Fifty-Five Days of Terror

THE STORY OF THE BOXER REBELLION

BURT HIRSCHFELD

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FIFTY-FIVE DAYS OF TERROR

The Story of The Boxer Rebellion

On June 24, 1900, a fanatical Chinese army, sworn to exterminate all "foreign devils," trapped the diplomatic envoys of eleven countries behind the legation walls in Peking. For fifty-five days there was bloodshed as the foreign devils fought for survival, and the outcome marked the end of one era in history and the beginning of a new one. This absorbing account of the Boxer Rebellion tells the full story of imperialism in China where the ruling dynasties, through cruelty, corruption and superstition, kept the peasants in poverty while they lived in splendor. Stronger nations seized upon these weaknesses and ruthlessly exploited the country, reaping great profits in imports ranging from cotton to opium. Placing the blame not on the Chinese ruling class but on the foreign invaders, secret societies formed a group which became known as Boxers and bloody warfare resulted.

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by

Burt Hirschfeld

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China 1900

1 "Has It All Been in Vain?"

August 13, 1900, was a day of ominous portents in the ancient city of Peking. A lowering gray sky pressed down, air thick from recent rains. The oppressive summer heat added to the sense of doom. A proper English lady delicately patted beads of perspiration from her cheek with her last remaining lace handkerchief. A wistful smile touched her lips: this was so like a day in London. A Frenchman tugged at his short beard, no longer impeccably barbered. He shrugged fatalistically: the weather, he was certain, would alter nothing. An American Marine squinted uneasily into the gloom, rifle at the ready, and settled down to wait.

This was Peking, in the north of China, capital city of that unhappy land. Here the troubles of China had come to a head. Here the long-festering Boxer Uprising had localized, spewing death and destruction at the last of the *yang kuei-tzu*, the foreign devils. These barbarians from the outside, as the Chinese scornfully called them, had assembled in Legation City, a collection of foreign legations within Peking itself, the better to defend themselves against the furious onslaughts of the massed Chinese Imperial Army, and its fanatical arm, The Fists of Harmonious Righteousness—the Boxers!

The location of the legations offered certain defensive advantages to the diplomats, missionaries, their families and charges. The southern edge of the enclave was protected by the Tartar Wall, forty feet high and more than forty feet

thick. To the north rose the pink wall of the Imperial City, with its crown of yellow tiles, equally high, but less foreboding a structure. The eastern boundary was a broad avenue which led to the Ha Ta Men (*Men* means gate) through the Tartar Wall. A shallow canal, crowded with sampans and flatboats, ran north and south through the compound, crossed by dozens of footbridges.

The siege, which had begun on June 20, was now in its fifty-fourth day, and with the passage of each day life within the legations grew more demanding, more oppressive. Food was in short supply, sanitation impossible, privacy forgotten. To make matters worse, the defenders never had a clear look at their attackers, hidden in the streets and buildings of the city. Rooftops and trees limited the view from the legations to less than one hundred yards. This "blindness" increased their sense of isolation.

Nevertheless, a determined band of Americans, Europeans and Japanese stood firm. What resources they possessed—military, supply and personal—were pooled as they turned a united front to the common enemy. Trapped behind the Tartar Wall were the diplomatic envoys of eleven nations, their staffs and their familes. Cut off from the outside world—there was no radio and the telegraph was in a state of disrepair—they had been able to send only occasional messages through enemy lines. Too often these dispatches failed to arrive, and even when they reached their destination they were received with considerble skepticism.

Yet hope for eventual rescue remained alive. A message had come through the enemy lines. It was from the British General Gaselee, and read: "Strong force of Allies advancing. Twice defeated enemy. Keep up your spirits."

But that had been three days earlier. No further word had come, and there had been no signs of the rescue force, no signal rockets, no thundering of Allied artillery. Had the message been a cruel hoax?

A French captain, Labrousse, by name, thought not. He spread word of the impending relief as he made his rounds of the guard posts, cautioning people to take no foolish risks at such a late date. He failed to heed his own good advice, and was killed by a sniper's bullet.

Casualties continued to mount. A storm of Chinese machine-gun and rifle fire ripped into the legations. Clearly, the Boxers were preparing to launch another assault. The diplomats, missionaries, merchants and soldiers made ready to meet it. How long, they wondered, was survival possible? Sooner or later, it seemed, they must succumb to the weight of superior numbers.

One American Marine who vowed to go down fighting in the best tradition of the Corps was Sergeant Joe MacClintock, lanky and wiry, his lantern jaw cocked aggressively, his cold blue eyes searching. He alerted his men.

"Stay awake, now," he barked. "They'll be coming soon. Make every round count."

"Maybe they won't charge," Willie Sommers offered hopefully, his boyish face tense, freckles vivid again his pale skin. "Maybe they'll pull back."

MacClintock gazed at the young recruit. Sommers, not more than eighteen years old, had been in the Marine Corps less than a year, with no prior combat experience. There had been occasions when his inexperience had resulted in mistakes, errors of judgment, sins of omission. Yet the flinty sergeant never questioned the youth's courage or tenacity. Now, however, he noticed a tightness to Sommers' voice, the grim set of his mouth, the way his fingers worked nervously at the stock of his rifle, the whiteness of his knuckles. MacClintock dropped a hand to Sommers' shoulder, squeezed encouragingly. He smiled.

"They'll attack. Now keep your eyes open."

Willie Sommers peered into the streets of Peking, searching for signs of enemy action. But his mind was elsewhere, up in the green, rolling hills of Pittsfield, Massachusetts, where

he had hunted rabbit and squirrel, at the bubbling clear stream where he once swam with boyhood friends, the stream that was more creek than river. He thought of his mother and berated himself for not writing her more often. He knew she worried about him, and he promised himself to write her as soon as this fuss was ended. There would be so much to say if, he reminded himself, he was still able to write, still alive.

Sergeant MacClintock's thoughts were elsewhere, too, as he considered his wife who, even at that very moment, might be having the baby. She hadn't wanted to remain at home in San Francisco when he shipped out, but he had been adamant.

"I want the boy to be born in the States," he had told her. "He might want to become president someday."

"And if it's a girl?" his wife had replied.

He grinned a lopsided grin and shrugged his big, bony shoulders. "Now why would you do a thing like that to me?"

He chuckled softly at the memory.

"You say something, Sarge?" Willie Sommers asked.

"Keep looking," the older man bit off. MacClintock was an old China hand with two previous tours of duty in the Orient, and was wise to the Boxers' fanatical determination, to their mystical approach to battle. He knew that the crimson-clad warriors claimed immunity to shot and shell and, encouraged by the unfathomable Empress Dowager, Tzu Hsi, had sworn an oath to destroy them all.

"Protect the dynasty," was the cry of the Boxers. "Exterminate the foreigners!"

Though the defenders had repulsed wild charges during the weeks preceding, few among them doubted the Boxers' ability to turn that oath into a fact now. The Boxers possessed the manpower, the supplies, the guns and ammunition and, given time enough, the will to triumph. Against this, the besieged had little more than a dogged desire to survive, and even that diminished under the continuing assaults.

Despite waning confidence, men tried to maintain a façade of optimism in the presence of their families, but it became increasingly difficult to remain cheerful.

For Helen Gordon the strain was almost too great to bear. She sat tensely on the edge of a straight-backed chair, hands tightly clenched, lips trembling, a sense of something lost etched permanently on her pale face. A delicate woman in her middle-twenties, normally neat and clean, Helen Gordon seemed misplaced in the dull, dim room with its rough, unpainted walls, which had been her home for nearly two months. She had wanted to do something with those walls, whitewash them or cover them with wallpaper, but neither had been available. The curtains she had managed to make hung limply over the tiny windows, a faint reminder of a more peaceful day.

She stared in silent sadness at the small crib which Lemuel had made for Charles. It was at the same time an empty reminder of recent anguish and the harbinger of terror still to come. Helen shuddered, a vision of Charles vivid before her eyes, aware that the price the Boxers extracted from the foreigners living in China grew more inflated each day.

She made an effort to clear such thoughts from her mind as she focused across the small room on her daughter, Sally, who sat hollow-eyed and still on a battered canvas army cot, legs dangling, cheeks sunken and arms wasted, quieter than a child her age should be.

Mrs. Gordon roused herself to speak, a note of forced gaiety in her voice. "Why don't we play some sort of a game, Sally?"

Sally didn't look up. "What game?" she said, after a moment, no hint of interest in her voice.

Helen Gordon blinked back the tears, struggling to recall something to interest a four-year-old, but Charles was all she could think about.

Lemuel, where are you? Mrs. Gordon pleaded silently, and

as if in answer the door opened, a rectangle of yellow light brightening the cubicle.

"Hello, everybody," Lemuel Gordon said, placing his rifle against the wall as he entered. He was not the kind of man people paid attention to normally, being of medium height with narrow shoulders and those blurred features that make a man indistinguishable from his fellows. His eyes peered from behind steel-rimmed glasses at a world he couldn't understand. In the civilized environs of his native Philadelphia, no one ever dreamed that he possessed the stuff of which heroes were made. And they were right. Yet since the siege had begun nearly two months before, Helen had seen her frail husband accomplish amazing things. To begin with, he had mastered the heavy military rifle, despite his fear of firearms; and each day he had assumed his obligations without protest, with a mounting determination, until he was considered to be one of the most reliable among the nonmilitary men in the compound, showing qualities she never dreamed were in him.

Helen stopped chewing her lip at the sight of him. She rose and embraced him, oblivious of the roughness of his unshaven cheeks.

"There's going to be a full ration of Mongol pony meat this evening, Helen. I'll fetch it later."

"I hate it!" Sally burst out. "It's horse meat! I won't eat it! I won't!"

Lemuel ignored the words. He smiled at his daughter and took her in his arms.

"Soon," he said, "the relief force will get here, and then there will be plenty of good food for everyone, all the things you like, Sally."

The child stared at him. "Candy?"

He nodded, and pressed his cheek against hers.

"Lemuel," Helen said. "What if the relief doesn't get here?"

His eyes met hers. "It *will* get here. It *will*." She wanted

to believe him, but it was difficult. Too much had happened. If only they had listened to her parents and remained in Philadelphia. Fine positions in good schools had been available, but Lemuel had insisted on taking the assignment in China.

"They need good teachers there," he had said, ending all discussion. "We are going."

And go they did, three years before. Helen had grown to love the life in the Orient. But that was before the trouble broke out, before Boxer activities in the provinces became widespread, before missionaries were massacred, before Peking came under attack. It was an effort for her to return to the present. She forced a tone of brightness into her voice.

"I tried to get Sally to play a game with me, but she doesn't want to play."

Lemuel Gordon filled his lungs with air and sat down on the edge of the army cot, his daughter on his knee. "Speaking of games," he began, "when I was a boy we used to play a wonderful game."

"Did girls play, too?" Sally asked.

"Did they! I should say so. It went like this. . . ." And he began to explain.

Outside, every effort was being made to strengthen the barricades. Sandbags were filled and piled high. Weak positions were reinforced. Mr. Gamewell, a missionary in charge of the Fortifications Committee, toured the defenses on his bicycle, making certain that all was in proper order, no longer a comic figure to be laughed at. Mr. Gamewell now assumed heroic proportions.

Elsewhere, life, such as it was within the legations, went on. Dr. George Ernest Morrison, handsome and courageous, shifted his position to ease the agony of his wounds. A foreign correspondent for the London *Times,* Dr. Morrison tried to ignore the pain as he composed his account of the siege.

Here and there a weary diplomat dozed fitfully, a mission-

ary prepared bandages, and some of the ladies managed a bath, determined to meet their fate properly groomed.

And they waited.

Suddenly the suspense was over, as from beyond the compound walls came the shattering cry of war trumpets.

"On your toes, men!" Sergeant MacClintock ripped out. "This is it!"

Willie Sommers and his comrades gripped their rifles tightly, releasing safety catches, sighting into the streets below.

In his room, Lemuel Gordon hurriedly kissed his wife and daughter and dashed for his post, calling over his shoulder: "Stay inside, and keep the blinds closed."

Wearily, that ragtag band of diplomats and soldiers, missionaries and Marines, merchants and sailors, took up arms and mounted the defenses. Attack was imminent.

On the Tartar Wall, Willie Sommers stiffened, eyes wide.

"Sergeant! Look!"

MacClintock followed his glance. In the gloom he spotted a glint of brass.

"What is it, Sergeant?"

"Sommers! Get word to the lieutenant. Tell him the Boxers are wheeling an artillery piece into place. Hurry!"

MacClintock was right. The gun proved to be a modern, two-inch, rapid-firing Krupp, which began to lob shells into the legations. Within a few minutes it had wreaked extensive damage and, if allowed to continue unchecked, would level the defenses. Something had to be done, but the besieged had no weapon large enough to counter this new threat.

Sir Claude MacDonald, British minister in Peking and commander-in-chief of the combined forces in the compound, hurried to the wall. Tall, slender, mustache bristling with aristocratic dignity, he cut an impressive figure as he studied the position of the Krupp.

"We're in serious trouble," an officer said nervously. "Nothing we have can reach that gun."

Sir Claude made no reply. His mind reviewed the complete arsenal at his command. He decided to improvise.

"Let's bring the American Colt up here, and the Austrian Maxim."

By the time the two machine guns were fixed into place, darkness had settled over the embattled city.

"Fire!" came the hopeful command. The machine guns began to cough their angry rebuttal, while the defenders held their breath. Then all at once the Krupp ceased firing. A great cheer went up.

But it was only a temporary victory. A withering stream of rifle and machine-gun fire poured into the Legations.

"Where is the relief?" someone asked.

"Won't they ever get here?" another questioned.

The volume of fire rose as the Boxers and the Imperial Army prepared to attack in force.

"Take cover!" bellowed an officer, ducking behind the battlements.

Intelligence reports indicated a fresh Chinese division had taken up positions outside the legations. Its commander had vowed to launch an attack that would overwhelm the hated *yang kuei-tzu*. No mercy could be expected. Everyone was aware of the savagery with which the Boxers treated prisoners.

The fire intensified. Bullets pinged overhead, thudded into sandbags, the fusillade reaching a terrifying crescendo.

"Has it all been in vain?" a woman asked.

The defenders braced themselves for the final onslaught. The alarm sounded in the Bell Tower. Every available weapon was distributed. Even the missionaries, who, heretofore, had not been armed, were issued revolvers. The ultimate test was at hand.

While stretcher-bearers carried the wounded to protected areas, women and children were directed to places of comparative safety. Calls for reinforcements went out. A half-squad double-timed to the Russian legation. Riflemen hur-

ried onto the crenelated Tartar Wall, sighting into the night. Tension gripped them all. After so long and so valiant a struggle, was help going to arrive too late?

"Sha! Sha!" came the piercing howls out of the darkness. It was the battle cry of the Boxers—"Kill! Kill!"

The Chinese charged.

2 The Boiling Kettle

To the average Chinese, the rising of the Boxers was inevitable and just. Traditionally, he was certain, the Celestial Kingdom absorbed her conquering enemies, and the Boxer Rebellion was a move in that direction.

The old men in the villages clucked knowingly over their evening tea and recalled past enemies who had so succumbed, some after long occupations. In the fourth century A.D. the T'o-pa, a Turkish people, imposed a barbarian dynasty for over two hundred years, ultimately to fall. Then in 907 the Tartar Ch'i-tan invaded from the north, forming the Liao Dynasty, only to grow civilized and soft, falling victim to the Ju-chen, forerunners of the Manchus. Though the Ju-chen were anxious to adapt themselves to the Chinese ways of life, civilization weakened them less than it had the Ch'i-tan, and when fierce Ghengis Khan led his Mongol hordes against them, they put up a desperate struggle. In the end, of course, they were conquered, and Ghengis Khan went on to found the Yuan Dynasty, which was to last well into the fourteenth century.

It was during those days of alien rule that the Chinese began reassuring each other than China always absorbed her enemies, until finally it happened. In 1368 the Mongols were routed, and the Ming Dynasty was formed. At last China was ruled by Chinese, and with great success, until 1644, when the Tartars came pouring over the Great Wall from the

north. These Tartars, called the Manchus, occupied all of China and by 1659 had destroyed all remnants of the Ming Dynasty, though antidynastic disorders continued in the south for twenty-four additional years.

Unfortunately, this foreign dynasty, intent on perpetuating itself at all costs, occupied the Dragon Throne during that period when the impact of the West was strongest on China. It refused to realize that the foreigners, already established on the islands of Formosa and Macao, would inevitably come crowding onto the mainland in large numbers, seeking the riches of the Orient.

Creaky with age and corruption, the Manchu Dynasty strove mightily to further the antiforeign sentiment natural to the native Chinese and so strengthen its own position; and though the regime may have lacked its earlier vitality and force, it still appeared powerful enough to maintain its grip on the country. The ruling classes, both Manchu and Chinese, preferred to live in the traditional ways, aloof from outsiders and their notions of change, blissfully unaware, or uncaring, that the world was moving rapidly forward, growing smaller, more mechanical, more scientific, more curious about strange, distant places and peoples.

China, in those days, had little contact with the rest of the world, possessing instead a deep-rooted contempt for it. Countering this was the natural curiosity of the people, coupled with their strong commercial instincts. Over the centuries, these instincts had resulted in occasional trade with the Roman Empire, and a Chinese army had marched to the Caspian Sea. A trade mission from the Netherlands was admitted in 1655, but its efforts to do business were unsuccessful. Later, Great Britain met similar rebuffs. Nevertheless, foreign influences were infiltrating China, making themselves felt. The doctrines of Buddha, for example, had been welcomed from India and adapted to the Chinese character. In the northwestern provinces, the Moslem religion had taken hold, and

later the Jesuits were able to make a place for themselves in Peking. But it was the written accounts of Marco Polo, describing his seventeen years in the service of Kublai Khan, that were most instrumental in directing attention to China.

The Manchus more and more felt threatened by the changing orders of the outside world; other governmental systems, other religions, other political philosophies, other more vital economies, were more than they could handle. A bamboo curtain was erected. By sealing off the kingdom, the Manchus hoped to prevent a duplication of their own conquest.

Nowhere in previous Chinese history was there a suggestion of the contrived isolation into which the Manchus plunged the nation, and for some two centuries the design succeeded. Darkness shrouded China. But that great land mass with its huge population—one-fourth of the world's people—was an irresistible lure to merchants everywhere. Anxious for new markets for their goods, they were drawn to China as iron filings are drawn to a magnet.

But the Manchus had closed the door to foreign commerce, opening it only once each year. Beginning in 1834, foreign merchants were allowed to set foot—between October and March only—on a section of flat land on the Canton waterfront measuring 1100 by 700 feet. Only there, and only at that time, was trade permitted. In this way the Manchus sought to prevent the perversion of their people by foreigners, at the same time maintaining their own private world. Forces were at work, however, which made this situation intolerable.

Tea was the foot in the Chinese door. Along with silk, china and cotton cloth, tea was traded on the Canton waterfront to the Europeans for woolen cloth, metal, pepper, spices and opium. The East India Company held a virtual monopoly on this trade, except for opium, in which the company refused to deal.

The use of tea in England was becoming increasingly popular, despite a high tax which made it a rather expensive

pleasure. Smugglers began bringing tea into England, and the trade grew to such proportions that legitimate importers petitioned the government to lower the tax. This was done and the consumption of tea promptly increased.

Thousands of taels (Chinese ounces) of silver passed into Chinese hands in Canton in return for tea, so much silver that British merchants found themselves short. England pressed for free trade which would have evened the flow of silver between herself and China, but the Dynasty stood firm.

Even as the English demand for tea grew, so did the Chinese for opium. As appetites for the drug increased, more and more silver passed back into British hands. Now it was the Chinese financial experts who became alarmed. Not only was opium a threat to the economic structure, they informed the Emperor, but it was poison as well. Its import was forbidden.

The result was widespread smuggling and corruption. Chinese and foreigners alike made fortunes. Addiction spread. The Emperor appointed Imperial Commissioner Lin to go to Canton and root out the evil.

There have always been desperate men willing to face any risks for profit, and Arthur C. Clarke was one of these. His small dry-goods warehouse on the docks at Canton provided him with a comfortable income, but Clarke craved wealth, great wealth. Opium, he had decided, was the means to that end. In league with a handful of other English merchants, he contracted with a British adventurer, Crowell, by name, to bring supplies of opium from India.

Crowell made the journey by seagoing junk three times without incident. Always his junk put into Canton under cover of darkness carrying packets of the drug. Mr. Clarke was always waiting nervously at the pier.

When he arrived the fourth time, Crowell stepped ashore. "Did you get it? Was there trouble?" Clarke asked anxiously.

Crowell grinned. "You are a fearful creature, Mr. Clarke. No need to be. All went smoothly. I struck a rather advan-

tageous bargain, I should say. You ought to declare a bonus for me."

Clarke's eyes darted from Crowell to the Chinese members of the crew, now coming ashore. Each of them carried a square bundle wrapped in oilskin.

"Is that it?"

"Yes."

Clarke sighed. He gestured toward a donkey cart. "In there. Under the load of firewood. Make certain they conceal it well."

Crowell repeated the order in local dialect, and the men went about their task silently. When it was done, Clarke climbed aboard and took up the reins.

"Come and see me in the morning," he said. "I'll have your money for you then."

Crowell bowed slightly. "That I will, Mr. Clarke. That I will."

It was almost noon before Crowell went to collect his fee. He felt good. The job had gone well. The pay would be more than adequate. Also, he had a secret plan. In time he would go into business for himself, selling directly to the Chinese the opium he smuggled. Once he possessed capital enough he would have no further need for Mr. Clarke and his associates. Clarke's warehouse loomed ahead, a crowd of natives clustered about the entrance. Crowell smiled to himself. Business was good.

Suddenly he stiffened. A detail of Imperial soldiers came quick-marching along the dock, led by an officer and a Chinese mandarin by the name of Ching. Crowell paused, and watched. The soldiers forced their way through the crowd into the warehouse. Crowell shrugged and turned away. He would have to find another outlet for the goods he smuggled. Mr. Clarke's cries of dismay drifted after him.

"There is nothing here that you want," Clarke told the

mandarin. "Make them stop!" he shouted, as the soldiers began tearing open bales and crates.

Ching pursued his lips and said nothing, his black eyes intently watching the soldiers. He had no doubts about what he would find. His informant had been precise in his instructions, certain of his information. Ching knew that even at that moment other warehouses were being similarly searched by other detachments, boarding parties were on ships in the harbor and on Lintin, the offshore island. Ching was certain they would all find opium.

"Ho!" came the hoarse cry from a thick-bodied private. "I have made a discovery."

Ching smiled slyly at Clarke. "Commissioner Lin suggested we might discover something of interest." He held out a delicate hand. "Shall we see what the soldier has found, Mr. Clarke?" The Englishman's shoulders sagged. He shuffled forward.

Using a bayonet, Ching slashed open a packet. Gently, he pressed a forefinger to the white powder, put finger to tongue, barely tasting the stuff.

"Opium," he said mildly.

"It must be a mistake," Clarke said. "Come into my office, Mr. Ching. Let us talk."

"Commissioner Lin suggested that you might wish to talk with me in private." Ching's voice went cold. "There is nothing for us to discuss." He swung to the officer, spoke in Chinese. "Destroy it all."

Clarke paled. "No, you can't. You'll ruin me. My government will hear of this."

"I expect they will, Mr. Clarke," Ching answered. "But there is nothing your government can do."

Ching could not have been more wrong. Opium constituted 54 per cent of all British exports to China, and was a source of considerable profit, which the Crown meant to protect. Altogether, Commissioner Lin confiscated twenty thousand

chests of opium, valued at between ten and twenty-five million dollars. For Great Britain, the situation was intolerable. British military units attacked several Chinese coastal cities in force.

The Opium War had begun.

There were those in England who spoke out against the war. William Gladstone, later to become prime minister, declared: "I am not competent to judge how long the war will last, or how protracted may be its operations, but this I can say, that a war more unjust in origin, a war more calculated in its progress to cover this country with permanent disgrace, I do not know, and have not read of."

At another time he wrote: "I cannot be party to exacting by blood, opium compensation from the Chinese."

But the lure of silver was more overwhelming than moral considerations. The war went on. It was no contest. China lacked the strength to stand up against modern armaments, and she went down to defeat. The result was the Treaty of Nanking of 1842, by which huge indemnities were imposed on China as payment for opium seized and for the cost of the war. The island of Hong Kong was ceded to England in perpetuity, and the ports of Canton, Amoy, Foochow, Ningpo and Shanghai were opened to foreign trade. A supplementary agreement, the Treaty of Bogue, contained the "most favored nation" clause.

> Should the Emperor hereafter, for any cause whatever, be pleased to grant additional privileges or immunities to any of the subjects or citizens of such foreign countries, the same privileges and immunities will be extended to and enjoyed by British subjects.

All of this revealed the Chinese pie as not only tasty but readily available. The other world powers drew chairs up to the table, anxious to fatten up.

During these years a major shift in political power began to take place within China. Affairs of state within the Im-

perial Court fell increasingly into the hands of self-seeking individuals, and soon power was being siphoned away from the central government and into the provinces. Administration was in the hands of the "mandarins"—civil servants divided into nine ranks, owing their jobs, supposedly, to grades attained in official examinations. These mandarins were a social and professional group apart from the common people, making their separateness and authority apparent at every given turn. Rather than serving as the proper link between peasants and rulers, the mandarins became a force to widen the gulf between the two, thus ensuring their own well-being at the expense of those less fortunate. So, as is often the case in nonindustrial, agricultural economies, power and wealth rested in the hands of the few at the expense of the many. And the official examinations, designed to offer the lower classes an opportunity to advance, often, due to the greed of the mandarins, failed to accomplish this purpose.

One peasant who found the government literary examinations an insurmountable obstacle was Hung Hsiu-ch'uan, a Hakka from Kwangtung Province. Anxious to advance his rank, Hung kept taking the examinations despite repeated failures. In 1847, he suffered another of these failures, and promptly broke down. For forty days he was the victim of a strange, seemingly incurable fever. It was thought that he was dying as he appeared to exist in another world, a victim of visions and dreams. When he finally regained his senses, Hung gathered a number of villagers about him and described one of the visions.

"A venerable old man came to me in my vision," he said. "This was Shang-ti, the Heavenly Ruler. He called me his son and showed me the world below us. He spoke with great sadness of the ways of the people on earth. 'They have neglected me,' " Hung repeated solemnly, holding his listeners spellbound. "Then Shang-ti presented gifts to me, a magnificent sword carved in the traditional manner and a seal

so that I might ward off demons and evil spirits both. Shang-ti told me to lead the Middle Kingdom out of slavery, to cast down the barbarian Manchus. This humble creature has been chosen to bring about the salvation of His people."

The villagers rocked piously back and forth on their knees, impressed with Hung's mystical intensity. Later, when a local dispute forced the Hakkas to become vagrants, to wander about the countryside, it was Hung who led the way.

"It has come to me," he announced one day, "that the title of Heavenly King shall be mine, for I am indeed the younger brother of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." No one disputed the point.

And thus was the Taiping Rebellion born, a threat to the Manchu Dynasty more dangerous than the inroads made by foreign imperialists and adventurers. This massive revolt, which dragged on for fourteen years, almost proved to be the undoing of the dynasty, as it spread like a stain into twelve provinces, gutted six hundred cities and cost twenty million lives.

With his limited knowledge of Christianity to serve as a base, Hung evolved a philosophy for his followers. He lay down directions as to military, religious, judicial and social affairs, run by a hierarchy of Princes of the Heavenly Kingdom of Universal Peace, *T'ai-p'ing T'ien-Kui*, soon shortened to "the Taipings." Through these princes, Hung was able to keep a tight hold on the citizens of this new nation within a nation. Hung was both spiritual and temporal ruler.

The Taipings had three aims: public ownership of land, equal allotment of surplus money and food, and a self-supporting economy. At harvest time enough grain was to be presented to each person to sustain him until the next harvest, with all surplus grain going to a national warehouse.

The Taipings were violently opposed to the Manchus. "The empire," Hung declared, "is God's empire, and not that of the barbarian Manchus." He accused the Manchus of

altering the national dress, of forcing the Chinese to wear the pigtail, a Manchu custom, and of employing corrupt practices. "The waves of the Eastern Sea cannot wash their sins away."

The rebellion broke into the open early in 1851. Cities and villages were razed, some by the Taipings, some by Imperial troops. Forced to choose one side or the other, peasants often selected the Taipings and followed beneath their banner, life being less intolerable under Hung. Occasionally there were great victories to celebrate, as in March of 1853, when the Taipings rolled into Nanking, killing twenty thousand people along the way.

Many Protestant missionaries were drawn to the Taipings because of their Christian pretensions, but Hung's Christianity was at best secondhand and insincere, a device of his personal ambition. The missionaries soon became disenchanted. Hung, they realized, was a ruthless murderer. Besides, his claim of having gone to heaven and talking face-to-face with God was not only blasphemous but dangerous. Who could tell toward what denomination he might lean: Methodist? Lutheran? Baptist? The Roman Catholic Church refused to give its blessing to such a heretical movement.

It was shortly after the start of the Taiping Rebellion that a young woman named Yehonala came to the palace of the Emperor, Hsien-feng, who at nineteen was a weakling, and in many ways little more than a figurehead for the Grand Council. He soon took a fancy to this new third-grade concubine who was clever, beautiful and well-born, and in time was to become the Empress Dowager, Tzu Hsi, staunch enemy of all foreigners. Even then there were clear indications of her indomitable spirit.

She solidified her position close to the weakling Emperor when she bore him his first and only son, and she wasted no time pressing this advantage. Her influence grew when she prevailed upon him to permit her to classify his memorials,

and soon he allowed her to dictate some of his public comments and edicts. The young concubine was clever and learned all she could about the application of power and the practice of palace politics. It was her stubbornness, courage and strength which persuaded the Emperor to stand firm against the Taipings when all seemed lost and the Grand Council urged a more timorous course. Before long she became the very real power in the Forbidden City, that great walled expanse of Peking that contained the winter palace, and was sacred to the Imperial Court.

But Yehonala had made enemies, intrigue being a way of life in the Manchu court. In time she found herself busily engaged in a power struggle with a handful of mandarins and princes who sought to lessen her influence with the Emperor, now an ailing man and dying.

The intriguers were making considerable progress toward undermining Yehonala's position, when the Emperor, in dynastic tradition, named her son heir apparent. Shortly afterward, the Emperor died. A regency of eight men was formed to rule, since the child Emperor was only six, and it seemed that Yehonala had been outflanked. Such was not the case, for the Emperor had left the great seal in her capable hands, which gave her the ultimate veto on any edict the regents might issue.

Before very long she manipulated the forces around her so that she was able to have the eight regents arrested, to establish a loyal prince, Kung, by name, as an adviser and to guarantee the services of sufficient crack troops to ensure the success of her own intrigues. Her enemies were killed, or found themselves sentenced to lengthy prison terms.

More secure in her position now, Yehonala turned to pleasure to help pass the time within the palace walls. She loved theatricals and spectacles of all sorts, and surrounded herself with people who pandered to her particular tastes, thus forming a protective corps about the Royal Person.

Yehonala was the fount of strength in the Court and intended to remain so. Gradually, power passed from the grand councilors and the princes into the hands of her favorites. It was generally believed she would prosecute the struggle against the Taipings with dispatch and vigor, and this is what she did, applying continuous pressure on Hung and his people. Yet the eventual failure of the Taipings was due primarily to their inept military strategy, the lack of adequate administration of conquered areas, internal dissention and, finally, general incompetence. Hung was incapable of coping with any of these problems and abandoned himself to luxury and debauchery, isolated from the world around him.

His head eventually was to hang over a Peking gate, a sharp lesson to those who opposed Yehonala, as that lady moved closer to the even greater power that would one day be hers, a power that would encourage her years later as the Empress Dowager, Tzu Hsi, to stand fast against the massed armed might of the outside world.

3 The Wolfpack

But for all Yehonala's astuteness and strength, she was still a Manchu, influenced by limited Manchu philosophies, by ancient Manchu concepts of justice and fair play, by narrow Manchu attitudes toward the people she ruled and toward the Outer Barbarians. Even she failed to read the portents of the times, to take note of the changing world and to adapt to it. Instead, she tried to stand against it and so found herself being battered by forces she couldn't understand, power she couldn't oppose.

England's easy triumph in the Opium War encouraged others to slice off a piece of the Chinese pie. The United States negotiated a treaty at Wanghia, on Macao, which obtained without bloodshed the same rights Britain had won through force. That same year, 1844, France extracted a similarly advantageous treaty at Whampoa.

Now ports were thrown open to foreigners. Trade was permitted and indemnities paid. It was the beginning of the end for the Celestial Kingdom, though the wisest of the courtiers around the throne failed to recognize the signs.

Now came the Second China War (1857–60), which the Chinese termed the Second Opium War. Great Britain attacked the mainland, a struggle in which neither the United States nor Russia wanted to become actively involved. France, however, had no such qualms. She was embittered by the murder, in the interior, of a missionary, Father Chapdelaine.

Again China succumbed to superior military strength, and Britain and France set about consolidating and extending their political and economic privileges. Hoping to gain similar advantages, Russia occupied vast territories in 1858; and a new treaty obtained for the United States what force had won for England and France.

In 1860, France and Britain attacked the Taku Forts at the mouth of the North River, then took Peking and razed the summer palace. Britain extracted a ninety-nine-year lease on Kowloon, on the mainland opposite Hong Kong.

Portugal was confirmed by treaty in her occupation of Macao.

France got a toehold in Annam, and Britain annexed Lower Burma.

France then annexed three provinces of Lower Cochin-China, gaining control of the Mekong Basin.

In 1871, Russia took over Ili, a large tract of territory in Chinese Turkestan. In 1879, Japan helped herself to the Ryukyu Islands, which included Okinawa. A year later, in return for a massive indemnity, Russia returned part, but not all, of Ili.

Britain annexed Upper Burma in 1886.

And the following year the whole of Annam, Cochin-China and Cambodia were formed into French Indo-China, containing a population of eighteen million.

So it went, an endless series of violations of Chinese sovereignty, obtaining for the leading powers an infinite number of privileges and concessions.

There were those in the West who claimed that these imperialistic forays were for China's own benefit, maintaining that westernization would raise the level of life in that nation and so profit all the people, but that didn't happen. Instead, continuous contact with the West served only to make the Chinese patriot increasingly aware of his country's humiliating position.

As a matter of fact, many mechanical and other techniques basic to civilization were transmitted *from* China *to* the West prior to the influx of the Jesuits in the seventeenth century: deep drilling for mining, efficient harness for draft animals, cast iron, the segmental arch and iron-chain suspension bridges, the drawloom, canal lockgates, the edge-runner mill, the sternpost rudder, plus the inventions of paper, printing, porcelain and the magnetic compass. Add to these, watertight compartments for shipbuilding, paper money and the use of coal, known by Medieval Europe to be in use in China but not consonant with life on the Continent at the time.

For her part, China had little interest in the science of the West, with the exception of its mathematics. This superior knowledge enabled the Chinese to settle their calendar—devised 4660 years ago—with greater accuracy than native astronomers had been able to do, a vital advance in an agricultural economy. The Industrial Revolution in Europe during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had little immediate impact on Chinese life, though in time it proved to be the primary cause of her downfall. But it was not until she came into violent contact with the West and her military weaknesses were exposed that China began to sense her shortcomings.

Imperialism pierced the various layers of Chinese life, penetrating the family with shattering force. It was in the spring of the year 1876 that the weaver Liu Mok, with the help of his first son, Chu, then nine years of age, loaded into his donkey cart the lengths of cotton cloth he and his wife had woven during the winter months.

Liu gazed proudly at the cloth. It was a good winter's work, and surely the merchant Chang would be pleased, for Liu was an excellent craftsman. Men such as he had made China famous for her textiles. They had learned their skills from their fathers and in turn passed them on to their sons, as Liu was doing for Chu.

"The dyes were not without distinction," Liu said, not looking at his wife. She cast her eyes down modestly, warmed by her husband's words, proud that he recognized her worth. She hesitated to think such thoughts, but she felt no other woman in the village mixed dyes as vivid as hers.

Chu, his round face gleaming in the early morning sunlight, his eyes bright with anticipation of his first journey to Ningpo, turned to his father. "Will I really be able to look upon the great sea, Father?"

"Perhaps," said Liu. "If you are a son who acts in a manner that gives pride to his father." He motioned the boy into the cart, and climbed aboard himself. "The journey is of one day's duration in each direction," he told his wife, as he did each time he made the trip. "And another to bargain properly with the merchant Chang. I will return then in three days."

The wife played her role in the ritual. "Chang is a thief," she called, as they drove away. "He is not to be trusted."

"Am I a child," Liu shouted over his shoulder, "to be tricked by a city merchant? We shall receive our due. Aiee, women," Liu ended with feigned annoyance.

"Aiee, women," Chu repeated.

Father and son looked at each other and burst into laughter.

It was already dark when the donkey cart reached the outskirts of Ningpo. Liu decided to enter the city in the morning. He built a small fire alongside the road and boiled water for tea. While they waited, he and Chu dined on cold rice.

"We will sleep in the cart," Liu announced. "The cotton will shield us from the chill of the night."

When the merchant Chang arrived the next morning to open his shop, Liu's donkey cart was already parked outside. The two men greeted each other formally, with short quick bows. Chu watched, smiling, until a sudden warning flicker

in his father's eyes reminded him of the proper way to act. He bowed deeply, three times.

"A most unworthy son," Liu murmured.

"Enter my shop," Chang said. "Your presence honors me."

Chu trailed the two men inside. The thick smell of incense tickled his nose. Chang opened the shutters, and sunlight streamed in like rungs of a ladder. Chu looked around in wonder. From floor to ceiling, shelves were crowded with bolts of fabric of such design and colors as he had never before seen. He noticed that his father's eyes roamed the shop, though Liu gave no indication of his thoughts.

Chang went round behind the counter and clapped his hands together. "You have come to buy?" he began.

Liu could not keep his brows from rising in surprise. Chang knew full well that he had come to sell. He always came to sell. A weaver does not buy from a merchant. Ah! It was Chang's way of starting the bargaining. A worthy adversary. Each time Chang used a different approach. Liu smiled.

"I have decided to offer you the first opportunity," he replied, with studied matter-of-factness. "We have long dealt with each other, and I feel a bond between us. Before I offer my superior fabrics to the other merchants, I allow you to select a few for yourself, if the price is suitable. My cotton is of a supreme quality this year."

Chang waved his hands at the full shelves. "Look about you, man. Do I appear to be a person in need of fabric?"

Liu hesitated. He assured himself that this was merely another gambit of the wily Chang's. He made as if to move toward the door.

"I will go elsewhere. My work is not appreciated here."

"Yes," Chang said. "I wish to buy nothing. Only to sell."

Liu's heart began to thump in his chest. Fear thickened his throat. All at once he realized that Chang meant what he said: he did not intend to buy. Liu watched as Chang

reached behind and took down a bolt of blue cotton with red and white flowers on it. The merchant spread a length of it on the counter.

"See what sort of goods I now sell. All are comparable to this one. See how fast the colors are, and how bright. Also, the fabric is strong and does not tear easily. The people who buy from me are pleased by such things."

"Who makes such fabrics?" Liu said hoarsely.

Chang began to roll up the cotton. "I buy now from the English barbarians." He leaned toward the stunned Liu. "The cost of such goods is less than the cost of your work, Liu. And so the cost to those who buy from me is less." He put the bolt of material back on the shelf. "The barbarians own great machines with which to make such things. From now on I will buy only from them."

"But what of my cotton?"

Chang shrugged. "Offer them to the other merchants. But they will speak as I have spoken. No one will buy."

Liu gazed blankly at the other man. "What will I do? I have a family to feed."

Chang fixed his eyes on the far wall.

"All my life I have woven fabrics. There is nothing else I can do."

Chang studied his shelves with rare intensity.

"My children will go hungry."

Chang busied himself straightening his stock. Liu shuffled slowly out of the shop. He lifted Chu back onto the cart. He would visit the other merchants, but deep in his heart he knew that Chang had spoken the truth and that none of them would buy his cotton.

He was right. In the 1870's, one-third of all imports into China were Lancashire cotton goods, this voluminous introduction of machine-made goods signaling the destruction of Chinese handicrafts. For Liu and his family, and others like them, it meant the end of a way of life that had existed for

generations. For Liu, it also meant a loss of pride in his skill, a loss of status in his village and in the eyes of his family. He felt less as a man. No longer was he able to provide for them as he wished.

There were many nights when the boy, Chu, cried into his pallet. "The white devils. It's all their fault. I wish they were dead." Years later, wearing a Boxer's crimson sash, Chu, the man, would have his chance to make that wish come true at Peking.

Differences between East and West existed on levels other than those of economy, each civilization having its own special view of life. Western society developed under the authority of man-made laws, with responsibility fixed in terms of the "doer," each liable for his own acts; while the Chinese notions of justice were based in large measure on the security-group system, whereby each member of the group was held accountable for the acts of his fellows, and any of them might be made to pay for the crime of another, a concept difficult for Westerners to grasp.

It was hammered home late in the eighteenth century with the *Lady Hughes* affair, when a gunner aboard the *Lady Hughes,* a ship in Canton harbor, failed to realize that his gun was loaded with live ammunition while firing a ceremonial salute. A small boat was hit and sunk, and two Chinese officials were drowned. The authorities demanded the person of the gunner, but the British refused to hand him over, claiming it was an accident. The Chinese promptly arrested another Englishman who had no connection at all with the unhappy event.

The British relented after exacting a promise that the gunner would be given a fair trial. They surrendered the man, and the Chinese promptly strangled him.

Understanding came hard.

Continued penetration by foreigners resulted in drastic alterations within the feudal structure of Chinese society,

directing it toward semicolonization so that China's independent development was interrupted.

The powers saw China as a huge market place and were dissatisfied when imports failed to accelerate at an acceptable pace. Something had to be done. The introduction of railroads and the telegraph were logical steps.

The railroad between Shanghai and Wusung was constructed by British merchants, the tracks stretching across the countryside past villages and farms. Each day the massive black engines went chugging along, belching steam, frightening livestock, waking the peasants during the night, disturbing the spirits of wind and rain.

"This is an evil thing," a peasant muttered.

"A bad omen."

A minor official whose living was gleaned off travelers on the roads and waterways, and who saw his way of life being threatened, stood nearby. "The *yang kuei-tzu* care nothing for our traditional ways," he complained loudly. "See how they have placed the iron rails so that they lie heavily upon the graves of our ancestors. It is done without consideration."

All about him heads were bobbing in agreement. There was an angry murmur.

"The graves of the ancestors are everywhere across the land."

"Is not the land also theirs?"

"The ancient ones cannot be happy with the iron rails pressing upon them in such a manner."

"It is not a thing one would wish for oneself."

Presently the complaints of the peasants were heard in the Imperial Court. There, the Manchu rulers were equally distraught, equally disinclined to alter the ancient order of life, the courtiers recognizing the practical side of the problem. Since Manchu political power reached into every area of Chinese life, support for the dynasty came from the thousands of persons on the government payroll, minor bureau-

crats who, if they saw no further profit in supporting the regime, would direct their allegiance elsewhere. The Imperial Court counted the railroads a threat to such persons as muleteers, chair-bearers, innkeepers and others. Further complaints came from the owners of junks, who found the waterways barred by railway bridges.

It was time to act. The government acquired possession of the Shanghai-Wusung Railroad and, in typical fashion, tore it up!

"The dynasty has acted with wisdom," the peasants told each other.

"The barbarians must learn their place."

But the foreigners refused to learn, and other threats to the old order sprang up. Telegraph lines were stretched across the countryside, hanging mysteriously, like some strange talisman, from tall poles, their purpose dark and unknown. On bleak winter mornings the wind blew and caused the wires to moan mournfully.

"Aiee. It is the sound of the Devil."

"Much worse. Those are the cries of the dead ancestors pleading for aid."

"They ask the living for help."

"It is so. The white devils drive their great stakes deep into the ground piercing the souls of the dead."

And when the wires rusted, and rain water ran red from them, it became clear that the spirits were indeed suffering unbearably.

"Such fiendish devices must be eliminated."

"The spirits of the dead are tortured, their souls bleed."

"Aiee."

The mandarins knew better, but did nothing to dissuade the peasants of their notions, for to them the telegraph was a different sort of threat; it brought official surveillance closer, something to be avoided at all costs, since few of China's bureaucrats functioned in a manner beyond re-

proach. Every effort was made to feed the flames of superstition.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, the Europeans slowed their claims to new territory. It seemed reasonable to tread lightly lest power clash with power over Chinese interests. Also, each possessed an almost mystical suspicion of the giant land to which they had attached themselves. Its size and population, plus its strange ways, gave rise to vague fears in Western hearts.

Such fears were groundless, for the powers had overestimated the strength of the Middle Kingdom. Not so Japan. That island empire had designs on Korea and Formosa, and in 1894 Japan attacked, dealing the Manchus a lightning swift defeat. The Land of the Rising Sun crowded into the ranks of the Imperial Powers.

This exposure of China's truly weak military condition evoked a predictable response in the West; each of the nations set out to increase its claims. China was viewed as another Africa, to be carved up as that unhappy continent had been. Thus the stage was set for the "Battle of the Concessions," as the powers vied to dismember China into "spheres of influence."

The wolfpack hewed out great chunks of territory and profit, their imaginations soaring with dreams of legendary treasure hoards; the French dispatched a mission inland seeking gold, rubies, tin, ivory, copper, musk and flax, as well as horses of fabled strength and speed.

Britain moved in along the border of Burma. Russia ran the tracks of the Trans-Siberian Railroad across Manchuria, and occupied Port Arthur and Talienwan. Germany demanded, and received, concessions in Shantung, then moved into Tsingtao. France arranged a ninety-nine-year lease on Kwangchowan. Determined not to be left behind, Britain obtained a lease of similar duration on the New Territories across from Hong Kong and took possession of Weihaiwei,

to be occupied for as long as the Russians held Port Arthur. Only the United States failed to avail herself of the opportunity. The American consul at Shanghai, Mr. Jernigan, questioned the wisdom of this:

> The establishment of a bank in China or Japan by American capitalists would, at least, give the color of permanency to American enterprise in China. China, being a country incomparable in resources, and acknowledged to be the wealthiest in the world, the question may well be asked, why should not American capitalists recognize a primary principle in the extension of the trade relations of their country?

Mr. Jernigan's point of view was heard and noted, and in 1899, in Washington, D.C., a meeting took place which was to have a great effect on events in China. John Hay had asked for a conference with President McKinley.

Hay, at that time Secretary of State, had had a long and distinguished career. He had studied law at Springfield, Illinois, where he first met Abraham Lincoln, and when Lincoln was elected president, Hay accompanied him to Washington, serving as his assistant private secretary until Lincoln's assassination. Hay spent the next five years in minor posts in American legations around the world. Later, he worked as a journalist, and in 1879 was appointed Assistant Secretary of State. Subsequently he was named ambassador to Great Britain, before his appointment as Secretary of State by McKinley.

"You wanted to talk about China?" the President asked.

"Yes, sir. I have been giving a lot of thought to the activity taking place there."

"It has not gone unnoticed by me, Mr. Hay," the President said dryly. There was a long moment of silence. "Mr. Hay, the United States does not wish to employ force in order to achieve what it believes to be its legitimate aspirations in the

Far East. However, neither do we wish to be excluded from trading profitably with the Chinese people."

John Hay leaned forward and placed a folder on the President's desk. "That is precisely my feeling, Mr. President. This folder contains a proposal which I call an Open Door policy concerning China. I would like to issue this note, making it the policy of the United States. It is my opinion that it will help prevent conflicts between any of the major powers at a later date."

President McKinley rose. "I will study your note, Mr. Hay." The two men shook hands. "You will hear from me presently."

A few days later, John Hay received presidential permission to proceed. In September of 1899, Hay circulated his now famous note to the governments of the powers active in China. It requested formal assurances

. . . that each within its respective spheres of whatever interest:

First: Will in no way interfere with any treaty port or any vested interest within any so-called sphere of interest or leased territory it may have in China.

Second: That the Chinese treaty tariff of the time being shall apply to all merchandise landed or shipped to all such ports as are within said "sphere of interest" (unless they be "free ports"), no matter to what nationality it may belong, and that duties so leviable shall be collected by the Chinese government.

Third: That it will levy no higher harbor dues on vessels of another nationality frequenting any port in such "sphere" than shall be levied on vessels of its own nationality, and no higher railroad charges over lines built, controlled, or operated within its "sphere" on merchandise belonging to citizens or subjects of other nationalities transported through such "spheres" than shall be levied on similar merchandise belonging to its own nationals transported over equal distances.

Finally, Italy, observing the treasure chest being rifled with a minimum of difficulty, decided to obtain her share, only to find China, its back to the wall, snapping and snarling. Unwilling to chance a bloodbath, Italy withdrew its demands. The Manchu Dynasty had won a bloodless battle and in so doing gained a grossly inflated sense of its own strength, for the idea of resistance to the Western powers, as if such resistance was feasible, took root in the minds of many of the Imperial advisers. The idea especially gripped the imagination of Tzu Hsi, a powerful force in the Court of the Emperor Kuang Hsu. He was a weak and indecisive young man, so like Hsien-feng, to whom Yehonala had been placed in concubinage years before.

By means of plots and counterplots, Tzu Hsi had managed to maintain herself in a position of power for nearly half a century since Hsien-feng's death in 1861. Her son was declared Emperor in 1872, only to die three years later, to be succeeded by the infant Kuang Hsu. As his aunt, Tzu Hsi had been named a regent. Kuang Hsu ascended the Dragon Throne in 1889, but this hardly prevented Tzu Hsi from dominating the palace. With her traditional Manchu philosophies, Tzu Hsi was the natural rallying point for the conservative forces in the government who often sought her out.

"Now is the time to strike," a handful of princes urged her after the diplomatic victory over Italy. "Let us drive the barbarians into the sea."

"Perhaps," Tzu Hsi said, "the foreign devils are less fierce than we imagined."

"There are ways of discovering the precise sharpness of the foreigner's claws," one of the reactionary princes offered.

Another snorted disdainfully. "Stand too close to a tiger and one may well be shredded by those claws."

"Could it be the beast fears to fight?" The Empress Dowager spoke softly, seeking to provoke a response from her courtiers. "I would prize an answer to the question."

"The *I Ho Ch'uan* cause trouble in the provinces."

Tzu Hsi's penetrating black eyes flashed angrily. "The Fists of Harmonious Righteousness! What is it the barbarians call them? The Boxers? These secret societies do not please me."

"There have always been such societies in China," a courtier said, smiling obsequiously. "They are a way of life with the peasants."

Tzu Hsi was furious. "What do I care for the peasants and their secret societies? Let them play their little games if they wish, but what these Boxers do is not to my liking. They ravage the countryside, stealing and murdering. Even now they advance toward Peking. Who can say where it will end? Who is the leader of the *I Ho Ch'uan?* I would have him stand before me."

"There is no single leader," came the reply. "But many leaders, thousands, perhaps. The *I Ho Ch'uan* seem to spring into being as if from nowhere. They appear to band together as if by instinct and are everywhere at once like ghosts in the night."

Tzu Hsi's lips tightened. "I remember another such peasant rising led by a charlatan named Hung. They called themselves the Taipings. I do not like such doings. We will put down such activities with rare ruthlessness."

"Perhaps it might be wise to act in another fashion," an adviser offered gently. "The *I Ho Ch'uan* vow death to the foreigners, swearing to uphold the dynasty. Let us utilize that vow. Let them do as they wish with the barbarians."

"And if the barbarians object?" asked another prince.

"The Imperial Court cannot be responsible for every peasant uprising. If foreign missionaries wish to bring their strange god into areas of unrest, they must look to that god for protection."

Tzu Hsi suppressed a smile. "It is said that only when one can fight can one negotiate for peace."

She gestured with her six-inch fingernails, lengthy nails being a symbol of the upper classes who did no menial labor. The audience was over. A pleased smile curved the sensuous mouth. A strong, capricious woman, she leaned by instinct toward the ultraconservatives in her government, the reactionaries who, constituting a war party, signified all that was the worst in the ruling class, whether Manchu or Chinese.

Corrupt and ignorant, crippled by primitive superstitions, they were wholly incapable of facing in realistic fashion the deadly dangers in the path of their country. They were selfish and self-seeking, caring less for the national interest than for their own. Through the years these people had given the citizens of China little more than edicts and memorials which, though noble in language, were empty of practical effect. This antiforeignism of China's elite dovetailed perfectly with the militant and fanatical nationalism of the Boxers.

Craving to reverse the trend of history, the reactionaries kept careful watch on the mounting Boxer insurgence in the northern provinces, as that movement grew rapidly more powerful and arrogant. The reactionaries could afford to bide their time, for now no effort would be made to suppress the increasing violence, since the Empress Dowager had given tacit consent to the Boxers.

That ordinarily perceptive lady failed to see them for the two-edged sword they were. The uprising spread like a plague across the deprived countryside, gaining recruits, committing a variety of outrages on foreigners and Chinese alike, until by the dying days of May, 1900, the Boxers stood poised at the gates of Peking.

4 The Dark Spirits

The land was a checkerboard of rice paddies, broken only by the dusty ribbon of road that reached from one horizon to the other. To the peasants of the area, that road was a means of getting only from their own village to the next one.

But the road was more important than that, for they were aware that the road led to mysterious places. They had heard tales of huge cities with magnificent palaces and temples, with thick and impregnable walls, built in ancient times, tales of great harbors crowded with giant vessels that came from distant lands. None of these simple people had ever seen these places or these things, nor did they ever expect to, but they knew of them, for their lives had been changed by them.

For the two men shuffling along the road, life had also changed. They moved silently, their drab Chinese Army uniforms stained with perspiration and dirt. The slighter of the two, Wang Chen-Fu, mopped his brow with his uniform sleeve. He grunted. "The sun is very hot today," he said. His companion, Chou Gungwu, said nothing.

"Would it be a bad thing if we should rest for a short while?" Wang asked a few minutes later.

Chou glanced at his companion and nodded. They sat on the shoulder of the road facing the rice paddies, watching the peasants, knee deep in water, bend to their labor.

"So did I work before becoming a soldier," Chou said finally.

"It is hard work. You will return to it?"

Chou snorted. "I would have remained a soldier with pleasure. Now the rice paddies await, and my back shall grow bent and my muscles stiff before many years."

A slow frown furrowed Wang's brow. "I still do not understand. Why did the authorities dismiss us from the Army? Were we not acceptable soldiers? Did they question our courage?"

Chou gazed solemnly out at the rice paddies and at a peasant who had ceased his work and was staring curiously at them.

"We were not cowards," Chou said. "We did what there was to do." He would have said more, but the peasant had started toward them.

"Perhaps," Wang offered, "it is not permitted to rest in this place."

"We will soon see."

The peasant stood before them, his broad sun-darkened face expressionless under a flat straw hat. He looked at Chou, who met his glance, then at Wang, who turned his eyes away.

"I am Lao Sheng," the square man said. He gestured at their worn uniforms. "You are soldiers?"

"No longer," Wang said glumly. "I must return to my father's kiln and spend my remaining days making pottery."

"Then you are fortunate," said Lao, his voice harsh. "In my village the kilns are cold. Potters cannot sell their wares. Nor can the weavers. The old crafts are no longer desired. The old people seldom have full rice bowls now."

"That is not good," Wang said.

Lao allowed a bitter laugh to escape his lips. "It is not good."

"Why is it so?" Chou asked.

"Why are you no longer soldiers?" Lao countered.

"An officer explained that the government no longer could afford the wages of a large army. Some had to go."

Lao shook his head. "You are no longer soldiers for the same reason that the people go hungry, that the land is despoiled, that the ancient order of life is altered, that barbaric temples scar the heavens. It is all the work of the *yang kuei-tzu.*"

The foreign devils! Chou had heard such talk before, among his fellow soldiers, but he had paid little attention. He grew angry with his own lack of wisdom and understanding. Had he known more he might never have been dismissed from the Army.

"What have the barbarians done?" he asked.

"What have they not done?" Lao countered. "They are here and the people suffer. Is that not enough?"

Wang rocked back and forth, moaning. "We will all starve. There will be no children to respect me when I am old and feeble."

"Perhaps not," Lao said. "You have heard of the *I Ho Ch'uan,* the Fists of Harmonious Righteousness?"

Chou cleared his throat. "It is a secret society, I have heard."

"For those of the *I Ho Ch'uan,*" Lao went on, "there is food aplenty. And a modern weapon. And ammunition. And an honorable purpose in life, to protect the dynasty and to exterminate the foreigners. But it is a society only for men of courage and determination."

The two uniformed men exchanged glances.

"We are such men," Chou said.

"We fear nothing," Wang added.

A small smile played across Lao's mouth. "Follow me. In my village is one to whom you should speak."

He started off down the road. Wang and Chou climbed to their feet, and followed after him. They walked a little

straighter now, a little quicker, certain they would find fulfillment when they had attained the status of Boxers.

Secret societies, such as the Boxers, had always existed in China. For people like Wang and Chou, people of little stature, possessing no voice in large affairs, they provided an organization that could bring pressure to bear on the rich and the mighty. Secret societies seemed to blend with the Chinese taste for mystery, running through the history of the Celestial Kingdom like an elusive thread, glinting under certain light, but never wholly visible. Thus to trace the less than exact pedigree of the Boxers might serve only to add to the confusion, for they were indeed an offshoot of the Eight Diagram Sect, in turn associated with the White Lotus and Red Fist Societies and affiliated with the *Ta Tao Hui,* the Big Knives, and so on and so on.

To the average Chinese, the Boxers must have resembled the merry men of Sherwood Forest—Robin Hoods in red sashes rising up to give battle to the vested interests. Yet the Boxers never denied constituted authority, that is, the Manchu Dynasty. They were rather antiforeign and thus anti-Christian.

At the time of their eruption, in 1898, the Boxers were flamboyant figures. They were thought to be Spirit Soldiers, immortal, heaven-sent, come to sweep the empire clean of all foreigners. Even more, a Boxer was dedicated to the extermination of his Chinese neighbors, if those neighbors were converts to Christianity. To achieve these goals the Boxer cloaked himself in vivid costumes and practiced ritualistic mumbo jumbo, posturing and making passes with his arms that resembled those of a professional prizefighter.

Dr. H. D. Porter, of the American Board mission at Pangchuang, in the province of Shantung, having observed the boxerlike movements of the *I Ho Ch'uan* was the first to call them Boxers, writing as follows in January, 1899:

The "Boxers" were the people so stirred up over the Roman Catholic troubles west of Kinching. They broke out again in August, but were put to flight by the prefect of Feng Chang and a few soldiers. . . . This Society, something like the German Turners, add a kind of spiritism to their gymnastics. They suppose that their trainer is a medium. The fellows, mostly young men, practice under him and fancy themselves under the influence of a spirit. In this condition they pretend that nothing can harm or injure them. They assume great bravado, and boast of great strength and skill. . . .

When the *North China Daily News* of Shanghai picked up the name in its columns, the word stuck, and from then on they were referred to as the Boxers.

But a Boxer was something more than merely a peasant in masquerade. He was a rebel with a deep sense of dedication. He possessed no single leader to whom he paid homage, he owed allegiance to no fuehrer, no party chairman, no dictator. He sought no personal gain or profit. He was steeped in mysticism, and he believed the fantastic rites and trances and incantations gave him courage and resolve.

Thus it was not many days after the peasant Lao recruited Wang Chen-Fu and Chou Gungwu that they and others like them took part in an involved and solemn ceremony. In a hidden place far back in the hills, facing toward the southeast, they intoned:

"The instructions from the God Mi T'o to his Disciples—proclaiming upon every mountain by the Ancient Teachers —reverently inviting the Gods from the central southern mountains, from the central eight caves—your Disciple is studying the Boxer art, to preserve China and destroy Foreigners."

Then they stomped heavily on a crucifix, genuflected and knocked their heads enthusiastically against the ground. The cross was an exclusive Christian symbol in 1899. Christians

had a cross on their heads which was invisible to a non-Boxer, it was said, or they had staring eyes.

The chants of the new Boxers continued.

". . . if cut with a knife or chopped with axe, there will be no trace. Cannon cannot injure, water cannot drown. If I urgently invite the Gods they will quickly come, if I tardily invite them they will tardily come from their seats in every mountain cave. Ancient Teachers, Venerable Mother, do swiftly as I command."

Wang and Chou concluded by passing their hands through the air in intricate and mysterious fashion, and bowing deeply. The two recruits noticed that there were some who became so possessed by the spirits that they shook with violent spasms; their eyes rolled and they foamed at the mouth.

"God descends!" Boxers shouted, as their fellows were spiritually possessed. "God descends!"

"Aiee," Wang muttered, deeply impressed by the magical proceedings. "There is nothing a Boxer cannot accomplish."

Chou nodded. He had been thinking the same thing.

A few days later a special ceremony was held in a valley high in the hills which the local villagers were invited to watch. The purpose was simple: to use the villagers to spread the word of Boxer superiority and invulnerability. A holy shrine had been erected at one end of the valley. and now a line of Boxers, red ribbons fluttering in the gentle breeze, stood to one side as if bewitched, oblivious of their surroundings. The villagers crowded together some distance away as a stocky Boxer addressed them. It was Lao Sheng. His harsh voice sliced through the clear air.

"Spirit Soldiers are protected by heaven. No harm can come to them." He waved an arm. "Those you see have become *hsien,* they are immortal. They have practiced the way of *hsien.* Watch!"

A handful of men shouldered their rifles, and cut loose a volley. Three of the Boxers toppled over, dead or dying. The

remainder were unhurt. Another volley was fired. Some of the Boxers waved their hands, as if to turn the bullets aside, and this time none fell. Now the riflemen laid aside their weapons and took swords in hand. With fierce shouts, they charged, brandishing the long knives. The peasants gasped at the ferocity of the thrusts, yet the line of Boxers never wavered or broke.

"See!" cried Lao triumphantly. "Boxers are immune to steel and bullets."

"What of those who fell?" inquired a peasant timidly.

"Fool," Lao said. "They were not real Boxers. They lacked the true faith. Perhaps they were spies of the *yang kuei-tzu.*"

The peasants whispered among themselves. It was a logical explanation. They were impressed. By the time they returned to their village, their stories would grow with dramatic exaggeration.

The provinces of Shantung and Chihli were the main areas of Boxer activity. In Shantung, the Boxers felt relatively secure, since they had the tacit support of the governor, Yu Hsien. When twenty-seven Boxers were killed in a clash with provincial troops, instead of praising the action of his own soldiers, Yu Hsien cashiered the local commander and imprisoned a police official who had arrested some of the Boxers.

Edicts issued now and again by the Empress Dowager added to the freedom the Boxers exercised. Cloaked in veiled terms, these edicts urged the Boxers on to greater and more destructive incursions against the foreign population.

Now nature joined the conspiracy to evoke increased discontent among the natives. Two successive harvests had failed and famine was widespread. A plague of locusts intensified the problem, and as if that was not enough, the Yellow River flooded, displacing hundreds of thousands of persons, who squatted about the landscape, homeless and hungry, without hope. Relief from Peking did little good.

There was rampant corruption among the mandarins, and food and medical supplies seldom reached those for whom it was intended and who needed it most.

Antiforeign feeling became more open as bitterness deepened, resulting in stepped up anti-Christian campaigning by the Boxers. At first they were content to wreak havoc only against the "secondary devils," native converts, but that failed to satisfy them for long.

It was the final day of the year 1899. A youthful English clergyman, S. M. Brooks, was alone in his mission in the Shantung Province. The others had gone off marketing or to prepare for that evening's New Year's celebration. Brooks was glad for the respite, for the opportunity to be alone happened seldom. He busied himself with those small housekeeping tasks that somehow never seemed to get done.

At first he was unaware of the men crowding into the doorway, gazing ominously and silently at him. Finally, he sensed their presence and looked up. There were six of them, armed with rifles and swords, crimson ribbons around their waists or hanging from their caps. Boxers! He straightened up and smiled.

"Welcome," he said, spreading his hands in friendship. "Welcome to the House of the Lord."

"Where are the others?" Lao Sheng rasped, making his voice hard.

Brooks shrugged. "I am alone."

"Let us slay him at once and be gone from this place. Black spirits are at work in this house."

"No," Lao said. "We will take him with us. He is a priest of some kind. I must think what to do with him."

"Please," Brooks said. "I am a friend of the Chinese people. I am here only to help you."

They paid no attention, dragging him roughly outside, and hurried away from the mission. They roamed the countryside for hours, seemingly with no goal in mind. It grew

colder and snow began to fall. Often the band stopped as the Boxers fell to arguing among themselves. Brooks' knowledge of Chinese was enough for him to understand that they were debating his fate. Two of the men were for killing him at once, but the leader stood opposed. If Brooks interpreted Lao's reluctance to murder him as a kindness, he was mistaken.

"Take off your clothing," Lao ordered.

"But it's snowing," Brooks protested. "It's cold."

That landed him a smart blow alongside the head from the flat of Lao's sword.

"Take off your clothing."

Brooks did as he was told. He stood shivering in his underwear, to the amusement of the Boxers. They pointed at him mockingly and laughed at his discomfort.

"See how pale he is."

"Like a frightened rabbit."

Brooks' mind worked quickly.

"There is a church at Ta Kuang Chuang," he said, in the local dialect. "Living there are Christians like myself. Take me to them and you will receive a fine ransom for my safe delivery. There will be silver for all of you."

"How do we know you speak the truth?" Wang Chen-Fu asked shrewdly. "Perhaps there are foreign soldiers in the place. You think to betray us."

"There are no soldiers."

"Enough," said one of the Boxers, a rough-looking, pock-marked fellow. "Enough of this tramping about the hills like a goat. I want no more of it. It is snowing harder and I am cold. Do what you will with the barbarian." He pivoted on his heel and marched away.

"Come back!" Lao shouted. "There will be much silver."

The eyes of two of the other men darted after the retreating form of their comrade. "Aiee," said one. "He is right. Keep your silver. It is too cold for such things. I too have

had enough." He and his companion broke into a trot, disregarding the threats Lao hurled after them.

"Cowards," he muttered bitterly, turning to Wang and Chou. "And you?"

"We are Boxers," Chou said proudly. "Lead and we follow."

"Good. To Ta Kuang Chuang. All the barbarians are rich. We will get much silver from them."

For more than an hour they stumbled through the hills. Brooks alert as his captors paid him less and less attention. He had been struggling steadily to loosen the rough cords that bound his wrists. Suddenly they went slack. His hands were free. He flexed his fingers, to restore circulation. His feet felt numb from the cold, and he knew that time was running out for him. He grew tense, waiting till the three Boxers turned their attention elsewhere, then broke for a stand of trees.

"Aiee! The devil has freed himself!"

"Follow! Capture him!"

"Kill Kill!"

Brooks forced his legs to move. They felt heavy and sluggish. Snow squished underfoot. Behind him he heard the fierce cries of the Boxers and footsteps closing fast. Ahead the timber line came nearer. Once among the trees he would be able to hide. Soon it would be dark, and the Boxers would never find him at night.

But Wang, slender and quick, gained rapidly on the fleeing clergyman. Brooks heard hoarse breathing at his shoulder. There was no time to reach the trees. He turned in time to see Wang's sword gleam against the dull gray sky.

"No!" he cried in horror.

"No!" Lao shouted in anger.

It was too late. The blade flashed downward. The missionary tumbled bloody and lifeless to the ground, a slow

crimson stain spreading across the snow. Lao came abreast of Wang and Chou.

"Fool," he puffed. "A corpse is worthless to us."

"All foreigners must die," Chou said, shrugging. "We are Boxers."

The tempo of Boxer insurgence increased. Similar outbreaks took place elsewhere in the empire, as the intensity of Chinese antiforeignism mushroomed. At Shashih, nothing was spared in a riot directed at the British and Japanese. There was a riot in Chihli, disturbances in central Szechwan, the Kwangsi insurrection, the antimissionary riots at Foochow, trouble in Yunnan, outbreaks in Paotingfu, the Kienning riots, and widespread murder and looting. The annual mid-autumn festivals seemed to herald the oncoming rebellion. The temper of the people was clear to those willing to see. The father of a member of the United States legation was severely wounded, a member of the British legation and an English lady were insulted and abused, a French citizen was wounded and two Japanese subjects were attacked.

A massive confrontation of Westerners and Boxers was fast approaching, its inevitability triggered by a *coup d'etat* that had taken place less than two years before.

5 A Friend at Court

Autumn is the season of change everywhere. In North China, in 1898, it was no different. People welcomed relief from the thick, depressing heat of summer. They felt a new spirit, fresh desire to go about their business, taking pleasure in the vibrant fall colors of the countryside.

But there were those in China who were not interested in any kind of change, a fact of life becoming increasingly clear to many important Chinese who placed the welfare of their country before all else. Such forward-looking men realized the vital need for political and economic reform, seeing clearly the need for a modern approach. But they were hampered in their effort to effect changes by traditions and customs and by those to whom the *status quo* meant wealth and power.

Nevertheless, the reformers forged ahead. Memorials were submitted to Emperor Kuang Hsu suggesting changes, pointing out the various opportunities that existed for moving China out of the past toward the present. Reactionary officials were bypassed, which served to increase their opposition, and they sought to isolate the Emperor from the reformers. When this failed, they applied more and more pressure on the Empress Dowager to depose the Lord of Ten Thousand Years. Word of these efforts came to Kuang Hsu.

"There are plots against the person of the Son of Heaven,"

a trusted adviser told him in the privacy of the royal apartment.

Kuang Hsu paled. A weak man, he knew himself to be a coward.

"You mean they wish to remove me from the Dragon Throne?"

"There are those who would go further, who wish to remove all life from your majesty's person."

"Kill me! They wouldn't dare."

"These are desperate men. Your majesty must act at once."

"Yes, of course. At once."

Kuang Hsu thought quickly. He feared death, but he also feared to live and lose his throne. Something would have to be done, and swiftly, and on that same morning he crippled the existing official system by abolishing six of the government boards, which resulted in a horde of dispossessed mandarins joining the ranks of those violently opposed to him. Discontent rippled through the corridors of the winter palace, but the final indignities to the conservatives in the Forbidden City were still to come.

Word reached them that a secretary of the Board of Rites, Wang Chao, by name, was preparing a memorial suggesting reforms beyond the wildest dreams imaginable. Two elderly members of the conservative faction of the Board of Rites visited Wang Chao in his office.

"It is said you prepare a memorial for the Emperor," one of them began.

"That is so."

"It is said also that in it you recommend that the pigtail be abolished." The pigtail was an imposed Manchu custom, despised by many Chinese, but worn, because to do otherwise would mean death.

Wang Chao's face gave no hint of the surprise he felt. He had thought to keep the contents of the memorial secret un-

til it was submitted. He should have known better, for there were no secrets in the winter palace.

"Your informants are correct," Wang said testily. He decided to plunge ahead. "But there is more. I intend to suggest to the Son of Heaven that he name Christianity the state religion."

"That is madness."

"And," Wang went on, "that a national parliament be formed, even as the English have. And that the Emperor and the Empress Dowager travel abroad, to Europe and Japan, so that they may witness first hand the contrast between life in those lands and in our own."

"Truly you are mad."

"I think otherwise. Life must be made more palatable for the people of China. Progress is the only way to do so."

The two conservatives exchanged dour looks.

"You must not submit this memorial to the Emperor," Wang Chao was warned.

He shook his head stubbornly. "The welfare of the empire demands that it be done."

The conservatives did not give up easily. A bribe to Wang Chao's messenger placed the memorial in their hands. A few quick strokes of a pen and the reactionary faction of the Board of Rites had attached a rider denouncing Wang Chao as an undisciplined visionary, an absurd and impractical dreamer. The memorial was then returned to its envelope and the messenger sent on his way to the palace. When the memorial was finally presented to the Emperor, his ministers awaited the royal reaction with undisguised interest.

Kuang Hsu gazed at the thick envelope. "The seal has been broken," he complained.

"A recommendation," soothingly murmured the Manchu president of the Board of Rites. "There are those who would distort and obscure the truth from his Imperial Highness."

The eyes of the conservatives swung tauntingly toward

Wang Chao, who gave no outward indication of nervousness, though fear brought a weakeness to his stomach and a trembling to his knees. He watched as Kuang Hsu studied the envelope. All at once the royal lips began to twitch. The royal eyes flashed with anger, and the royal face darkened.

"No member of this court has the privilege of opening any Imperial communications!" he stormed. "Nor will I countenance such blatant disrespect, such disregard for protocol."

Significantly, the Emperor met this threat to his authority by displaying his weakness as a ruler, being more concerned with the outward forms of respect than with the contents of the memorial. His anger rising, Kuang Hsu summoned his secretary and dictated an order dismissing the two presidents of the Board of Rites (one Manchu, the second Chinese) and the four vice-presidents.

A stroke of the vermilion pencil and the order was official.

"To Wang Chao," Kuang Hsu announced triumphantly, "we offer an abundance of praise, and we reward him with the honorable position of a judge."

It was the last important act of Kuang Hsu's reign.

The cashiered officials of the Board, and others of like mind, scurried to the palace of the Empress Dowager, where they found her pleasantly engrossed in her flowers, but agreeable to receiving visitors. They fell to their knees before Tzu Hsi, beseeching her to overthrow her nephew, to assume the reins of government. Very much the female, she dismissed them without hinting what was in her mind.

Meanwhile, Kuang Hsu, who feared and mistrusted Tzu Hsi, plotted her downfall. Plans were made to murder Jung-lu, the general who commanded forces loyal to her, then to make her prisoner. But secrets seldom remained secret for long in the Imperial compound, and inevitably word of the Emperor's schemes reached Old Buddha, as Tzu Hsi had come to be known. Her handsome face stiffened with fury,

black eyes flashing as she rose, straight and imposing in a gown of black and purple silk embroidered with gold thread. Jade earrings dangled from her ears, and an elaborate pearl necklace circled her regal throat. She was an impressive figure as she gestured imperiously to a handful of her followers.

"Come with me."

She hurried to the palace, vital and forceful, looking twenty years younger than her sixty-four. She swept into the presence of the Emperor without warning, shocking that weak youth, who paled under her surveillance.

"We are pleased to see you," he stuttered.

"You are after all," she stated, "but an unsophisticated child. You would murder my general, Jung-lu, who is a friend of my childhood. You would alter the ancient traditions, send the nation into the pits of despair. These things I cannot permit. Jung-lu stands now at the head of my armies here in Peking, ready to strike at my command. You have made a fool of yourself. Return at once to your inner apartments! Remain there. It is evident that I must resume control in order to save the empire, which you, in your extreme unwisdom and foolishness would drive to perdition."

Tzu Hsi's swift action, so characteristic, completely unnerved Kuang-Hsu. He surrendered the great seal and his authority without an opposing word or deed, ending the reform movement, and his reign. Such was the *coup d'etat,* a bloodless revolt.

So for the third time in her life, Tzu Hsi assumed the rule of China. It had been a remarkable career the once third-grade concubine had carved out, and it was far from over.

Long experience had made Tzu Hsi a mistress of intrigue. She loved life in the Court, its excitement, constant politicking and luxury; thought nothing of spending on reconstruction of the summer palace monies designated for the building of a navy. The black marble throne room with its stone

statuary and intricately carved wood panels was her special joy, and it also pleased her to spend time in the gardens walking among the yew trees, listening to her courtiers gossip, filing away bits of information for future use.

A good actress, Tzu Hsi often used her talents to play on the emotions of those she ruled; with her grace and charm, plus her startling beauty, she was able to gain the heart of any man, while her sudden explosions of anger were enough to send ministers cringing in terror. In the last extremity, Tzu Hsi was not above using tears to disarm an adversary. Perceptive, quick of mind, jealous of power, she could be a ruthless enemy. Rumor said she had caused the death of more than one political rival, and there is no reason to doubt it, though no evidence exists to substantiate the claim that she had helped her own sister "ascend the fairy chariot for the distant journey."

Conservative by training and experience, Tzu Hsi never hesitated to break with the most ancient traditions when it suited her purpose. In 1899, she gave a five-hour reception for the ladies of the foreign legations, an unheard-of event at the time, during which each of the visitors was embraced by Old Buddha and given a pearl ring. Later, she sent each of them a portrait painted by herself. She also drank a "loving cup of tea" to give added weight to her repeated claim that they were "all one family."

But while she entertained the ladies of the diplomatic corps, Tzu Hsi was desperately seeking ways of maintaining the old order, of turning aside the inroads made by foreign ways. She cast about for additional aid, for significant signs of strength, thinking that the Boxers appeared to offer what she needed.

She watched as the trouble spread across the land. Then, on January 11, 1900, she issued an edict which left no doubt of her position, though it required reading between the lines:

Of late in all the Provinces brigandage has daily become more prevalent, and missionary cases have recurred with frequency. Most critics point to seditious societies as the cause, and ask for rigorous suppression and punishment of them. But reflection shows that societies are of different kinds. When worthless vagabonds form themselves into bands and sworn confederacies, and relying on their numbers create disturbances, the law can show absolutely no leniency to them. On the other hand, when peaceful and law-abiding people practice their skill in mechanized arts for the preservation of themselves and their families, or when they combine in village communities for the mutual protection of the rural population, this is in accord with the public-spirited principle of "keeping mutual watch and giving mutual help." Some local authorities, when a case arises, do not observe this distinction, but listening to false and idle rumors regard all alike as seditious societies, and involve all in one indiscriminate slaughter. The result is that, no distinction being made between the good and the evil, men's minds are thrown into fear and doubt. It means not that the people are disorderly, but that the administration is bad.

The advantage of hindsight makes this edict clear in its intent, but in 1900 there were those who failed to unravel the meaning from the verbal labyrinth. The British minister, Sir Claude MacDonald, saw nothing significant in the edict and decided not to telegraph his superiors about it. Instead he wrote a letter to the Foreign Office in London, which took two months to arrive. In it Sir Claude conceded that the edict was "regarded in some quarters with misgivings," going on to say that he felt otherwise, since there was considerable difference of opinion.

Ten days later he had a change of heart, and joined with the Americans, French, Germans and Italians in protesting its issuance. No satisfaction was forthcoming for the ministers.

By now much of North China was in a state of anarchy as bands of armed Boxers roamed the countryside looting, burning and killing. No one was safe. Seemingly insulated from

all activity around them, the diplomats paid little attention, proceeding with their business with equanimity.

If the diplomats were oblivious of the Boxers, Tzu Hsi was certainly not, studying their every move with a keen eye. Perhaps she was attracted by their claims of magic powers, or immortality, or perhaps she believed their claims to invulnerability to shot and shell. In any case, her desperation mounted rapidly as the foreign imperialists made deeper incursions of her domain. Her armies, badly equipped, poorly trained, seldom paid, and loyal more to their individual commanders than to the central government, seemed useless. Her navy, since she had squandered its funds, was in no condition to do battle. Despite these military shortcomings, she managed to convince herself that with the aid of the Boxers all things were possible. That mystic rabble, she told herself, would help her defeat her armies, strengthen her rule, guarantee her future power.

She made common cause with the dark powers of the spirit world.

6 See No Evil, Hear No Evil

On the twenty-fourth of May, 1900, Queen Victoria's eighty-first birthday, the members of the British community in Peking assembled to do homage to Her Majesty. They dined leisurely, then meandered onto the legation tennis courts to waltz in the soft night air beneath star-speckled skies and orange paper lanterns. They sipped iced champagne and reminisced about home. It was a thoroughly enjoyable evening.

"The music is delightful."

Lady MacDonald accepted the compliment graciously.

"We must thank Sir Robert."

Sir Robert Hart's band was an integral part of life in the legation compound, where it gave weekly concerts. Most of the guests did not expect to hear the band again for some time. Already they were anticipating the end of the cool season, for soon the intense, dry heat of summer would descend upon the North China plain, and the capital city would become unbearable, sweltering and noisy. Before that happened, Peking society, or at least the European segment of it, would make its annual migration to the beaches at Peitaiho and Weihaiwei or to the Western Hills, where the diplomats and their families would sit out the summer in magnificent Buddhist temples converted into villas. Those whose duty demanded that they remain behind were objects of sincere sympathy.

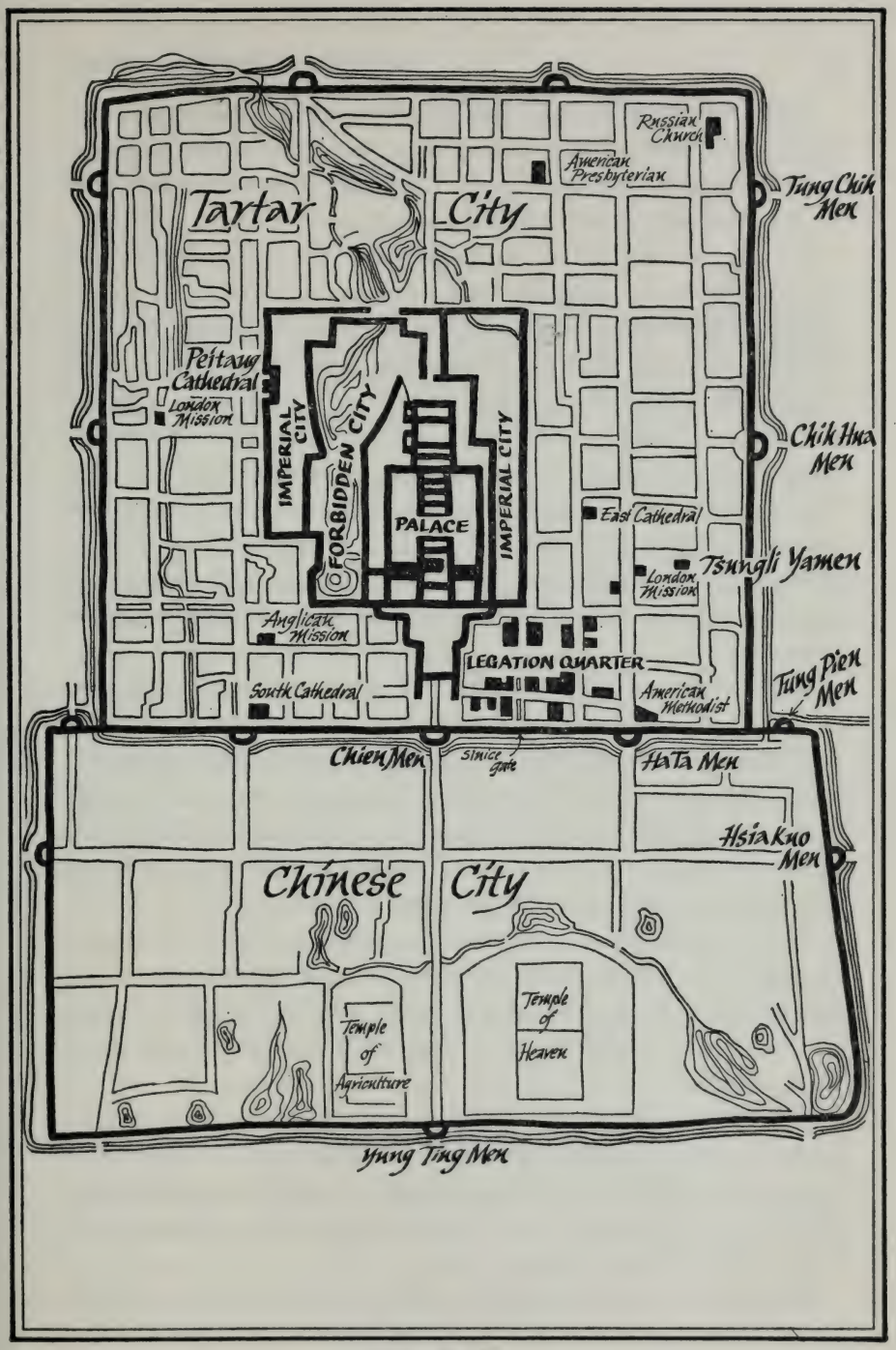
None of these folk realized that they would suffer the heat of summer within the legations itself, fighting for their lives in a stand that would focus the eyes of the world on them. Few of them understood the forces that even then were being marshaled against them. Tales of discontent among the peasants in the provinces drifted to their ears, tales of rebellion, violence, even murder. They all seemed like happenings in another world. Such outrages, they were convinced, could never touch them in Peking.

The drought offered a ready explanation for the unrest. "A good rain will put an end to all the troubles," they reassured each other.

Peking was a city composed of cities in 1900. Within its bounds were the Tartar City and the Chinese City. The southern wall of the Tartar City served as the northern rim of the latter. At the center of the Tartar City was the Imperial City, which in turn enclosed the Forbidden City where Holy Lions protected the buildings.

Tradition in the Orient decreed a concentration of trades and crafts in certain areas; thus tanners were found in one street in Peking, goldsmiths in another, food merchants in still another. Foreign diplomats were treated in a like manner. Locating them in the same area jibed perfectly with the desire of the Manchu Dynasties to maintain a close watch and control over Europeans. The result: eleven legations—United States, Great Britain, France, Austria, Hungary, Belgium, Holland, Italy, Germany, Russia and Spain—were quartered in a plot of land roughly three-quarters of a mile square.

Close by the legations were a number of foreign merchants and other enterprises, two banks, offices, some shops, the Mont Blanc Hotel and, of course, a private club. There were also the people from the post office and the customs, as well as a sprinkling of teachers from the university.


Russian Church
American Presbyterian
Tung Chih Men
Tartar City
Peitang Cathedral
London Mission
IMPERIAL CITY
FORBIDDEN CITY
PALACE
IMPERIAL CITY
Chih Hua Men
East Cathedral
Tsungli Yamen
London Mission
Anglican Mission
LEGATION QUARTER
Tung Pien Men
South Cathedral
American Methodist
Chien Men
Sinico gate
Ha Ta Men
Hsia Kuo Men
Chinese City
Temple of Heaven
Temple of Agriculture
Yung Ting Men

Peking

Who were the people living within this community? To begin, they were not a close group, hardly of a single mind, falling instead into two clear divisions, the relationship of each to the other strained and uneasy.

In all, the foreigners in Peking at this time came to no more than five hundred, half of them missionaries, whose activities were concentrated in the churches, hospitals, orphanages and schools scattered about inside the Tartar Wall. The missionaries were by no means a single, compatible group. Far from it. They were divided in their work, first by location and, even more important, by the powerful doctrinaire differences between Roman Catholics and the sundry Protestant denominations. Occasional social confrontations seldom bridged those differences, the result being many missionary groups, which caused great confusion among would-be converts.

Before long, the Chinese were being taught five different names for the Deity. Even before the coming of Christianity, the Chinese referred to the *concept* of a supreme being with two separate words. Then the Jesuits introduced a third word, and the Protestants a fourth, and later a rival Protestant denomination entered the lists, coining a fifth name in hopes of isolating its brand of Christianity from that of its rivals.

The religious conflicts were not in themselves too serious, though they did make for a succession of minor grievances against the missionaries who were allowed by the 1858 Treaty of Tientsin to travel freely and preach the gospel anywhere in the empire.

To further distress the Chinese, the foreign men of God raised churches with tall spires which stood as an omen against the spirits of wind and water, so that inevitably local disasters were blamed on the missionaries, who showed scant appreciation for the ancient ways.

Nor were the Chinese the only ones to find the missionaries objectionable. In England's House of Lords, Lord

Clarendon pointed out, "Missionaries require to be protected against themselves, and they are a constant menace to British interests."

A letter from a clergyman in China written in October of 1899, said:

> Things are quiet here now and the property undamaged. Our compound was threatened but fortunately a large detachment of soldiers arrived in time and about 100 of the malcontents were beheaded and the rest scattered and our work goes on as usual.

The trouble went on, spreading like a prairie fire, moving into Shantung Province where American missionaries, Congregationalists and Presbyterians, as well as French Catholics, suffered at the violent hands of the Boxers. Churches and chapels were burned and hundreds of converts robbed or killed. Pitched battles were fought, and as Christmas approached little joy was to be found in the missionary compounds.

Nevertheless, they continued their work undaunted, work that gave birth to extremely dangerous antiforeign emotionalism. They were charged with terrible practices, especially in regard to the young, for there were many abandoned children in China, custom dictating that female babies be exposed at birth until they died, or later offered for sale if times were hard. No facilities existed to care for such children; none was desired, but the missionaries opened orphanages. The move was completely misinterpreted.

"It is," wrote Arthur H. Smith in his book, *China In Convulsion,* "impossible for the Chinese to understand the motive for beneficence of this sort; and the presence of so many helpless infants, especially when the mortality is large, is immediately connected with the invincible superstition that foreigners wish to mutilate the bodies for the purpose of alchemy, thus turning lead into silver."

Such fantastic tales flew from village to village, countering

the good works of the missionaries. Their medical efforts had healed many Chinese, yet the worst possible interpretations were placed on any treatment or operation that failed, as was inevitable. Native doctors and others were quick to spread distorted accounts of such mishaps.

The second community of foreigners in Peking was secular, born of the diplomatic corps, a group insulated by circumstance as well as by choice from the native population. The diplomats paid little attention to the ordinary Chinese, seldom attempting to understand even those natives with whom they dealt on a formal level each day. Naturally, the plight of peasants grubbing for sustenance in the rice paddies was of even less consequence.

These diplomats, their wives and their staffs, all carried with them the conventions of their own lands wherever they traveled. They held fast to their own kind, their own customs, seldom taking the trouble to learn anything about the people of the country to which they were assigned. Few of them spoke any language but their own. They communicated and cooperated with their peers from other imperial powers when necessary, in the polite, prescribed terms of their profession; yet even these negotiations were conducted with suspicion. The Russian minister, de Giers, viewed the Japanese with a troubled eye, while Sir Claude MacDonald gazed benignly on both, finding neither to be a threat. Edwin Conger, America's minister, remained aloof from these intramural squabbles, the United States having disdained any interest in Chinese territory.

Important in this community were such officials as Sir Robert Hart, Inspector General of the Imperial Maritime Customs, from 1863 to 1909. He controlled customs administration and collections of revenues, responsible only to the Tsungli Yamen, the government department which had come into being under the Tientsin treaties and dealt with foreign

affairs, a sort of diplomatic clearinghouse. Sir Robert, a stern-looking gentleman with a short gray beard and deep eyes, was walking both sides of the Chinese street. Li Hung-chang, a Manchu official, reported in the *Annals of the Conduct of Foreign Relations* that "We know that Robert Hart is malicious at heart, yet driven by lust for money, he is quite willing to serve us. . . . These people can be employed to serve as intermediaries in our dealings with foreign powers."

That was written in 1876. Some fifteen years later, nothing, apparently, had changed. Ch'en Chih took note of Sir Robert, though not daring to mention him by name.

> The annual customs revenues and *likin* amounting to 30 million taels of silver are in the hands of this man. He employs hundreds of his followers in the customs and their salaries cost the country two million taels of silver a year. His counsels prevail at the court and he has gradually gained control over the conduct of the country's foreign policy. Woe to those who defy his authority! . . . He has obstructed the enforcement of customs tariff regulations and has shown partiality to foreign merchants. He looks sincere but in reality is a blackguard. . . . He has been knighted by the British Crown, and this is an eloquent proof that he is working for the good of his own country.

And so it went. The diplomats, the bureaucrats, the exploiters, all considered themselves to be well informed about China, experts on its ways and its people. They regarded that huge land their own private preserve, to be apportioned amongst them as suited their purposes. Had anyone informed them that the Chinese people might be resentful, they would have expressed genuine surprise and disbelief, as they drifted smugly across a calm lake, oblivious of the rough waters boiling beneath the surface.

As the twentieth century loomed closer, there were occasional references to the bands of rebels known as the Boxers, though none of the diplomats took the movement seriously,

nor did the countries they represented. The Chinese, everyone knew, were given to sporadic outbursts of violence which always passed. This one would too. Letters home contained little or no mention of the Boxers. Life went serenely on, as usual.

Or so it seemed.

7 "Let All Tremblingly Obey"

It was early morning on May 28 that George Ernest Morrison made ready to leave Peking. The rising sun cast long shadows as he checked the saddle cinch on his Chinese pony. A young British officer stood to one side, a worried frown on his boyish face.

"Sir," he said finally. "Are you fully aware of the risks?"

Morrison nodded solemnly. "I am, Lieutenant." In a single, easy motion, he swung astride the pony. "I received word that the Boxers have fired the railway station at Fengtai. It's my job to confirm it."

"If the Boxers are still in the neighborhood . . ."

A brief smile crossed Morrison's rugged face. He ran strong fingers through his thick, straight brown hair.

"Occupational hazard, Lieutenant."

"Let me send some men with you."

"No thanks." Morrison heeled the pony into a brisk canter. The officer watched him go with grudging admiration, knowing the correspondent for the London *Times* to be a man of singular purpose. When he made up his mind to do something, he invariably followed through.

The lieutenant was right about Morrison. A thirty-eight-year-old Scotsman, handsome and resolute, he appeared to be the prototype of the romantic concept of a foreign correspondent. He tempered his flair for the spectacular with a scrupulous journalistic accuracy.

Morrison's reputation had preceded him to Peking, and the diplomats knew him to be a man accustomed to hardship and danger. Once, alone and unarmed, Morrison had trekked across the wastelands of Australia, covering 2043 miles in 123 days. Still another time, on expedition in the wilds of New Guinea, he was left for dead with two native spears in his body. He managed to survive. But Morrison was no mere adventurer. A qualified physician, he had served as the medical officer at the Tio Tinto copper mines in Spain and as court doctor to a Moroccan sheik. George Morrison was indeed a man of many parts.

The Chinese pony would not be hurried. He proceeded at a deliberate trot along the fifteen-mile route to Fengtai, and Morrison welcomed the time to think. If his sources were accurate in their reports, this attack at Fengtai marked the initial Boxer move against government property, and so meant a new phase in the uprising. Morrison wondered if he did not take this matter too seriously. Others felt all of it would soon pass. He hoped his skeptical reaction to the optimism of his diplomatic friends was misplaced, but he doubted it. Where they saw only isolated and unrelated outbreaks, he saw a growing pattern of violence and hatred. Where, he asked himself, would it all lead?

As he rode, he maintained a sharp lookout for roaming bands of Boxers, aware that his status as a journalist would mean nothing to them. He would appear as just another despised foreigner. Something caught his eye. He reined in the pony, peered into the distance where a thin stream of smoke rose about the horizon. It was true, then, Fengtai was afire. He spurred the pony into motion.

At Fengtai, Morrison dismounted, tied his mount to a tree, strode rapidly toward the center of town. More and more people appeared, peasants and shopkeepers, families, children alone, all hurrying away from the danger, faces reflecting fear and confusion, men and women alike carrying their

meager possessions on their backs or balanced on their heads. A few lucky ones had found carts into which were loaded household goods. Here and there, officials were trying to organize fire brigades and to rescue the sick and the elderly from burning buildings.

Morrison made his way slowly through the stream of humanity toward the railway station. The Boxers had done their work well. Dense clouds of black smoke billowed skyward from the locomotive sheds, and nearby houses belonging to the foreign engineers were aflame. Morrison jotted down his impressions, noting that the steel bridge had been dynamited. His observations complete, he made his way back to his pony, mounted and rode out toward Peking. Even as he jogged along, the story he would write was forming in his mind. He was anxious to cable the news home to England, to alert the world of the impending disaster that was being born in China and, while there was still time, to avert it.

A shattering memory flashed across his mind and he reined the pony to a stop. There was something the young lieutenant had said, something about Herbert Squiers' wife. Squiers, first secretary of the American legation, had sent his wife and her guest, a pretty girl named Polly Condit Smith, away from Peking for a few days. The ladies, Morrison remembered, were in a villa in the Western Hills overlooking Fengtai. A cold fear stabbed through the correspondent. He hoped he would not be too late.

He turned the pony toward the hills, pushing it to the breaking point, until at last the villa came into sight. Dusty and weary, he dismounted and moved cautiously toward the pagodalike structure, drawing his pistol, calling Mrs. Squiers by name. The only sounds he heard were the faint cries of the Fengtai refugees on the plain below.

"Mrs. Squiers! George Morrison, here," he called.

Suddenly the two women appeared on a balcony from

which they had been watching the rape of Fengtai, relief shining in their eyes.

"Oh, Mr. Morrison," said Mrs. Squiers. "We feared that we'd been forgotten."

"What if the Boxers had found us first," Polly Condit Smith said breathlessly. "What a horrible experience. Nothing can ever again happen to me that will be as frightening."

Morrison allowed himself a small humorless smile. He feared the young woman was mistaken. The worst, he felt, was still ahead.

He was right.

But the diplomatic view of happenings in China was misty and blurred. A week after Dr. Morrison returned Mrs. Squiers and Miss Smith to Peking, Lady MacDonald sent her two young daughters to the legation bungalow in the hills, in charge of her sister, Miss Armstrong. Miss Armstrong decided to return to Peking with the children after only two days, and shortly afterward the bungalow was burned by the Boxers.

Now the warnings of the mounting trouble that came from the missionaries were echoed by the *North China Daily News* and the Peking and Tientsin *Times*. But to the diplomats all missionaries were alarmists; it didn't matter what the newspapers said; if they defended the missionaries their opinions were downgraded. With the passage of time, however, the news grew worse and could not be ignored. A naval demonstration by Allied warships was considered, then abandoned, although the United States, Britain and Italy did dispatch warships to Taku, about 110 miles away on the coast. At Kiaochow, a German squadron was riding at anchor. Tension mounted. Then the Empress Dowager issued an Imperial Decree denouncing the Boxers. As could be anticipated, the powers relaxed their guard.

Let All Tremblingly Obey! concluded the decree. But none did. The Boxer advance on Peking continued. Three

villages were razed and more than sixty converts massacred only ninety miles from the capital; then one day later, and fifty miles closer, a London mission chapel was fired. Thousands of refugees crowded the roads, seeking to escape the oncoming terror.

Monseigneur Favier, the Vicar-Apostolic of Peking, was seriously disturbed. In a message to the French minister, he wrote: ". . . This religious persecution is only a façade; the ultimate aim is the extermination of all Europeans." He concluded with a call for forty or fifty sailors to protect "our lives and our property."

The plea was ignored.

Historians have found it difficult to understand how the various ministers, trained and experienced diplomats all, could have failed to recognize the approaching disaster; yet they did. Much of the blame may rest on their acceptance of the advice of Sir Robert Hart. His allegiance to the Imperial Court, his personal and financial stake in the continuance of the *status quo,* his long tenure in China, all colored his opinions. However, there was no one to challenge those opinions, for no one appeared to be in a more advantageous position to assess the local situation, no one seemed better equipped to gain access to accurate information, and no one could have been more wrong in his forecasts.

When the reactionary Prince Tuan was appointed to the Tsungli Yamen, Sir Robert viewed the move with bland indifference. Only two weeks later Prince Tuan was placed in command of the Boxer horde.

Like lemmings marching toward the sea, the Boxers advanced on Peking, moving past Ch'anghsintien, cutting off the foreigners who lived there. With the telegraph lines down, no word of their fate was known. A young Swiss hotelkeeper, Auguste Chamot, volunteered to head a rescue party. With his young American wife, who refused to remain behind, four Frenchmen and an Australian, Monsieur Chamot

set out by pony for Ch'anghsintien, a short journey. That night, Chamot and his party returned with twenty-nine Europeans. Later it was learned that within an hour of their departure from Ch'anghsintien, their homes were burned to the ground.

Now there was no ignoring the ballooning danger. The diplomatic corps convened a hasty meeting and decided to send for guards, this despite the vigorous protests of Chinese authorities. The guards were recruited from among the sailors and marines aboard seventeen men-of-war lying off the Taku Bar, twelve miles offshore, and were ferried past the forts at Taku which guarded the mouth of the North River, upstream to the river port of Tangku. There they boarded a train for the journey to Tientsin, a distance of some thirty miles, and on May 31, a train pulled out of Tientsin with the initial contingent.

Tension thickened the air at Peking. The first detachment of guards was due to arrive after dark. Normally, the railway depot, located outside the walls of the city, closed down at nightfall, but now some six thousand sullen Imperial troops from a remote province had been moved into position to "protect" the depot. Rumor had it that the soldiers intended to massacre the arriving Allied detachment. Then, without explanation, the troops were withdrawn and the train bearing the guards arrived without incident.

By 8:00 P.M., 337 officers and men of various nationalities paraded along Legation Street with fixed bayonets, headed by a detachment of 50 United States Marines. Sergeant Joe MacClintock marched stiffly, counting cadence for his men.

"Straighten those lines," MacClintock barked. "You're Marines. Look the part!"

Willie Sommers puffed out his chest, put a little more snap into his step. More than anything else, Willie wanted to look like a real Marine, an ambition born when he was a young

boy romping around the fields and hills outside Pittsfield, and as soon as he was old enough he had enlisted.

Training at Parris Island had been tough, but Willie's young body was strong and he was a willing worker. And when assignments had been handed out he was thrilled and proud to find himself slated for sea duty on a destroyer heading for the Orient. During those dull days when they had lain idly at anchor off the Taku Bar, Willie had chafed impatiently at the inactivity, until traveling orders came through.

"Combat packs, rifles and bayonets," Sergeant MacClintock had ordered.

"You think we'll see some action?" Willie had cried excitedly.

MacClintock looked at him gravely. "Sooner or later, Sommers. We're Marines and that's why we're here."

Now Willie marched stiffly along Legation Street, aware of the people watching, their cheers in his ears, his rifle held at the prescribed angle on his shoulder. He hoped they would get into action before too long. Rumor had it that the Boxers were close to Peking and might attack at any moment. Willie hoped so, anxious for his initial trial by fire. Maybe, he told himself, he might win a medal and a promotion to private first class. The thought sent a shiver of anticipation along his spine.

The possibility of an early confrontation with the Boxers was also in Sergeant MacClintock's mind, though with considerably less anticipation. The veteran Marine was concerned about the personnel in his platoon. There were too many recruits, youngsters like Sommers, immature boys with romantic notions of Marine Corps life and combat. MacClintock wondered how Sommers would stand up under the pressure of an enemy attack. He wished a few more salty old veterans had been assigned to the platoon before they left for Peking. Silently, he shrugged away his doubts, telling himself

that it was now too late to worry. He would simply have to keep a close watch on the newcomers, take what time was left to train them further, instill in them the fighting spirit of Marines. But he knew from experience that when the bullets began flying each man would be on his own.

"Straighten up, there," he rasped out, blue eyes snapping. "Make them know who you are!"

The presence of this small force in the city was a morale booster. Mobs disappeared, tension evaporated and missionaries who had taken refuge in the legations returned to their compounds. Sir Claude MacDonald telegraphed Admiral Seymour:

"No more ships wanted at Taku unless matters become more complicated, which I do not think they will."

Sir Claude's optimism was misplaced. Outside the city, Boxer activity was becoming even more daring. The chief engineer in charge of construction work at Paotingfu took stock of the worsening situation and decided to withdraw his entire staff from that vulnerable locale. He made plans to travel downriver to Tientsin aboard a dozen small boats. The party consisted of thirty-three men, seven women and one child, plus their Chinese servants. The men, armed with revolvers and rifles, were divided into groups of three or four to a boat. The convoy got under way. Along the route they received warnings from so-called friendly Chinese on the nearby river banks.

"Beware the Fists of Harmonious Righteousness."

"All foreigners are to be assassinated."

"Danger lurks everywhere."

After the first day of the trip, an official from Paotingfu returned to his post, leaving his interpreter in charge of the boat. He was not a man who inspired confidence as he paced the deck nervously, eyes scanning the banks. Suddenly he cried out.

"Below decks! All must hide below decks. The hatches must be closed."

"That's madness," objected one of the Europeans. "We'd certainly be helpless down there."

"It is safer that no foreigners be seen as we pass certain localities."

The Europeans argued to no avail. Reluctantly, they followed orders, and several times during that day the ritual was repeated until nerves became frayed. The air was thick and odorous below decks, and the cramped conditions were not only uncomfortable but dangerous. An attack, it was feared, would find them trapped and helpless.

It was about six in the morning on May 31 that the Europeans, from their positions below deck, heard rifle fire.

"*Allez!*" cried one of the Frenchmen. "We are attacked. Fight for your lives."

The men came bursting out of the hatches, firing blindly toward the shore. Some of them slid over the sides into the shallow river and waded ashore. Bullets kicked up geysers of water around the crouching engineers, but they returned the fire. Once on land, they quickly organized into small groups and advanced on their assailants.

"Protect the women! Keep down!"

"Make each shot count!"

Slowly the accuracy of the Europeans' shooting made itself felt. They advanced further inland.

"The boats!" a woman cried in alarm.

All eyes swung back to the river. Some of the Boxers had gotten behind them long enough to free the boats, already adrift in the channel in deep water, floating leisurely downstream, beyond retrieving.

"We'll have to fight our way to Tientsin."

"It is twenty miles. Two days march, at least."

"There is no choice."

The continued crackling of Boxer firearms put an end to

the talk. Fighting all the way, the band progressed slowly across the hostile countryside, taking whatever cover was to be had, food where they found it, until weary and bloodied they arrived at Tientsin. Four of them had been killed and many more wounded.

Subsequently, the engineers learned that a troop of twenty-five Cossacks had been dispatched to locate and rescue them. Unfortunately, the Cossacks had themselves been surrounded and barely managed to escape annihilation. The Boxers made much of this victory over foreign cavalry.

When a maurauding band of Boxers attacked the mission some fifty miles northwest of Peking, firing the mission hospital and murdering four Chinese converts, the decision was made to abandon the post and return to the capital city. Lemuel Gordon, who had been assigned there as a teacher, was against the move and said so at a general meeting.

"We're here to help these people, to teach them. To leave in the face of trouble means to abdicate our responsibilities."

But Gordon was outvoted. He loaded his family and their belongings into a rickety cart, drawn by a weary old mule, and they headed for Peking.

"I'm glad we're going," Helen Gordon said, holding her infant son, Charles, in her lap, one arm around her daughter, Sally.

"I still think it's wrong to leave," Gordon replied, climbing to the seat and picking up the reins. "We owe these people something."

His wife set her lips and faced forward, saying nothing, not understanding her husband's attitude. Lemuel repeatedly surprised her; she had never considered him an aggressive man, a man of action, yet when the Boxer attack came, he was among the first to fight back, firing steadily from the mission wall until the Boxers were beaten back. There were times, Helen Gordon told herself, when she believed she would never understand men.

The trip back to Peking was uneventful, and those first days inside the legations' walls were spent trying to find suitable quarters. It took much searching in that rapidly crowding compound before Lemuel Gordon found even that small, sunless room behind the stables into which they finally moved.

Helen gazed at the airless, dirty surroundings with dismay, wondering if she would ever have a proper home, clean and bright, in which to bring up her children. She sighed and rolled up her sleeves.

"Find a bucket, Lemuel," she said. "And light a fire. We'll need plenty of hot water. There's a lot of cleaning to do here."

The spreading trouble brought more and more missionaries into Peking, and now, as if a bright flare had suddenly burst illuminating the landscape, the diplomats saw clearly what was happening. Their dealings with Chinese authorities confirmed the worst: the Empress Dowager was in league with the Boxers. Her recent edicts had scorched Christians as troublemakers while relieving the Boxers of all blame.

But perhaps the most pointed indication of Chinese intentions was the burning of the grandstand of the racetrack just outside Peking. The destruction of this, the diplomats' private preserve, brought vividly home to them the precariousness of their position. Shocked by this direct attack on their personal world, stunned by its daring, the eleven diplomats met to decide on their strategy.

"The Boxers have seized the railway bridge at Yangtsun," the Belgian, Joostens, said worriedly.

"A serious loss," Edwin Conger added. "That's our last communication link with Tientsin. There can be no doubt the Boxers will destroy the bridge."

The Russian, de Giers, grunted his assent. "We need men," he said, "and guns. Many men and many guns."

Sir Claude MacDonald gazed at the faces of the men around the conference table. Their expressions left no doubt that

each recognized the gravity of the situation. The differences among them, the nationalistic ambitions, the lust for increased power and wealth—none of it mattered now. Circumstances had forced them to come together in this manner, circumstances which might require even closer future cooperation among them.

"I'd best get word to Admiral Seymour at Taku," Sir Claude said.

"Waste no time, *monsieur*," the Frenchman, Pichon, muttered. "The situation deteriorates by the moment."

The meeting over, Sir Claude dispatched a message by telegraph describing the dangerous conditions and asking that troops in force advance on Peking immediately.

In Tientsin, Admiral Seymour wasted no time assembling his command. Daylight was just beginning to climb above the eastern horizon as the members of the relief began boarding five trains in Tientsin. There was a total of 2129 men—soldiers, sailors and marines of eight nations, including 120 Americans under the command of Captain McCalla of the U.S.S. *Newark*. The force carried seven field guns and ten machine guns, in addition to rifles and rations for three days. By the time loading operations were completed, the sun had swung well up into the sky. Already the men were complaining about the heat.

"Order the convoy to get under way," Admiral Seymour said at last.

"Yes, sir."

"I intend to be in Peking by nightfall."

The admiral was an optimist.

8 Victory . . . and Defeat

The trains got under way, the passengers filled with high spirits.

"Should be a pleasant journey," one young officer said to another.

"I expect so. Hope we get to see some action."

"Well, we'll know soon enough. We'll be in Peking in a few hours at most."

The journey continued, uneventful but tedious, and soon it became clear that it would take more than just a few hours to reach Peking. Past Lofa minor damage had been done to the railway, and the sailors were forced to repair the line as they went along, with the result that Langfang—halfway mark to Peking—was not reached until the evening of the next day.

It was just outside Langfang that the Allied advance guard came upon a band of Boxers hard at work barricading the right-of-way. Both groups took up combat positions.

"Open fire!"

The skirmish was brief but deadly and the Boxers withdrew, leaving behind thirty-five dead comrades. Hoping to impress the Chinese with Allied military might, as well as the fact that the Boxers lacked the supernatural powers which they so loudly claimed, the dead were left unburied.

It did no good.

"These are not real Boxers," claimed one of the peasants, "only make-believe; or if they are real, in a few days they will

get up healed, disappear miraculously, and then come and fight again."

All at once the relief force was compelled to look at events in a grimmer light. Stations and the water tanks along the route had been destroyed, and here and there rails had buckled because of the burning of the ties.

"One of the natives informs me that the wells have been poisoned," an aide reported to Admiral Seymour.

"And we need water for the locomotives," an engineer said.

Admiral Seymour felt a bead of perspiration trickle beneath the stiff high collar of his uniform. His once-trim beard was wilted, and his mustache drooped listlessly.

"Have the men ration drinking water," he said. "And we will form bucket brigades to bring water to the trains."

They moved forward. That day only three miles were covered.

The Imperial Court took a dim view of Seymour's expedition, members of the Tsungli Yamen in Peking urging the diplomats to end it. When this did no good, the Chinese government made ready for war. The following decree was issued:

We have received a report from Yu Lu saying that more than one thousand foreign troops will come to Peking by train. Now that bandits have stirred up disturbances around the metropolitan area, we are handling a difficult situation. The legations' guards that have arrived at Peking numbered more than a thousand and should be sufficient for protection. If foreign detachments still come one after another, the consequences would be unthinkable. . . .

No attention was paid to Chinese protests. Seymour continued to move toward Peking, at a somewhat slower pace than expected. Three days after leaving Tientsin, the Boxers made their first attack on the trains themselves. One moment the countryside was peaceful, quiet, the chugging of loco-

motives the only sounds, then suddenly it was alive with Boxers advancing out of the tall grass off the left flank.

"They don't look like much to me," a sailor said, peering through field glasses. "Mostly young boys. Some of them don't even have rifles, just spears."

But many did have rifles, and also swords and gingals, a sort of two-man blunderbuss fired from a wooden base. In all, there were no more than two hundred Boxers marching across the fields in a ragged skirmish line, red ribbons fluttering in the mild summer breeze. Without warning, as if on signal, every Boxer dropped to his knees and raised his arms to the sky as if to invoke Divine blessing for their cause. Prayers offered, they climbed to their feet.

A hoarse cry split the air.

The Boxers charged.

Volley after volley was directed at the oncoming Chinese. Gaps appeared in the skirmish line as Spirit Soldiers were hit and went down until the charge was broken. Regrouping, the Boxers came on again. And again.

The mocking laughter that had been heard in the Allied defense positions after the initial charge was gone now. These poorly armed peasants were no laughing matter, but an enemy to be reckoned with, their lack of fear incredible. But courage was not enough. In twenty minutes, the back of the attack was broken, and the remaining Boxers disappeared into the countryside, leaving their dead behind.

"I guess that's the last we'll see of them," a sailor said.

"I hope so," replied another.

But the Boxers returned with reinforcements. Again and again they attacked, their battle cries mingling with the moans of the wounded. Though the ferocity of the Boxers seemed to become greater, the superiority of Allied marksmanship and weaponry kept foreign casualties at a minimum, until supplies and ammunition began to run short. The attacks continued for two days, and whenever there was a lull

in the fighting, attempts were made to repair the railway in order to continue the advance. It was a futile effort.

During all this, the last train in the convoy had been used to haul supplies, in continuous shuttle-service between the expedition and the base at Tientsin. Now it was unable to get past Yangtsun. The force was strung out along the track, garrisoning every station in order to prevent the Boxers from completely isolating them, each detachment under increasing Boxer pressure. Adding to the gravity of the situation was the matter of the wounded, who could not be properly cared for.

"Any further advance on our part is impossible," said Colonel Vogak, the Russian officer serving as second in command. "This situation is intolerable."

Seymour considered his colleague's words. Vogak was right. The only thing to do was to return to Yangtsun and hope to restore communications with Tientsin. He straightened his slim shoulders and gave the order to retreat. It galled him to do so. Edwin Seymour had never avoided responsibility; he did not intend to do so now. He may have been less than an imaginative strategist, but his courage was unquestioned and his reputation as a gallant officer was well established.

"From Yangtsun," he said, "we can requisition a flotilla of junks and move north upriver."

"Ah, good," the Russian said. "The same route followed by the Anglo-French force in 1860."

The trains carrying a band of troops, chastened and much wiser, chugged slowly back to Yangtsun, where plans were made for the return upriver. But circumstances forced a radical change in thinking. From Tientsin, the steady thumping of artillery fire could be heard. But since the bridge across the Pei Ho River was impassable, Seymour had no idea what was happening.

Word came through that the German detachment left behind to hold Langfang had come under heavy attack by a force of 4000 regular Chinese Army troops. The retreating

Germans had been pursued for some distance by members of the Imperial cavalry, Kansu warriors under the command of General Tung Fu-hsiang, a onetime bandit now held in high esteem by the Empress Dowager.

Seymour turned to his staff.

"This means only one thing. The Imperial Army is making common cause with the Boxers. This is no longer an isolated attack by some peasants, but a planned military campaign by trained troops. We must alter our plans. We'll go downriver instead, back to Tientsin, and relieve the garrison there."

"What about the legations in Peking?" someone ventured.

Seymour heaved a sigh. "I'm afraid they'll have to take their chances alone."

In Peking, the beleaguered diplomats having received no word from the expedition, and unaware of the opposition faced by them, grew bitter and confused. Mr. Conger wrote:

> It is now eight days since the relief party under Admiral Seymour and Captain McCalla left Tientsin. We know they have been within thirty miles of Peking, and we cannot understand why, if they find it impossible to readily repair the railway, they do not, with the larger part of their command, march directly here.

That possibility was no longer a practical consideration. The Allied force was in no condition for an extended march, fighting along the way, and it was a bedraggled command that Seymour led back to Tientsin in the half-light of dawn on the following day.

The retreat downriver was a harrowing effort, since they were forced to move slowly, their pace dictated by the four junks which carried equipment and the wounded. Men on shore were towing them through the shallows. Short of food and supplies, hampered by the sick and the wounded, under constant attack, the little army struggled precariously along. Village after village had to be cleared of Boxers at bayonet point. Night at least brought relief from the oppressive heat,

though it meant the exhausted men had to remain awake on the picket lines. After three days, they were still ten miles short of Tientsin.

It was midnight of June 21 when the column, on shore, suddenly came upon a black mass looming up in the darkness. This was the Imperial arsenal of Hsi-ku, a stronghold whose thick walls enclosed forty acres. Seymour admitted later that the arsenal's very existence was unknown to him. A challenge came from the wall, and bedlam broke loose. A hail of rifle and machine-gun fire streamed down from the walls, and men died where they stood, while others broke for cover. In the darkness, confusion spread. Here and there a Marine returned the fire, a squad formed and fought back, an officer sought to regroup his command. To most of the men, it seemed as if they had been caught in a deathtrap from which there was no escape.

The junks, now unattended, drifted downstream and the vessel containing most of the guns and ammunition foundered. Many of the wounded aboard the junks were shot and killed. An English petty officer gathered some men about him.

"Follow me," he shouted, wading into the river, striking out for the floating craft, others close behind. They managed to get hold of the towropes and swing the junks back to shore.

Meanwhile, another British force formed and crossed the river above the arsenal, while, at about the same time, a German storming party was doing likewise at a point below. On signal, the two detachments attacked the outer defenses from the flanks, fighting viciously, until at last the defending Chinese were put to flight.

At daybreak the arsenal was secured, and Admiral Seymour found himself in command of a fort with walls seven hundred yards long, in which were stored huge quantities of arms, including machine guns, field guns, rifles and over seven million rounds of ammunition, also medical supplies and fifteen tons of rice.

Counterattacks by the Chinese were beaten off, and the men settled down to await relief. A trusted Chinese was dispatched with a message in code to the British consul at Tientsin. The messenger was a man of courage and wit and managed to get through.

A relief column was hastily organized, and on the twenty-fourth, the defenders of Hsi-ku were overjoyed to see the colorful pennants of Cossacks troops fluttering in the distance, as all around the arsenal, Boxers began withdrawing. Soon a column under a Russian colonel galloped into view, guided by the intrepid Chinese messenger.

Stretchers were built for the 232 wounded; and 62 dead men were buried. Then Seymour led his men back to Tientsin, dog-tired and useless as a fighting force.

Help for Peking would be a long time in coming.

Events were moving swiftly elsewhere, too.

Boxers struck everywhere, turning all of North China into an inferno, yet no one knew what was happening at Peking. The railway between Tientsin and the mouth of the Pei Ho was on the verge of being cut, and most of the French settlement at Tientsin was burned by the Boxers. Supplies and reinforcements were seen moving into the Taku Forts even as torpedo tubes were mounted, and rumors told of mines being laid in the channel of the Pei Ho. Should that river be closed to Allied traffic, the naval squadrons at sea beyond the Taku Bar would be useless.

The Allied naval commanders swung into action, gathering aboard the Russian flagship standing off the Taku Bar.

"There is only one course to follow," one admiral stated. "We must occupy the Taku Forts."

"And if the Chinese refuse to permit it?"

"Then we attack in force, of course."

An ultimatum to this effect was delivered to Chinese authorities, its expiration 2:00 A.M. the next day. There was,

however, one dissenting voice, that of the American, Admiral Kempff.

"Gentlemen, I am obliged to point out that no declaration of war has been made against China by any of the powers. The attack you plan would automatically constitute such a declaration. I, therefore, stand opposed to the suggested action. The forces under my command will not participate."

Admiral Kempff's decision was based on instructions received from his superiors in Washington:

> We have no policy in China except to protect with energy American interests, and especially American citizens and the legation. There must be nothing done which would commit us to future action inconsistent with your (Minister Edwin Conger's) standing instructions. There must be no alliances.

But the collective decision of the admirals was to attack, and it was an audacious one, the Taku Forts being a formidable objective. There were four of them, two on each bank of the Pei Ho (at that point a scant two hundred yards wide), modernized by German engineers who had laid in new armaments, including many heavy rapid-firing guns. In the naval yard below the forts were moored a quartet of new, German-made destroyers, each boasting half a dozen three-pounders. Reaching out to sea was a long, flat stretch of mud, offering no cover to would-be attackers. To complicate matters, the depth of the water out to the Taku Bar was no more than seventeen feet at full tide, too shallow for most fighting ships, so that a minimum of help could be expected from that quarter. Standing by, but not to see action, as per government instructions, was the U. S. Navy's *Monocracy,* a turtle-shaped paddle-steamer dating from 1863.

A landing force was organized. It included nine hundred officers and men, scattered aboard nine ships of such shallow draft as to be able to sail near shore. As night descended, the ships lined up opposite the forts, the grinning faces of the

Chinese artillerymen clearly visible from their decks. Allied officers had no cause to be cheerful about their prospects for victory, for there was no room to maneuver strategically under the Chinese guns. Yet cheerful they were, an attitude that stemmed more from contempt for the enemy than any trust in their own battle tactics or strength.

At ten minutes before one, an hour prior to the expiration of the ultimatum, the forts suddenly opened up with every gun.

Of the nine Allied ships, seven returned the withering fire, while the other two, British destroyers *Whiting* and *Fame,* according to a prearranged scheme, moved upstream toward the naval yard.

Once abreast of the German destroyers, the two men-of-war launched landing craft manned by boarding parties. Quickly the British sailors rowed to the moored enemy ships, boarded them, and in a matter of minutes, subdued the crews. During the swift encounter the British suffered no casualties. Later, one of the captured vessels was taken over by the Royal Navy, and the others by Russia, France and Germany.

Meanwhile the gun battle between the forts and the flotilla continued, lasting for six hours. The Chinese batteries did little damage, except to the Russian gunboat *Gilyak,* which unaccountably switched on a searchlight thus offering a fine target to Imperial gunners.

At 3:00 A.M., landing parties began to struggle through the mud toward the forts. A well-placed shell destroyed the powder magazine in one fort, which was stormed at bayonet point. Resistance in the second was weak and ineffectual, and one of the remaining forts was put out of action when its huge arsenal exploded. That signaled the end of the battle and victory for the Allies; the Taku Forts were taken.

It was a key move in the Boxer Uprising. For had the forts not fallen, an effective rescue mission for Peking could not have been launched. Because the telegraph lines were down,

news of the victory was slow in reaching the besieged diplomats. It was equally slow in reaching the Empress Dowager, no one being anxious to convey bad news to that ill-tempered lady.

Long before that information came to her attention, Tzu Hsi had swung her weight openly behind the Boxers. She commended their patriotism, pointing out that their victories were due to the assistance of their ancestors and the benevolence of the gods, and orders were issued to organize the insurgents. Princes were placed in command, and rice and money distributed. This public Imperial recognition made the Boxers more unruly than ever, and now it seemed that anyone with a red sash wrapped about his waist took on the authority to burn, pillage and kill with impunity. Indignities were heaped on such high Chinese officials as the governor of Kweichow, who was dragged bodily from his sedan chair, forced to his knees, roughed up, then robbed of his clothing. Others were attacked and killed until so many corpses littered the streets of Peking at one time that an Imperial decree was issued ordering them removed.

Belatedly, word of the fall of the Taku Forts reached the ears of Tzu Hsi. Her reaction was instinctively violent—she declared war on the world!

She had an edict issued which included this paragraph, expressing the feeling of hatred and anger of the reactionaries toward foreigners:

> . . . For the past thirty years [the foreigners] have taken advantage of our country's benevolence and generosity as well as our wholehearted conciliation to give free rein to their unscrupulous ambitions. They have oppressed our state, encroached upon our territory, trampled upon our people, and exacted our wealth. Every concession made by the Court has caused them day by day to rely more upon violence until they shrink from nothing. In small matters they oppress peaceful people; in large matters they insult what is divine and holy. All the people of our country are

so full of anger and grievances that every one desires to take vengeance. . . .

Imperial troops were ordered to join the Boxers in ridding the land of foreigners, and at Tientsin, some ten thousand armed men attacked the settlements. Hasty defenses were improvised from bales of cotton, silk, wool, rice, sugar and peanuts, their construction the work of a young mining engineer, later to become President of the United States—Herbert Hoover.

Fighting everywhere was desperate. When communications with Taku were cut, a young Englishman, James Watts, volunteered to ride for help. He spent twelve hours in the saddle, had one pony shot out from under him, but eventually got a relief expedition organized. The column, under Commander Cradock of the Royal Navy, fought its way inland in time to save the people trapped at Tientsin.

Joyous civilians clustered about their saviors.

"Three cheers for Commander Cradock!"

"Now push on to Peking!"

The mood of the foreigners sobered quickly.

"Yes," one of them said. "What news of Peking? Will you move on to help them?"

Cradock's face lengthened. "That job will require much more of a force than I command. It may be a long time getting under way."

He was right.

9 Trapped!

A mood of crisis lay like a heavy cloak over the Peking legations. Streets were deserted and native help grew scarce; each day grooms, gardeners, chair-bearers and others left the scene. Word of new outrages, of destruction of foreign property, or of wanton murders heightened the tension.

All missionaries able to do so had found asylum in Peking. Still others made their way north to Russian territory, and several thousand Christian converts had taken refuge in the Peitang, the North Cathedral, two miles from the legations, along with Bishop Favier.

Though out of touch with the world at large, the foreigners were still not besieged in a military sense, yet they recognized the precariousness of their position and, not knowing when or if help would arrive, saw their kind of world crumbling. Conflicts with the Chinese became more frequent, and on June 13, a full-fledged Boxer, hair tied up in red cloth and wearing a flaming crimson sash about his middle, appeared in Legation Street. He was seated in a cart, calmly sharpening a wicked-looking knife.

The sight was too much for the German minister, Baron von Ketteler, who flew into a rage and, flowing mustaches quivering, charged toward the Boxer, walking stick upraised.

"Murderer!" shouted von Ketteler, clubbing the Boxer across the shoulders. "Robber! Murderer!"

The Boxer leaped from the cart and made his escape, but

not before von Ketteler had landed a series of heavy blows.

That same afternoon a band of Boxers came swarming through the Ha Ta Men into the Tartar City, shouting their fearful war cries, sending pedestrians screaming in terror as they slashed indiscriminately with their ugly swords, stabbing innocent strollers, looting shops and homes. People scattered for their lives. The Boxers moved on, a trail of fired buildings marking their path.

That night the sky was lit by flames from burning sections of the city. The night wind carried the agonized cries of Christian converts unlucky enough to fall victim to marauding Boxers. Many people died in the flames, burned alive, including an aged French priest in charge of the East Cathedral, which went up with a roar. Later, the South Cathedral, nearly three hundred years old, was also put to the torch.

Provocation came from both sides. On June 13, a patrol of Italians and Germans raided a temple where a number of Boxers were drilling, killing many of them in cold blood. The next evening German marines, from their position on the city wall, fired at a meeting of Boxers being held in the Chinese City, and Austrian machine-gunners also amused themselves with this kind of live target practice. A dispatch fom Edwin Conger read:

> We are simply trying to defend ourselves until reinforcements arrive, but nearly 100 Boxers have already been killed by various legation guards. If we had been feeling at all safe with our present guards, many hundreds would have been already punished.

Chaos spread. Imperial troops watched passively as murder and looting continued. The commercial quarter of Peking was set afire, the flames traveling quickly to the Chien Men, a great central gate crowned by a fabulous hundred-foot tower. In a few hours this landmark of history was destroyed.

Life within the legations had already grown strained. This waiting time, which was neither peace nor war, was difficult.

Adding to the discomfort of the foreigners, many native servants and workers had abandoned them.

"Good riddance," was the immediate reaction. But the less impulsive realized that there was a definite need for Chinese help. Fortunately the missionaries were actively engaged in bringing Chinese Christians into the legations, though at first the diplomats stood opposed to this, pointing out that the compound was already overcrowded and unwanted elements might sneak in with the refugees. Then there was the problem of feeding the newcomers, of housing them, as well as the threat of disease.

The missionaries, with the help of Dr. Morrison, overcame all objections, and some two thousand Roman Catholic Chinese were admitted, plus a number of Methodist converts. The result proved to be the unintentional strengthening of the legations' defensive ability, for these grateful people provided a hard-working labor force. In the trying weeks that lay ahead, they proved to be invaluable as they dug trenches, laid mines, erected bomb shelters, milled corn, fought fires, carried stretchers, constructed barricades and in general performed an amount of manual labor which could otherwise not have been done. When measured in purely military terms, their contributions must be said to have saved the legations.

No group of diplomats had ever so misread the portents that signaled a coming uprising as did the ministers at Peking. Not only had their judgment been faulty with regard to the extent and nature of the popular feeling against foreigners, but they tended to underestimate the powers which might be utilized by the Dragon Throne. Viewing the Boxers primarily as an anti-Christian sect, the diplomats concluded that Peking condoned the secret society in order to exorcise a foreign religion.

They proceeded to make things worse by the use of threat and ultimatum and foreign displays of force only muddied

the already dark waters. Popular feeling against foreigners rose to flood proportions.

The Seymour expedition evoked widespread antiforeign sentiment. The ultimatum demanding the surrender of the Taku Forts strengthened that feeling, and the storming of the forts hardened it. Sadly, each step by the diplomats, or by their admirals at Taku, was taken on the strength of rumors, and each was followed by a sharp rise in hostility toward foreigners. Fear that a European invasion was close at hand was contagious. Chinese patriots viewing each action of the powers as another step toward the eventual partition of the empire. Tzu Hsi felt her back was against the wall.

"Now the powers have started the aggression," she said, "and the extinction of our nation is imminent. If we just fold our arms and yield to them, I would have no face to see our ancestors after death. If we must perish, why not fight to the death?"

Helen Gordon sat on a small packing crate in the warm sunlight sewing curtains for the tiny windows of her uninspiring quarters. The material she used was a bright red-and-yellow printed cotton, the product of British mills.

"The English make such pretty patterns," she said to her husband, who sat on the ground, back against the stable wall. He grunted and continued reading his book. She smiled, eyes idly noting that Sally was playing nearby with another little girl, while young Charles slept peacefully in the crib Lemuel had improvised. Helen felt content. Life here in Peking was not as bad as she had at first feared.

"Everything's going to be all right, isn't it, Lemuel?" she asked mildly.

"What?"

"I mean, the Boxers. They really wouldn't dare attack the legations. Would they?"

"I hope not."

Helen continued sewing. "Besides, Admiral Seymour should be arriving any day now. Once he gets here everything will be the way it was before."

Lemuel Gordon looked up from his book and peered at his wife through his steel-rimmed glasses, lips pursed thoughtfully. He wondered where Seymour's expedition was, what was taking it so long to reach Peking. A worm of concern gnawed at his insides, but he shrugged it aside, forcing himself to smile at his wife.

"Yes," he said, with assumed confidence. "Everything will be as it was before."

Helen sighed comfortably. "I'm glad. I've been frightened, Lemuel, not just for us, but for the children. I'm so pleased the trouble is nearly over."

A cough or two and a whimper of distress signaled that young Charles had awakened. Helen put down her sewing and went over to the crib, lifted the infant and kissed his cheek. She frowned.

"I think he's got a little fever. And his eyes are watery. Oh, dear, I'm afraid he's getting a cold. Perhaps I'd better give him some hot tea. Would you like some, Lemuel?"

"A good idea," Gordon said absently, gazing up at the Tartar Wall where U.S. Marines standing guard were outlined against the afternoon sky. In his longing to know what was happening beyond that wall, Gordon was not alone. Isolated for more than a week, the diplomats also hungered for knowledge of happenings outside the city. They knew nothing about Seymour's forced retreat or of the taking of the Taku Forts. Out of this lack of knowledge they managed to nourish an unwarranted optimism. Not one among them could conceive of this government abandoning him. Nor could they conceive of being left to fend for themselves for an extended period of time as they waited for their governments to act unilaterally. Then, on June 19, this optimism was shattered.

It was 5:00 P.M. when scarlet envelopes were delivered to

each of the ministers and to Sir Robert Hart by members of the Tsungli Yamen, the government bureau which dealt with the diplomats. The envelopes contained identical notes ordering the diplomats to leave Peking.

The note referred to the admirals' demand that the Taku Forts be surrendered, saying, "The receipt of this news has caused us the greatest astonishment." The Yamen pointed out that this was evidence of the Allied intention to break the peace and to commit an act of hostility, going on needlessly to call attention to the Boxer activities in Peking as evidence of considerable popular excitement.

The Yamen must, therefore, request that "within twenty-four hours Your Excellency, accompanied by the legation guards, who must be kept under proper control, will proceed to Tientsin in order to prevent any unforseen calamity."

The various ministers wasted no time in convening in the Spanish legation, their conversation punctuated by periodic explosions outside. Conditions were not conducive to a calm approach.

"I wish to state to you gentlemen," Sir Claude opened, "that I intend to make the strongest of protests to my government about the attack against the Taku Forts. The whole thing is incomprehensible."

"I agree," said Señor Cologan, Spain's envoy. "It should not have happened."

Mr. Conger interrupted. "The important thing is what do we do now?"

"What choices are open to us, monsieur?" inquired Pichon politely.

"I do not believe I understand the question," Baron von Ketteler said stiffly.

"Gentlemen," Sir Claude said. "I have here a note from Sir Robert Hart. Permit me to read it to you, in part. He says, 'I am not at all in favor of surrender, but, when I think of the

women and children, I wonder and wonder which course would ensure their safety most entirely.' "

"My sentiments exactly," Conger said. "We have to accept the ultimatum."

"I agree with Monsieur Conger."

Von Ketteler heaved himself erect. "Nonsense!" he exploded. "We must oppose the Court in this matter. If to stay means probable massacre, to go means certain destruction."

The debate continued until shortly before midnight, when an accord was reached. Señor Cologan wrote and dispatched an answer to the Yamen.

The foreign ministers can only accept the declaration and demand made by the Yamen and they are ready to leave Peking. It is, however, materially impossible to organize their departure within the short space of twenty-four hours.

The note asked for further information about the protection which would be given them en route, requesting a meeting with officials of the Tsungli Yamen the following morning. News of the decision to abandon Peking spread quickly through the legations, with shame and anger the predominant response. Dr. Morrison confessed that he "could not look my servant in the face. I feel ashamed to be a white man."

Early the next morning the diplomats assembled again, this time in the French legation, to await a reply from the Yamen. Nine o'clock—the time of the requested meeting—came and went with no response.

"An act of gross discourtesy," complained von Ketteler.

"What shall we do now?" asked Pichon.

"We surely can't go to the Yamen and wait," Sir Claude said. "Much too undignified."

Von Ketteler pounded his fist on the table. He roared his defiance. "I will go and sit there till someone meets with me, if I have to sit there all night!"

Conger broke in. "That might be a mistake. It could be dangerous."

"Nonsense. There is no danger; yesterday, and the day before, I sent my Chinese secretary, Cordes, and he was in no way molested."

"Then why not send him now?" de Giers suggested.

Von Ketteler considered that. He shrugged agreeably. "A reasonable idea. I will do it."

On that note, the meeting was adjourned.

Von Ketteler made his way back to his legation, where he summoned his secretary, Cordes. But while he waited for the man to appear, the Baron changed his mind, deciding to go to the Yamen himself.

Two sedan chairs, of scarlet and green to denote their official status, were summoned, and von Ketteler stood patiently by while Cordes issued instructions. Five heavily armed sailors marched up.

"What are these?" von Ketteler said, puffing his cigar.

"The escort, Herr Baron."

"Dismiss them. No escort is required."

Only two liveried riders on ponies accompanied the minister and his secretary through the now quiet and deserted streets of Peking. The Tsungli Yamen worked out of unimposing offices less than a mile from the legation compound, and the journey was not swift. In his chair, von Ketteler read a book to help pass the time. He had waited in many an antechamber for many a long and boring hour, and so came prepared.

The chairs were moving past the police station when a Manchu soldier in full uniform, wearing a mandarin hat, stepped out of the shadows, aiming his rifle at the Baron. From his vantage point, Cordes saw the soldier shuffle forward.

"Halt!" he cried desperately, but too late. A shot rang out, and von Ketteler slumped forward. The bearers dropped the

chairs and fled. As Cordes sprang to his feet, a shot struck him in the thigh and he fell. Seeing no movement from the minister's chair, he ran for his life, limping all the way. Half an hour later he stumbled into the American Methodist Mission, fainting as he entered the door.

Six months later a lance corporal in the Peking Field Force named En Hai was arrested and executed for the crime. He confessed his part in it.

"I merely obeyed the orders of my superior officers; otherwise why should a small person like myself venture to take the life of so exalted a personage as the German minister? My officers offered a reward of seventy taels and promotion to anyone who would shoot the minister, and I agreed to do so. My part of the contract was carried out, but I only received forty dollars and no promotion, and thanks to my waiting in Peking for promotion, I have been arrested."

The immediate result of von Ketteler's murder was to make the ministers give up all thoughts of leaving Peking. Clearly, their lives would be forfeit if they ventured outside the legations; obviously the Tsungli Yamen either could not or would not guarantee their safety.

All at once activity in the legations increased. A detachment of United States Marines aided in the evacuation of the Methodist Mission. Seventy-six missionaries and a number of converts, including 126 schoolgirls, were brought into the quarter and took up residence in the small chapel of the British legation.

The British compound, commanding a good field of fire and not dominated by the Tartar Wall, had been selected as the key defensive position. Crowded into it were some nine hundred persons, plus a large number of ponies, mules and sheep, and also one cow. All this in three acres of land with a normal population of sixty people.

It was a frenetic scene. Carts containing household furni-

ture jammed into the area, and peasants swarmed about unloading their belongings. One building was assigned to the French, another to the Russians, a third to the Imperial Customs. Pavilions were heaped with provisions, and the rear pavilion was divided into various eating rooms. A corner was occupied by two men representing the Hong Kong & Shanghai Banking Corporation, while across the way a group of officers huddled over maps and planned strategy. And Dr. Morrison made space on the tile floor for his mattress, heaping his supply of books nearby.

Other legations provided similar scenes. Everywhere alert guards searched through field glasses for enemy maneuvering. At five o'clock, on June 20, expiration of the ultimatum, heavy firing commenced in the east, near the Austrian legation, momentarily stopping all activity as people listened. Questioning glances were exchanged. Then, as if on signal, they resumed work with renewed energy.

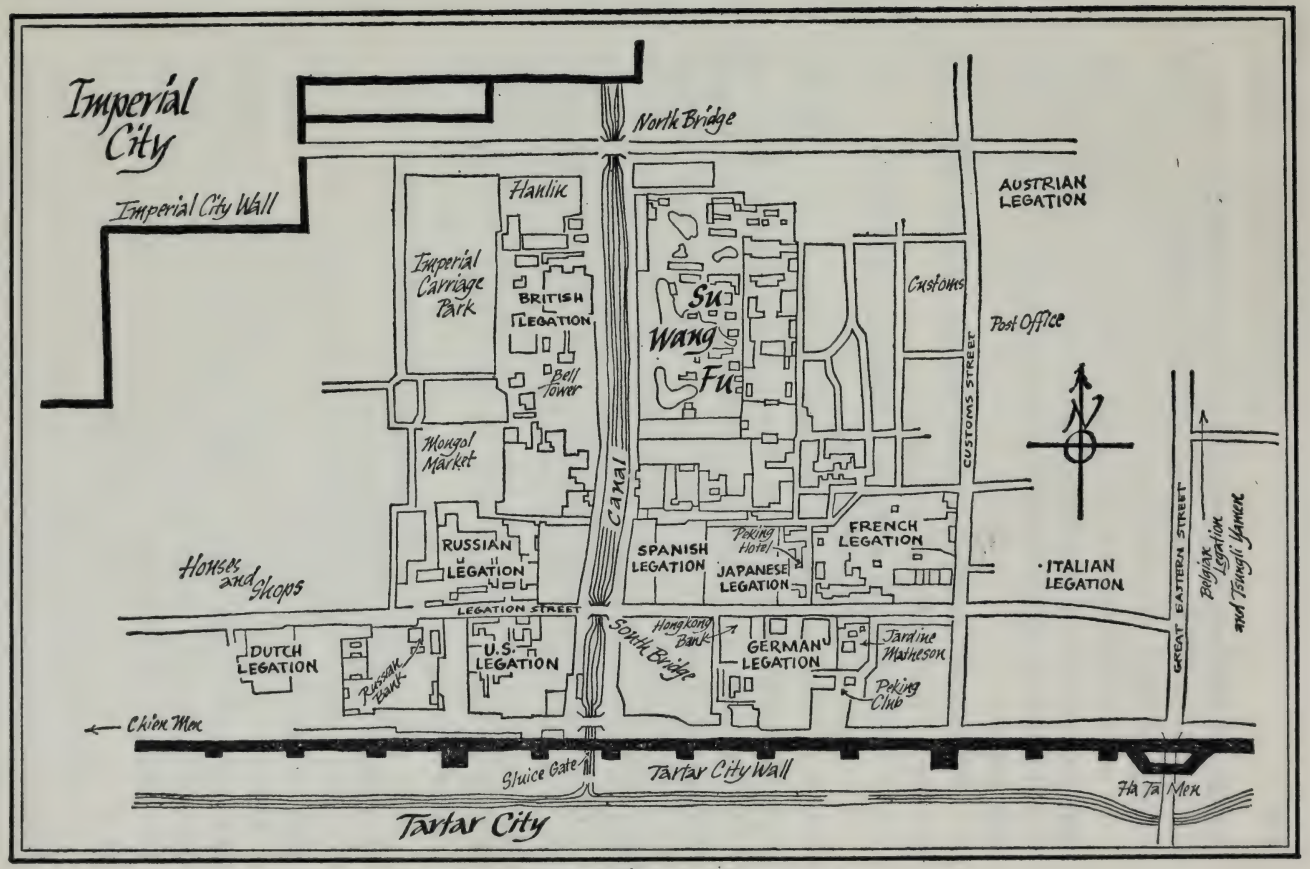
The siege of the legations had begun.

10 Terror and Confusion

There was a pervading sense of unreality within the compound during those first hours of the siege. The sacrosanct world of the diplomats had been upset with shattering suddenness, and they found it almost impossible to believe that they were actually under attack. Not only had the Chinese taken up arms against the sovereign might of the various powers, but they had rudely violated the treasured immunity generally tendered to the diplomatic community, whose members now found themselves in a position for which they were unprepared by experience, training and temperament—the defense of their lives.

The Dutch and Belgian legations were abandoned. Situated on the fringes of the diplomatic quarter, they were virtually indefensible, and their occupants retreated to more strategic positions. These moves served as invitations to the Boxers to fill the vacuum, and this they did promptly, burning the empty buildings. Inexplicably, the Chinese failed to press their early advantage as the diplomats fought from behind flimsy barricades, made mostly of overturned Peking carts. Later the defenses would be strengthened with trenches and sandbags, bomb shelters and masonry.

At the Austrian legation, one of that nation's naval officers, Captain von Thomann, having seniority, had assumed supreme command of the defense of the legations. Von Thomann, an



The Legation Quarter

impulsive man given to quick decisions, was of that military school which claims it is good to "do something, even if it's wrong."

It was not yet 9:00 A.M. on the third day, when he was approached by a disheveled and obviously terrified American. Von Thomann didn't know the man, had, in fact, never seen him before.

"The United States legation," gasped the stranger frantically, "—it has been abandoned!"

Von Thomann's eyes widened. "Are you certain?"

The man nodded breathlessly.

Von Thomann, typically, made no effort to verify the report, instead ordering all forces east of Canal Street to abandon their posts and take up new ones inside the British compound. Panic is contagious and the American Marines on duty on the Tartar Wall were soon infected with it. Willie Sommers was the first to spot the retreating defenders.

Fear slithered along his spine. "They're retreating," he muttered to himself. "The Boxers must have broken through." He swung around to the Marine at the next post, calling through cupped hands. "The Boxers! They've broken in! They're coming in!"

The other man, as young and inexperienced as Willie, muttered: "I'm getting out of here!"

"Pull back!" Willie yelled to the other guards. "Pull back! Boxers attacking in force!"

Nearby Russian troops seeing the Marines retreat joined the backward movement, and the stampede was on. Position after position was abandoned, with fully three-quarters of the defenses left unguarded, yet during all this frantic milling about no shooting was heard. The Chinese, observing this unexplained activity with a suspicious eye, wary of some insidious foreign trick, finally managed to bestir themselves enough to burn down the Italian legation, and subsequently

occupy a barricade in Customs Street, but made no further effort to exploit the situation.

The panic-stricken troops poured into the British legation where Sir Claude MacDonald called them to account.

"Did anyone see the withdrawal from the American legation?" he demanded heatedly. There was no answer, instead a sudden lowering of eyes and shuffling of feet. "Very well," Sir Claude continued stiffly. "Return to your position. At once."

The Marines got a real dressing down from Sergeant MacClintock, especially Willie Sommers.

"After you come off guard duty report to me in my quarters," Maclintock tossed over his shoulder. "We'll see whether or not a little extra duty will teach you to control yourself."

Willie Sommers was not the only one who received punishment. The ministers gathered together and decided to relieve Captain von Thomann of his command. They looked around for a suitable military leader, finding him at last within their own ranks.

"Sir Claude MacDonald," someone recalled, "served in the Highland Light Infantry."

"He fought in several African campaigns."

Reluctantly, but with determination, Sir Claude took on the difficult assignment. He possessed no official authority over the nationals of countries other than his own, and often resorted to diplomatic language when direct orders would have been more suitable. Instead of coming right out and asking for reinforcements, he wrote polite requests: "I may have to call upon you and Mr. Conger to help repulse this attack—so please have some men ready."

Sir Claude was in charge of a small, motley garrison, the total strength of the legations' guards set at 20 officers and 389 men of eight nationalities:

	Officers	*Men*
American	3	53
British	3	79
German	1	51
Austrian	7	30
Russian	2	79
French	2	45
Italian	1	28
Japanese	1	24

Added to this were the armed volunteers, about 75 in number, ex-military men with actual combat experience, who were most helpful; and an even more irregular force of about 50, known as the Carving Knife Brigade because they liked to attach such cutlery, instead of bayonets, to their rifles. Dr. Morrison described them as being "formidable alike to friend and foe."

A serious ammunition shortage existed, and since the different troops used different weapons, no common reserve was possible. The garrison owned four pieces of light artillery, the best being an Italian one-pounder. The Americans had a Colt machine gun with 25,000 rounds, and the British a five-barreled Nordenfelt, thirteen years old, which always jammed after four shots. The Austrians owned a Maxim. There was a severe scarcity of tools, medical supplies and fire-fighting equipment.

In some other respects conditions were encouraging. There were five wells of fresh water within the British compound, plus two of a brackish quality. A Legation Street grain shop yielded 200 tons of wheat, plus rice, maize and other foodstuffs, and since the spring races had been held early in May, the stables were still full of ponies, about 150 of them, as well as a handful of mules, so that there would be no shortage of fresh meat. No one believed the siege would last that long.

Since the diplomats knew nothing of Seymour's defeat and

withdrawal, they were reasonably optimistic and expected relief momentarily. The Chinese, who knew the truth, anticipated the foreigners succumbing quickly, that being part of their design. Meanwhile, they continued recruiting new talent for the Fists of Harmonious Righteousness, Boxer aims succinctly enunciated in a "divine rhyme":

There are many Christian converts
Who have lost their senses,
They deceive our Emperor,
Destroy the gods we worship,
Pull down their temples and altars,
Permit neither joss-sticks nor candles,
Cast away tracts on ethics,
And ignore reason.
Don't you realize that
Their aim is to engulf the country?

No talented people are in sight;
There is nothing but filth and garbage,
Rascals who undermine the Empire,
Leaving its doors wide open.
But we have divine power at our disposal
To arouse our people and arm them,
To save the realm and to protect it from decay.
Our pleasure is to see the Son of Heaven unharmed.
Let the officials perish,
But the people remain invincible.
Bring your own provisions;
Fall in to remove the scourge of the country.

"The foreigners," Tzu Hsi gloated to Prince Tuan, "are like fish in the stewpan."

Her confidence was such that she issued the following decree to the Imperial Council regarding the siege:

The work now undertaken by Tung Fu-hsiang [commander of the Kansu troops] should be completed as soon as possible, so that troops can be spared and sent to Tientsin for defense.

It was the fervent wish of the Empress Dowager that the foreign community be completely eliminated. Though such a massacre could hardly be kept secret, the truth surrounding it might be concealed forever behind a curtain of distortions. There were always unkown bandits to blame.

"Fire!"

The night sky glowed with it. The legations were a playground for ominous dancing shadows. The Boxers had sneaked into the southeast corner of the British quarter and put to the torch a cluster of native houses which, tinder dry, went up with a roar.

"Make way for the fire brigade!" came the desperate cry, as the two ancient fire engines dashed wildly toward the conflagration, bells clanging, horses snorting and whinnying. It was a grand effort, but too much for the larger of the two machines, which shuddered and gave up the ghost.

A call went out for volunteers to form bucket brigades. Lemuel Gordon had left his wife, Helen, in their room, cautioning her to remain there.

"I'll see what help I can give."

But Helen Gordon felt restless, certain any action would be better than just sitting. She made sure the two children were asleep, aware that Charles' breathing was labored, then hurried after her husband, an old leather bucket in hand. Moments later she took her place in line beside Lemuel.

"I told you to stay in the room," he said, annoyance in his voice.

She took a heavy bucket of water from the man on her left and passed it to Lemuel. "The children are asleep. Besides, I want to do what I can to help."

He nodded and almost smiled. "Try not to spill any water. We need every drop."

A shot rang out and the man to Helen Gordon's left top-

pled over soundlessly. She gazed down uncomprehendingly at him, then screamed.

"He's been shot!"

The wounded man was carried away and another took his place as the struggle against the fire continued, increasingly hazardous as, from the rooftops of the Mongol Market, Boxer marksmen took sport in trying to pick off the fire-fighters.

"Keep the buckets coming!"

Guards on the wall fired back, seeking to relieve the pressure on the bucket brigade. It was a long and weary night, and the Gordons were glad when it ended, but the new day brought them only fresh terrors. Returning to their little room, they found Charles, crying and coughing, Sally standing by helplessly. Mrs. Gordon cradled the unhappy infant in her arms.

"He's been like that for a long time," Sally offered. "I wanted to help but I didn't know what to do."

Mrs. Gordon touched the child's forehead. "He's feverish."

"I'll go after the doctor," Lemuel Gordon said. By the time he returned with the doctor, Charles' condition seemed to have worsened. His breathing had become labored and rasping, his skin livid, his crying continuous.

The doctor examined the child wordlessly. When he looked up his expression was grave. "It's a respiratory infection. The throat is extremely inflamed. It may have already moved down into the lungs. I hope not."

Helen Gordon clutched Sally tightly. "What is it, Doctor?"

"I'm not certain," the doctor said slowly. "But I think it may be pneumonia."

Pneumonia! A dreaded disease in those days, a killer that struck quickly, adults and children alike among its victims.

Helen turned to Lemuel and buried her head against his chest.

"Keep the boy isolated," the doctor said sternly. "No one is to go near him. If it is pneumonia, we don't want it to spread.

Now boil some water, get me a couple of large towels, and leave me alone with the child. Perhaps the steaming vapor will relieve the congestion."

Lemuel was waiting when the doctor finally came out. "My wife is finding other quarters for my little girl," he explained. "She and I will stay here."

The doctor nodded. "The baby is resting now. If he shows any change, come and get me. Otherwise I'll be back every few hours."

"Is my son going to die?"

The doctor lit a cigar, puffed slowly, his face drawn and wan. "We'll know within forty-eight hours. He'll reach a crisis by then."

Before going back inside, Lemuel watched the doctor disappear. A sense of helplessness came over him; he longed to help Charles, but there was nothing he could do. He sat down to wait.

"I am concerned," Sir Claude said, as he and Mr. Conger inspected the northern rim of the British defenses that morning, the pungent smell of smoke thick in their nostrils, making their eyes water.

Conger shrugged. "The fire is out."

Sir Claude paused. He indicated an ornate eave which reached over the legations' wall, and Conger followed his glance along the length of the wall to the Hanlin Academy. The great halls of the Hanlin were a shrine of Chinese scholarship. Here was the oldest, and perhaps the most rewarding, library in the world, academic treasures accumulated over the centuries, and irreplaceable, including the *Yung Lo Ta Tien,* an encyclopedia commissioned by the second emperor of the Ming Dynasty and completed in 1407. It reflected the work of over two thousand scholars, comprised more than twenty-three thousand books, containing the substance of all the classical, historical, philosophical and literary works pub-

lished to that point, including everything known about geography, medicine, the occult sciences, astronomy, Buddhism, Taoism and the arts.

Mr. Conger turned a horrified face to the British minister.

"Oh, no. Not even the Boxers would fire the Hanlin."

"I sincerely hope you're right, but I fear the worst."

Sir Claude had reason to fear. The venerable wood buildings of the Academy were a firetrap, and he noted that the wind was blowing steadily from the north. Any flames would carry across the walls into the British sector. He beckoned to a Royal Marine officer.

"Lieutenant, take a detail of men and cut a hole through the wall. I want an access route into the Hanlin. Just in case."

"Yes, sir." The officer hurried away.

Mr. Conger frowned. "I still cannot believe they intend to burn the Hanlin. What would be the point? Besides, the Chinese venerate learning too much."

But the aroused Boxers were not to be deterred by scholarly traditions. Moving rapidly from one courtyard to the next, they fired the Hanlin that same morning. With the north wind feeding the flames, the Academy was soon a roaring inferno, and to make Allied efforts to smother the fire more difficult, the Chinese loosed volley after volley into the dense smoke. Some of the random shots took effect.

The foreigners were fighting for their lives. If the flames jumped across the wall they were finished, for then the British compound would be useless as a defensive position. Missionaries, ministers, women, children, Marines, Chinese converts —all joined the bucket brigades, and every available receptacle from soup tureens to chamber pots were put to use.

"The flames! We're lost!"

And so it seemed as the wind carried the flames across the wall, until suddenly the wind shifted and the crisis ended abruptly. Here and there people sank slowly to their knees and offered thanks for their deliverance.

The fire-fighters had managed to save a handful of undamaged manuscripts and books, as well as a supply of the hand-carved wooden blocks on which works of the past had been preserved. The rest, including the *Yung Lo Ta Tien,* were lost.

The Boxers made additional attempts to burn out the foreigners until all buildings outside and close to the defensive perimeter were destroyed, thus creating a firebreak that worked to the advantage of the besieged. Fire no longer was a threat.

Soon, however, another menace loomed. Two artillery pieces, nine-pounders, began raining shells into the American and Russian sectors with great accuracy, despite the range of a thousand yards. Except for the small Italian cannon with its limited supply of ammunition, the Allies had nothing with which to try and silence the Boxer guns. Worse, they had no way of telling how many more guns the Chinese had. The danger was clear and the Fortifications Committee set to work.

Mr. Gamewell, an engineer before turning to missionary work, was in charge, and his suggestions were instantly put into effect.

Deep trenches were dug, roofed with heavy beams and earth where the noncombatants would be reasonably safe from the shelling. Mr. Gamewell indicated the obvious weaknesses in the barricades, suggesting that sandbags were needed to strengthen them. This was work for the ladies, and silks and satins, drapes, trouser legs, all were made into bags and filled with earth. Many thousands of such sandbags were made, and not only were the defenses stiffened, they were beautified.

Fighting continued to be fierce and on a hand-to-hand basis. Boxers advancing along the broad top of the Tartar Wall and shooting down into the American legation had created an intolerable situation. A detachment of Marines

attacked a group of oncoming Boxers, driving them back to the Chien Men; then, with the aid of some converts, a barricade was erected across the top of the wall. The Germans did likewise in their area, and so a stretch of the Tartar Wall became safe from enemy encroachment.

Other sorties were made. Outside the British legation, Boxers were securely ensconced in a labyrinth of houses and courtyards that afforded fine vantage points from which to zero in on the defenders. Something had to be done, and Royal Marine Captain Halliday did it.

"My plan is simple, gentlemen," he explained to his small raiding party. "We go out through the hole in the wall into the Hanlin. There we'll split up into smaller groups, half-squads. Each building must be cleared of enemy people. Unless there are questions, I suggest we be on our way."

Moving quickly, the Royal Marines passed into the Hanlin, then fanned out, hoarse cries of dismay greeting their unexpected appearance. The surprised Boxers tried to fight back. Rifle fire crackled continuously. Captain Halliday was everywhere.

"Move on, men! Keep going."

He led a detachment into one large building. As he crossed the threshold, a shot rang out, and Halliday crumpled to the floor, shooting as he fell. A Boxer tumbled out of a closet, dead. A sergeant knelt alongside the wounded officer.

"We'll make a litter, sir. Carry you back."

"No time now. Step lively, Sergeant. Push on. I'll be here when you get back."

The Marines stepped over the prostrate officer and charged wildly ahead into the building. Halliday could hear their cries of triumph, the authority of their Enfields, until at last the shooting stopped and the sergeant returned.

"The house is secure, sir. Thirty-four of the blokes bought it."

These and other adventurous and courageous attacks by

the Europeans were instrumental in providing the time needed to strengthen defensive positions. Such daring forays also caused the Chinese to consider the dangers of a head-on attack more prudently.

At 4:00 P.M. on the following afternoon, a horn was blown from the Imperial City. For a moment there was silence; then the air came alive with horns and bugles, as all shooting from the Chinese side ceased. The foreigners held their fire, and the ensuing silence was eerie and troublesome. The beleaguered men and women gazed at each other blankly. What was happening?

"The Boxers are leaving their posts!" cried a lookout.

People rushed to see. It was true. Everywhere, Chinese warriors were strolling casually away from their combat positions. Some stretched out on the ground, sunning themselves, while others gathered in small groups, laughing and chattering. Still others began gambling.

"What does it mean?"

"It's a trap. It must be. Take no chances."

"Have they decided to stop fighting?"

Speculation behind the Tartar Wall ran wild. Questions were asked, but no one had any answers.

"Message from the enemy!" called a soldier posted on the roof of the British minister's stables; and there was a concerted rush to gain a good view of the North Bridge, where considerable Boxer activity could be seen. Field glasses were broken out.

"They're holding up some sort of a placard."

"It's a sign, written in Chinese."

"An Imperial Edict," a missionary said. "There are eighteen characters painted in black on a white board." He began to translate: "In accordance with the Imperial commands to protect the ministers, firing will cease immediately. A dispatch will be delivered at the Imperial Canal Bridge."

Optimism surged through the compound. Surely this

meant the Relief Force was within reach of Peking, else what other reason could there be for this strange cease-fire? The diplomats did not know that at that very moment Admiral Seymour was defending himself from enemy attack in the Hsi-ku Arsenal.

While waiting for the dispatch to arrive, many of the besieged wandered outside the barricades. Boxer warriors and foreigners eyed each other curiously, but warily.

Night closed in and all foreigners withdrew behind the barricades. The dispatch had not yet come, and hours passed with no word from the Chinese side.

A shot sounded. Another. Then a fusillade. Full-scale fighting broke out again.

Why had it ever stopped?

The reasons were not clear. There were those who believed the Chinese hoped to lure the foreigners into overconfidence before an all-out attack, while another report had it that the Empress Dowager, in a fury at some of the more reactionary elements in the Court, ordered the cease-fire simply to demonstrate her authority, only to change her mind later. Whatever the reason, it was over.

The foreigners again fought for their lives.

11 Trial by Combat

The siege was a continuing ordeal, without respite, and it was estimated that on one particular night the Boxers fired more than 200,000 rounds of bullets at the foreigners. The result was a steady mounting casualty list, with thirty-eight fighting men killed by the first days of July, and fifty-five more badly wounded.

Tension rose in direct proportion to the number of casualties and the passage of time. Two weeks had expired and there was no sign of the relief. Had they been deserted? Were they doomed to succumb finally to their assailants? Bitterness seeped into conversations and tempers flared as indications of their deprived and vulnerable state grew more apparent. Children were pale and thin and women sat dry-eyed and silent in dark corners.

The huge walls surrounding them loomed larger, seemed to close in, and even the guards on their posts could tell little of what the Boxers were doing, hidden among the buildings of the gloomy city outside. Hours often passed without anyone actually seeing the enemy, though he made his presence known with an almost continuous stream of deadly rifle fire. No patrols were sent out to gain information, for the Boxers occupied all territory beyond the legations.

The wall, broad enough for "four carriages to be driven abreast at full speed," could be reached from the legations only by two ramps, both without protective cover and both

inviting to Boxer marksmen. The American and German breastworks were stretched across the breadth of the wall, only a few yards removed from the enemy barricades, so that for safety's sake, these posts were relieved only after dark.

Mr. Conger wanted to abandon the American outpost during the first two days of the siege, but was dissuaded from doing so by Sir Claude MacDonald, whose clearheadedness and courage gave strength to the besieged.

"Give up the position," said the British minister, "and the results will be fatal. The Boxers will then have unrestricted use of the wall. They will be able to take pot shots at us from above without fear of reprisal. Hold the position and I'll send you help."

Russians were ordered to reinforce the barricades, plus Royal Marines. The added strength, however, caused little joy among those responsible for maintaining the posts. Captain Myers, in charge of the American force, wrote: "It is slow sure death to remain here. . . . The men all feel that they are in a trap and simply await the hour of execution."

Conger summoned Captain Myers to a meeting.

"We cannot abandon the positions on the wall," Conger led off.

"But they are untenable," Captain Myers pointed out.

"Then it is up to you to improve them," Conger said.

"Are you suggesting we attack the Boxers?" Myers said.

"I am. And this very night. It must be done, Captain."

Myers' face was grim. "Very well. The men won't like it, but they'll follow my orders."

That night fifteen Americans, an equal number of Russians, and twenty-six British gathered at the American outpost. Captain Myers faced the men, brow furrowed, his lack of confidence apparent to all. He spoke in a hoarse whisper.

"This is a desperate enterprise. I am against it and have so indicated. But orders have been given and will be obeyed. We must drive the Boxers back, if it costs us every man in the

attempt. If any of you men lack the heart for this mission, now is the time to say so."

The silence was oppressive. Then a volley of Boxer rifle fire shattered the stillness.

Captain Myers sighed. "Very well. Follow me." And he led the way over the barricade.

Willie Sommers followed, moving silently and swiftly in the darkness, able to see barely a yard ahead in the starless night, dimly aware of his comrades nearby.

"Close it up," a voice hissed in his ear. He turned and saw Sergeant MacClintock hurrying on, urging another man into position, issuing whispered instructions. All at once Willie was startled by a shadowy mass which appeared out of the black—the Chinese barricade. He clutched his rifle tighter and moved forward.

The startled cry of a Boxer sentry cleaved the still night air. A rifle shot cut short the warning, but the damage was done.

"Up and at them! Move out! On the double!"

All about him Willie could hear shooting and the cries of men fighting; then he was over the top and in the thick of battle with no time to think or be afraid.

As a result of that night's work, the garrison's position on the wall was greatly strengthened. It proved to be the most important offensive operation carried out by the besieged during the battle, for it gave them control of the Tartar Wall, and thus was, in the words of a missionary, "the pivot of our destiny."

The Japanese contingent, though one of the smallest—one officer and twenty-four sailors—was the most reliable. They headed the defense in the Fu (the park), which was a vulnerable area, shrinking every day as the Boxers pushed in. Each night the Boxers constructed new barricades nearer the defense perimeter, edging closer and closer, despite the courageous efforts of the Japanese.

Supporting the Japanese were the Italians and a group of youthful volunteers, students and customs employees plus a number of "secondary Christians" who were provided with rifles and stood guard duty during the most quiet periods, allowing the regulars to get some much-needed sleep. To the Japanese went the painful distinction of receiving more than 100 per cent casualties, several sailors being wounded more than once.

Colonel Shiba, their commander, was a liked and respected officer, and it was said of the Japanese during the siege that they were "the only nationality of whose conduct one could predict anything with almost absolute certainty."

The situation on the Tartar Wall was tense and insecure, but that of the Fu was tranquil and determined, despite increasing pressure from the Chinese. An example of that confidence was expressed in a note from Colonel Shiba to Sir Claude:

Dear Sir,

They are nearing to break down the Fu's wall. I want to crush them when they come in. Will you please send some reinforcements to me with the bearer?

The Boxers came through just as Shiba feared they would, but his men stood fast, mowing down the howling Chinese until they were forced to pull back in confusion. Eventually, however, Shiba had to give ground to superior numbers until, by the middle of July, nearly three-quarters of the Fu belonged to the Boxers; yet confidence in the Japanese never flagged.

Living conditions grew worse each day. In the British compound, for example, the most secure of the legations, there were 500 Europeans, 350 Chinese, plus a couple of hundred mules, horses and ponies. People struggled to find a corner in which to sleep. Distinguished officials were satisfied to find floor space. Customs workers and coolies, valets

and Marines, missionaries and teachers, it made no difference: all found the routine procedures of daily living to be a trial.

Feeding this unwieldy crew presented a problem, since war sets no disciplined hours. Men coming off duty at midnight required food and drink the same as those who did their fighting by day. Kitchens were established at key points, and the preparation of food took precedence over everything else. The ornamental rockwork in front of the legations' theatre was hollowed out in many places to hold the large kettles used for cooking. Tough mess sergeants took their turn as cooks, and while a dietitian would have blanched at their methods and the results, no one complained. It was a time of "make do." Pony meat and rice were the staples, with champagne to wash it all down, supplies of the latter seemingly limitless.

Everyone smoked, even the women, an unusual occurrence in 1900. The reason was simple: Peking in summer was hardly the sweetest smelling of cities. Add to this the problem of sewage disposal within the legations, and the stench was practically overwhelming. To make matters worse, once the summer drought set in, nobody bathed. Tobacco smoke helped soften the offense to delicate nostrils.

At the end of June, the drought broke but rain did little to raise the spirits of the foreigners, since they felt it would only slow the advance of the expected relief. To add to their distress, whenever the rains let up, temperatures shot higher, going up to 110 degrees in the shade.

History was being etched in blood and suffering behind the Tartar Wall, yet the outside world had no precise knowledge of events there. In the weeks and months before, vaguely disturbing reports, official and otherwise, had seeped through to the various capitals of the world; but on June 13, the last telegraphic link with Peking was severed, so that now no reliable word came through.

Further, after Admiral Seymour embarked on his doomed mission, there was no contact with him either, and his fate was unknown for seven days. Nor did any enlightenment come from Tientsin. This news blackout gave birth to rumor and a sense of dread among the powers, with anxiety the natural result. Eleven diplomatic missions plus an international army two thousand strong had simply dropped out of sight, an enigmatic development which captured the front pages of the world press.

With the end of June, and the rescue of Seymour's command from Hsi-ku, events began to fall into place for those not in China. Little hope was held out for the people trapped in Peking, and the powers' attitude of incipient superiority over China now changed to one of exaggerated pessimism. The number of troops required to rescue the besieged was vastly overestimated; military experts agreed it would take 20,000 men merely to hold the Taku-Tientsin area, and an additional 50,000 to 100,000 troops to march on Peking. Japan alone, because of her geographical location, was in a position to supply a force of such size quickly, but that nation was in no position politically or militarily to take such action.

Another reason for the delay of the relief was the mutual suspicion that existed among the powers, for though each government issued pious declarations proclaiming its desire to rescue the diplomats, each looked with jaundiced eyes upon the others, certain ulterior motives existed for landing powerful military forces on the Asian mainland. Nor could anyone decide whether such an expedition should be a relief or a punitive force. This, coupled with ignorance of the true situation, resulted in immobility.

Following the laying of the siege on June 20, no communication reached the outside world until nine days later. It was from Sir Robert Hart, and read: "Foreign community besieged in the legations. Situation desperate. Make Haste!!"

Now all Europe sprang into action as plans were made for dispatching troops to Peking. Talk of swift punishment, of revenge, of quick victory, filled the air. But China was a long way from Europe, and there was still the matter of relieving Tientsin, a situation that would have to be corrected before any force could move on the capital city. Then another message came out of China; it reported the murder of Baron von Ketteler.

Further bits and pieces of information came to light, the details forming a terrifying picture, as the fate of many missionaries was revealed (about 250 missionaries, and 50 of their children, were murdered in China in 1900). One particularly horrifying report came from a Chinese Christian, a reluctant witness to happenings at Taiyuan on July 9. He saw foreign ministers, their wives and children, Roman Catholic priests and nuns massacred.

Such information, coupled with the scant word out of Peking itself, made Europe ready to believe any story. Thus, when an account came out of Shanghai describing the annihilation of the diplomatic community at Peking, the world accepted it without question. The story, published in the *London Daily Mail,* quoted "reliable" Chinese sources and was laced with what appeared to be factual detail. Told without undue emotion, it caused rage and horror everywhere, so that, as of July 7, it was believed that everyone at Peking had been "put to the sword in a most atrocious manner."

"Vengeance!" cried the world.

The German Kaiser urged his soldiers to show no mercy. "Just as the Huns a thousand years ago, under the leadership of Attila, gained a reputation by virtue of which they still live in historical tradition, so may the name of Germany become known in such a manner in China, that no Chinese will ever again dare to look askance at a German."

A memorial service for the "victims" was scheduled to be

held in St. Paul's Cathedral in London, but before it could take place, doubts began to rise as to the authenticity of the massacre story, doubts raised by a coded telegram from Mr. Conger and received by the U.S. State Department: "For one month we have been besieged in British legation. Quick relief only can prevent general massacre."

The memorial service was cancelled.

Now that it was known for sure that the diplomats were still alive, public opinion became a factor. People everywhere demanded the powers put aside political jealousies and take effective measures for the relief of the legations before it was too late.

Added to the confused state were the complexities of the Oriental mind. In a letter dispatched to President McKinley in the name of the Emperor, that royal Personage called attention to China's trusting faith in American friendship and fairness and pleaded for the President to devise measures that would bring about the restoration of peace. This drew a skillfully worded reply from President McKinley in which he pointed out that it was well within China's power to rectify the situation by herself.

Within the Peking legations life went on, the doctor having delivered a baby into the world, a baby appropriately named Siege by its proud parents, and now he was on his way to see the Gordon infant, who was growing more feeble with each passing day.

"Lemuel, make your wife get some rest, or you'll have a sick woman on your hands, too," he said gruffly as he bent over the crib. Charles' breathing was more difficult now, the coughing spells almost constant.

"Please, Doctor," Helen Gordon pleaded. "Help my baby."

The doctor sighed, knowing that there was nothing more he could do. He wished there were some way to relieve the tortured child. Someday, he wanted to believe, a doctor wiser than he would discover an effective way of treating pneu-

monia, of curing the dreaded disease, of prolonging the lives of innocent children; but at that moment he was helpless. He jerked his head toward the door, and Lemuel led his sobbing wife away.

Elsewhere in the compound, other hardships and dangers were being borne with quiet fortitude, though one complaint was universal: there was little of a recreational nature behind the barricades, and those not active on the firing line had little to do. A number of phonographs were available and were played almost continually. "Marching Through Georgia" and "Nearer, My God, to Thee" were the favorite songs of the American missionaries who assembled outside the chapel each evening to serenade the embattled foreigners.

The exchange of rumors was another favorite method of passing time and relieving the monotony.

"A complete French army has been landed on the coast and is marching toward Peking."

"Twenty thousand men, I hear."

"Twenty-five thousand, except they're English, not French."

"French."

"English."

So it went. Each night reports were made of searchlights in the distance, of signal rockets, of the booming of Allied guns, and so thick and fast did the rumors fly that Sir Claude took to posting notices debunking them on the Bell Tower, which stood near the main gate of the British legation.

But Sir Claude was faced with more-pressing problems and he assembled his colleagues to discuss the situation.

"We have no immediate food problem," he began, "but there is a serious ammunition shortage."

"That is true, monsieur," Pichon said. "Yesterday my forces captured fifteen of the enemy. It was thought necessary to dispose of them. Naturally, bayonets were used so as to conserve cartridges."

Edwin Conger cleared his throat. "Only fourteen shells remain for the Italian one-pounder. When they are used up we will be faced with a serious problem."

Captain Strouts, Sir Claude's chief of staff, rose. "Gentlemen, I am profoundly troubled by our manpower situation. It deteriorates daily. Not only are we losing more people than we can afford, but we are losing our best people."

"Can't anything be done?" Sir Claude said.

"I don't know what, sir. Our best people, our bravest men, our best shots, are the ones most exposed to danger. Then there's the Chinese artillery. I estimate that they're using about ten pieces against us. They are firing at virtually point-blank range and causing considerable damage and a high casualty rate."

Colonel Shiba spoke softly. "I wish to extend my apologies. My men have made many attempts to disable the enemy's artillery with a notable lack of success."

"There is no blame attached," Sir Claude offered. The meeting broke up shortly afterward, nothing decided, for there appeared to be little that could be done to better conditions. Then came an unexpected stroke of good fortune. A pair of Chinese converts rooting through the debris in the foundry came across what looked like an oversized rifle.

"See!" cried one of the men. "I have discovered a valuable weapon. It will save us all."

His friend inspected the find. "Useless," he decided. "Merely the muzzle of an ancient gun, now rusted and of no worth."

But the first man refused to heed such pessimism. He sought out Sergeant MacClintock, urging him at least to look at the gun.

MacClintock inspected the old piece. He peered down the barrel.

"It has rifling." He turned to the convert. "I think it may help us."

MacClintock set to work, and in time the rust was chipped away. A set of spare wheels were borrowed from the Italians, and ammunition from a Russian nine-pounder was found to fit the breech. The international flavor of the new weapon was completed when MacClintock pointed out that the gun was a relic of the Anglo-French expedition of 1860. He named the gun "Betsey."

Though too inaccurate for great distances, Betsey was quite effective at short range. Frequently it was loaded with old nails, scrap iron and miscellaneous nuts and bolts, a charge that caused the Boxers considerable unhappiness.

Despite Betsey's best efforts, the Boxers continued to make their presence felt, and the Japanese were forced to abandon the seventh of their nine defense lines. The British quarter was also under severe enemy pressure, while on the Tartar Wall, Americans fought round the clock against fierce attacks. The Germans had to resort to a bayonet charge in order to repulse a Chinese onslaught. Then mines were exploded beneath the French legation, and the Chinese poured into that sector. Desperate fighting followed until at last the Spirit Soldiers were battered into retreat.

The rising tide of casualties severely weakened the defenders, and there was genuine cause for concern which deepened when, on the morning of July 15, the foreigners received a shocking blow.

Captain Strouts and Dr. Morrison had completed their turn at sentry duty and were on their way back to the British compound when they paused at the corner of a building.

"There's a bit of exposed territory ahead," Strouts said. "Those chaps out there might just be zeroed in."

"I suppose we should have come back before it got light."

Strouts permitted himself a small smile. "Shall we make a dash for it?"

Morrison measured the distance. It was only a few dozen yards to the safety of the building opposite. Surely the Chi-

nese would not be looking for two men to come scampering across an open area. He nodded at Strouts.

"Whenever you're ready."

"After you, Doctor."

Morrison took a deep breath and broke into a run. It was as if the Chinese had been expecting him. No sooner did he appear than Boxer sharpshooters opened fire. Bullets zipped past him like angry bees. He could hear Strouts pounding after him.

"Faster, Morrison. Faster."

A quick hot pain sliced deep into Morrison's thigh, and the leg went out from under him. He sprawled face down in the dust. Strouts came dashing up, oblivious of the hail of rifle fire.

"How bad is it, old man?"

"Go on. It's my leg. Get out of here."

Strouts reached down to help the wounded man, then toppled over wordlessly, a crimson stain spreading across his chest.

Morrison wrapped his arms around Strouts and tried snaking along the ground toward safety. It was slow going. Bullets kicked up puffs around him, by some miracle all missing. The journalist was about ready to give up when Colonel Shiba appeared. The stocky Japanese wasted no time hauling Strouts to safety, then returned for Morrison, dragging him out of the line of fire.

"You are safe here," Shiba said. "Do not move. I go for medical help."

Stretcher-bearers arrived not many minutes later and carried the wounded men to the hospital, where the doctors worked frantically on Captain Strouts, but he died three hours later. Morrison's wound, though not dangerous, confined him to his mattress, where he continued to compose his dispatches for the London *Times*. The loss of these two topflight fighting men could not be minimized, since both

had shown not only calm courage but superior judgment in every situation.

Captain Strouts' funeral was attended by ministers, officers, missionaries, ladies, children—everyone not on duty—and took place with shells exploding overhead and bullets buzzing past. In the midst of the services, lookouts reported that an intermediary was approaching the main gate of the British legation. He was identified as a Chinese convert, extremely old, able to move at a very slow pace, and holding in one ancient hand a white flag. At last he made it to the gate, with two messages.

The first, addressed to Edwin Conger, was in State Department code, and read: "Communicate tidings bearer." It was the first word received by the diplomats from the outside since the beginning of the siege.

The second message was directed to Sir Claude MacDonald. It was from Prince Ch'ing, who was not pro-Boxer, and had been replaced as president of the Tsungli Yamen by Prince Tuan because of that shortcoming. The note reassured Sir Claude that the Chinese government would ". . . exert all its efforts to keep order and give protection.

Such guarantees possessed a hollow ring; the Chinese had done nothing to extract trust from the besieged. Still, the artillery was suddenly silent, with only a smattering of rifle fire being heard, until that too ended. When daylight broke, the guards were astounded to see their enemies grinning and waving from behind their positions, trying to make friends.

A truce had been declared.

12 Watermelons, Spies and an Angry Man

Why?

To those trapped behind the legations' walls the unexpected and unnegotiated truce was simply another enigmatic move on the part of the Chinese. Actually, it was puzzling only because of a lack of information, rather than any built-in Chinese predilection for mystery. Circumstances about which the diplomats had no knowledge were exerting pressures on the Imperial Court.

The most alarming to Tzu Hsi was the fall of Tientsin, on July 16. The earlier relief of that unhappy city by Commander Cradock and his men had turned out to be largely illusory when the Chinese returned to the attack, raining heavy artillery fire into the foreign settlements and making several frontal assaults until it seemed that Cradock's occupation of Tientsin would be a temporary affair. The defenders fought fiercely, however, spearheaded by the Japanese, until the Chinese were finally routed. Tientsin was once and for all relieved.

The truce at Peking followed immediately. But the fall of Tientsin was by no means the only weapon in the hands of those who saw war with the powers for the folly it must eventually be. There were many in the Imperial Court who openly questioned the Boxers as a potent military force, the Spirit Soldiers having proved to be less than invincible. No longer were their claims to supernatural powers taken seri-

ously in many quarters, and as for protecting the dynasty, they had actually placed it in an extremely precarious position with outrages that had, in fact, united the powers in a single determination, to march on Peking. There were those close to the throne who realized that the foreigners would seek revenge for what had occurred.

There were other signs that the war against the *yang kuei-tzu* was far from universally popular. First, a call by the Empress Dowager for reinforcements went virtually unheeded, with only a few additional troops supplied by the provinces. Then a memorial was sent to Tzu Hsi which urged the protection of foreigners, suggesting that they be compensated for damage done their property. Coming as it did from thirteen viceroys and governors who indicated that an apology for Baron von Ketteler's murder was appropriate, the memorial could not be ignored; it further suggested that the rebels be suppressed.

A second memorial was soon forthcoming which took issue with the edict which had ordered the cessation of payments of interest on foreign loans, pointing out that such a step would result only in additional cause for foreign governments to occupy Chinese ports in order to obtain their monies, choking off vital revenues to Peking.

Add to these internal considerations mounting anger around the world—Britain and Germany warned of the dire consequences; Russia moved troops into Manchuria; troopships from all over the globe steamed toward Taku—and the motivation for the truce becomes clear, an attempt to undo some of the damage.

At first, the besieged foreigners suspected a trick. They gazed warily from their outposts at Boxers sunbathing atop their breastworks and at those Imperial soldiers who drifted close enough to inspect the defenses. In time, the defenders took heart at the enemy's confidence, and some of them dared

to do likewise, only to be shocked and disheartened to see close up the strength of the surrounding fortifications.

The caution and suspicion of the defenders was in sharp contrast to the open friendliness of their attackers. A smiling Manchu soldier, Mauser slung over one shoulder, approached two American Marines on the second day of the truce, carrying a frayed basket.

"Good afternoon, sirs," he started out, bowing politely.

"He speaks English, Sergeant," Willie Sommers said.

"Oh, yes, indeed, sirs." The Chinese smiled. "Learn very well at missionary school."

"You a Christian?" Sergeant MacClintock asked dubiously.

"No, sirs."

The sergeant leaned closer. "Why you trying to kill us?"

The man shifted the basket to his other hand. He frowned thoughtfully. "I soldier," he said finally. "Like you. Officers say march, I march, like you. Officers say shoot, I shoot." He smiled guilelessly. "Same like you."

MacClintock grunted, and changed the subject. "What's in the basket?"

The Chinese's eyes lit up. "Ah, very nice. You like eggs? I have eggs." He drew back the piece of cloth across the top of the basket and revealed six smooth white hen's eggs. "You like to have eggs?"

"And how!" said Willie.

"How much?"

The bargaining began and eventually money was exchanged for eggs. They were not the only items purchased that day; the Japanese even managed to buy a supply of Chinese rifles. Commerce was native to both sides.

On July 20, a supply of vegetables and watermelons was sent into the legations as a gift from the Empress Dowager, and six days later came a further supply, along with rice and a thousand pounds of flour.

"It's immoral to accept these things," maintained some of the missionaries.

"Nonsense," countered the pragmatists. "Fruit possesses no morals."

"How can we reconcile accepting gifts from the very people who are trying to kill us?"

It was an argument with little persuasive power, and the fruit was accepted and enjoyed.

The truce signaled the exchange of a series of notes between Sir Claude MacDonald and Prince Ch'ing, the goal of the latter to get the diplomats to withdraw from Peking.

"There is no reason to trust the Chinese," the Russian de Giers reasoned.

"Not so, monsieur," Pichon said. "They promise us safe passage to Tientsin. I believe them to be forthright. They, too, wish this unpleasant matter ended."

"Then let us see some concrete examples of their good faith first," Sir Claude said logically.

The correspondence continued, with Prince Ch'ing becoming more and more truculent, his veiled threats clear to the diplomats.

"It is possible," he wrote, "that the foreign envoys do not fully realize the keen desire of our Court to protect the legations, and we feel bound to give a detailed explanation." No explanation, however, was ever forthcoming. Instead, Prince Ch'ing made reference to "a general ferment, absolutely beyond our control," and spoke again of the diplomats moving to Tientsin.

When intermittent rifle fire broke the quiet of the truce, Sir Claude made sharp reference to the transgressions in his notes, receiving apologies as well as promises that there would be no repetition. The promises were empty.

During the siege many attempts to get word to the outside world were made, with messages being carried by Chinese converts, most of whom were captured and killed. But a few

did get through, and on July 18 a messenger dispatched by the Japanese was able to complete the return journey as well, delivering a written message to Baron Hishi, Japan's minister. The Baron spoke one other language beside his own—Russian. Minister de Giers was called upon to interpret, but since the two nations had little love for each other, these two got on less than idyllically. However, the note was finally translated.

A mixed division consisting of 2400 Japanese, 4000 Russians, 1200 British, 1500 Americans, 1500 French and 300 Germans leaves Tientsin on or about 20 July for the relief of Peking. The foreign settlement has not been taken by the enemy.

The diplomats were beside themselves with joy. They would not know till later that the information was misleading and that the relief force would not leave Tientsin until the beginning of August, nearly two weeks later. But right now this was the first solid information they had that indicated the outside world was even aware of their plight.

"This is great news!" Conger said. "We'll be out of this mess in a couple of days at most."

"It was bound to happen," Pichon added. "No government in honor could act otherwise."

"I wish I were as optimistic as you gentlemen," Sir Claude remarked.

"One thing is certain," de Giers said. "We must temporize with the Chinese. Each day that passes brings rescue that much closer."

Sir Claude smoothed his mustache. "Quite right. I shall set forth demands in my notes to the Court. Should they be met, I shall then set forth others, and still others."

And so began an exchange in which such trivial items as carts and sedan chairs were discussed. Somehow, Prince Ch'ing and Sir Claude could never agree on one point or another, and though each day brought an increased amount

of rifle fire, the foreigners felt there was considerable cause for optimism.

Then there was the matter of the spy.

A Chinese who claimed to be a member of the Imperial Army arrived inside the compound unannounced, smiling and confident.

"I am very efficient spy," he told his credulous listeners. "With considerable happy and secret information to sell."

Operating on the premise that any news would be good news, the besieged were only too willing to do business with this intrepid fellow, and so a bargain was struck.

The spy functioned on the theory that his customers should get exactly what they wanted. Obviously they wanted a relief force, so he created one, reporting that such a force was on the way, with the result that joy in the compound was unrestrained. The spy continued to make his way in and out of the legations with remarkable ease, always bringing back good news of the nearing relief. Maps were posted on the Bell Tower to indicate the precise location of the approaching column.

The relief, according to the spy, conquered everything in its path, until it stood poised within twenty miles of Peking. Spirits soared, until another Chinese spy came along to contradict this intelligence. He was eyed suspiciously and finally thrown into a cell, while the first spy was given dispatches for the commander of the relief and promised rich rewards when he returned with an answer.

This posed a problem for him. Since there was no relief, there was also no commander, and an encouraging message from him could never be obtained. The situation called for drastic action. This time, when the spy returned to the legations, it was to report the sad news that there had been a setback and sixty men had been killed as a result of the hit-and-run tactics of Imperial Cavalry. On the next day he told of another devastating foray, Boxers killing seventy men,

the attacks gaining in ferocity until the relief was forced to withdraw to Tientsin.

Eventually, the defenders discovered that their spy was a better liar than he was a spy, and they were very much annoyed with him, though grudgingly admitting that he had provided considerable pleasure and anticipation.

The Japanese note and the false spy served only to whet the appetites of the besieged for reliable news, and on July 28 their patience seemed at last to have been rewarded. On that day a boy of fifteen returned to the compound with a letter from Mr. Carles, the British consul at Tientsin. Excited groups gathered at the Bell Tower to hear the news only to be disappointed.

"Had not the arrival of the messenger been witnessed by numbers of people," Sir Claude later wrote, "it is more than probable that no notice of the contents of the letter would have been posted on the Bell Tower."

The message read:

Your letter of 4 July. There are now 24,000 troops landed and 19,000 troops here. General Gaselee is expected at Taku. When he comes I hope to see more activity. The Russians are at Peitsang. Tientsin city is under foreign government and the Boxers' power here is exploded. Do try and keep me informed of yourselves. There are plently of troops on the way; if you can keep yourselves in food for a time, all ought yet to come out well. The consulate is mended to be ready for you when you come. Almost all the ladies have left Tientsin. Kindest remembrances to all in the legation.

This hollow missive destroyed all optimism behind the Tartar Wall. To receive in their moment of stress a message so devoid of facts, so vague and gossipy, was a blow to all, and especially to the British nationals, who were forced to face up to the low estate of the Foreign Service with such a man as a consul. British pride was somewhat assuaged two

days later when a message was received by Mr. Conger from Mr. Ragsdale, the American consul at Tientsin. It was no less absurd than Mr. Carles' note, beginning: "I had a dream about you last night," and ending grimly, "It is my earnest wish that you may all be spared."

That sentiment was not echoed by a recent arrival at the Imperial Court, a visitor who wished all foreigners death.

Li Ping-Hêng was an angry man. His slender patrician features belied his iron resolve, showing nothing as he approached the Empress Dowager. Tzu Hsi studied him as he made the proper outward manifestations of respect. Clearly this was a man not afraid, nor one given to begging favors nor bootlicking.

"Welcome to Peking," she said easily. "We have awaited your arrival with impatience."

"The decree summoning this person to stand before Your Majesty did not arrive until late in the month of June. I departed Kiangyin at once."

Tzu Hsi gazed evenly at the man before her, and he returned the look with neither defiance nor fear.

"It has come to my attention that you were prepared to bombard the warships of the barbarians," she said.

Li stared unblinking at her. "My coastal guns were ready, Imperial Highness. To fight for the Dynasty is to live gloriously."

Old Buddha allowed a smile to soften her firm mouth. "Not all my people can match your patriotism."

"There is talk that some people would conspire with the foreign devils. It would please me to deal with such as those."

Tzu Hsi smiled thinly. She made a small gesture with one hand. "I would speak in private with Li Ping-Hêng. Leave us."

While the room was being emptied of courtiers, the Empress Dowager watched her visitor. She had heard that Li was a man of strong character, his hatred of foreigners deep

and pervading, a man anxious to do away with all their works; railways, post offices, telegraphs and even paper money. Tzu Hsi recalled that he had been governor of Shantung Province when two missionaries were murdered. She judged him to be a man capable of murder, or worse. Currently, by royal appointment, he was Imperial Inspector of the Yangtze Naval Forces. She approved of him and his ideas, being certain that he would show considerable enthusiasm for pursuing the war against the barbarians. Tzu Hsi felt such men were vital to a regime, to her regime.

Alone with Li now, she beckoned him closer. She made a steeple with her elongated fingernails.

"There is now a truce in existence," she said. "But the foreign diplomats refuse to leave Peking."

"I urge you, Highness, resume the attack. Aggression is the only answer. The devils must be thrust bodily from our land."

Tzu Hsi's weakness for strong men was well known. Here was such a man, and it took little time for her to make up her mind. "I will issue a decree. You will be granted the privilege of riding a horse inside the Forbidden City. You may also use a sedan chair, to be borne by two carriers, in the winter palace."

Li inclined his head in gratitude.

"Such rewards honor me."

"There is more. Four armies shall be placed under your direct command. I wish events to proceed with dispatch. There are about me too many persons who vacillate. And still others whom I do not trust. I fear not for my own welfare, but rather for the life of the Emperor and the continued well-being of the Empire."

"I will exercise my power to make certain that whosoever stands opposed to Your Highness no longer causes difficulties."

Tzu Hsi rose abruptly. "See to it. You know my wishes. Time enough has been squandered."

He backed off, bowing.

"It shall be as you desire."

Two days later, Hsu Ching-ch'eng, a former minister at St. Petersburg and president of the Imperial University, and Yuan Ch'ang, a member of the Tsungli Yamen, were summarily executed. Subsequently, three other men of similar liberal political thought were beheaded. All had advocated peace with the foreigners, all had been critical of the Boxers. A decree was issued stating that they ". . . committed the crime of gross disrespect."

On July 29, Boxer firing at the legations resumed. Li Ping-Hêng had made his presence known.

The truce was over.

13 Race to Glory

"Now we can get on with the rescue of the legations," bellowed an English sergeant-major after the capture of Tientsin by the Powers.

Apathy had settled over the various commanders, an apathy born of the belief that the people behind the Tartar Wall were doomed; the enthusiasm and excitement of Admiral Seymour's ill-fated expedition was now lacking. Caution became the guiding philosophy. Estimates were made concerning the size of a force large enough to take Peking, and each day those estimates swelled. Admiral Seymour put the number of troops necessary at 40,000, and in the light of his recent debacle, that was thought to be a conservative figure. The Japanese guessed that 70,000 men would do, while Admiral Kempff informed Washington that 60,000 troops were required, with another 20,000 to guard lines of communication.

In the world capitals there was much political maneuvering. In Berlin, the Kaiser was still making bloodthirsty speeches.

"I will not rest until the German flags, united with those of the other powers, float victoriously over China and, planted on the walls of Peking, dictate the terms of peace."

Russian attention to Manchuria caused alarm elsewhere. Distrust between nations was commonplace.

Finally, as July drew to a close and the truce at Peking

ended, an army began to assemble in Tientsin and at Taku, the men sweltering under the summer sun while they waited for orders and reinforcements. But prior military commitments inhibited the total involvement of some of the leading powers. The French were having trouble in Indo-China; England was fighting the Boer War in Africa; Boxer activity in Manchuria occupied the Russians; and the U.S. Army had its hands full in the Philippines.

Preparations for the march to Peking were made nevertheless. Supplies were shipped into China. Strategies were evolved. Equipment was inspected and repaired. But no overt move toward China's capital was made, the aggressive tendencies of the generals checked by their recollection of Seymour's experience.

"We must wait for more troops," said General Lineivitch, the Russian commander-in-chief, at a council of war. "And more supplies."

That irritated the French commander, General Frey, a man not given to contemplation. His bald pate gleamed crimson. "Nonsense! We must advance with all possible haste. It is my wish to see the Tricolor waving from the walls of the city. France's glory demands it."

This drew a disdainful snort from General Adna Chaffee, the American, a sturdy man with a face hewn out of granite. "I go nowhere without my artillery. When it arrives, Americans will march. Not until then." He sat down hands folded on the edge of the conference table.

The British general, Sir Alfred Gaselee arose. Well on in years, he tended to be old-fashioned in his thinking, and many of his colleagues considered him too easygoing, but he was much revered by his troops. He tugged at his flowing white mustache and cleared his throat.

"I suppose he's going to make a speech," General Frey said behind his hand. Chaffee grunted and studied the table top.

"Gentlemen," Gaselee said. "There are things to be said for every point of view expressed here. Still, I wonder shouldn't we place first things first?"

"What do you mean, Gaselee?"

"Simply this. Shouldn't we do something, anything, take the bit in our teeth, so to speak?"

"I won't budge without my artillery," Chaffee muttered.

"French forces must lead the relief column."

"I am for waiting," Lineivitch said.

Gaselee looked sad. "Gentlemen, I am sorry. My orders are to relieve the legations. I shall do my best to carry out those orders. Some effort must be made to save those poor people in Peking. British troops will march."

There was an excited babble. Gaselee's stand placed the others in an impossible situation, for, with the eyes of the world on them, no single nation could be allowed to attempt the relief alone. The risks to all were too great. If such an attempt failed, the other nations would have not only their wisdom challenged, but their courage questioned; and in the event such an attempt should succeed, all glory would attach itself to one flag, a result national competitiveness and pride could not tolerate. They all agreed to march. It was dawn, August 4, when the first members of the International Relief Force paraded out of Tientsin.

The relief numbered approximately 20,000 men, distributed as follows:

Japanese	10,000
Russians	4,000
British	3,000
Americans	2,000
French	800
Germans	100
Austrians and Italians	100

Though well-equipped with artillery, despite General Chaffee's concern, the force did lack sufficient cavalry.

"I don't like it at all," said a veteran tropper. "Not enough horse troops."

"Oh, we don't need any more," said a fresh-faced recruit.

The older man glared at him. "There's never enough when people are shooting at you. Remember that. Besides, in this heat we're going to have trouble with the stock. Bound to. Horses and mules don't thrive when it's this hot."

He was right. Out of 400 animals that began the march, only 60 managed to reach Peking. Unfortunately, the U.S. 6th Cavalry, which had landed at Taku, could not join the relief, their mounts still unfit after the sea voyage. Only a handful of Cossacks and some Bengal Lancers were available for scouting purposes and for the quick strikes which might be necessary in the open countryside.

Japanese hostlers had made a fundamental error; many of their pack horses were stallions, which led to considerable trouble, while the French brought only a few Annamite ponies, no bigger than tiny donkeys. The Italians, Austrians and Germans possessed no animal transport at all. The skill the Americans showed in handling mules was widely recognized and admired, as were their big Studebaker wagons.

The line of march was simple—to follow the Pei Ho. While the troops moved along the banks, a train of junks and sampans were poled up the shallow stream. Progress was necessarily slow. Roads were little more than gorges cut over the years by hooves and wheels, and sudden squalls turned them into rivers of mud. Trouble with the pack animals began almost at once, horses and mules slipping and stumbling. A few fell, breaking legs, and had to be destroyed, with the result that equipment had to be distributed among the other mounts. Merciful rifle shots punctuated the remainder of the march.

At last contact with the enemy was made by a Japanese patrol.

"A Chinese force awaits at Peitsang," the patrol leader reported to his officers.

"How powerful are they?"

"Many troops and artillery. Well entrenched."

The commanders turned to their maps. Peitsang was just north of the Hsi-ku Arsenal. It was decided that English field artillery would support a Japanese attack. Orders were given. The Japanese soldiers moved out fearlessly, little men in white tunics, advancing in tight formation against strong fortifications. The Chinese fought back fiercely, but the Japanese would not be deterred, charging with guttural cries until they rooted the Imperial soldiers out of the trenches and sent them fleeing.

Encouraged by this early victory, the Powers quickened their march. The next day another enemy force was encountered, at Yangstun, again firmly dug in. This time the Americans and the British headed the attack.

It was just past noon when the battle was joined, the heat at its unbearable worst. Perspiration half-blinded the soldiers as they stumbled ahead, shimmering heat waves lending an unreal air to the proceedings. It was not a day for combat. Then somebody made a terrible mistake.

The victims were men belonging to the 14th U.S. Infantry, advancing deliberately across the rugged terrain, maintaining the prescribed distance between each man, rifles at the ready, bayonets fixed. Uniforms were drenched and damp palms slipped on smooth rifle-stocks.

An artillery shell burst to the right. Another to the left. It was a full-scale barrage.

"Hit the dirt!" shouted the company commander.

"They've got us zeroed in," groaned a rifleman.

"Take cover!"

But there was no cover that would save them from the

heavy concentration of artillery shells that continued to fall. A sergeant, battlewise and alert, cocked an ear for the fearsome whirr of an approaching shell. It came. He raised his head after the explosion and called to his company commander.

"Our own guns, Captain. We're being shelled by our own people."

There was an incredulous expression on the captain's face. He didn't want to believe it. He listened for the sound of the shells through the agonized cries of his men. Another salvo brought confirmation. The officer leaped to his feet and began running toward the rear, pounding ahead as fast as he could, lungs burning, a hot steel band slicing into his chest. He stumbled into battalion headquarters.

"The artillery," he gasped. "They're shelling my men." Then he collapsed.

Though the barrage killed four men, and eleven more were wounded, some of whom later died, it was never discovered whether Russian or British gunners did the damage.

The battle went on, and despite the mishap and the severe heat, Yangtsun fell to the Allies by nightfall. The cool darkness brought blessed relief to the weary troops.

The following day was spent resting, regrouping, and waiting for the river-borne supplies to catch up. With two comparatively easy victories under their belts, the generals grew heady with visions of glory, while the men anticipated mountains of loot. No one objected when it was decided to push straight on to Peking, and on the morning of the eighth, the relief moved out.

All at once the military advance turned into a foot race as the nationals of the various countries strove to be first in Peking. But the field grew smaller, with only the British, Japanese, Americans and Russians still running. The German, Austrian and Italian detachments, plagued by supply problems, were forced to return to Tientsin. The French

were, for a variety of reasons, in no condition to continue, much to the chagrin of General Frey, who had no choice but to order them back to Tientsin. Frey, however, was not a man to be turned away from his goal. At Tientsin, he hurriedly assembled a motley crew of French sailors and set off in pursuit of the others.

For the greater glory of France, was Frey's driving thought, and he was determined that neither he nor his country would reap a lesser share of the rewards of victory.

The relief force pushed ahead. Hosiwu was taken on August 9, Matou the next day, and Changchiawan on the eleventh. Now only the walled city of Tungchow, fourteen miles short of Peking, stood as a major obstacle. To date, the worst hardship had been the heat and the shortage of drinking water which intensified the suffering. Everyone was affected, the Americans worst of all.

"Nearly fifty per cent of our men fell behind during the day," Lieutenant Smedley Butler of the U.S. Marine Corps later recalled. "In the cool of night they would catch up with us and start again next morning."

A total of 198 casualties was suffered by the two battalions composing the Marine detachment.

On the Chinese side, chaos infected the Imperial armies, despite the efforts of Li Ping-Hêng, for with the continued advance of the relief, fear spread and discipline evaporated. Li sent a bitter and despairing note to the Empress Dowager.

I have retreated from Matou to Changchiawan. For the past few days I have seen several tens of thousands of troops jamming all roads. They fled as soon as they heard of the arrival of the enemy. As they passed the villages and towns they set fire and plundered, so much so that there was nothing left for the armies under my command to purchase, with the result that men and horses were hungry and exhausted. From youth to old age I have experienced many wars, but never saw things like these. . . . Unless we restore

discipline and execute the retreating generals and escaping troops, there will be no place where we can stand. . . . The situation is getting out of control. There is not time to regroup and deploy. But I will do my utmost to collect the fleeing troops and fight to the death, so as to repay the kindness of Your Majesties and to do the smallest part of a minister's duty.

Li Ping-Hêng took poison the next day.

Earlier that same day, the Japanese blew up the South Gate of Tungchow to discover that the Imperial troops had fled, permitting the Allies to enter the city unopposed. There followed an orgy of looting and destruction, in which most of the citizenry of Tungchow joined.

The next day the relief rested and replenished its supplies. During this hiatus, General Gaselee decided to take steps toward re-establishing good relationships with the Chinese people. He sought a suitable locale for setting up a market place for local produce, deciding finally that the abandoned compound of a large American mission was ideal for this purpose. But a missionary, attached to the general's staff as an interpreter, objected.

"I think you are making a mistake, General."

"Why is that, sir?"

"You would do better to have nothing to do with these savages. I suggest you make a huge bonfire in the compound. That way the people in Peking will see the light at night and know that we're on our way."

"Well," Gaselee said gently. "We do not wish to antagonize the three hundred and fifty millions of China."

The missionary's lips tightened. "You are kindness itself, General," he said, walking away.

Before continuing the advance, a meeting of the Allied commanders was called. Rumors were rampant in Tungchow that the defenders of the legations had succumbed, and these served to heighten fears that many in the relief felt, that their approach would signal the death of the diplomats.

"Surely the Chinese will attack and overwhelm our people by sheer weight of numbers," an officer said logically.

"There will be no survivors. Perhaps we ought to proceed no further."

"And what good would that do? In either case, those people will be murdered."

The generals recognized this possibility, but were in no position to give it serious consideration since, to the best of their knowledge, the defenders still were alive and fighting, awaiting rescue. Patrols were ordered ahead. They reported no signs of organized resistance between Tungchow and the outer walls of Peking.

"Let us advance with all possible haste," Gaselee urged.

The Russian, Lineivitch, thought otherwise. "My men are too weary. If we march for Peking immediately, they will not have strength enough to make an assault upon arrival."

"A good point," General Chaffee said. "Why don't we organize the attack in two phases?"

"What do you have in mind?"

The plan he outlined was simple. Each nation's troops would direct its assault at a different gate in the walls of the city, thus eliminating any confusion and ensuring that there would be sufficient strength at each gate to get the job done, the individual contingents approaching the city along parallel lines. Three miles outside Peking, the entire relief was to bivouac for the night. Then, on the morning of the fifteenth, rested and fresh, a massive coordinated assault would take place.

"Excellent!"

The appeal of the plan lay in its simplicity, plus the equal prominence given each nationality in the line of battle. Still another point in its favor was that no detachment would want for room on its flanks in which to maneuver. The plan was accepted and the meeting ended on a high note of fellowship.

Poised for the supreme effort, the relief suddenly discov-

ered that there were five runners on the track, not four. The irrepressible General Frey, with a couple of hundred bedraggled sailors, had arrived in time to join the climactic assault. He issued his orders:

. . . Tomorrow, under the walls of Peking, when the foreign national anthems are played, a complete silence will be maintained; each anthem will be heard with respect. When the French national anthem is played, it will be sung as loudly as possible, in tune, by the whole of the French Expeditionary Corps. Our compatriots and the occupants of the foreign legations beleaguered on the other side of the walls of the Chinese capital will know, when they hear our noble war-chant, that deliverance is at hand.

General Frey's purpose may have been noble, but his battle tactics were faulty; the French contingent lost its way in the dark.

14 "How Good of You to Come . . ."

August 13, 1900, was a gloomy day. The lowering gray sky pressed down, air thick and oppressive. Pessimism mixed with the enervating summer heat. From the direction of Peking came the ominous crash of rifle fire, so continuous that many soldiers took it to be thunder.

Veteran campaigners knew it for what it was. The Boxers were readying a furious attack on this, the fifty-fourth day of the siege. With the relief nearing the city, the Chinese hoped to annihilate the defenders of the legations in one crushing onslaught.

A British corporal inspecting the weapons of the men in his squad paused to listen to the distant rumble of artillery.

"In for a bit of rain, eh, Corporal?" said one of the men.

"A rain of lead," said another. "Them's guns you're listening to."

The first man cocked an ear.

"Is that right, Corporal?"

"Right. Those poor chaps are catching it good, I think. And after holding out for so long."

A grim smile touched the corporal's lips. There was no humor in it. "I knew this'd happen. Soon as them Boxer blokes got wind of us they had to let go full-blast at the people behind the walls. Had to happen."

That belief was shared in higher echelons as well, a fear many of the old hands had carried all the way from Tientsin.

Now they were sure it would come to pass. Yet there was nothing to do but press on. Orders were issued.

The columns marched out of Tungchow in parallel routes, straight on the city, each aimed toward its predesignated target. The British, on the left flank, were to attack the Sha K'ou Men. To their right, were the Americans, pointed toward the Tung Pien Men. Across the Imperial Canal came General Frey's units. Next were the Japanese, advancing along a broad paved road which lay just north of the canal, their goal the Chih Hua Men. On the extreme right flank were the Russians, to make directly for the Tung Chih Men.

Maintaining orderly ranks soon became impossible. Men slipped and fell in the slick mud, rifle muzzles becoming clogged with the gooey stuff. The heat added to everyone's distress. A further harassment was the terrain; irrigation ditches crisscrossed the land, disrupting lines of march. Villages, pagodas, temples, all caused the troops to detour, and sunken roads made them scatter even further afield. Somehow the advance, ponderous and disorganized, continued, but when the order came to bivouac three miles outside of Peking, officers and men alike were grateful. They tried to shut out the rattle of musketry that came from inside the massive city-fortress that loomed against the western sky. Peking, they told themselves, was a problem for the next day.

With night came a deluge, and the men tried vainly to stay dry and manage some sleep, both impossible tasks. And so the contingents waited for the dawn, five tightly drawn runners poised and waiting for the starter's gun to send them dashing along the straightway.

Up to now the terrain had inhibited the competitive instincts of the individual generals, their rate of march dictated by the topography. Now, however, it was an easy dash for Peking, and none of them arranged for an advance guard, nor a reserve.

At midnight, rifle fire broke out from the direction of the

Tung Pien Men, the American target, just south of the canal. Soon it increased in intensity and was supported by the thump of field artillery.

"The Boxers have attacked the legations in force," was the consensus.

"God help those poor devils."

This belief was soon discarded, replaced by anger when it was learned that the Russians had beaten the starter's gun! They had ignored the accepted plan, attacked in the dark, pushed alone on the path to glory—and profit.

Or so it seemed.

Outraged by the inexplicable action of the Russians, the Allied commanders were able to perceive only something devious and sinister in the move. Not only had the Russians attacked well in advance of H-hour, but they had cut diagonally across the common front, hitting the American target gate, Tung Pien. The assumption was that General Lineivitch, determined to be first into Peking, had sacrificed his honor to accomplish this; yet, in truth, the Russian attack was honorably motivated.

What really happened?

On the evening of August 13, Russian scouts rode out on a routine reconnaissance patrol. Accompanying them was a Norwegian adventurer named Munthe, a onetime cavalry instructor in the Chinese Army, a man fluent in the language. They picked their way slowly toward Peking. It was Munthe who reined in first.

"We are very close to the walls," he whispered.

"They have not seen us or they would surely have sounded the alarm."

Munthe considered the situation. He felt the work of the patrol was not yet completed. True, they had discovered that no enemy soldiers were positioned between the walls of Peking and their own lines. But his orders had been to probe for a weak spot in the defenses.

"We will go on," he said, prodding his mount lightly. In the black of night, the creaking of saddle and stirrup sounded exaggeratedly loud. How long before a keen Boxer sentry spotted them? Behind him, a horse whinnied.

"Quiet that animal," he hissed. It was too late. All need for caution evaporated as a shrill cry sounded from the wall.

"Yang kuei-tzu!"

A rifle shot cracked out. Another. Munthe wheeled his horse about.

"Let's get out of here!" he shouted. The patrol galloped toward its own lines.

"You say you came within two hundred yards of the walls?" It was General Lineivitch who asked the question. Munthe stood easy in the command tent, his Nordic face a series of shadowed hollows in the flickering lamplight.

"Perhaps closer, General." He placed a finger to the rough map on the field desk. "To about this position, I would say. Just outside the Tung Pien Men. It is lightly defended. Only a few rifles fired at us. And the approaches are completely undefended."

The general's brow furrowed thoughtfully. He exhaled loudly and clapped his hands together. "We will act. Munthe, you will accompany General Vassilievski on a combat patrol. I will dispatch one whole battalion, plus half a battery. You will secure the approaches and so pave the way for the advance by the main body tomorrow at the appointed hour."

Perhaps General Lineivitch misunderstood Munthe, confusing Tung Pien with his own objective, Tung Chih. Or perhaps the patrol simply went to the wrong gate in the darkness. In any case, it was outside the Tung Pien Men that General Vassilievski heard heavy fire being directed at the legations. It was raining heavily now, muffling the movements of the patrol, and he knew that the weather provided a fine opportunity to effect a major surprise.

Vassilievski led a party of men up to the city walls, across

a narrow bridge spanning the moat, coming quietly upon the occupants of an outer guardhouse. The struggle was brief. All the Chinese soldiers were killed, but the sound of the fight alerted a guard on the wall.

Rifle fire poured down on the Russians from above. But the rain and the darkness served as a protective veil about the Russians, and they went to work in comparative safety.

"Bring up the fieldpieces!" Vassilievski ordered. Minutes later, two light guns were wheeled into place.

"At will, rapid fire!"

A quick succession of shells ripped a hole in the iron outer gate.

"Cease fire!"

"Forward!"

General Vassilievski led the charge, closely followed by Munthe, through the jagged opening, the first members of the relief to enter Peking. A company of Russian infantry followed.

A moment later they were all trapped.

Between the inner and outer gates of the wall was a courtyard, topped by a tower, a handy arrangement in which to catch and annihilate enemies who managed to penetrate the first gate, constructed for just such an emergency as this.

Flattening themselves against the side walls, the Russians fought back desperately while some of their number searched for an entry through the second gate.

"Here!" a Cossack bellowed. "A back door."

A team of husky soldiers put their shoulders to the wood panels and soon sent it crashing off its hinges. The troops pushed through and soon the fighting became confused and bloody as the struggle moved from the wall into the streets behind it. During those frantic hours, General Vassilievski was seriously wounded, and the Russians suffered heavy casualties, but when dawn broke the Tung Pien Men was firmly in Russian hands.

The remainder of the Russian force did not appear on the scene until ten the following morning. Had their attack been a move of duplicity instead of military expediency, surely General Lineivitch would not have waited so long to secure the costly victory.

Still, plot or otherwise, the Russian move signaled the beginning of the race. All contingents made ready to advance. The French, under the anxiously nervous General Frey, jumped off in the darkness and immediately ran into trouble.

To begin, they charged blindly into the American bivouac area. Undeterred, they pushed on until a company of Bengal Lancers galloped out of the night. Now thoroughly disoriented, the Frenchmen had to be restrained from firing at their allies. Then someone discovered that all their coolies had disappeared in the confusion. General Frey never faltered.

"Advance," he ordered.

A strange column of soldiers came marching through the French ranks, and all discipline disappeared. Men hesitated, stumbled about, shouting angrily in a babble of languages. The newcomers proved to be American troops properly advancing straight on their assigned target. Identifying the wandering French, General Chaffee arranged a meeting with General Frey.

"I am disappointed in you, sir," Chaffee thundered. "I took you for an officer and a gentleman."

"*Pardon,* monsieur. You go too far."

"Sir, you are making an unauthorized dash for the city. That much is clear."

General Frey drew himself erect. "The attack has commenced, *mon general.* What I do is for the greater glory of France. Permit me to ask you, *monsieur,* why you and your forces are on the north bank of the canal?"

Chaffee stared at the other officer in amazement. "Sir, it is not my men who are on the wrong side of the canal, but

yours. You, sir, have managed to get yourself very thoroughly lost. I suggest you rectify the error, General."

The stunned French general watched Chaffee march stiffly away, then threw up his hands in a gesture typically Gallic. He had more important things to do than argue with the stubborn American. Frey was determined to find the Russians. Lineivitch, senior to them all, would resolve this unholy mess, make certain that France received her full portion of glory.

As the day unfolded, the tempo of fighting increased, with the Japanese, particularly, running into severe opposition. They brought into play all their artillery, a total of fifty-four guns, lobbing over one thousand shells at the Chih Hua Men. It was not enough. Only after dark, when engineers were able to approach the gate and secure high explosives in place, were they able to breach the fortification.

The 14th Infantry led the American assault, riflemen using ladders and ropes to scale the city wall to the south of the Tung Pien Men. Once Chinese resistance was cleared away in that area, the men of the 14th doubled back toward the tower where the Russians were now under severe attack. The sudden appearance of the Americans at their rear startled the Boxers, who promptly crumpled under the pressure.

The attack continued on the left flank, where the British pounded through the Sha K'ou Men, hoisting a white naval ensign above the gate, then pushing into the deserted streets of Peking, moving rapidly at first only to have the advance slow as the men became aware of the eerie silence that engulfed them. They inched forward cautiously in the shadows, ducking into doorways, sliding along walls, peering hesitantly around corners. Where, they wondered, were the Boxers? Were they being enticed into a trap? Then, turning a corner, they came in sight of the Tartar Wall. Beyond it, three flags—American, British and Russian—could be seen hanging lifelessly in the torpid air. Was it an omen? The silence con-

tinued deep and depressing. No sound of rifle fire came from within the legations. They feared that this ominous quietude meant only one thing—the defenders had all been killed.

"I hold no hope for finding anyone alive," a member of General Gaselee's staff said.

"What about those flags?"

"A ruse, perhaps. To lead us on. What do you think, General?

Gaselee hesitated. He was not a young man, and a great weariness had taken hold of him, an oppressive sense of sadness. His aides noticed deep ruts running from nose to mouth, and his skin seemed to sag. He shook his head as if to clear it.

"We advance. There is no other choice."

The men surged forward. An advance scouting party discovered an opening in the Tartar Wall, a seven-foot tunnel. The troops ripped away the rotting iron grillwork that served to close it off, then plunged into the black hole, the air about them clear evidence that this dismal passageway was used as a sewer. Nostrils twitched at the acrid odors, lungs ached, throats burned. In the distance, a point of light appeared. They hurried on.

At the same time, above them on the wall, U.S. Marines and Russian sailors combined in a wild, free-wheeling charge to drive the last of the Boxers from the Chien Men, that central gate which was supposed to be opened only for the solemn passage of the Emperor on his holy visits to the Temple of Heaven.

Behind the Tartar Wall, a weary and discouraged band of diplomats awaited the next Boxer attack. In the early morning hours of August 14, people tried to steal a few moments of sleep. Somehow, none of them really knew how, they had managed to withstand the ferocious Chinese attack of the previous day. They feared another assault would result in a less fortunate outcome.

For the past twenty-four hours they had been hearing the rattle of Allied gunfire, the sounds coming closer and closer. But time was running out and the initial joy and excitement were quickly dissipated. There were even those who claimed the guns heard were in fact Chinese guns, that the relief was still many days away.

Hours dragged slowly by. At each sign of enemy action, the fatigued defenders were summoned to the ramparts. False alarms caused tensions to rise, fears to be reborn, pessimism to spread.

At noon, a lunch of Mongol pony meat was served, though few among them had appetite or energy enough to eat. People fell asleep as soon as they sat down. Occasional rifle shots sounded, but they came further apart each time, until they ceased altogether. An uneasy torpor settled over the compounds. Even the flies seemed to have fallen into a kind of lethargy. Then, with no warning, the oppressive stillness was shattered.

"They're coming!"

"The Relief!"

"It's here. The Relief is here."

People rushed about pell-mell. Guards came tumbling off the wall.

"Where are they?"

"I think it's the Germans."

"No, the Italians got here first."

"The tennis court," someone shouted happily. "They're at the tennis court."

The excited foreigners pounded toward the British legation, and found there, on the tennis courts, a detachment of Indian Sikhs. A low cheer came from the defenders as they crowded in close, calling out unintelligible greetings, laughing and crying.

More and more Sikhs came funneling out of the Sluice Gate, advancing up Canal Street. These giant-turbaned men,

legs thick with mud, faces gaunt with fatigue, beards matted and dirty, milled about the tennis courts in confusion. Fierce warriors, they backed off, eyes popping in alarm. No one had told them about this hazard. They were soldiers prepared to fight and, if necessary, to die, but not to deal with this mob of excited men who pressed in to pound their backs and wring their hands. Even less were they prepared to cope with women who tried to kiss them. They searched anxiously for help.

It arrived in the person of General Gaselee, who came clattering up on a charger. He swung to the ground and stood there, a broad smile on his weary face, sweat staining the high collar of his military blouse, eyes misting, his throat thick with emotion.

The British had won the race, and though it was a victory without political or military significance, the British nationals took great pride in the achievement. Two hours later, American infantrymen reached the legations proper, and the Russians showed up an hour after that. The Japanese came along that evening. The disconsolate General Frey and his French sailors did not put in an appearance at the compound until the morning of August 15. The race, pointless and fruitless, was over.

Lady MacDonald made her way through the crowd. By some miracle of female ingenuity, she was perfectly groomed, her lace-trimmed gown and wide-brimmed hat making her look as if she had just come from a garden party.

"General Gaselee," she said graciously, offering her hand. "How good of you to come . . ."

The legations were relieved.

15 A Royal Procession

Even as the troops of the hated foreign devils streamed into China's capital city, the Manchu Court, in typical fashion, stood immobile. Flight, obviously, was indicated, yet to this end no preparations had been made, though the fall of Peking was clearly imminent to many around the Empress Dowager.

Now, in the morning hours of August 15, hurried steps were being taken. With the assistance of servants, Tzu Hsi shed her colorful finery, donning instead the coarse dark-blue homespun worn by the peasant women of her regime. While one servant dressed her hair in typically severe Chinese style, another trimmed her long fingernails to a less conspicuous length.

"The bullets come close," whimpered one servant.

Tzu Hsi gazed haughtily at the frightened woman. "They sound no different from the crying of cats. Do cats frighten you?"

The Emperor arrived at Tzu Hsi's apartment. He had been taking part in elaborate religious ceremonies and was dressed in pearl-studded robes and a scarlet-tasseled hat. Tzu Hsi rose as he entered, her face impassive, her black eyes alert.

"We must leave Peking this very day. We will depart in secret. Prepare yourself. Dress as I have done, so that none will recognize you."

The Emperor wet his lips nervously. Tzu Hsi made him

feel uncomfortable. "But what of my attendants? They must have time to pack my belongings."

"You will take only what you wear, nothing more. And there will be only a handful of grand councilors attending us. We leave under cover of darkness in three common carts. Now prepare yourself."

As night enveloped Peking, Tzu Hsi and her retinue attended to last-minute details. A small group of Imperial concubines appeared before her to pay their respects. Earlier Tzu Hsi had issued a decree forbidding any of them to accompany the Emperor. Now one of their number stepped forward.

"I would, with respect, address Your Highness." This was the Pearl Concubine, the Emperor's favorite, a pale-faced, delicate creature with a determined tilt of chin.

"Speak then. There is not much time."

"I submit, with respect, that it is my belief the Emperor should remain in Peking. It surely is what the people expect of the Lord of Ten Thousand Years."

Tzu Hsi fixed the young woman with an unblinking stare, seeing much in the Pearl Concubine she admired, much of her own youthful ambition, much of her own impetuous fearlessness. But the Empress Dowager had neither the time nor the mind for anyone who opposed her will. Besides, she had long ago decided that those very qualities which she admired in the Pearl Concubine made the younger woman a personal threat.

"The Emperor leaves Peking tonight," Tzu Hsi said testily, her anger mounting. For the last week, she had lived with tension in ever-increasing amounts. Never had she been a safe one to cross; today that was truer than ever.

The Pearl Concubine persisted. "Then I beg you permit me to accompany His Majesty in flight." It was the final error. A red mist descended over Tzu Hsi's eyes. Her mouth twitched and she pointed a rigidly steady finger at the girl.

"Throw the wretched creature down a well!"

A pair of husky servants stepped forward and took hold of the suddenly terrified girl, dragging her out of the royal presence.

"Have mercy on the girl," the Emperor dared to say. "She is only a stupid woman."

Tzu Hsi ignored him. She nodded in the direction of the servants who had paused, and a moment later the Pearl Concubine disappeared forever from the Imperial Court.

The carts stood ready outside the palace, as did those who were to make the journey with the Empress Dowager. A courtier hurried to her apartment.

"Everything is prepared, Your Highness."

She nodded and started out after the man, pausing in the doorway to look back. On the thick luxurious cover of her bed lay a richly embroidered coat of black satin; beneath, a pair of Manchu slippers. Two boxes were overturned, their contents, blue-and-yellow handkerchiefs, spilling out. She thought of the huge camphor-wood boxes lining the walls of her other rooms, boxes filled with coats and trousers of different colors, sparkling with pearls and laced intricately with gold thread. She thought of the sable coats lined with white fox fur, of her collection of foreign clocks. A wry smile briefly touched the regal mouth; there was no time for such thoughts. Her shoulders straightened and she turned her back on the room.

It was raining as the caravan of Peking carts creaked through the Gate of Military Prowess. No one paid much attention to three common carts moving slowly through the night, the shabbily dressed occupants obviously peasants who carried no luggage, no boxes of clothes.

The rain beat a bitter tattoo on the hoods of the carts. Tzu Hsi said nothing, remembering instead an earlier time when she had fled along this same path while behind her thundered the great guns of the barbarians. It was forty years earlier that the young concubine had left Peking with Hsien-feng,

her lord and master, to escape the advancing armies of France and England. There were certain similarities. On both occasions the Emperor had been a weak and futile man, and both flights had been made in confusion and stress. Where the first retreat had been to the north, to Jehol, beyond the Great Wall, this time she ordered her people to Sian, capital of Shensi Province in the southwest, but by a roundabout route to Kalgan in the northwest in order to confuse any pursuers. It would take two months to travel the seven hundred miles, a journey filled with anxiety and suffering.

The tiny Imperial caravan wound through the countryside, unrecognized. Rain continued to fall on it and Tzu Hsi and the Emperor were constantly wet and miserable. They drank rain water to quench their thirst, for the wells had all been despoiled by decapitated human heads. Food was also a problem, for the fleeing army and the Boxers had looted every village and farm.

In due course they came to a small hamlet whose magistrate, Wu Yung, felt a powerful obligation to the Dynasty. He arranged for them to be housed in a warm, dry room at the local inn, supplying them with dry clothing and, more important, with bowls of coarse porridge. Tzu Hsi and the Emperor were forced, however, to share the one pair of chopsticks the magistrate had been able to find.

The sound of their rapid eating came to him as he waited outside the door of their room, and he was pleased to listen to their noisy enjoyment of the simple fare. Inspired, he rooted about the village until he found five eggs, which he boiled and submitted to the Imperial personages.

As the royal party put more mileage between themselves and the *yang kuei-tzu*, fear of pursuit lessened. The trio of common carts struggled up steep mountain ranges, through deep gorges, across swift rivers. Behind, supposedly loyal garrisons were sworn to guard village, road and pass against possible pursuit. The caravan began to grow, and its com-

plexion was radically altered, swelled by many of the foremost reactionaries from Peking who had managed to escape and overtake Their Highnesses. As the retinue became increasingly impressive, life became more tolerable, and soon porridge was replaced by bird's-nest soup and sedan chairs took the place of the Peking carts. Retreat turned into a leisurely autumn tour of inspection.

By the end of September, Old Buddha had led her followers to Sian, her first visit to the interior of China since her childhood. With time came the realization that the barbarians had no intention of seeking her out. What's more, no demands for the punishment of her person were being made. This came as a surprise, since, had the situation been reversed, she knew she would have acted in a much more vindictive manner. She was certain that the Powers would make claims against the government of China; concessions would be required, indemnities demanded; but the lopping off of royal heads was not a prerequisite of peace. She relaxed.

It was not very long before the old ways were resumed in the Imperial Court in Sian. Intrigue was everywhere and graft was once again widespread. Scandal brewed and gossip was whispered. And the nails on the Empress Dowager's fingers began to achieve their former graceful proportions.

Normalcy had returned to the Manchu Court.

Normalcy returned also to the legations.

After a brief moment of elation at their salvation, the attitude of those who had lived through the siege changed, and depression settled down upon them. Some people even looked back on the recent dangers with a touch of nostalgia.

"No one will ever understand what really happened here," men told each other.

"It's as if a play has come to its end. During the fighting we were important."

"Now that's all gone."

And to fill the void came concrete causes of discontent, for the entire legation area overflowed with people and activity. Where once there had been order and design, now there was only confusion. Guns, ammunition, supplies, pack animals, troops, were everywhere. No longer was a precise daily routine imposed on the diplomatic community. There were no more watches to stand, no more community meals to prepare, no more meetings at the Bell Tower at which to argue the merits of the latest rumors.

Peace had brought freedom back to the compounds, and with it came individual responsibility. And discontent. Each man now had to forage for himself, see to his own welfare, his own food. Jealousies were born and, as animosities sprang into the open, arguments ensued. Forecasts of eventual conflicts between the Allies were made, with a certain joyful anticipation by some people.

Though the Powers were in command of Peking, it was a capital without a government. The Court had fled and the mandarin corps seemingly had vanished into thin air. The Imperial armies had also disappeared, while the only evidence remaining of the Boxers were bits of crimson ribbon still littering the streets.

But the fighting was not quite finished. The Peitang, the North Cathedral, was still under siege, and Bishop Favier, his priests and followers, a total of 3400 people, still held out.

General Frey, as soon as he entered Peking, began making plans to advance on the Peitang. Here France would finally find its glory in combat, he was certain.

"You'll have to countermand your orders, General," General Chaffee informed him, his manner blunt.

"And why is that, *monsieur?*"

"Because, sir, I am about to launch an attack against the Imperial City. My entire contingent is committed to that action. I can detach no troops to support you at the Peitang."

General Frey's face sagged, his enthusiasm waned, but only

momentarily. He brightened. "Very well, *monsieur*. I will relieve the Peitang tomorrow then." The glory of France would not be denied after all.

It was seven o'clock in the morning when American soldiers began advancing toward the high pink walls of the Imperial City, the 14th Infantry leading the assault against the fanatical Boxers still resisting. Battering rams were brought up to force open the gates. Heavy small-arms fire greeted the members of the 14th, and they suffered a great many casualties as they drove ahead, until finally the walls were scaled and the Stars and Stripes fluttered in the breeze.

Caught up in the spirit of battle, the Americans then surged toward the Forbidden City. Three gates stood between them and their objective. At the cost of fifteen dead infantrymen, plus numerous wounded, they forced the first two gates, then headed for the final barrier. Suddenly, and without apparent reason, General Chaffee ordered an end to the advance. Sullenly angry and confused, the men of the 14th pulled back.

There was, of course, a simple reason for the withdrawal order. Chaffee had been influenced by the Russians and the French, who believed that to violate the sacred precincts of the Forbidden City would leave a lasting scar on the Chinese and serve no practical purpose. So the American soldiers found themselves back where they started, bitter toward Chaffee for ordering what had turned out to be a futile and costly attack.

August 16 was General Frey's last chance. A powerful force marched for the Peitang. But the general's aspirations were doomed. As his men came upon the access routes to the Peitang, they saw between themselves and the cathedral a body of Japanese troops some three hundred strong. Nobody could readily explain what they were doing there, except that they had already relieved the Peitang.

Nevertheless, the French citizens who had been trapped in the Peitang broke loose with a suitable amount of cheering and weeping. It was a moment charged with emotion and so not difficult to forget the presence of the Japanese soldiers.

The siege of the legations was over. During its 55 days 66 foreigners had been killed in the fighting; 2 more adults, plus 6 infants, died from other causes, and over 150 people were wounded. No one knew how many more casualties there were among the Chinese converts within the compounds.

No one took the trouble to count them.

With the Powers in Peking in force, the flight of the Empress Dowager, and the rout of the Boxers, many of the missionaries felt it was now safe to resume their work in the outlying districts, and each day more of their number departed for the provinces. Lemuel Gordon was ordered to report to his post and resume teaching the children of native converts. All at once he was faced with a decision he could not make alone. Life in China was no longer as appealing as it once was. The death of his son had changed all that and he had no doubt that Helen would want to return to Philadelphia where they might forget the tragedy that had befallen them.

"We don't have to go back to the school," he said. "My contract expires in less than two months. I'm sure I can get a release."

"And do what?" Helen replied flatly. Never particularly robust, she had lost weight since Charles had died, and her cheeks were hollow, her eyes rimmed and listless, her manner distant.

"We could go back home, to Philadelphia, try and put all this behind us."

Helen shook her head and her eyes seemed to clear. "Forget? Oh, no. I want to remember Charles forever. But he's

gone now and nothing will bring him back. I'm grateful I still have you and Sally. Other people were less fortunate."

Lemuel kissed his wife's cheek tenderly.

"Then we'll go back to the mission?"

"I'll begin to pack."

16 Off With Their Heads . . . !

Victory at Peking created problems for the Powers, now that the generals no longer had anyone to fight and the diplomats could find no one with whom to negotiate.

The city was partitioned into zones, a different nation governing each, with the result that disagreements between them erupted almost immediately. Typical was the French complaint that theirs was the worst sector. To mollify them, Mr. Conger diminished the American zone to the profit of France.

The population of Peking had shrunk, thousands of people having fled the embattled city. They were slow to return, and many services were not fulfilled. Looting was extensive, by both Chinese civilians and Allied soldiery, of the lowest as well as the highest ranks, and corpses lay rotting in the streets.

In time the ponderous bureaucracies that were the powers and the Manchu Dynasty found each other, and peace negotiations finally got under way.

The Imperial Court anticipated stringent demands for punishment and retribution from the foreigners, and so Tzu Hsi, who wished to soften the inevitable blow, cast about for likely scapegoats. The rice paddies were full of them. There were clusters of reactionary princes who had been caught with their hands in the cookie jar. Tzu Hsi issued a decree: Princes Tuan and Chuang were banished for life at Mukden; Prince

Lien was confined to his house; Duke Lan was demoted; still others were slated for imprisonment, and some were sent to a remote frontier and sentenced to hard labor for life.

When the Allies still were not satisfied, alterations in the decree were made. Prince Tuan and Duke Lan now were sentenced to be decapitated. Orders were issued for Ying Nien, Chao Shu-chiao and Prince Chuang to commit suicide. Yu Hsien and Hsu Cheng-yu were informed that they too would be separated from their heads. Further, 119 minor officials were sentenced to various punishments, mainly death. None of these men, many of whom were then free and powerful, attempted to evade their fate.

Even more, Prince Ch'un was dispatched to Berlin where he offered the German Kaiser Imperial regrets for the murder of Baron von Ketteler, promising that a monument would be erected on the spot where the minister had been killed. All official examinations in those cities where foreigners had been mistreated were to be suspended. Na T'ung, vice-president of the Board of Revenue, proceeded to Japan with regrets for the murder of a minor functionary of that nation's legation, a Mr. Sugiyama. Sugiyama, however, did not rate a monument, though monuments were to be erected by China in each of the foreign settlements which had been "desecrated."

Further, arms and ammunition were not to be imported for five years, and the legation quarter of Peking was to be reserved for the residence only of foreigners. The forts at Taku, and any others that might conceivably obstruct free communication between Peking and the sea, were to be leveled; and an edict was issued which prohibited, on pain of death, membership in any antiforeign society. Other provisions included amendments to the Treaties of Commerce and Navigation, and the reformation of the Tsungli Yamen, with its precedence over the six other ministries of state.

Then came the matter of indemnities. The Allies, after

considerable haggling, fixed a price—$337 million—which all the foreign ministers agreed to, except Mr. Conger.

"My government stands opposed to such an excessive sum," he said.

"And just what sum does your government approve?" Pichon asked.

"A figure under two hundred million dollars."

"Nonsense!"

"Too little by far," added Sir Claude.

That evoked a strong response from Field Marshal Count von Waldersee, the representative of the Kaiser. "It seems," he said crossly, "that the desire of the United States is that nobody shall get anything out of China."

The argument continued, and in the end the larger figure was agreed upon. In order to collect, the Allies had to further weaken China's sovereignty by taking over some of her resources, such as the maritime customs, and part of the internal customs, thereby sowing the seeds of future discontent, since it would take thirty-nine years for payment in full to be made. The function of the Manchu Dynasty became that of a debt-collection agency.

If time heals all wounds, it also offers a sense of security to those who feel their lives have been threatened, and such was the situation with Tzu Hsi. After one long year in exile, she felt it would be safe for her to return to Peking. Accordingly, plans were made and the Emperor issued a decree:

> Our Sacred Mother's advanced age renders its necessary that we should take the greatest care of her health, so that she may attain to peaceful longevity; a long journey in the heat being evidently undesirable, we have fixed on the nineteenth day of the seventh moon to commence our return journey and are now preparing to escort Her Majesty by way of Honan.

The return of Old Buddha was quite different from her flight. A gigantic caravan set out from Sian, including two

thousand carts, cavalry, and hundreds of mounted officials. Ten thousand flags fluttered brightly in the autumn breezes, and the blaring of many trumpets heralded the royal coming and cleared the roads. In the center of the lengthy procession rode the Imperial party in bright yellow sedan chairs, surrounded by courtiers and servants. This was no defeated ruler crawling supinely back to plead for mercy, but rather a triumphant return for a haughty personage who accepted the cheers of the peasants along the right of way as her due.

Even the foreigners in Peking looked forward to the return of Tzu Hsi, expecting with good reason that she would restore order where there was only chaos. Preparations were made in the capital city to greet her properly. The streets were cleared of debris, and indications of the recent unpleasantness between the Chinese and the foreigners were eliminated, honor guards were selected and rehearsed, their uniforms cleaned, their brass polished, their boots waxed.

At that same time, in Peking and elsewhere in the world, statesmen and historians were attempting to understand the reasons for and the results of the Boxer Uprising. They wanted to learn what it was that had brought about the violent confrontation of East and West, and what, if anything, might be done to prevent its repetition. It was clear to them all that the Boxer outbreak was a catastrophe, for in addition to the obvious physical cruelties, it resulted in the further impoverishment of an already deprived people. The movement openly signaled the birth in blood and violence of Chinese nationalism, something many foreigners, diplomats, merchants and soldiers alike, failed to recognize, even as they had failed to recognize Chinese loyalties to the old ways and traditions. This was a people that did not wish to be converted to a foreign religion, nor to a foreign body of thought, nor to a foreign culture; and when the Communist revolution took place, promises of the preservation of the ancient

ways of life were given. Such promises, though empty, eased the path to victory.

Where to pin the blame for the Boxer rising? Perhaps in no one single place. The causes of the trouble were rooted deep in the differences between two civilizations, East and West. The West sought to progress and expand, as indicated by its industrial advancement; China hoped to maintain its traditions, which had for so long proven satisfactory. Neither was at fault in its aim. Unhappily, the aspirations of two such unlike civilizations were bound to bring them into conflict.

But since it was the West that sought to effect change in the other, the West that aimed at making alterations in the ancient ways, the West that was the aggressor, the greater responsibility must surely lie there. Arrogance and stupidity are human qualities, and both sides possessed an abundance of each. The Powers shortsightedly failed to consider how their nationalistic aims would cause the Chinese to react, or, for that matter, how they would affect the world. To the imperialistic powers the Manchu Empire was an inert mass of potential wealth upon which they could work their wills without fear or rebellion.

The Chinese were no less arrogant or blind. They saw the Westerner as a barbarian, a white devil, possessed of little that was worthy, other than his superior instruments of war. China agreed to treaties that neither her officials nor her people had any intention of obeying, and in fact did not carry out. No respecter of other nations, the Celestial Kingdom gave no respect to international law.

Neither side ever considered the legitimate interests of the other.

It is difficult, even now, to believe that the Powers failed to recognize the significance of the *coup d'etat,* bloodless though it was, that brought Tzu Hsi to power. Nor did the general unrest of the citizenry make an impression on diplomatic thinking. Oblivious to the growing determination of Chinese

extremists to oppose by force any further foreign inroads, diplomats viewed the outbreaks in the North China provinces as merely local disturbances.

How different our world today might be had the Powers been able to recognize the Boxer revolt for what it really was, a popular uprising giving powerful evidence of general discontent among the people with both their personal lot and the general situation in the country.

The internal condition of the Celestial Kingdom must come in for its share of the responsibility. Motivated by corruption and selfishness, her rulers kept the populace in ignorance and poverty. When aid was offered, it seldom reached the ordinary persons for whom it was intended.

Yet despite everything, had the Boxer movement been relegated only to the northern countryside, the Powers would have taken no military action. And without the encouragement of the Empress Dowager there would have been no attack on the legations. Why had she given her consent to such drastic action?

To successfully plumb all the motives of Tzu Hsi and her pride of princes is well-nigh impossible, for unfathomable schemes lie buried deep in a labyrinth of subtle maneuverings. Conjecture indicates this much: hatred of foreigners was extreme, and an attack on them was expected to stimulate general patriotic fervor; there was a very real fear of the legation guards and the territorial ambitions of the foreigners; lastly, the Court felt a genuine need to eliminate all witnesses to its, and the Boxers', infamies. The attack was made, the siege laid, the outcome known.

No one was concerned with the whys and wherefores as the royal entourage approached its destination, for there was a much more pressing matter. Tzu Hsi's soothsayers had indicated the precise moment that would be most favorable for her entry into Peking, and now she worried that the

train might be too early, or too late. A trainman was brought into her presence in order to ease her concern, to assure her that her fears were groundless, and he was right. The train rolled into the capital city on schedule. A pleased Tzu Hsi decorated the railway official with the Order of the Double Dragon.

A military band struck up a rousing march as the train chugged to a stop. An honor guard of U.S. Marines in colorful dress uniforms snapped to attention.

"Present arms!" bellowed Sergeant Joe MacClintock, and his men snapped gleaming ceremonial rifles to a salute. Willie Sommers froze into position, eyes glued to the front, proud of his promotion to private first class, proud to be present at such a historic occasion. He made a mental vow to write a long letter to his mother that night, telling her all about this momentous day.

Hordes of people had turned out to watch the arrival of the Empress Dowager, including most of the foreign population. Applause from Chinese and foreigner alike greeted Old Buddha as she alighted from the train. There was general accord that Tzu Hsi's return was a good thing.

"Now we know that the troubles are over," one diplomat told another blandly. "Now life can get back to the way it was."

He was wrong. Life in China, as elsewhere in the world, was in a state of flux, and new struggles were being fomented as men sought better lives for themselves and their families. Sun Yat-sen, son of a Chinese peasant, product of a Church of England missionary school and a Christian convert, would soon alter the face of the Middle Kingdom to a degree never fancied by the Boxers or the Taipings.

A practicing physician, Sun Yat-sen fostered a revolution in 1911 which forced the Emperor's abdication and created a republican form of government, with himself as its first president. But the following year, Sun resigned his post in

favor of Yüan Shih-k'ai, a monarchist of extensive influence and power, who promptly established a military rule so repressive that Sun's followers were moved to sporadic revolts over the years.

It was during this period that China, which had inched ponderously through century after century resisting change, executed an almost complete about face. Traditional isolationism soon lay shredded and unmourned, with the West playing an integral role in Chinese daily life. Foreigners were to be found everywhere, seemingly in control of the nation, occupying key posts, their influence strengthened by economic ties.

External pressures mounted with the growing belligerence of Japan, encouraged by memories of her quick victory in the first China-Japanese War. Standing on the side of the Allies against Germany in the early days of World War I, Japan sensed an opportunity for national aggrandizement—she announced her intention of appropriating all territory once occupied by Germany in China. This, in turn, led to the issuance of the notorious Twenty-One Demands, virtually a blueprint for national slavery. The Chinese, however, were determined to frustrate the Japanese scheme and did so, in part by lengthy and querulous negotiations, in part by joining the war on the side of the Allies, though no Chinese soldiers ever actually fought in Europe.

Nevertheless, with the telling argument of being on the side of right in her favor, China demanded the return from Japan of Kiaochow and the Shantung territory. China's position in relation to Japan was further improved by the Nine-Power Treaty of 1921–22, though in guaranteeing Chinese territorial integrity and the Open Door policy, it seemed to many people only to substitute England and the United States for Japan in the role of exploiter.

Vital changes born of the Boxer Uprising continued to take place. A tough-minded soldier named Chiang Kai-shek was

busy gaining experience and forming opinions which he would put into practice when he formed a government in 1928; while in Moscow, an ambitious Chinese, Mao Tse-tung, absorbed the techniques of Communist revolution. The Chinese stew became more complicated as internal struggles pitted Chinese against Chinese, as hostile forces gathered without, poised for invasion, with war imminent. Change was the global order of the day.

Nothing could ever be the same.

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About the Author

Burt Hirschfeld was born and raised in New York City, where he now makes his home. Following his graduation from DeWitt Clinton High School, he worked at a succession of odd jobs, until the outbreak of World War II, when he enlisted in the Army. He served four years in the Engineer Corps, spending thirty-six months overseas, his final assignment in Korea, a post which allowed him to broaden his knowledge of Oriental people, customs and history. After his discharge, he attended Florida Southern College, and subsequently New York University and The City College of New York. Since completing his education, he has been an actor, a radio announcer, a stage manager and a press agent. Now embarked on a full-time writing career, he writes books and magazine articles for young people and adults.

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FIFTY-FIVE DAYS OF TERROR is Mr. Hirschfeld's second book for young people, the first being STAGESTRUCK: YOUR CAREER IN THEATRE. Now embarked on a full-time writing career, he also writes for adults, fiction and non-fiction, magazine articles as well as books.