CHAPTER XIX.

ADVANTAGES GAINED BY RUSSIA AND AMERICA—A SERIOUS "HITCH" —THE TWO IMPORTANT DEMANDS—THE RIGHT OF A RESIDENT MINISTER—THE CHINESE SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT: MODE OF INFLUENCING IT—PRINCIPLE OF DIRECT COMMUNICATION—THE CONCESSION GAINED—THE FINAL PROCESSION—SIGNING OF THE TREATY—AN EFFECTIVE ILLUMINATION—A RETROSPECT—THE NEW PORTS—THE TRANSIT-DUES—CLIMATE OF TIENTSIN—ABSENCE OF SURVEYS—GEOGRAPHY OF THE COUNTRY—ABUNDANCE OF ICE—A SKITTLE ALLEY—CURIOSITY-HUNTING.

MEANTIME the work of negotiation was progressing with the neutrals, whose task was less surrounded with difficulties than that of the quasi-belligerents, more rapidly than with ourselves.

On the 14th of June, Count Poutiatine signed his treaty, in which the chief concessions gained were, the right of correspondence upon an equal footing between the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Prime Minister or First Minister of the Council of State at Pekin; permission to send diplomatic agents to that city upon special occasions; liberty of circulation throughout the Empire of missionaries only, under a system of passports; and the right to trade at ports at present open, and, in addition, at

Swatow, at a port in Formosa, and another in Hainan.

Four days afterwards, the American treaty was signed by Mr Reed, in which the same privilege of special missions to Pekin was accorded to the Government of the United States, and the same additional ports opened to its trade.

These were by no means trifling concessions, and, eked out by "the most favoured nation clause," were a great advance on the privileges formerly enjoyed by Russia and the United States in China. It would be a mistake, however, to suppose that they were willingly granted by the Chinese Government. Much more moderate demands, when preferred the year before by the Ministers of Russia and the United States respectively, had been peremptorily refused. Indeed, both Count Poutiatine and Mr Reed, upon concluding these treaties, expressed, in the most frank and candid manner, the conviction they entertained, that the concessions they had gained had been due to the pressure exercised, at this juncture, upon the Imperial Cabinet by the allied Governments of France and England.

By the end of the week, after several pretty stormy discussions between the Commissioners and Mr Bruce and Messrs Wade and Lay, who were acting on behalf of Lord Elgin, a general agreement had been arrived at as to the terms of the British Treaty. It had been resolved that the clauses should be drawn up forthwith in English and Chinese, and the evening of the 26th had been fixed for the signature.

An incident, however, occurred on the evening of the 25th, which threatened to lead to very serious embarrassments. Among the clauses in the British treaty, which were not included in the other treaties, there were two which were most pertinaciously resisted by the Chinese Commissioners. The one provided that the British Minister in China should be entitled to reside permanently at Pekin, or to visit it occasionally at the option of the British Government; and the other, that British subjects should have the right of travelling to all parts of the Empire of China for trading purposes. Having failed in their endeavours to induce Lord Elgin to recede from these demands, the Commissioners had recourse to the Plenipotentiaries of the other powers then at Tientsin, and begged their intervention in conveying to Lord Elgin the important piece of intelligence, that on the previous day an Imperial decree had been received from Pekin, to the effect, that not merely degradation, but decapitation, would be inflicted upon Kweiliang and Hwashana if they conceded these two points.

Whether or not any such decree had actually been received was problematical; but the appeal *ad misericordiam* was difficult to resist, more particularly as it was made just at the moment that the first rumours of Keying's death reached us. As the French Plenipotentiary had not included in his treaty the specific demands now objected to, it would have been unreasonable to suppose that he would consent to enforce them by hostile measures. The circum-

stances of the case were obviously in the highest degree critical. To give way was perhaps to imperil all that was most valuable in the proposed Treaty; for the Commissioners, emboldened by success, would in all probability have proceeded to call in question other clauses, such as that for the settlement of the transit dues, which were peculiar to the English treaty, in the hope of indefinitely protracting negotiations. To persevere in the face of the representations which had been made, was to run the risk of isolation, perhaps of a hostile advance on Pekin, unaccompanied by allies. Nevertheless, Lord Elgin, after full consideration, resolved to adhere to his original demands; and upon the morning of the 26th he authorised Mr Bruce to communicate his determination to the Commissioners in peremptory terms, believing that language of a decided character would be the best protection to the Commissioners against the Imperial wrath, which, it was alleged, their acquiescence in his demands would provoke.

It is scarcely necessary to enlarge upon the motives which induced the Ambassador to exhibit so much persistence, in so far as the second of these demands is concerned. The commercial advantages which England must derive from the vast extension of her import and export trade consequent upon the "*exploitation*" of the interior of the Empire by her merchants, are too manifest to require elucidation. With reference to the other point, however—viz. the power of appointing a resident Minister at Pekin—as opinions

are divided in England as to the expediency of taking advantage of this privilege, the concession of which cost the Imperial Government so sharp a pang, it is necessary to say a few words in explanation of the value which Lord Elgin attached to it.

Any person who has attentively observed the working of the anomalous and altogether unique system under which the vast Empire of China is governed, will have perceived, that though ruling under altogether different conditions, supported not by a physical force, but by a moral prestige unrivalled in power and extent, the Emperor of China can say with no less truth than Napoleon, "L'Empire c'est moi." Backed by no standing army worth the name, depending for the stability of his authority neither upon his military genius nor administrative capacity, he exercises a rule more absolute than any European despot, and is enabled to thrill with his touch the remotest provinces of the Empire, deriving his ability to do so from that instinct of cohesion and love of order by which his subjects are super-eminently characterised.

But while it happens that the wonderful endurance of a Chinaman will enable him to bear an amount of injustice from his Government which would revolutionise a Western state, it is no less true that the limit may be passed when a popular movement ensues, assuming at times an almost constitutional character. When any *emeute* of this description takes place, as directed against a local official, the

Imperial Government invariably espouses the popular cause, and the individual, whose guilt is inferred from the existence of disturbance, is at once degraded. Thus a certain sympathy or tacit understanding seems to exist between the Emperor and his subjects as to how far each may push their prerogative ; and so long as neither exceed these limits, to use their own expression, " the wheels of the chariot of Imperial Government revolve smoothly on their axles." So it happens that disturbances of greater or less import are constantly occurring in various parts of the country. Sometimes they assume the most formidable dimensions, and spread like a running fire over the Empire ; but if they are not founded on a real grievance, they are not supported by popular sympathy, and gradually die out, the smouldering embers kept alive perhaps, for some time, by the exertions of the more lawless part of the community. But the last spark ultimately expires, and its blackened trace is in a few years utterly effaced.

The late rebellion is in this waning stage. Nor did the Imperial Government trust so much to its armies as to the inert mass of public opinion which had not yet decided in its favour. So long as the capital is not threatened, and the lives of "the powers that are" there are not in absolute danger, they contemplate with comparative calmness the vicissitudes through which remote cities and provinces pass, contented to wait until the agitation shall have subsided, and then resume the old despotic sway, as

though nothing had happened. It affects their repose but slightly at the capital whether rebel or foreigner occupy some distant city. The patriotism of the loyal part of the population is evoked by Imperial decree; whether the people obediently respond, and are successful, or whether they are unsuccessful, or whether they disobediently refuse, is a matter which seems but little to disturb the philosophers at Pekin. Either the Imperial authority exists absolutely, or it has been entirely extinguished. In the latter case, unprovided with adequate physical means to restore it, the Emperor is forced into a fatalistic view of the subject.

A better illustration of the truth of the important principles above laid down could not be afforded than in the case of Canton. The instructions furnished by the Emperor to Yeh furnish unmistakable evidence of the inefficacy of protracted diplomacy at a distance to influence the policy of the Imperial Government in its treatment of foreigners; while, so far from the capture of Canton—which was the result of his acting in accordance with those instructions — humbling the Court of Pekin, as it was prophesied at Hong-Kong would be the case, the hauteur and obstinacy of the Imperial Government were increased by this event. The Prime Minister declined to communicate direct with Lord Elgin according to treaty, and refused to send commissioners to meet him at Shanghai. At a later period, when we were dallying in the Gulf, orders

were sent down to Canton calling out the Braves, who immediately responded to them, and attacked the city. Shortly after the signing of the Treaty, counter-orders were despatched disbanding them, and commanding them to remain at peace with foreigners, and these were also ultimately obeyed. The popular impression among the British heretofore had been, that the Canton question was purely local, and that authorities and Braves were alike acting independently of orders from Pekin.

But if these incidents went to show how impossible it was to influence the Court of Pekin by coercion applied at remote parts of the Empire, still more hopeless was it to effect this object by diplomacy exercised at a distance from the seat of government. Yeh's stubbornness and Keying's shuffling alike proved that a provincial governor, charged with the conduct of foreign affairs, was approved of at Court only so long as he could show that he was thwarting the barbarians, whether by obstinacy or craft. To bring conviction to the mind of a functionary so situated was of little avail, because it only made him an object of suspicion to his Imperial master. Lord Elgin's observation had therefore led him to the conclusion, that it was necessary to be at the heart to affect the extremities, and that it was impossible to affect the heart through the extremities. Conceiving this to be the knot of the situation, he determined to establish the principle of direct communication between the British Ambassador and the

Imperial Ministers at the capital, and to secure, at all events, the right of the former to a permanent residence at Pekin. It would rest with the Government whether to exercise the right or not, attended as it doubtless was with many objections of a practical character,—such as difficulties of access, severity of climate, absence of accommodation in the first instance, and almost absolute isolation. But whatever point might ultimately be fixed upon for the residence of the Minister, the fact that he had a right to be at Pekin would be a source of influence in his hands, scarcely less powerful than that which he might acquire by his actual presence there, and the dread of his exercising that right operate as a check not less effectual than if it was already in existence. It would still be *through* the heart, although not absolutely at it, that the extremities would be affected. It will be seen from Lord Elgin's despatch from Shanghai of the 5th November, which I have placed in the Appendix, upon what grounds he was ultimately induced to recommend non-residence at Pekin.

The decided tone held by Mr Bruce having convinced the Commissioners of the hopelessness of further resistance upon these points, it was arranged that the Treaty should be signed at the hour originally named. As it was deemed best that as much *eclat* as possible should be given to so important an event, the whole strength of the military force accompanied Lord Elgin as a guard of honour; while the Admiral

and most of the officers of the squadron also attended, a number of them having arrived from the ships in the Gulf for the purpose of being present.

The procession was one calculated to inspire the inhabitants of Tientsin with some respect. The military guard of 400 men, preceded by the band; the long array of chairs, and the body of spectators on foot, in full uniform, extending over a distance of nearly half a mile. The ships in the river were dressed out, and the crews manned the yards as the procession filed along the bank, which was lined with crowds of wondering Chinese.

In consequence of the heat of the weather, the hour fixed for the ceremony was somewhat late, and it was nearly dark before we had traversed the winding streets of the suburb, and crossed the plain in which the "Temple of the Oceanic Influences" was situated. We were received in the same hall which had been the scene of the former conference, but it was arranged in a more business-like manner. Instead of the long table covered with refreshments, three small square tables occupied the centre of the apartment. At the middle one of these Lord Elgin took his seat, flanked by a Commissioner on either side. The Admiral, together with some of the naval officers and members of the Mission, were seated at other tables, and the remaining space was densely crowded with European and Chinese spectators. Three large paper-lanterns lighted the business-tables, upon which the various copies of the Treaty were

soon spread out, and the process of signing and sealing commenced, the interest of the ceremony being sufficient to retain in silence the miscellaneous throng who were watching it.

Thus expired, on its fifteenth birthday, the treaty negotiated by Sir Henry Pottinger in 1843; for, by a curious coincidence, the day of the signing of the Treaty of Tientsin was the anniversary of the day upon which the Treaty of Nankin was ratified.

After the treaty was signed, tea and refreshments were handed round, though the Commissioners had scarcely provided for the reception of so many visitors. The Chinese attendants on the Commissioners remained closely grouped round their chiefs; while the exploratory propensities of British naval officers, and the reckless enterprise with which the more juvenile portion of them attacked every species of unwholesome dish that was placed in their way, rendered it desirable, for their own sakes, not to prolong the ceremony unnecessarily. It was nevertheless quite dark before the procession started on its return to the yamun. As we passed along the brink of the river, the crews of both French and English ships sent up long and hearty cheers; and Admiral Rigault's band welcomed us with the National Anthem.

On the following evening, when Baron Gros signed his treaty, there was an improvement in the programme; for, as the long procession of blue-coated and white-gaitered French marines were filing along

the river's bank, the darkness was suddenly dispelled by the blaze of blue-lights, and the Chinese crowd found itself unexpectedly brought out in strong relief beneath their vivid glare; and with ears deafened with the shouts of hundreds of barbarian throats, and eyes dazzled by the unearthly brilliancy which illuminated the scene, they gazed in amazement on each other and their own muddy river, and wondered, perhaps, whether the treaties, the signing of which was being thus vividly impressed upon their memory, would work as great a transformation in the Empire as the process of obtaining them had effected in their own city.

On entering our yamun, Lord Elgin received the congratulations of Baron Gros; and indeed it is scarcely possible to describe the feeling of satisfaction we experienced on this most successful termination to the doubts and anxieties of the past year. It wanted but a few days of the anniversary of our first arrival in the Celestial Empire; and although much doubtless remained to be done before we could hope to turn our faces homewards, our future labours would be of a far more pleasing character than those which had just been concluded. Up to this point we had met with a series of disappointments; now we were sanguine enough to hope that an era of success was about to commence.

We could bear tranquilly to review the history of the events of the past year. We could recall the effect produced by the first staggering intelli-

gence we received at Galle of the Indian mutinies, and the consequent diversion at Singapore of all our thoughts and energies from China to Bengal, and remember how our three weeks' stay there was devoted to the annihilation of all our hopes and plans, while Lord Elgin was solely employed in divesting himself of all his means for carrying out the objects of his mission. We thought of the time when it seemed so hopeless that these were ever to be achieved—that we went to India in sheer despair—and learned for our consolation, that though the China force had saved Bengal, the China mission had lost all claim to public interest in presence of the appalling events occurring in this quarter; we recollected with horror the dismal months we spent in the harbour of Hong-Kong, living on board a Peninsular and Oriental Company's steamer during the hottest and stormiest season of the year, uncertain whether a force was ever coming to relieve us from our inaction.

There were other and more recent periods which afforded us very little satisfaction to look back upon, and when our anxieties were felt the more keenly because it seemed likely that the prize was to be snatched from us when it was within our very grasp; but we could afford to laugh now at these reminiscences, and the adverse influences which seemed to have beset our path from the commencement, only served to enhance the pleasure of success. Hostilities with the Empire of China had terminated with a loss to the

British arms of about twenty men killed in action (since our first arrival in the Empire), and a treaty had been signed far more extensive in its scope, and more subversive of Imperial prejudices, than that concluded fifteen years before, after a bloody and expensive war, which had been protracted over a period of two years. The reflection that we should probably be compelled to return to the south without visiting Pekin, would indeed force itself painfully upon us; but for the moment satisfaction predominated, and we endeavoured to keep gloomy thoughts out of view.

As the result, then, of the process applied to the Imperial Government, we had obtained, first, the two points of a resident Minister at Pekin, and permission to travel and trade in all parts of the Empire already referred to. Next, besides Teng-chow in the province of Shantung, and the ports opened in the islands of Hainan and Formosa by the other treaties, we opened New-chwang in Manchouria. The political importance of this latter port will be evident from a glance at the map, in which will be seen that it is the nearest seaport to the Soongary river, a tributary to the Amour, and navigable for steamers as far as Petuné; it is also the port of Moukhden, the Imperial capital of Manchouria. In addition to these ports we opened Chin-kiang, and secured the ports on the river Yang-tse-Kiang between that point and Hankow, a celebrated mercantile emporium in the heart of the Empire. A condition was attached to this conces-

sion, declaring that it was not to come into effect until the rebels were expelled from its shores.

Lastly—and this, perhaps, in a commercial point of view, was the most important clause of the Treaty—the much-vexed question of transit-dues was finally set at rest. A few words are necessary in explanation of this clause. Some misapprehension has prevailed in England as to the nature of these duties, and they were for some time regarded as applied only to foreign produce passing into the interior, and to native produce intended for exportation. It is, however, universally understood and admitted in China, that the transit-dues are a tax in the form of an *octroi*, levied upon all produce indiscriminately which passes into the interior provinces of the Empire, or from one to another. Inasmuch, then, as it is one of the permanent sources of revenue to the Chinese Government, to demand the total abolition of these dues would have been a harsh and unjustifiable measure; nor was it likely that the Imperial Government would have consented to a domestic change involving such an enormous sacrifice of revenue. On the other hand, the Treaty of Nankin left the question in so unsatisfactory a state, that it has ever since proved a permanent source of complaint to the British merchant. That Treaty simply provided that the transit-duty should not be increased beyond the then existing rates; but as those rates were never ascertained, this provision proved, in effect, of no avail, and two evil consequences followed from

the position in which the matter was left. In the first place, a number of articles—and more especially the important article of tea—were subjected occasionally to very heavy imposts under the name of Tea-duties, whereby, in point of fact, the provisions of the tariff were in a great measure rendered nugatory. In the second place, the power of indefinite taxation, thus left to the Chinese Government, introduced an element of great uncertainty into mercantile transactions, both in exports and imports.

In the various suggestions and communications which, at Lord Elgin's invitation, had been given to him by different mercantile bodies in China, this difficulty had been repeatedly referred to, but none of them contained any plan for its removal. It was met in the British Treaty, negotiated at Tientsin, by an article, enabling the British merchant to purchase, at the rate of 2½ per cent *ad valorem* in the case of imports at the port of entry, and in the case of exports at the first inland barrier through which his commodities would pass, a certificate enabling him to carry his goods duty free, in the latter case, to the port of shipment, and in the former, to any place in the interior of China to which it may be destined.

In a separate clause the amount of indemnity claimed by us for losses sustained at Canton was stated at two millions of taels (about £650,000), and a further sum of two million taels was claimed in compensation for the expenses of the war.

The above were the most important points in which the British Treaty of Tientsin differed from the other treaties signed at the same place and time. The first great step having been thus achieved towards the placing of our relations with the Celestial Empire upon a new and more substantial basis than had hitherto subsisted, it only remained for Lord Elgin to await the Imperial assent to the treaty which had just been negotiated, ere he finally bade adieu to Tientsin. Our experience of this "heavenly spot" had now extended over a period of a month, and we were not sorry to think that it was soon to be brought to a termination. During the last few days the temperature had been rapidly increasing. At first we had hot days, but the nights were cool, and the thermometer sometimes showed a variety of 20° in the twenty-four hours; now, however, the nights were beginning to be oppressive, and the thermometer ranged from 90° to 96° in the coolest part of the yamun. I am indebted to our medical attendant, Dr Saunders, for the annexed register of the temperature during our stay at Tientsin. Although the thermometer showed so high a range, the heat was not accompanied by those debilitating effects which so often attend it in tropical latitudes. The air was dry and pure, and the general health of the squadron remained good. We had been threatened with a rainy season in June, but with the exception of one or two heavy showers, the weather continued fine throughout the month.

It was indeed much to be regretted that,—as, during the first portion of our occupation of the river and Gulf, the climate was so favourable to the health of the men,—nothing should have been accomplished in surveying the unknown mouths of the Peiho, and in exploring some of its tributaries. For a period of three months upwards of twenty men-of-war lay idle in the Gulf, and during a number of weeks our gunboats navigated the Peiho, yet we sailed away from those shores with our geographical knowledge as limited as when we first arrived there. Beyond pulling for about two miles up the Grand Canal, we know nothing more of the course or depth of water of that channel of communication than is furnished in the records of the former embassies. As far as we went, we found water enough for gunboats, the banks being in places built up with wheat-straw and matting. The course is very winding, as indeed in this place it is, properly speaking, not a canal but a river, into which the Grand Canal is led some miles above its junction with the Peiho. It is called by the Chinese the Grain-bearing River. About a mile higher up the Peiho, and debouching into it on the same side as the Grand Canal, is a smaller canal, which takes a southerly course across the wheat plain, and was reported to lead to Ho-kien and the Peh-hu lake, and so into the southern parts of the province of Shansee.

About half a mile beyond this canal the Peiho is entered by a river apparently exceeding it in size and volume, commonly known as the Yen-ho, or Great

Salt River. It is spanned by a bridge of boats at its point of junction ; and to judge from the number and size of the junks with which the stream was crowded, must be an important channel of internal communication. Sir Frederick Nicolson pulled up it for a few hundred yards, and brought back a poor account of the depth of water ; but I have ridden along its banks for some miles, and have seen junks navigating it whose draught of water must have equalled, if not exceeded, that of our smallest class of gunboats. The direction which this river takes renders it important that we should know its capabilities, as it reaches a point to the west of Pekin, as near to that city as the Peiho approaches it on the east.

The only channel of water-communication we observed to enter the Peiho on its left bank, was a small canal which debouched opposite the peninsula upon which our yamun was situated. As far as I followed this canal, it pursued a northerly direction across the barren-looking steppe which I have already described. Its course was marked, not so much by the usual line of trees, as by large isolated mud villages, which doubtless it supplied with the means of intercommunication. It was navigated by very small junks, a number of which were often fastened in a long string to each other, and punted along till they came to a sharp turn or other impediment, when they would break up like a raft. This canal, I strongly suspect, connected the Peiho with the stream usually known as its northern mouth, and which enters the Gulf

about ten miles to the north of Takoo ; but this is mere conjecture, as I could not obtain any reliable information on the subject. From the different accounts one received in answer to geographical inquiries, it was evident how reluctant the people were to impart knowledge of their country to the barbarian.

If the climate of Tientsin was latterly somewhat oppressive, we could at all events luxuriate freely in that most powerful alleviation to the discomfort of intense heat—ice. The whole population could revel in it if they chose. Boat-loads of it traversed the river—coolies staggered under the refreshing burden along the broiling streets—beggars stood at corners and sold it for infinitesimal sums, and other beggars came and bought it. Food of all sorts was abundant, and our requisitions in this respect were promptly attended to ; though it must be confessed that, in respect of beef, they were sometimes a little unreasonable, as all the cattle are used in these parts for draught purposes only,—a fact which their well-shod hoofs undeniably attested. Coarse but not ill-flavoured apricots, and coarser peaches, with small marsh-melons and apples and pears, furnished us with dessert, and the sailors in the river with the maladies incidental to an indiscriminate use of fruit in a hot climate.

The courtyard of the yamun, roofed over with matting, always afforded us a cool and agreeable lounge. In its grateful shade we played quoits and

established a skittle alley,—a game which had the merit of being, at all events, as aristocratic in the eyes of the Chinese as any other, and of giving us exercise when it was impossible to face the rays of the sun, even as it was sinking below the horizon. Unlike the sun of the tropics, merciful during the final hour of his existence, the sun at Tientsin darted fiery rays at you up to the last moment of the long summer day.

On Sundays this sheltered court was turned into a place of worship. The pulpit was on one of the raised platforms containing the Emperor's handwriting, the roof adorned with dragons and the mystic signs of Confucian philosophy. Army, navy, and diplomacy seated themselves in the quoit-ground and skittle-alley, grouped themselves round the majestic old tree which stood in the centre, or took up a position beneath a collection of gods and goddesses, who gazed as imperturbably at the scene on one side as a group of Chinese did on the other. It was a picturesque, but at the same time an impressive ceremony, none the less suggestive in its simplicity because brought into such close and striking contrast with the mixed emblems of an obscure metaphysical system on the one hand, and a debasing superstition on the other.

After we had signed the treaty, and a proclamation had been issued by the Commissioners informing the Chinese public that the foreigners now in the river might shortly be expected to evacuate it, the

people began to regain their confidence; new shops were opening daily in the suburbs, and curiosity-hunting commenced with that energy which seems to distinguish the "barbarian" of every "outside nation" when he visits the "Central Flowery Land." The great inconvenience attending this amusement at Tientsin was in the medium of circulation. We had brought with us a quantity of sycee silver, but the weighing out of a mass of particles of silver for each purchase was a tiresome and uncertain operation. Mexican dollars were taken, but not very freely, and then for much less than their value, while the only small change current was copper cash, of which a dollar's worth weighs from ten to fifteen lb. The simplest plan of dividing a dollar was to cut it in halves with a chopper, and re-divide them if you wanted to purchase a shilling's worth of anything; but it was as inconvenient to carry a chopper in one's purse as ten pounds' weight of copper, or a pair of scales, which were the other alternatives. Moreover, there was very little worth buying, and I saw no good old china, enamel, bronzes, or any of those articles which form the staple of Chinese works of "virtu."