

## CHAPTER XVII.

THE CHANCES OF A CHINESE POLITICAL CAREER—ARRIVAL OF KEYING—INTERVIEW WITH HIM—ADVERSE POLICY OF KEYING—HIS HOSTILITY TO THE COMMISSIONERS—PROOFS OF HIS INSINCERITY—SECOND INTERVIEW OF MESSRS WADE AND LAY—KEYING'S MEMORIAL—KEYING'S TREATMENT OF BARBARIANS—A DISAGREEABLE EXPOSÉ—CONSEQUENCES OF HIS OFFENCE—A LENIENT SENTENCE—THE EMPEROR'S DECREE—KEYING'S SUICIDE.

A FEW days after the incidents recounted in the last chapter, an episode occurred singularly illustrative of the vicissitudes of Chinese official life, and of the dangers to which those are exposed in the Celestial Empire, who are either "born to greatness, or have greatness thrust upon them." The account which has been already given of the fortunes of Tan exhibits, in a striking manner, the dilemma in which the Imperial Government places its high functionaries, when it forces them under the severest penalties to accept positions from which it is morally impossible for them to escape, without incurring failure. There can be little doubt that the Imperial Government often appoints a man to an office with the express intention that he should serve as a scape-goat, and be sacrificed to its own folly or incompetency. The

system of unscrupulously immolating innocent subordinates, to screen guilty superiors, extends through the whole of Chinese official life ; and so well recognised is this principle amongst them, that, in the numerous misunderstandings our authorities have had with the Chinese, the latter have invariably sought to lay the blame on one of our own inferior officers, with a view of enabling the superior to retreat with honour from a false position, should he desire to do so. If, however, the British official maintains his ground, as is commonly the case, the Chinese gets out of the scrape by a similar process.

When a high official position is attended with these inconveniences, it will readily be understood that intrigue amongst Imperial officers often takes a precisely opposite direction to that which it commonly assumes in Europe, and that, so far from attempting the ruin of your greatest enemy by opposing his advancement, there are circumstances under which a Chinese politician can most surely gratify his revenge by procuring his nomination to an important and hazardous service, the refusal of which would entail the same extreme penalty which will be the result of his inevitable failure. Not only in the Chinese world of fact, but in their realms of fiction, is this practice used to point the moral and adorn the tale ; and in many of their romances the interest of the plot is made to turn upon some crisis in which the virtuous hero is made the victim of a fatal promotion.

It is impossible for us to do more than speculate upon the secret motives which may have induced the Imperial Government to nominate Keying, in an independent capacity, to assist in the settlement of the barbarian business. (That this appointment was more probably due to the able intrigues of his enemies, than the ill-advised efforts of his friends, may be inferred from the fact that the high officers who first moved the Emperor to raise him from disgrace, and employ him at Tientsin, were the first to denounce him as worthy of death in consequence of his conduct there : though it must be remembered that, in China, the only chance which the man who recommends an incompetent *employé* has of saving his own head is, to be the first to denounce his nominee should he prove a failure.

Be that as it may, Lord Elgin was not a little surprised to receive an intimation from the old friend of Sir Henry Pottinger, whose name is most familiar to English ears as the negotiator of the last treaty, and (who contrived, during the short period of his intercourse with Europeans, to create in their minds so high an estimate of his intelligence and good faith, announcing his arrival, but not stating that he held any official rank, while he at the same time requested an interview with the Ambassador.)

( Lord Elgin at first felt somewhat disposed to overlook this informality, in favour of a man whose presence at the scene of negotiations might appear to indicate the existence of a strong desire on the part of the

Emperor to terminate existing difficulties amicably. The reputation which Keying had earned in his management of barbarian business had been founded on his conciliatory treatment of them; still we were in possession of documents invalidating his sincerity, and we knew that his conciliatory policy had led to his disgrace. Messrs Wade and Lay were, therefore, sent in to express Lord Elgin's regret at not being able to accord him an interview; and, at the same time, to observe the tendency manifested in his tone and sentiments.

They found an old, decrepit mandarin, half blind, and, to judge from his countenance, sinking into his dotage. He at first declared that he recognised Mr Lay, and that gentleman had some difficulty in persuading him that he had mistaken him for his father. Then he burst into tears at the deplorable position of the Celestial Empire generally, and of himself in particular, stating that he was involved in a difficulty which must end in disaster to himself. Mr Wade suspected that this was a mere theatrical effect. Mr Lay giving him credit for sincerity, to test it, Mr Wade assured him that he might be relieved from his situation, as he had no doubt Lord Elgin would write a letter peremptorily declining intercourse with him, which would be his justification to the Imperial Court. This, however, did not suit the crafty Keying, in whose senile brain some cunning still remained, and he complained that we were placing a knife to the throat of China and a pistol

to its head ; and gradually let it appear what his opinion was on this subject to an extent which convinced our envoys that his sentiments were distinctly hostile, so that he was requested in writing, the same evening, to postpone his visit for a few days. Notwithstanding this, however, on the day following (the 10th) Keying had the perseverance to appear at the gate of the yamun, and sent in his card, but was of course not admitted. I regretted not arriving in time to see more than the back of his chair as he was being carried away. As an historical personage, and one whose tragical end has since invested him with a deeper interest, Keying was a man worthy of having been noticed.

It may readily be supposed that the Commissioners Kweiliang and Hwashana did not regard this interloper with any favourable eye. The only definite office he seemed to fill at first was that of spy, while the Imperial Commission which he managed subsequently to obtain only qualified him more fully to put in practice the resolution he at once manifested of thwarting the Senior Commissioners in everything they proposed. We were informed, on tolerably good Chinese authority, that he totally dissented from the pacific policy by which they were actuated, and held the most pugnacious language with reference to the barbarians. To this he might have been impelled by two motives. In the first place, his independent appointment almost necessarily implied that he was expected to entertain independent views. As the

views of his colleagues were "peace at any price," he felt bound to be warlike; and he the more readily adopted this tone, as he had himself, in his former dealings with us, adopted the "peace at any price" policy, and had remained in disgrace ever since. His second motive was, in fact, consequent upon this; he regarded the present as the only opportunity which was ever likely to be afforded him of retrieving his position, by becoming the vigorous advocate of a policy directly antagonistic to that which had already been his ruin: could he only show that Kweiliang and Hwashana were pursuing a course as weak and temporising as that which, in the opinion of the Imperial Government, had characterised his own diplomacy, he might still hope to clothe the nakedness of his present disgrace with the miserable remnants of the robes of honour he had torn from the backs of his colleagues.

The Commissioners finding him in this vein, and perceiving that their most earnest efforts to bring about a satisfactory adjustment of the existing difficulties were likely to be frustrated by the determination to thwart a conciliatory policy manifested by Keying, earnestly requested his removal. The Emperor, however, as he himself states in his subsequent decree on the subject, knowing that he (Keying) must be aware of this, and lest he should feel embarrassed by the knowledge, again sent him orders to remain at Tientsin. But Keying, instead of taking this hint to pursue the independent policy which had

been originally indicated to him, suddenly took the unexpected and indefensible course of deserting his post, thereby much delighting his enemies, and drawing upon himself the serious displeasure of his Imperial master. In order, however, to comprehend the real motive which induced him to adopt this unusual and fatal line of conduct, it is necessary to explain the nature of the interference on our part, to which we were compelled to have recourse.

It no sooner became evident to the Ambassador that Keying was endeavouring to exert an influence which, if successful, would neutralise the good dispositions of the Senior Commissioners, and imperil the final and satisfactory issue of the negotiations already commenced, than he determined to remove from the scene one whose presence was calculated to prove a serious embarrassment, the more especially as he had been furnished with unmistakable evidence that the obstructive tendencies of Keying had not been exaggerated. Fortunately, among the papers discovered in Yeh's yamun was a memorial written by this very mandarin to the Emperor upon the subject of barbarian affairs; and the tone in which that document was conceived, furnished Lord Elgin with an instrument which, if properly used, would secure his removal from the present Commission. It was considered that the most effective and certain way of accomplishing this desirable result, would be for Messrs Wade and Lay unexpectedly to produce in

his presence his own Memorial, and read it aloud for the benefit of himself and his colleagues. Accordingly, upon the 11th, or the day following the visit of Keying to the yamun, these gentlemen waited upon the Commissioners. Their first object was to present a letter complaining of the unsatisfactory reply which the Commissioners had returned, to a confidential communication made to them by the Ambassador upon the subject of the propositions, which were to form the base of the negotiations.

Upon entering the Commissioners' room, Messrs Wade and Lay found Keying present, apparently associated with them in the capacity of colleague. They adverted to the communication already received by Lord Elgin, as differing altogether in tone and spirit from the document he had been led to expect, and as being one altogether impossible to be received by him as the base for future negotiations. The Commissioners insinuated, as broadly as it was possible for them to do, in presence of Keying, that this gentleman was responsible for the letter in question, and for the tone in which it was couched. Messrs Wade and Lay remarked, that while Lord Elgin did not conceive himself entitled to dictate to the Emperor on the subject of the appointments he might be pleased to make to the Imperial Commission, it was clear that good faith on the part of the individuals likely to be engaged in the pending negotiations was a qualification of the first importance. It was evidently not in the interest of either party that a

person discredited in this particular should be associated in the Commission. It would be for the Commissioners to make their own application of this principle with reference to the document which they now begged to produce, the authorship of which it was not necessary to particularise, as it was attached to the paper.

The circumstance of its having been found in Yeh's yamun at Canton amongst his private archives, imparted an additional interest, doubtless, in the eyes of the Commissioners, to this singular and interesting production of Keying. The following document was then handed to the Senior Commissioners, and read aloud by Hwashana in a subdued tone, Keying being present, but keeping well in the background, conscious that the revelations it contained would put his command of countenance to the test should he seem to pay attention to its contents:—

*“The Supplementary Memorial, detailing the peculiarities of the Receptions of the barbarian Envoys of different nations, and the Autograph (lit. Vermilion) approval of his Majesty the Emperor.”*

[The date of this Memorial was about the end of 1850.]

*(Translation.)*

“The slave Keying, upon his knees, presents a supplementary memorial to the throne. The particulars of his administration of the business of the barbarian

states, and management\* of barbarian envoys, according to circumstances, in his receptions† of them, have formed the subject of different memorials of your slave.

“ The supplementary conditions of trade having been also negotiated by him, he has had the honour to submit the articles containing those to the sacred glance of your Majesty, who has commissioned the Board of Revenue to examine and report upon them. All which is upon record. He calls to mind, however, that it was in the seventh moon of the twenty-second year (August 1842) that the English barbarians were pacified. The Americans and French have successively followed in the summer and autumn of this year (1845). In this period of three years barbarian matters have been affected by many conditions of change, and in proportion as these have been various in character, has it become necessary to shift ground, and to adopt alterations in the means by which they were to be conciliated and held within range.‡ They must be dealt with justly, of course, and their feelings thus appealed to ; but to keep them in hand, stratagem (or diplomacy) is requisite.

“ In some instances, a direction must be given them, but without explanation of the reason why ; in some, their restlessness can only be neutralised by

\* *Lit.* Riding and reining.

† Receptions of them as inferiors in rank.

‡ Conciliated—*lit.* pacified, as a person or an animal that is wild, and comforted. Kept within range—*lit.* tethered.

demonstrations which disarm (*lit.* dissolve) their suspicions ; in some, they have to be pleased, and moved to gratitude by concession of intercourse on a footing of equality ; and in some, before a result can be brought about, their falsity has to be blinked, nor must an estimate (of their facts) be pressed too far.

“Bred and born in the foreign regions beyond (its boundary), there is much in the administration of the Celestial dynasty that is not perfectly comprehensible to the barbarians, and they are continually putting forced constructions on things, of which it is difficult to explain to them the real nature. Thus the promulgation of the Imperial decree (*lit.* silken sounds) devolves on the members of the great Council, but the barbarians respect them as being the autograph reply of your Majesty ; and were they given to understand positively that (the decrees) are not in the handwriting of your Majesty at all, (so far from respecting them), there would, on the contrary, be nothing in which their confidence would be secure.

“The meal which the barbarians eat together they call *ta-tsan* (dinner).\* It is a practice they delight in, to assemble a number of people at a great entertainment, at which they eat and drink together. When your slave has conferred honour upon (has given

\* The word used by our Canton servants for dinner ; the great meal.

a dinner to) the barbarians at the Bogue or Macao, their chiefs and leaders have come together, to the number of from ten to twenty or thirty ; and when, in process of time, your slave has chanced to go to barbarian residences\* or barbarian ships, they have, in their turn, seated themselves round in attendance upon him, striving who should be foremost in offering him meat and drink. To gain their good-will, he could not do otherwise than share their cup and spoon.

“ Another point : It is the wont of the barbarians to make much of their women. Whenever their visitor is a person of distinction, the wife is sure to come out and receive him. In the case of the American barbarian Parker, and the French barbarian Lagréné, for instance, both of these have brought their foreign wives with them ; and when your slave has gone to the barbarian residences on business, their foreign women have suddenly appeared and saluted him. Your slave was confounded† and ill at ease ; while they, on the contrary, were greatly delighted at the honour done them. The truth is, as this shows, that it is not possible to regulate the customs of the Western states by the ceremonial of China ; and to break out in rebuke, while it would

\* The word *lan*, loft or story, is not that applied to the dwelling-houses of Chinese. The mandarins use it specially when speaking to their own people of our houses.

† Confounded, almost awe-stricken, as Confucius is described to have been in the presence of his ruler.

do nothing toward their enlightenment (*lit.* to cleave their dulness), might chance to give rise to suspicion and ill-feeling.

“Again, ever since amicable relations with them commenced, the different barbarians have been received on something of a footing of equality. One such interview is no longer a novelty ; it becomes more than ever a duty to keep them off, and to shut them out. To this end, on every occasion that a treaty has been negotiated with a barbarian State, your slave has directed Hwang Aw-tung, Commissioner of Finance, to desire its envoy to take notice, that a high officer in China, administering foreign affairs, is never at liberty to give or receive anything on his private account. That, as to presents, he would be obliged peremptorily to decline them ; were they to be accepted, and the fact concealed, the ordinances of the Celestial dynasty on the subject are very stringent ; and to say nothing of the injury he would inflict on the dignity of his office, it would be hard (for the offender) to escape the penalty of the law. The barbarian envoys have had the sense to attend to this ; but in their interviews with him, they have sometimes offered your slave foreign wines, perfumery, and other like matters, of very small value. Their intention being more or less good, he could not well have rejected them altogether, and to their face ; but he has confined himself to bestowing on them snuff-bottles, purses, and such things as are carried on the person, thereby putting

in evidence the Chinese principle of giving much, although but little has been received.\* Again, on the application of the Italians, English, Americans, and French, your slave has presented them with a copy of his insignificant portrait.

“To come to their government.† Though every State has one, there are rulers, male or female, holding office permanently for the time being. With the English barbarians, for instance, the ruler is a female, and with the French and Americans, a male. The English and French ruler reigns for life ; the American is elected by his countrymen, and is changed once in four years, and when he retires from his throne he takes rank with the people (the non-official classes).

“Their official designations are also different in the case of each nation. To represent these, they for the most part appropriate (*lit.* filch) Chinese characters, boastfully affecting a style to which they have no claim, and assuming the airs of a great power. That they should conceive that they thereby do honour to their rulers, is no concern of ours ; while, if the forms observed towards the dependencies (of China) were to be prescribed as the rule in their case, they would certainly not consent, as they neither accept the Chinese computation‡ of time, nor receive

\* Thus, according to the second of the Confucian books, should it be between the ruler and the nobles dependent on him.

† *Lit.* Their sovereign seniors.

‡ *Lit.* The first and last moons of the year, as computed by China,

your Majesty's patent (of royalty), to fall back to the rank of Cochin-China or Lewchew. And with people so uncivilised as they are, blindly unintelligent in styles and modes of address, a tenacity in forms of official correspondence, such as would duly place the superior above and the inferior below, would be the cause of a fierce altercation (*lit.* a rising of the tongue and a blistering of the lips) : the only course, in that case, would be to affect to be deaf to it (*lit.* to be as though the earlap stopped the ear) ; personal intercourse would then become impossible ; and not only this, but an incompatibility of relations would immediately follow, of anything but advantage certainly to the essential question of conciliation.\* Instead, therefore, of a contest about unsubstantial names, which can produce no tangible result, (it has been held) better to disregard these minor details, in order to the success of an important policy.

“Such are the expedients and modifications which, after close attention to the barbarian affairs, a calculation of the exigencies of the period, and a careful estimate of the merits of the question, as being trivial or of importance, admitting of delay or demanding despatch, it has been found unavoidable to adopt. Your slave has not ventured to intrude them one by one upon the sacred intelligence, partly be-

who issues her calendar to Corea, if not to her other dependencies. The sovereigns of Corea, Lewchew, and Cochin-China, are invested by a Chinese envoy, and receive a patent from their Emperor as their Suzerain.

\* As in note ‡, p. 360.

cause they were of themselves of small significance, partly because there was no time\* (so to report them). The barbarian business being now on the whole (*lit.* in the rough) concluded, as in duty bound, he states them detailedly, one and all, in this supplementary despatch, which he respectfully presents to your Majesty."

*"Reply in the Vermilion Pencil.*

"It was the only proper arrangement to have made. We understand the whole question."

While Hwashana was reading this production, his attention was more particularly directed to those passages which discuss so elaborately the various descriptions of "stratagem" which Keying was in the habit of resorting to, in order "to keep the barbarians in hand."

So long as this controller of barbarians was associated with the Commission, it was evident that it would be incumbent upon us to watch narrowly which mode of treatment he was applying; whether "a direction was being given to us without explanation of the reason why;" or whether "our restlessness was being neutralised by demonstration which disarmed our suspicions;" or whether this was one of those occasions in which we were "to be pleased and moved to gratitude by concession of intercourse on a footing of equality;" or whether the crisis was so eminent that our "falsity was to be blinded,

\* He had to act at once.

and the estimate of our facts not pressed too far." Whatever be the mode of treatment, he does not for a moment leave us in doubt as to its object. "Once such an intercourse (on a footing of equality) is established, it becomes more than ever a duty to keep them off, and to shut them out." Nor was his chuckle upon our gullibility with reference to the Imperial autograph lost upon us.

Hwashana and Kweiliang looked somewhat abashed when they had concluded this dissertation upon the "blindly unintelligent" race of barbarians with whom they were at that moment negotiating; and Keying requested to be allowed to see the paper, for the quiet perusal of which he retired into a corner. Meantime our envoys informed the Imperial Commissioners, that the best way of establishing confidence in Lord Elgin's mind, with reference to their good faith, was to send in at once the letter containing the propositions originally agreed upon, as the base of negotiations. They further stated their intention of waiting in the yamun until it was signed and sealed, which they accordingly did; and it was not until 10 P.M. that they finally took leave, with the precious document, signed by Kweiliang, Hwashana, and Keying, in their possession. It was doubtless in allusion to this communication that Keying states, in the Memorial to the Emperor containing his defence, that when, after consultation with Kweiliang and Hwashana, it was agreed that a despatch should be written, "they wept together beneath the window;

they knew not in the morning that they should not die by night."

Two days after this it was, that, finding himself discredited by us before his colleagues, to whom he was personally obnoxious, and who would gladly avail themselves of the weapon we had placed in their hands, and perceiving that it was impossible to pursue the obstructive and independent policy he was expected to adopt, Keying determined suddenly to return to Pekin, prefacing the step with a Memorial to the Emperor, stating only that he had "propositions of importance to submit." Before he reached the capital, however, he received an order to return to his post. Instead of obeying this command, he, to use the words of the Emperor, "could not take himself out of the way fast enough." This was the head and front of Keying's offence. Thus conscience made a coward of him. Had the Emperor read Shakespeare, he probably would not have asked, in passing sentence on him: "Had Keying any conscience, would the sweat have flowed down his back or not?" But so it happened, that, instead of bearing the ills he had, the unhappy mandarin fled to others that he knew not of.

Rumours were shortly after rife at Tientsin, first of the degradation, and then of the death of Keying; but the first authentic intimation we received of the severity of the punishment which was awarded him, was from the following extract from the *Pekin Gazette*, which reached us on the third of July, or about three days prior to our leaving Tientsin.

Not previously aware of the circumstances under which he had been appointed to meet us, or supplied with every link in the chain of events detailed in the foregoing pages, we were much shocked at the tragical end of one who had so recently been amongst us, and whose conduct, though weak and vacillating, scarcely seemed to deserve death by suicide. Nor, indeed, in so far as we are acquainted with the whole of his offending, does there seem any proportion between the guilt and the punishment. How little could we imagine that the objection taken to Keying as an Imperial Commissioner should even indirectly have been the cause of that fatal decree, the last sentence of which contains so painful a satire upon justice and mercy ; for certain officers, having desired Keying to read the decree, are commanded to inform him "that it is our will that he put an end to himself ; that our extreme desire to be at once just and gracious be made manifest." In a country where the highest attributes of divinity find such a manifestation, it is no very violent presumption to suppose that the fate of Keying was determined upon when he was first ordered to proceed to Tientsin, and that whatever his conduct there might have been, it would always have furnished the excuse desired by his enemies of causing his public execution, a sentence which the Emperor hypocritically modified by that parody upon leniency contained in the last clause, which commutes the public execution to private suicide.

*“ Autograph Decree.*

“ On receipt of a memorial by the Prince of Hwui\* and others, praying that Keying’s offence should be followed by instant punishment as under martial law, We commanded that he should be brought to the capital and subjected to a rigorous examination. When put on his trial he tendered his statement in defence, and We then directed the Prince of Kung† and others to decide and award with equity. They now find that, in not awaiting Our commands, Keying acted with stupidity and precipitancy, and they sentence him to be strangled after imprisonment until the Imperial Assize,‡ when his crime is to be entered among those not to be forgiven. Their award, certainly, is none other than a correct one. Still, as the terms in which they describe his transgression by no means define the criminality of his heart,§ it is incumbent on Us to give full publicity [to the facts].

\* Mien Yü, brother of the late Emperor Mien Ning, the style of whose reign was Táu Kwang.

† Yih Su, brother of the reigning Emperor, who was associated with Yih Tsung, another brother, and the adopted son of the Emperor’s uncle, in the trial.

‡ A list of criminal cases is submitted once a-year to the Emperor. The prisoners whose names are without a certain mark made upon it by the Emperor escape with life ; those within the mark die. The term here rendered Imperial Assize is applied to this re-hearing of cases tried in the capital ; cases heard in the provinces are revised at the Autumnal Assize.

§ *Lit.* Are certainly not a description of it that cuts the heart open : a classical expression elsewhere paraphrased as the offence of “ deceiving the sovereign, and so causing damage to the state’s interest ; ”

“When Keying, being at the time an officer in disgrace, was again lifted up to be employed, it was Our hope that he would exert himself to make a reputation in his declining years, and would competently perform the service needed in the matter [then before Us]. When he had his audience to take leave, his words were: ‘The powers of your slave are scarcely equal to his charge, but he will see what his fortune is;’—language that betokened neither numbness of conscience\* nor failing intelligence. On the 27th of the 4th moon (8th June), a letter from the Council† followed him to Tientsin, by which he was instructed that he need not associate himself with Kweiliang and his colleague, nor be bound by forms in any way;‡ to the end that he might follow up any step of theirs by the measures his own policy might require. It cannot be said that the position We gave him was other than independent, or that Our gracious support of him was short of considerable. When Kweiliang and his colleague moved Us to recall him, We assumed that he must be aware of

treason, in short. One Chinese understands it, “their finding does not show him guilty of the treason he has committed.”

\* *Lit.* Dimness.

† These letters are what we call Imperial Decrees. They are drawn up under instruction of the Emperor, and transmitted through the Council to those whom they concern.

‡ *Lit.* Not to grasp the mud, stand on ceremony. Properly, as junior he would have subscribed to the proposals of the senior commissioners, but he was authorised, “as exponent of his own policy, to take the second step”—the other Commissioners having taken the first.

this. Still, lest he might be somewhat\*—a letter was sent from the Council instructing him to remain at Tientsin, and take counsel for himself. Had Keying had any conscience, would the sweat have flowed down his back or not?† That officer, however, having despatched‡ a memorial to Us, takes on himself to return to the capital; his plea being that he has propositions of importance to submit to Us. If so, why did he not address Us a confidential memorial in his single name? He adds that there is matter that cannot well appear in writing. Then why, when he [subsequently] received the decree to the effect that it was Our pleasure he should stay at Tientsin, did he hurriedly prepare another memorial? And what is there after all, of moment, either in his memorials or in his defence? In all the irrelevancy which time after time he has obtruded upon Us, his sole calculation is [the safety of] his own head. The total absence of available suggestions in the memorials and defence of this officer, again, might be held, had he not been deep in the secret, to be over-harshly visited by the law. But it is known that the measure he names had been long since considered by Us with Our servants. Besides, what

\* There is an omission here of two characters, if not more.

† This is a classical expression, the parentage of which obliges it to indicate, not, as we should have supposed, great exertion, but the sense of shame experienced when our little merits receive bounteous consideration.

‡ *Lü.* having adored, prostrated himself before, the memorial about to be sent.

might have come from another with propriety could not with propriety come from Keying. Why so? Because he was art and part of\* the administration [of this question], and was free to carry out any views of his own. How was it then that, unprovided with measures suppeditative or remedial while acting with others, he was only ready with the right suggestion after the event?

(“Had We but punished this officer as he humbly prayed We would, We had indeed fallen into [the snare of] his machinations. For [in that prayer] Keying has plainly declared himself. Not only [does he imply that] his former offence had been completely washed away, but he seeks to lay blame on others; an intention yet more to his disgrace.† He had fancied that, for unauthorisedly relinquishing his commission, dismissal from the service would be all the penalty awarded him, and, this end attained, he would have enjoyed himself at home. With the obligation laid upon him by long recognition of his little merit (*lit.* dullness, *sc.* his employment in spite of it) should such a conception have been tolerable to

\* *Lit.* In the game, in the plot, on the committee. He flies from Tientsin, on the plea that he has an important suggestion to make which he dare not write; yet he writes, and his suggestion proves of no value; nor is it a novel one, as he well knew. This suggestion, say all Chinese expositors consulted, was war, which it must be inferred he was at liberty to resort to.

† *Lit.* Still less can his heart be inquired of. Man should be so that, “when he inquires of his heart, he finds nothing to be ashamed of.”

him ? Nor is this all, when his thoughts are unravelled.\* When, after consultation with Kweiliang and Hwashana, it was agreed that a despatch † should be written 'they wept together beneath the window ; ‡ they knew not in the morning that they should not die by night.' But We do not learn that, in devout obedience to Our will as earlier expressed, he then devised any worthier expedient of his own.§ By-and-by he observed to Hwashana that he feared his departure from Tientsin might disturb the population, and he would therefore pretend that he was moving thence for a while on business. But, though on arriving at Tung-chau he received the later letter of the Council [desiring him to return], We do not learn that he hastened back [to his post ; on the contrary] he could not take himself out of the way fast enough. He treated Our commands as a thing of course to be dispensed with.|| Full of intrigue, bent on deceit, could a hundred voices excuse him from immediate annihilation ? ¶

\* *Lit.* [When we follow] the track, or footprints, of his heart.

† Despatch, or communication, probably one addressed to Lord Elgin two days before Keying disappeared from Tientsin.

‡ A common phrase applied to men consulting or studying together. It does not appear whether the Emperor learned this from Keying's despatches or elsewhere.

§ *Lit.* Separately or distinctly, that is, from his colleagues.

|| *Lit.* As a cap-hair ; the tuft of hair formerly thrown away when the cap of manhood was assumed ; a thing to be rejected, and rejected of course.

¶ An expression that would include his family in the act of destruction.

(“The [sentence proposed in the] original memorial of the Prince of Hwui and his colleagues was, nevertheless, too severe ; neither was the memorial of [the Censor] Suhshun, again, proposing his immediate execution, as it should be.) Our object in handing him over to Our servants in the capital\* for trial, was to have the circumstances of so grave an offence duly weighed by them, and a sentence deliberately pronounced, for the edification of all. If (We were still to have approved his summary execution, what need was there for bringing him to the capital ?) What need, to go farther, for [the formality of] a finding and sentence ? Then the remark [in one memorial], that ‘if left for some months he might die a natural death, and so escape with his head’—is even more out of order.† Such words belong to sentences passed on malefactors (*lit.* robbers). They could not without serious impropriety be applied to Keying.

(“We have bestowed great attention [upon his case] for several days, seeking to spare his life ; but indeed it is impossible ; and were We to reserve him, as Yih Su and his colleagues ‡ propose, for the Great Assize, then certainly to suffer, We feel that [when the time came] We could not endure to leave him in

\* That is to say, by the chief members of the administration.

† *Lit.* Then the remark—is a finding [in cases between which and the present there is] even less analogy. It could not wantonly, or at random, be applied to Keying. Colloquially, it would never do, &c.

‡ Yih Su, see note †, p. 370.

the market-place.\* In this dilemma, having given all Our thought to a due appreciation of the facts and a just apportionment of the law, We command Jinshau, senior *tsung-ching*, and Mien Hiun, senior *tsung-jin*, of the Imperial Clan Court† with Linkwei, President of the Board of Punishments, to go at once to the Empty House of the Clan Court, and having desired Keying to read [this] Our autograph decree, to inform him that it is Our will that he put an end to himself; that Our extreme desire to be at once just and gracious be made manifest. Respect this!"

We were informed upon good authority, before leaving Tientsin, that the punishment here awarded had been actually carried out; Keying having drunk a cup of poison in the presence of the Imperial officers nominated to enforce it. Thus perished by his own hand this celebrated mandarin, whose signature, attached to the Treaty of Nankin, exactly fifteen years before, had secured for him a political notoriety in Europe greater than had ever previously been accorded to a Chinaman, and the tragical termination of whose career must ever invest his name with a yet more significant and touching interest.

\* Like a common criminal.

† The *tsung-jin-fu*, or Imperial Clan Court, is an office charged specially with the registration, payment, and jurisdiction of the Imperial Family in all its branches. The Empty House mentioned just below is the prison of this establishment.