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SUPPRESSION

OF THE

TAIPING REBELLION

IN THE

DEPARTMENTS AROUND SHANGHAI.

SHANGHAI:

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1871.

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PREFACE.

THE work now laid before the reader was intended to be accompanied by a short biographical sketch on the antecedents, previous occupations and religion of the Rebel Chiefs—together with an analogous comparison of the regimental brigade, and divisional systems of China and Great Britain, based on the authorized and published regulations of both governments on those subjects. A short view of the rise, progress, decline and fall of the Rebellion was intended also. Arbitrary circumstances, however, interposed, which not only effectually prevented the possibility of carrying out those projects for the present, but necessitated the publication also of the work with only the printer's corrections.

The assistance rendered by the Allied squadrons and troops around Shanghai has, as is well known, been already related in published official correspondence; but the exact extent of this effected by the Contingent is involved in some obscurity, partly from the greater importance claimed to be attached to it by Foreigners than to the arms of their Allies, the native troops. Between those conflicting claims, rendered still more difficult by political misunderstanding, there is no probability of compiling any account from a Foreign standard of estimation that would be of any permanent value.

General Ward.—Relying on the authority that the general was brought up as an officer in the United States Mercantile Marine, the professional world who have embraced the science of arms and war will be probably slow to entertain a genuine belief in the capability of Ward to form, train and maintain in sufficient efficiency a force with which to carry on garrison, field and siege operations. But it is a prominent and generally admitted fact, that during Ward's and Burgevine's administration of the Contingent, the one and only break down was when the men's pay was let fall into arrear. Ward was, as if by magic, apparently intended by nature, nativity and art to deal with and control the Foreigners and Natives who formed the officers, rank and file of the Contingent, as well as the Chinese superiors he had to deal with. It is no secret that Yang would no more attempt to withhold the Contingent's pay in Ward's days than he would to jump into the Wang-poo. It is not now intended to enter into the details of his career at the head of the Contingent; those details, with those of its other chiefs, will it is hoped hereafter be entered into and narrated in a way it is

anticipated that will prove of permanent value. On Ward's demise, his large fortune, including his property and other effects, moderately estimated at 50,000 dollars, were understood to have remained with Yang and Wu.

Burgevine.—It is said, and apparently with accuracy, that Burgevine was possessed of the usual amount of the military art acquired by young officers. His deportment was refined, and his manners were both engaging and insinuating. The naval and military officers of the allied fleets and armies were said to have been pleased and satisfied with his officer-like and gentlemanly bearing.

In addition to his bearing amongst officers, Burgevine was pronounced by competent authority to be eminently capable of commanding the Contingent. Under the circumstances that he was eligible in the two chief requisites then desirable, it would be thought that no obstacle of sufficient importance would present itself in so prominent and threatening an aspect as to mar his advance to the goal of victory, honour and fame. But in those calculations there was left out an imperceptible, but at once vexatious and serious source of continually recurring trouble—not unfrequently accompanied by danger and disaster. The pay of the troops went on so regularly in Ward's time that it was not taken into consideration at all by his successor. On the other hand, Ward's death was Yang's signal for commencing operations. Yang, who would be down on his bare knees at one of Ward's angry shouts, and knocking his head against his feet, and at the same time assenting to everything, now secretly commenced those measures which brought ruin on Burgevine, and subsequently an ignominious death.

Yang and Wu were fortunate enough to get well recommended to Kuo-fan on his succession to office, which made them to a certain extent more independent of Hung-chang than they possibly could be were they entirely dependent on him for recommendation to the Viceroy and Commander-in-chief. Consequently, on Burgevine's remonstrance with Yang, the natural audacity of the latter, backed by Wu, enabled them to lay before Hung-chang such statements as suited their interests, and were likely to conduce in their entire exculpation and justification in the prosecution of their dishonest peculations. Relying on the accuracy of those statements, and backed by the personal explanations of Yang and Wu, Hung-chang appeared to be fully impressed with the moderation of his demand, and the necessity for the prosecution of Burgevine. That he could be so easily duped and prevailed on to pursue a course, so detrimental to his personal interests and official dignity, is certainly tending to unmask the feeble and unsystematic character of his administration.

Fortunately for China and lives and property of the Foreign Residents, British interests were then represented at Shanghai by men who thoroughly understood the importance of the charge

devolving on them—who made themselves fully acquainted with what was passing round them, and whose experience and abilities very easily enabled them to defeat, counteract, and for the future stop the peculation, vile calumnies, and base proceedings of Yang and Wu, besides impressing on Hung-chang a necessity that he undoubtedly was in need of,—the formation of some system that would enable him to prevent in future such impositions as had just been imposed on him. Chinese and Foreigners may be thankful alike to Mr. Consul Medhurst and Sir John Michel, who so effectively exposed Yang and Wu's impositions. At the time referred to, there was no immediate pressing necessity for the protection of the Contingent, who were then engaged in offensive operations in the adjacent province of Che-kiang (which was just placed under the military jurisdiction of Kuo-fan, in addition to the four provinces already mentioned). Had the matter not been brought to so abrupt an issue, but have dragged onwards to the period of pressing emergencies, which afterwards occurred, when the Contingent were pressed close by powerful enemies in front and left to suffer hunger and thirst by their superiors, whom they knew to be safely ensconced far in rear, where they were devoting to their own commercial speculations the funds which were destined for the Contingent's pay. Under such circumstances it is not improbable that the Contingent, which was always exposed to the principal brunt of the battle and heat of the day; when they could see themselves and their officers falling fast around, would have gone over, with their arms and accoutrements to the enemy, leaving their officers and Foreign Residents to the fate of merciless victors, who under the existing and past circumstances, could not possibly be expected to treat Foreigners, the friends of their vanquished enemies, but with such rude indifference as they chose to extend.

Though Burgevine's fortune, and subsequently his life were sacrificed to the peculations and machinations of the men who were in duty bound to be his most sincere supporters, the opportunity still inculcated the obvious necessity of having some tribunal to be referred to for the adjustment of the differences, which subsequent experience proved were continually arising between the chief of the Contingent and even Hung-chang himself.

The Contingent (Ever Victorious Army).—The 75,000 taels a month, expended on the Contingent, would enable Kuo-fan to maintain about 12,000 men, at six taels a month, the usual pay of native soldiers during the Rebellion.

Hung-chang, as commander-in-chief.—It will be seen from the narrative, the three principal commanders under Hung-chang were Ya-chi, the chief of the Contingent, and Min-chuan. A common cause of complaint amongst local Foreign writers on Chinese subjects, is a general charge against the Chinese for allowing to Foreigners so little credit for the part they took in the suppression of