

**A RETROSPECT OF POLITICAL  
AND COMMERCIAL AFFAIRS  
IN CHINA DURING THE FIVE  
YEARS 1873 TO 1877**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649061907

A Retrospect of Political and Commercial Affairs in China During the Five Years 1873 to 1877  
by R. S. Gundry

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**R. S. GUNDRY**

**A RETROSPECT OF POLITICAL  
AND COMMERCIAL AFFAIRS  
IN CHINA DURING THE FIVE  
YEARS 1873 TO 1877**



21571

A RETROSPECT  
OF  
POLITICAL AND COMMERCIAL AFFAIRS  
IN  
CHINA  
DURING THE FIVE YEARS 1873 TO 1877.

---

EDITED BY  
R. S. GUNDRY.

---

SHANGHAI:  
PRINTED AT THE "NORTH-CHINA HERALD" OFFICE  
1878.

DS  
740  
G97

*J. M.*

## PREFACE.

---

FIVE years ago, a small volume was published containing a reprint from the "North-China Herald" of the Retrospects of political and commercial events which are written every year in that paper, for the five years from 1868 to 1872.

The project had been entertained of carrying back the work in another volume to 1863, in order to provide a fairly complete, even if very brief, sketch of events since the close of the last war. Partly from lack of encouragement, however, partly from other causes, this idea was not carried out; but it was resolved to carry forward the design and to publish a fresh volume at the expiry of another five years—at the close of 1877.

That period has arrived; and a second volume, covering the period from 1873 to 1877, is now published, with the conviction that it will be found a useful book of reference pending the appearance of a more pretentious history of our intercourse with China.

The Political articles are, as in the former volume, solely from the pen of the Editor, who is conscious that many defects can be charged against them. The excuse is that they do not pretend to be standard history, thoughtfully elaborated in the calm of a study, but simply retrospective sketches of each year's events, written originally for publication in a newspaper.

The Commercial reviews, on the contrary, proceed from many different authors, but in each case from experts in the subject treated of. The scope of these articles has continued to expand yearly since they were first undertaken, as their value has been recognised; and they form, it is believed, a careful and complete review of the course of the four chief staples of the China trade during the period treated of.



RETROSPECT  
OF POLITICAL EVENTS IN  
CHINA AND JAPAN  
DURING FIVE YEARS (1873 TO 1877.)

---

1873.

**Political.** THE leading incident which we had to chronicle last year, was the marriage of the Emperor—not, as we pointed out at the time, the mere fact that His Majesty had taken to himself a consort, but the acceptance of personal responsibility and power implied in the proceeding. And his formal assumption of power, after a short interval from the marriage, is the first incident that claims notice in our review of 1873. His Majesty formally accepted the responsibility of government on the 23rd of February; and the Foreign Ministers at once wrote to the Tsungli-yamen, intimating their wish to congratulate him personally on the event. Much haggling about form and ceremony; much endeavour on the part of the Chinese to deprive the concession of its value, and some effort on the part of the Ministers to assert the position of the countries they represented—ensued. His Excellency Soyeshima, Foreign Secretary to the Japanese Government, arrived in the meantime, as Ambassador from the Mikado, and at once claimed admission to the Presence on the same footing as his colleagues. Rumour said at the time, that his firm attitude contributed to the eventual solution of the problem; we must await the publication of official papers before judging accurately the value of the report.

However this may be, the Audience was eventually had on the 29th, in the building where Envoys of Tributary States are habitually received, but with the essential difference that, in this case, the form of salutation was foreign. The details of the ceremony appear to have been unobjectionable. The misfortune is that proper measures were not taken to give publicity to the circumstances, and to establish clearly in the eyes of

the Chinese the true position and power of Foreigners. So far from this being done, the only notice taken of the ceremony in the Peking Gazette was a statement that, as foreign envoys (designated by the same term as the annual emissaries from Liu-chiu and Corea) had supplicated (the same term used by Chinese to supplicate a mandarin) permission to present letters from their respective Governments, they might be allowed to do so—and a routine announcement that the Emperor would go on a stated day to the Temple in question, for the purpose of granting audiences. The Mandarins who were present at the audience know of course that the barbarians were too ill-bred and too unruly to *kotow*, and that the Son of Heaven mercifully condoned their ignorance; but what can the great mass of Chinese infer from the Gazette utterances, but that the foreign envoys had been granted permission to humble themselves before the Solitary Man, in the same manner and place as other envoys had humbled themselves in all ages?

Greater in real, though less perhaps in nominal, importance than the events just sketched, have been the successes of Imperial arms in Yunnan and Kansuh. After years of independence under a Sultan of their own election, the Mahomedans of Yunnan were finally crushed by the capture of Talifoo, about the time of the Emperor's accession. Of course the city was taken by treachery; even in Europe a proverb exists that all is fair in love or war, and the Chinese push the axiom to an extreme. They much prefer diplomacy to fighting, and are adepts in the art of corruption. What is unfortunate is that some grains of humanity are not also latent their character. The accounts received in Burmah, of the capture and sack of Talifoo, describe a scene of massacre and pillage scarcely equalled by the deeds of the Jews upon the Amalekites.

And now, from the North-west, we have an account of the capture by Tso Tsungtang of the city of Suh-chow, which was the chief stronghold of the Mahomedans in the farther half of Kansuh. Suh-chow is situated on the Tola river, just beyond the neck of land where Kansuh is nearly divided by the converging provinces of Mongolia and Kokonor. The account in the Peking Gazette speaks of hard fighting; and we accept the statement for what it may be worth. It also gives a description of butchery rivalling the achievements at Tali. "The troops," to quote from the Imperial decree, "massacred the Mussulman inhabitants down to the last man. Thus truly are Heaven's vengeance accomplished, and the feelings of humankind assuaged." It is strange how all people, of all religions, in all times, have been prone to claim the sympathy of Heaven in the slaughter of its creatures! The success is evidently thought much of at Peking, from the honours that have been showered on the successful general and his subordinates. It seems to show that the Mahomedan insurrection has been thoroughly quenched within the boundaries of China proper; and when we remember that, a few years ago, not only was Yunnan a Mussulman State, but Kansuh, Shensi and Shanse had been over-run by the Mahomedans in the Northwest, we may

well conceive that the Central Government finds reason for congratulating itself upon the present political position. Ten years ago, in fact, half of China was more or less out of hand. Now, Imperial authority is unchallenged in a single province. Kansuh, Yunnan, and Kweichow are not quite tranquillised, but the conditions of disturbance appear to have sunk from rebellion to brigandage. X

The young Emperor has not yet made any apparent mark; and we may be quite sure that Court intrigue will do its best to restrain him from too vigorous personal action. A rumour has come down that he has once or twice emulated the nightly strolls which rendered Haroun Alraschid so famous and popular. Of course everything will be done to dissuade him. Courtiers prefer that monarchs should see through eyes not their own; but the action indicates some energy of character, and leaves room for hope that he will be able to overcome the emollient influences that surround him. The most notable change which he has sanctioned, is the conveyance of Tribute rice by sea, in foreign-built steamers, instead of by the old Canal route. It is regrettable that the Canal should have fallen into such disrepair that the rice junks can actually not make their way throughout it; but it is well to find the Emperor recognizing the superiority of steamers to the native junk, and creditable to his great Minister Li Hung-chang, by whose advice the change is introduced. IV

It also speaks well for the young Emperor's intention, that he gave orders on his accession for reviving and restoring the efficiency of the public services; but we fear the wish has been little effectual. It would require giant effort, in an able and vigorous man, to make an impression on the Augean stable of Chinese Officialdom; and we can hardly expect much beyond intention, in a boy. If he, bye-and-bye, extend to the provinces the desire for personal inspection which he is reported to have shown in Peking, he may do much; but it is to be feared that, in the meantime, the effect of his order will rather be to revive the obsolete and useless than to reform the bad. The active drilling of troops on the old method, which has been reported from Ningpo, Foochow and other places, illustrates our argument. In the meantime, as we said before, we can only give His Majesty credit for good intention, and hope that he will retain his energy when greater experience in life shall have enabled him to direct it more efficiently.

Foreign Relations with China. Foreign relations with China have been devoid of incident, except the audience had by the Foreign Ministers in June. That event had been elevated to considerable political importance by the sustained attention and effort concentrated upon it; and we regret that its solution took place under circumstances so little calculated to achieve the object sought. What those circumstances were have been explained in our columns, so far as it has been given us to penetrate the mystery in which Peking delights to cower. What foreigners wanted was an