TWILIGHT IN THE FORBIDDEN CITY

BY

REGINALD F. JOHNSTON

K.C.M.G., C.B.E., HON. LL.D.

Professor of Chinese in the University of London; last British Commissioner of Weihaiwei; Tutor to His Majesty the Emperor Hsuan-T'ung:

Author of
From Peking to Mandalay,
Lion and Dragon in Northern China,
Buddhist China,
A Chinese Appeal to Christendom
The Chinese Drama,
Confucianism in Modern China

.

WITH A PREFACE BY
THE EMPEROR

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Johnston, Reginald Fleming, Sir, 1874-1938
Twilight in the Forbidden City / by Reginald F. Johnston ; with preface by the Emperor. -- Rev. ill. 4th ed.

Originally published in 1934.
Includes index.
ISBN 978-0-9680459-5-4

1. Johnston, Reginald Fleming, Sir, 1874-1938. 2. Puyi, 1906-1967. 3. Forbidden City (Beijing, China). 4. China--History--1912-1928. 5. China--History--Qing dynasty, 1644-1912. 6. Tutors and tutoring--China--Biography. 7. China--Kings and rulers--Biography. I. Title.

DS777.15.J64 2010 951.04'1092 C2009-907108-8

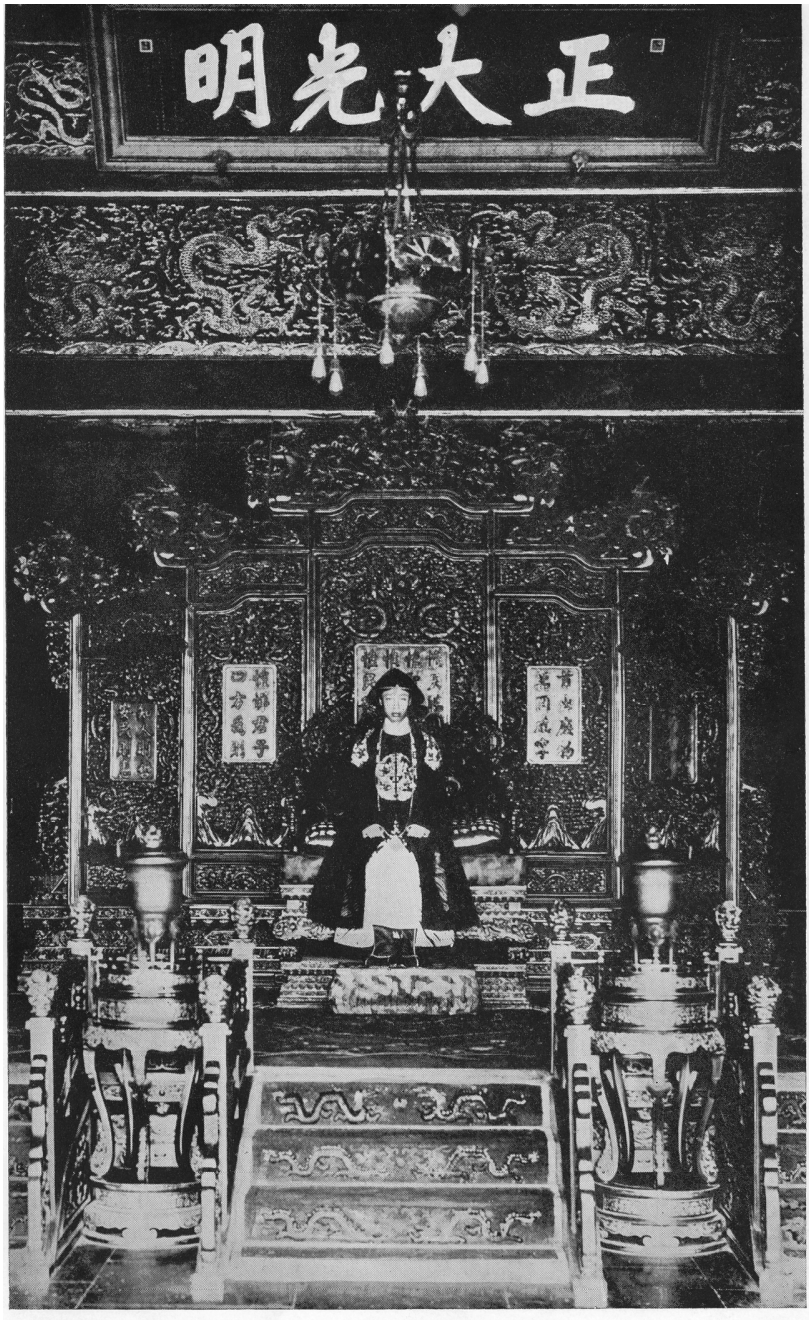
Published by Soul Care Publishing, Vancouver, B.C. Canada
Cover design by Liang Ning
Cover picture of building in Forbidden City: Mark Linden O'Meara
Printed in U.S.A

To
HIS MAJESTY THE EMPEROR P'U-YI
In memory of a happy relationship begun fifteen years ago in the Forbidden City,

And in the earnest hope that, after the passing of the twilight and the long night, the dawn of a new and happier day for himself, and also for his people on both sides of the Great Wall, is now breaking,

This book is dedicated by
His faithful and affectionate servant and tutor

Reginald F. Johnston



THE EMPEROR ON HIS THRONE IN THE PALACE OF CLOUDLESS HEAVEN, FORBIDDEN CITY

PREFACE TO THE FOURTH IMPRESSION

Since the publication of this book I have been authorised to disclose the name of the foreign diplomat who was concerned in an incident which took place early in 1923 and is described on pages 312 to 321. I do so all the more gladly because throughout the period of my residence at the Manchu Court during the period of its "twilight," he was the one who of all the foreign envoys in Peking took the kindliest and most sympathetic interest in the fortunes of the young emperor, and who was at the same time a true friend of China.

He is mentioned by name in another part of the book in connection with a later episode. It was not merely because Mr. W. J. Oudendijk, K.C.M.G., minister for the Netherlands, was *doyen of the corps diplomatique* in Peking that I appealed to him to intervene on his majesty's behalf on that dismal morning of November 5th, 1924, but mainly because I knew from past experience that to him I should not appeal in vain.

Mr. Oudendijk's own account of both incidents is given in a recent article by him which was published in the *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*, October, 1934. It is entitled "Two Episodes during the 'Twilight in the Forbidden City.' "

Many readers have enquired whether the blind walls erected by the empress-dowager in the Hall of the Waters of Rippling Jade in the Summer Palace, described on pages 362 to 368, have been pulled down or have been allowed to remain. According to the latest information received by me from Peiping, they are still standing.

Reginald F. Johnston.

Eilean Righ,
Kilmartin, Argyll,
December 14th, 1934.

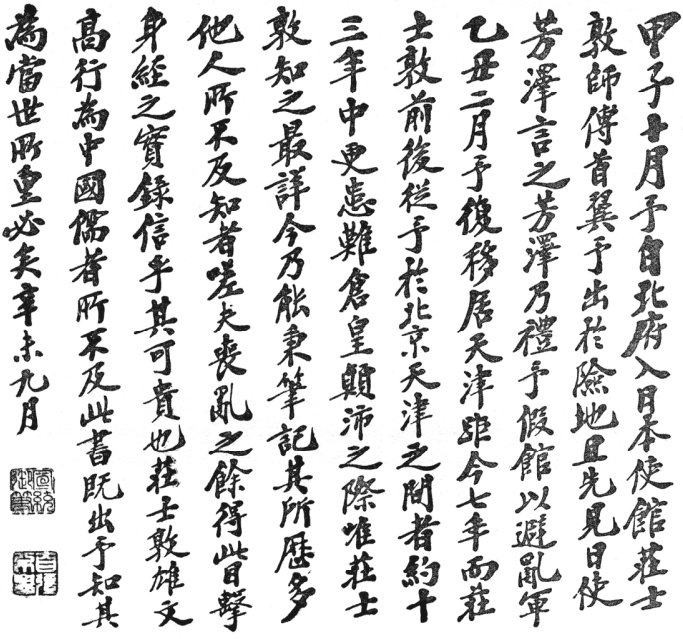
TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction 1
2. The Reform Movement of 1898 5
3. The Collapse of the Reform Movement 11
4. Reaction & the Boxer Movement, 1898-1901 24
5. The Last Years of Kuang-Hsu, 1901-1908 34
6. The Empress-Dowager T'zu-Hsi 46
7. Bonus Chapter: Wu-T'ai Shan & The Dalai Lama 60
8. The Revolution, 1911 70
9. The "Articles of Favourable Treatment" 85
10. The Ta Ch'ing and the Hung Hsien Emperors 100
11. Chang Hsun and the Restoration of 1917 119
12. The Old Man of the Pine-Tree 133
13. The Forbidden City, 1919-1924 146
14. The Imperial Tutors 170
15. The Manchu Court in Twilight 185
16. Imperial Household Department 200
17. The Dragon Unfledged 215
18. Monarchist Hopes and Dreams 238
19. The Dragon Restless 253
20. The Dragon Flaps His Wings 264
21. Dragon and Phoenix 294
22. Plots and Stratagems 310
23. The Imperial Garden 329
24. The Summer Palace 343
25. The Fifth of November 369
26. The Dragon Caged 389
27. The Flight of the Dragon 403
28. Epilogue- The Dragon Goes Home 424
29. Pedigree Of The Manchu Emperors 442
30. Notes 444
31. Index 469

PREFACE

by

HIS MAJESTY THE EMPEROR


甲子十月予自北府入日本使館莊士敦師傅首冀予出於險地且先見日使芳澤言之芳澤乃禮予假館以避亂軍乙丑二月予復移居天津距今七年而莊士敦前後從予於北京天津之間者約十三年中更患難倉皇顛沛之際唯莊士敦知之最詳今乃能秉筆記其所歷多他人所不及知者嗟夫喪亂之餘得耆宿躬經之實錄信乎其可貴也莊士敦雄文高行為中國儒者所不及此書既出乎知其為當世所重必矣辛未九月

TRANSLATION OF PREFACE

In the tenth month of the chia-tzu year,[1] after leaving the residence of prince Ch'un,[2] I took refuge in the Japanese Legation. It was Johnston, my tutor, who was chiefly instrumental in rescuing me from peril. Moreover, he it was who first interviewed the Japanese Minister, Fang Tse,[3] on my behalf, after which Fang Tse received me courteously and allowed me to use his Legation as a place of refuge from the wild soldiery. In the second month of the i-ch'ou year[4] I made another move, and went to reside in Tientsin. That was seven years ago, and Johnston from first to last, both in Peking and subsequently in Tientsin, was my companion, throughout a period of thirteen years. No one has a more intimate knowledge than he of the disasters and hardships of that critical period. He is therefore well fitted to take up his pen and make a record of events in which he himself played a part. To those who look back upon the sorrows and disorders of that time, this true record of his, based on personal experience and observation, will indeed be a thing of value. As a writer and as a man Johnston is one who is not surpassed by the best of our native scholars. When his book appears I know it will be highly prized by the world.

Ninth month of the hsin-wei year.[5]

(Authenticated by two imperial seals.)

---

[1]The chia-tzu year (which happened to be the first of the present Chinese cycle) roughly corresponds with 1924.

[2] Literally "the Northern Mansion" (Pei Fu). It was in the house of his father, prince Ch'un, ex-regent of China, that the emperor was a state-prisoner after the "Christian General," Feng Yu-hsiang, had forcibly expelled him, in November 1924, from his palace in the Forbidden City.

[3] Fang Tse—the Chinese name of Mr. K. Yoshizawa, then Japanese Minister in Peking.

[4] I-ch'ou year—1925.

[5] Hsin-wei year—1931. The Preface was written by the emperor at Tientsin and transcribed by his devoted servant the famous poet, statesman and calli-graphist, Cheng Hsiao-hsu, about a week before they both left for Manchuria, to become Chief Executive and Prime Minister, respectively, of the new State.

1. Introduction

At about eleven o'clock on the morning of July 25th, 1901, there stepped ashore at Hong-Kong a shy and boyish figure attired in the rich silk costume of a Chinese noble and wearing on his hat the red "button" of a mandarin of the highest rank. At the pier, he and his little suite were met by a group of British officials, of whom the writer of these pages was one, who welcomed him to British territory on behalf of the local government. Accompanied by an escort of police whose business it was to keep at a respectful distance the throng of inquisitive but undemonstrative Chinese who lined the streets, four red-coated chair-bearers bore him swiftly away from the water-front. Fifteen minutes later his chair was set down at the front doorway of Government House, where he was received and greeted by the Governor of the Crown Colony.

The distinguished visitor was his imperial highness prince Ch'un, brother of the reigning emperor of China. His host was his excellency Sir Henry Blake, representative in Hong-Kong of his majesty king Edward VII.

The occasion was a memorable one, for this was the first time that a Chinese prince had set foot in British territory. Yet his visit was shorn of most of the ceremonial courtesies that would have been extended to him by the British authorities had he been willing to accept them. No salute from British men-of-war or from the shore-batteries greeted him as he entered the harbour in the German ship *Bayern*, no guard of honour received him at his landing. This was in accordance with his own wish; for he was travelling on a mission of humiliation, and while it remained unfulfilled he preferred to receive none of the honours due to a prince of the blood-royal of China. One year and thirty-five days before prince Ch'un set foot in Hong-Kong, the German plenipotentiary in China had been murdered by a "Boxer" in the streets of Peking. The shot that killed baron Von Ketteler on June 20th, 1900, reverberated round the world, for it marked the beginning of the lamentable episode known to history as the Siege of the Legations; and now, in accordance with one of the conditions of peace imposed by the victorious allies on the abased Chinese court, a Manchu imperial prince was on his way to Germany to lay the humble regrets and apologies of the "Son of Heaven" before the throne of one who in Chinese eyes had lately been at best a tributary prince, at worst a contumelious barbarian kinglet.

Among some notes which I made at the time, and which were afterwards embodied in a document now in Downing Street, were the following words: "Though prince Ch'un cannot, according to the dynastic customs of China, himself become a candidate for the imperial throne, it is not impossible that if he has any children his son may eventually become emperor. This would certainly make prince Ch'un himself a very important factor in the future politics of China."

This remark correctly foreshadowed what fortune had in store for prince Ch'un. After his return from Germany, the empress-dowager married him to a daughter of her trusted friend and kinsman Jung-Lu, viceroy and grand-councillor. Early in 1906 their first son was born, and that son, whose personal name was P'u-Yi, became the last sovereign of the Ta Ch'ing (Manchu) dynasty in China; while prince Ch'un himself, as regent for his own son, became for a few disturbed and anxious years ruler of the Chinese Empire.[1]

Not long after prince Ch'un had come and gone, another member of the reigning house passed through Hong-Kong on a mission that involved no degradation for China. In his case, therefore, there was no abatement of royal honours. This was prince Tsai-Chen, afterwards (in succession to his father) prince Ch'ing, who was on his way to England to represent his sovereign at king Edward's coronation.

It was on these two occasions that I first came in contact with members of the Manchu imperial family, whom long afterwards I was to know more intimately than any other foreigner. But I had already made the acquaintance of a man whose fortunes were also linked with those of the Manchu dynasty and who will deservedly occupy a far more honourable place in the annals of his country than either of the princes I have named. I first arrived in Hong-Kong, an "Eastern Cadet" fresh from Magdalen, on Christmas Day, 1898. Epoch-making events had been taking place in China during that year, and the leading figure in those events had recently arrived in Hong-Kong as a refugee. It was in Government House that I first met K'ang Yu-wei, the most admired and the most hated member of the Chinese race at that time: admired, even reverenced, by those who combined loyalty to the dynasty with a patriotic longing to see their country honoured among the nations; hated, and also feared, by those who believed that China had nothing to learn from Western "barbarians" and that the Chinese emperor was *dejure* King of kings.