



They reached the palace the same day and there was an affecting interview with Ho T'ai-hou.

But when they had restored order in the palace the Hereditary Seal, the special seal of the Emperor, was missing.

Tung Cho camped without the walls but every day he was to be seen in the streets with an escort of mailed soldiers so that the common people were in a state of constant trepidation. He also went in and out of the palace careless of all the rules of propriety.

Pao Hsin spoke of his behaviour to Yüan Shao, saying, "This man harbours some evil design and should be removed."

"Nothing can be done till the government is more settled," said Shao.

Then he saw Wang Yün and asked what he thought.

"Let us talk it over," was the reply.

Pao Hsin said no more but he left the capital and retired to T'aishan. Tung Cho induced the soldiers of the two brothers Ho to join his command and privately spoke to his adviser about deposing the Emperor in favour of the Prince of Ch'ên-liu.

"The government is really without a head; there can be no better time than this to carry out your plan. Delay will spoil all. Tomorrow assemble the officials in the Wênming Garden and address them on the subject. Put all opponents to death and your prestige is settled."

So spoke his adviser and the words pleased Tung Cho mightily.

So the next day he spread a feast and invited many guests. As all the officers went in terror of him no one dared be absent. He himself rode up to the garden last of all and took his place with his sword girded on. When the wine had gone round several times Tung Cho stopped the service and the music and began to speak.

"I have something to say; listen quietly all of you."

All turned towards him.

"The Emperor is lord of all and if he lacks dignity and behaves in an unseemly manner he is no fitting inheritor of the ancestral prerogatives. He who is now on the throne is a weakling, inferior to the Prince of Ch'ên-liu in intelligence and love of learning. The Prince is in every way fitted for the throne. I desire to depose the Emperor and set up the Prince in his place. What think you?"

The assembly listened in perfect silence, none daring at first to utter a word of dissent. But one dared; for suddenly a guest stood up in his place, smote the table and cried.

"No! No! who are you, that you dare utter such bold words? The Emperor is the son of the lawful consort and has done no wrong. Why then should he be deposed? Are you a rebel?"

The speaker was Ting Yüan, governor of Chinchow.

when defeated and Pei gave him Hsiaop'ei to live in. If these two agreed to join forces and attack, my position would be most serious. What precautions can be taken?"

Then rose Hsü Ch'ü, saying, "Give me five legions and I will give the Minister both their heads."

Hsün Yü said, "O Leader, you are brave, but you are no strategist. You cannot start sudden war just as the capital has been changed. However, there is a certain ruse known as The Rival Tigers. Liu Pei has no decree authorising him to govern the district. You, Illustrious Sir, can procure one for him, and when sending it, and so conferring upon him right in addition to his might, you can enclose a private note telling him to get rid of Lü Pu. If he does, then he will have lost a vigorous warrior from his side and he could be dealt with as occasions serve. Should he fail, then Lü Pu will slay him. This is The Rival Tiger ruse; they wrangle and bite each other."

Ts'ao agreed that this was a good plan so he memorialised for the formal appointment, which he sent to Liu Pei. Pei was created General "Conqueror of the East" and a Marquis as well. At the same time a private note was enclosed.

When Liu Pei heard of the change of capital he began to prepare a congratulatory address. In the midst of this an imperial messenger was announced and was met with all ceremony outside the gate. When the epistle had been reverently received a banquet was prepared for the messenger.

The messenger said, "This decree was obtained for you by the Minister Ts'ao."

Yüan-tê thanked him. Then the messenger drew forth his secret letter. When he had read this Liu Pei said, "This matter can be easily arranged."

The banquet over and the messenger conducted to his lodging to seek repose, Yüan-tê, before going to rest, called in his councillors to consider the letter.

"There need be no compunction about putting him to death," said Chang Fei; "he is a bad man."

"But he came to me for protection in his weakness, how can I put him to death? That would be immoral," said Liu Pei.

"If he was a good man; it would be difficult," replied Fei.

Liu Pei would not consent. Next day, when Lü Pu came to offer congratulations, he was received as usual. He said, "I have come to felicitate you on the receipt of the imperial bounty."

Liu Pei thanked him in due form. But then he saw Chang Fei draw his sword and come up the hall as if to slay Lü Pu. He hastily interfered and stopped him. Lü Pu was surprised and said, "Why do you wish to slay me, I-tê?"

"Ts'ao Ts'ao says you are immoral and tells my brother to kill you," shouted Chang Fei.

victorious. Their opponents scattered in all directions. T'ai-shih alone made a determined stand and as he could not withstand a whole army he fled with a few followers to Chinghsien.

Now Sun Ts'ê acquired a new adherent in the person of Ch'ên Wu. He was a soldier of middle height, sallow of complexion and dark eye, an odd looking man. But Sun held him in high esteem, gave him rank and put him in the van for the attack on Hsüeh Li. As van-leader he and half a score horsemen made a dash into the enemy's formation, where they slew half a hundred men. So Hsüeh Li would not fight but remained within his defences. As Sun was attacking the city a spy came in with the news that Liu Yu and Chai Jung had gone to attack Niuchu, which made Sun move thither in haste. His two opponents were ready for battle.

"I am here," said Sun Ts'ê, "you had better give in."

A horseman came out from behind the two leaders to accept the challenge. It was Yü Mi. But in the third bout Sun Ts'ê made him prisoner and carried him off to the other side.

Seeing his colleague thus captured Fan Nêng rode out to the rescue and got quite close. But just as he was going to thrust, all the soldiers shouted "There is a man behind you going to strike secretly!" At this Sun Ts'ê turned and shouted so thunderously loud that Fan Nêng fell out of his saddle from mere fright. He split his skull and died. When Sun Ts'ê reached his standard he threw his prisoner to the ground. And he was also dead, crushed to death between the arm and the body of his captor. So in a few moments Sun Ts'ê had disposed of two enemies, one crushed to death and one frightened to death. Thereafter Sun Ts'ê was called the Little Prince.

After Liu Yu's defeat the greater portion of his force surrendered and the number of those put to death exceeded ten thousand. Liu Yu himself sought safety with Liu Piao.

An attack on Moling was the next move. As soon as Sun Ts'ê arrived at the moat he summoned the commander, Hsüeh Li, to surrender. Some one let fly a furtive arrow from the wall which wounded Sun in the left thigh so severely that he fell from his steed. Hastily his officers picked up their wounded chief and returned to the camp where the arrow was pulled out and the wound dressed with the medicines suitable for injuries by metals.

By Sun Ts'ê's command the story was spread abroad that the hurt had been fatal and all the soldiers set up cries of lamentation. The camp was broken up. The defender of the city made a night sortie, but fell into a carefully prepared ambush and presently Sun himself appeared on horseback shouting "Sun Ts'ê is here still."

His sudden appearance created such a panic that the soldiers dropped their weapons and fell on their faces. Sun gave

man, and if he joined forces with Yüan Shu and they set themselves to conquer Huai and Ssü* the problem would be difficult."

Then spoke Kuo Chia, "Let us take advantage of the moment before they have fully made up their mind. Smite before they are fully prepared." And Ts'ao Ts'ao did so. Five legions with four captains were sent in advance. Ts'ao commanded the rear army, which marched by divisions, and Chien Yung brought up the rear.

Soon the scouts informed Kao Shun. He sent flying messengers to Lü Pu, who detached two hundred horse to assist him. Kao Shun posted this reinforcement about thirty *li* from the city to meet Ts'ao's army. He followed close.

When Liu Pei saw the enemy retiring from the city he knew Ts'ao's army was close at hand. So, making arrangements for guarding the city within, he and his two brothers marched their men out of the city and made a camp, that they might be ready to assist.

Now the division of Ts'ao's army under Hsiahou Tun, having marched out in advance, first came into touch with Kao Shun. The former captain at once rode out with spear set and offered a challenge. It was accepted and the two leaders fought half a hundred bouts. Then Kao Shun began to weaken and had to own he had lost the day. His adversary pressed him hard and he rode round to the rear of his array. Tun was not the man to quail so he followed right into the enemy's country. Then Ts'ao Hsing, one of the captains, secretly strung his bow, fitted an arrow and, when Tun had come quite near, shot at him. The arrow hit Hsiahou Tun full in the left eye. He shrieked, and putting up his head, pulled out the arrow and with it the eye.

"Essence of my father, blood of my mother, I cannot throw this away," cried he, and he put the eye into his mouth and swallowed it.

Then resuming his firm grip of his spear he went after this new enemy.

There was no escape for Ts'ao Hsing. He was overtaken and fell with a spear wound full in the face. Both sides were stricken dumb with amazement.

Having thus slain the man who had wounded him Tun rode back toward his own side. Kao Shun went in pursuit and, waving on his men, attacked so vigorously that he won the day. Hsiahou Tun saved his elder brother, with whom he fled. The various divisions rallied at Chipei and made a camp there.

Kao Shun having scored this victory, returned to attack Liu Pei, and as Lü Pu opportunely arrived with Chang Liao,

* The country about modern Kiangsu and south Shantung.

"He is a beast, with neither a sense of humanity nor of right. Let us leave him," said Hsien.

"He is not worth fighting for. The best we could do would be to seize him and hand him over to Ts'ao Ts'ao."

"I was punished because I got my horses back again, yet all he trusts in is his own steed. If you two will betray the gate and seize Lü Pu I will steal the horse and go out to Ts'ao's camp."

They settled how to carry out the plot and that very night Hou Ch'êng sneaked into the stables and got the Hare away. He hastened to the east gate which was opened to let him through. The guard made a pretence of pursuing him but only a pretence.

Hou Ch'êng reached the besiegers' camp, presented the horse and told Ts'ao what had been arranged. They would show a white flag and open the gates to his army. Hearing this Ts'ao had a few notifications written out, which were attached to arrows and shot over the walls. This is one of them:—"The General Ts'ao Ts'ao has received a command to destroy Lü Pu. Those who interfere with the operations of his grand army, whatever their rank, shall be put to death in the gate on the day that the city shall be captured. Should any one capture Lü Pu or bring his head he shall be well rewarded. Let all take note of this."

Next day at daylight a tremendous hubbub was heard without the city and Lü Pu, halberd in hand, hastened to the wall to see what it meant. As he went from gate to gate inspecting the defences and guards he censured Wei Hsü for letting Hou Ch'êng escape and get away with his horse. He threatened to punish him. But just then the besiegers began a fierce attack as the white flag had just appeared and Lü Pu had to turn all his energies to defence. The assault lasted till noon, when the attacking force drew off for a time.

Lü Pu was taking a rest in the tower and fell asleep in his chair. Sun Hsien sent away his attendants, and when they had gone he stole his master's weapon, the halberd in which he trusted. Then he and Wei Hsü fell upon Lü together and before he was well awake had bound him with cords, trussing him so that he could not move. Lü Pu shouted for his men, but they were driven off by the two traitors and could not come near. Then a white flag was shown and the besiegers again approached the city. The traitors shouted out that Lü Pu was a prisoner. But Hsiahou Yüan could hardly believe it till they threw down the famous halberd.

The gates were flung open and the enemy entered the city. Kao Shun and Chang Liao, who were at the opposite gate, were surrounded and cut off by the water and helpless. They were captured. Ch'ên Kung made a dash to the south gate but was also taken. Presently Ts'ao Ts'ao entered and at once gave

"Mi Hêng shamed me too deeply before all the world. I am going to borrow Liu Piao's hand to remove him. And you need say no more," said Ts'ao.

Then Ts'ao sent Han Sung back to his former master to tell him what had happened. He came and was full of praise for the virtues of the Court and was keen on persuading Piao to espouse that side. Then Liu Piao suddenly turned angry, charged him with treachery and threatened him with death.

"You turn your back on me;" cried Han Sung. "I did not betray you."

K'uai Liang remarked that Han Sung had foretold this possibility before he left, it was only what he expected. Liu Piao, who was just and reasonable, went no further.

Presently came the news that Mi Hêng had been put to death by Huang Tsu on account of a quarrel begun over the wine cups. Both being worse for liquor they had begun to discuss the worth of people.

"You were in Hsütu," said Huang. "Who was there of worth?"

"The big boy was K'ung Jung and the little one Yang Tê-tsu. There was no one else to count."

"What am I like?" said Huang.

"You are like a god in a temple; you sit still and receive sacrifice, but the lack of intelligence is pitiful."

"Do you regard me as a mere image?" cried Huang Tsu, angry.

So he put the impudent speaker to death. Even at the very point of death Mi never ceased his railing and abuse.

"Alas!" sighed Liu Piao, when he heard of his fate. He had the victim honourably interred near Yingwuchou. And a later poet wrote of him:—

Huang Tsu could brook no rival; at his word
Mi Hêng met death beneath the cruel sword.
His grave on Parrot Isle may yet be seen,
The river flowing past it, coldly green.

Ts'ao Ts'ao heard of the young man's death with pleasure. "The putrid bookworm has just cut himself up with his own sharp tongue," said he.

As there was no sign of Liu Piao coming to join him, Ts'ao Ts'ao began to think of coercion. The adviser, Hsün Yü, dissuaded him from this course.

Said he, "Yüan Shao is not subjugated, Liu Pei is not destroyed. To attack Liu Piao would be to neglect the vital to care for the immaterial. Destroy the two chief enemies first and Chiang-han is yours at one blow."

And Ts'ao Ts'ao took the advice.

After the departure of Yüan-tê, Tung Ch'êng and his fellow conspirators did nothing else day or night but try to evolve

of Chou Ts'ang. There was every occasion for feasting and gratification.

Scattered wide were the brothers, none knew another's retreat,
Joyfully now they foregather, dragon and tiger meet.

At this time the forces under the command of the three brothers and their adherents numbered four or five thousand men. Yüan-tê was in favour of leaving Kuch'êng and occupying Junan and just then Liu P'ei and Kung Tu, commanders of that city, sent to invite him to go there. So they went. There they devoted all their efforts to strengthen their army, both horse and foot, but nothing will be said of the recruiting, purchase of horses and such matters.

However it must be noted that Yüan Shao was much annoyed when Yüan-tê did not return and at first was for sending a force after him. However Kuo T'u dissuaded him.

"Liu P'ei need cause you no anxiety; Ts'ao Ts'ao is your one enemy and must be destroyed. Even Liu Piao, though strongly posted on the river, is none too terrible. There is Sun Po-fu on the east of the river, strong, feared, with wide territory, a large army and able counsellors and leaders; you should make an alliance there against Ts'ao Ts'ao."

He won his chief to his view and wrote to Sun, sending the letter by Ch'ên Chên.

Just as one warrior leaves the north,
Another from the east comes forth.

Future chapters will reveal the outcome of these dispositions.

there came news that two captains, who had tendered their submission, had suddenly begun plundering the people in Chianghsia. They evidently meant rebellion. "If they really rebel it will cause a lot of trouble," said Piao, rather dismayed.

"Do not let that trouble you, I will go and settle it," said P'ei.

Pleased with this proposal, Piao told off three legions and placed them under his friend, and the army marched as soon as the orders were issued. In a short time it reached the scene and the two malcontents came out to fight. Yüan-tê and his two brothers took their stand beneath the great banner and looked over at the enemy. The two leaders were riding handsome prancing horses and Yüan-tê said, "They certainly have fine steeds."

As he spoke Chao Yün galloped out with his spear set and dashed toward the enemy. Chang Wu, one of the leaders, came out to meet him, but the combat was very brief for Chang was soon killed. Thereupon Chao Yün laid a hand upon the bridle of the fallen man's horse to lead him back to his own side. The slain rebel's companion Ch'ên Sun at once rode after him, whereupon Chang Fei uttered a loud shout and rode out to meet him. With one thrust he slew the rebel. Their followers now scattered and Yüan-tê speedily restored order and returned.

Liu Piao, grateful for this service, rode out to the boundary to welcome the victors. They re-entered the city and grand banquets were instituted, at which they emptied great goblets in congratulations over the victory. At one of these banquets the Prefect said, "With such heroism as my brother has shown Chingchou has one upon whom to rely. But a source of sorrow is the south country Yueh, from which a raid may come at any time. Chang Lu and Sun Ch'üan are to be feared."

"But I have three bold captains," said Yüan-tê, "quite equal to any task you can set them. Send Chang Fei to keep ward on the southern marches, Kuan Yü to guard the city against Chang Lu and Chao Yün will protect you from Sun Ch'üan. Why need you grieve?"

The scheme appealed strongly to the Prefect, but Ts'ai Mao did not approve. So he spoke to his sister, Liu Piao's wife, and insisted on the danger of putting these men in such commanding positions all round the prefecture. The lady Ts'ai, thus influenced by her brother, undertook to remonstrate and that night began by saying, "The Chingchou men seem to have a great liking for Liu Pei; they are always coming and going. You ought to take precautions. I do not think you should let them stay in the city. Why not send them on some mission?"

"Yüan-tê is a good man," replied the Prefect.

"I think others differ from you," said the lady.

The Prefect said nothing but muttered to himself. Soon after he went out of the city to see Yüan-tê and noticed he was

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CHAPTER XLVI.

K'UNG-MING "BORROWS" SOME ARROWS:

HUANG KAI ACCEPTS A PUNISHMENT.

The gossip Lu Su departed on his mission and found K'ung-ming seated in his little craft.

"There has been so much to do that I have not been able to come to listen to your instruction," said Lu Su.

"That is truly so," said K'ung-ming, "and I have not yet congratulated the Commander-in-Chief."

"What have you wished to congratulate him upon?"

"Why Sir, the matter upon which he sent you to find out whether I knew about it or not. Indeed I can congratulate him on that."

Lu Su turned pale and gasped. But how did you know, Master?"

"The ruse succeeded well thus played off on Chiang Kan. Ts'ao has been taken in this once, but he will soon rise to it. Only he will not confess his mistake. However, the two men are gone and your country is freed from a grave anxiety. Do you not think that a matter for congratulation? I hear Mao Chieh and Yü Chin are the new admirals, and in their hands lie both good and evil for the fate of the fleet."

Lu Su was quite dumbfounded; he stayed a little time longer passing the time in making empty remarks, and then took his leave. As he was going away K'ung-ming cautioned him against letting Chou Yü know that his new rival had guessed his ruse. "I know he is jealous and he only seeks some chance to do me harm."

Lu Su promised; nevertheless he went straight to his chief and related the whole thing just as it happened.

"Really he must be got rid of," said Chou Yü, "I have quite decided to put the man out of the way."

"If you slay him, will not Ts'ao Ts'ao laugh at you?"

"Oh, no; I will find a legitimate way of getting rid of him so that he shall go to his death without resentment."

"But how can you find a legitimate way of assassinating him?"

"Do not ask too much; you will see presently."

Soon after all the officers were summoned to the main tent and K'ung-ming's presence was desired. He went contentedly enough. When all were seated Chou Yü suddenly addressed

the five passes. He saw the desperate straits to which his benefactor was reduced and tears were very near to the eyes of both. He could not press him hard. He pulled at the bridle of his steed and turned away saying to his followers, "Break up the formation."

From this it was evident that his design was to release Ts'ao Ts'ao, who then went on with his officers, and when Kuan Yü turned to look back they had all passed. He uttered a great shout and the soldiers jumped off their horses and knelt on the ground crying for mercy. But he also had pity for them. Then Chang Liao, whom he knew well, came along and was allowed to go free also.

Ts'ao Ts'ao, his army lost, fled to the Huayung Valley;
There in the throat of the gorge met he Kuan Yü.
Grateful was Kuan, and mindful of former kindness,
Wherefore slipped he the bolt and freed the imprisoned dragon.

Having escaped this danger Ts'ao Ts'ao hastened to get out of the valley. As the throat opened out he glanced behind him and saw only two score and seven horsemen. As evening fell they reached Nanchün and they came upon what they took to be more enemies. Ts'ao Ts'ao thought the end had surely come, but to his delight they were his own men and he regained all his confidence. Ts'ao Jên, who was the leader, said that he had heard of the misfortunes of his master, but he was afraid to venture far from his charge else he would have met him before.

"I nearly missed you as it was," said Ts'ao Ts'ao.

The fugitives found repose in the city, where Chang Liao soon joined them. He also praised the magnanimity of Kuan Yü.

When Ts'ao Ts'ao mustered the miserable remnant of his host he found nearly all were wounded and he bade them rest. Ts'ao Jên poured the wine of consolation whereby his master might forget his sorrows. And as Ts'ao drank among his familiars he became exceedingly sad.

Wherefore they said, "O Minister, when you were in the cave of the tiger and trying to escape you showed no sign of sorrow; now that you are safe in a city, where you have food and the horses have forage, where all you have to do is to prepare for revenge, suddenly you lose heart and grieve; why thus?"

Replied Ts'ao Ts'ao, "I am thinking of my friend Kuo Chia; had he been alive he would not have let me suffer this loss."

He beat his breast and wept, saying "Alas for Fêng-hsiao! I grieve for Fêng-hsiao! I sorrow for Fêng-hsiao!"

The reproach shamed the advisers. Next day Ts'ao Ts'ao called Ts'ao Jên and said, "I am going to the capital to prepare another army for revenge. You are to guard this district and, in case of necessity, I leave with you a sealed plan. You are