

## “WAH,” FREDERICK TOWNSEND WARD OF SALEM MA<sup>1</sup>



1831

➔ November 29, 1831: Frederick Townsend Ward was born near the docks of Salem MA. Since most of his correspondence has been destroyed by a relative, we know very little about the earlier portions of his short life.

1846

➔ Winter 1846/1847: Frederick Townsend Ward, unsuccessful in obtaining an appointment to West Point, had attempted to enlist in the US Army to go on its attack against Mexico. Therefore upon reaching the age of 15, his father allowed the recalcitrant youth to ship out for China as a 2d mate on the clipper *Hamilton*, the captain of which was a relative.

1847

➔ Fall 1847: Frederick Townsend Ward returned from China and, for a time, studied at a military academy in Vermont.

1849

➔ 1849: At the age of 17 or 18, Frederick Townsend Ward again signed ship's papers, this time as a 1st mate. (He would later boast of having been during the ensuing decade a Texas Ranger, and a Californian gold-miner, and an instructor in the Mexican military service, and an officer in the French army of the Crimea. He would also claim to have gone filibustering with William Walker, perhaps the expedition to Sonora, Mexico in 1853 or the expedition to Nicaragua in 1857, and confess that for this he had been outlawed by his own government. There is no record to substantiate any of this, and it has been noticed that he liked to impress people and display his manliness, and that a good story would never suffer in his retelling of it.)

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1. Face retouched to conceal battle wounds.

1858

→ 1858: Frederick Townsend Ward returned from wherever he had been at sea and from whatever he had been doing on land for the previous ten years (he had had some adventures, he could tell you), to a desk job as a ship broker working for his father in New-York. (He would find this altogether too dull and would sail again for China.)

1859

→ Fall 1859: Frederick Townsend Ward disembarked in Shanghai on the coast of China and was hired as a mate on a vessel that was steaming up and down the Yangtze River. In his imagination at the time, he would be supporting the activities of local Chinese who had become Christians. Here is an excerpt from Chapter 3 “Ward and Gordon: Glorious Days of Looting” in Jonathan D. Spence’s *TO CHANGE CHINA, WESTERN ADVISERS IN CHINA, 1620-1960* (pages 57-92; London: Penguin, 1969):

The China he happened upon was a country in chaos, ravaged by a great rebellion whose leaders called themselves Taipings. These leaders had developed their power in the southern provinces of Kwangtung and Kwangsi in the late 1840s, drawing recruits from Hakka and Miao minority groups, from secret societies, from pirates driven inland by British patrol vessels jealously guarding the new treaty ports, from impoverished miners and peasants, and from the drifting population on the waterways, unemployed now that the focus of the opium trade had swung from Canton up to Shanghai and the Yangtze valley. The apathy and ineffectualness of the local Ch'ing officials had given the rebel band the opportunity to grow to some thirty thousand men by 1850. Two years later the rebels struck north, gathering hundreds of thousands of recruits along the way. In 1853, after a series of shattering victories, they seized the great city of Nanking and even threatened Peking itself. At the time of Ward's arrival in Shanghai they were still firmly entrenched in the Yangtze valley, and had routed all the Ch'ing forces sent against them. As rebels, they were a new phenomenon in Chinese history, unlike the peasant rebel armies of the past. Their leader, Hung Hsiu-ch'uan, had gleaned the elements of Christianity from a Protestant missionary pamphlet and had learned in a mystical vision that he was the younger brother of Jesus Christ. His mission, he believed, was to establish the "Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace" (*T'ai-p'ing t'ien-kuo*) in China and bring his people back to knowledge of the true God. "My hand now holds both in heaven and earth the power to punish and kill," he wrote; "to slay the depraved, and spare the upright; to relieve the people's distress. My eyes survey from the North to the South beyond the rivers and mountains; my voice is heard from East to West, to the tracts of the sun and the moon." Hung's troops followed him with fanatical loyalty and were subject to iron discipline. As they advanced across the country all those who resisted were slaughtered, those who surrendered were spared. Hung's followers had to obey the dictates of his religion, which were adapted from the Ten Commandments. The sexes were segregated, opium smoking was forbidden. Land was shared and all surplus paid into a common treasury. Civil service examinations were instituted, based, not

on the Confucian canon, but on the new doctrines. Western observers, initially fascinated by these rebels and sympathetic to their Christian aspirations, felt it would be no misfortune if the Taipings overthrew the Ch'ing dynasty. A British Protestant in 1853 pointed out four "advantages which will accrue to China from success on the side of the insurgents": China would be opened to the dissemination of the scriptures, idolatry would be firmly put down, opium traffic would be stopped, and "China, will be fully opened to our commerce, our science, our curiosity, and all the influences of our civilizations." A Catholic missionary, though finding the Taiping religion "a compilation of doctrinal rhapsodies, rather than the adoption of a religion transmitted by others," still saw the rebels "as avengers of their nationality" and noted "that they treated me with respect." And these sentiments were generally echoed at home. Marx and Engels in articles they sent to the New York Daily Tribune from London wrote, "In short, instead of moralizing on the horrible atrocities of the Chinese, as the chivalrous British Press does, we had better recognize that this is a war *pro aris et focis* [for faith and hearth], a popular war for the maintenance of Chinese nationality, with all its overbearing prejudice, stupidity, learned ignorance, and pedantic barbarism if you like, but yet a popular war." Desperate to contain the Taipings, the Ch'ing dynasty reluctantly condoned the development of regional armies. These armies were controlled and led by powerful officials in central China; the soldiers were usually peasants, with strong local allegiances, owing loyalty only to their own commanders. Unlike the regular Manchu forces, they were well trained and even well paid as their commanders collected the traditional land taxes and instituted new taxes on commerce, bypassing the national government treasury. Simply to preserve itself, the Ch'ing dynasty had had to delegate enormous powers to these officials. Nor was this the only trouble confronting the Court; other rebellions broke out in the north and West Of China; while at the same time the Western powers were brusquely demanding first implementation and then expansion of the terms of the Treaty of Nanking. China's intransigence in this regard precipitated the second Anglo-Chinese War in the late 1850s, and in 1860 after a British representative had been imprisoned and some of his entourage killed, allied forces occupied Peking. On the orders of Lord Elgin, the great Summer Palace of the Manchus, parts of which had been designed in the eighteenth century by Jesuits, was burned to the ground; the Emperor fled. It seemed that the Ch'ing dynasty, wracked by domestic rebellions and invaded by the West, would surely fall.

...[T]he Western powers were "adventurers." They had arrived by sea and settled, by means of guile and coercion, onto the Chinese coast. Moreover, their diplomatic and military representatives had great freedom of action since it took so long for them to request or receive instructions from their home governments. Often they were out to get what they could for themselves or their own countries by any means possible, and accordingly their loyalties went not to the Ch'ing dynasty but to whatever groups in China best promised to forward their interests. The constant friction inherent in this situation had led twice in thirty years to open warfare with the Chinese government. From their point of view the Ch'ing had "paid" them well enough, but they would have been willing to support the Taipings, had the Taipings offered them greater benefits. In addition, early

missionary accounts of the Taiping's "Christianity" had impressed most Westerners, and positive reports of their discipline and order (order being one thing congenial to trade) had also influenced Western public opinion. The Westerners were further encouraged when a new Taiping leader, Hung Jen-kan, came to the forefront in 1859. Hung Jen-kan tried to bring the Taiping religion closer to conventional Protestant tenets and to reestablish contact with the Western powers. He drew up an ambitious program of "modernization," planning to introduce railroads, post offices, banks and insurance to the rebel-held areas. But Hung Jen-kan lost out in a power struggle among rebel leaders, and in 1860 fresh Taiping forces began to approach and menace Shanghai, spreading chaos in the surrounding areas and prohibiting trade in opium. Western opinion began slowly to undergo a change. This change was indirectly linked to the successful ratification of the Treaty of Tientsin in 1860, which gave the Western powers the right to open new treaty ports and to trade along the Yangtze River (much of which was controlled by the Taipings). With these new rights, Westerners began to feel that it was, in fact, the Taipings who were delaying the Western advance and endangering Western economic interests in Shanghai. The stated Western policy of "neutrality" in the Chinese civil war came slowly and fitfully to be an active "neutrality" in favor of a quiescent China under the Ch'ing dynasty. The Ch'ing, in turn, began unwillingly to cooperate. "It is just that there is a danger (fear) that if we do not make them our allies they may be used by the rebels. The harm in that would be incalculable," said Prince Kung, new chief minister of the central government.

1860

→ June 1860: Although Frederick Townsend Ward had returned to China in order to support the activities of the Christians there –muscular Christians very much like himself, who did not believe in turning the other cheek but in returning blow for blow– upon arrival he had succumbed to Shanghai’s general attitude that the local Christians were a bunch of lowlife scum who needed nothing so much as to be kept under firm control:

☰ All that he had read of them in the United States had prejudiced him in their favor, for popular opinion in the Protestant countries had for many years leaned to the rebel side. But as so often happens, Western opinion in China was very different from Western opinion at home. At first favorable to the Taipings, the tide of foreign opinion in China had turned against the rebels in the late 1850s. When Ward arrived in Shanghai practically all foreigners in the city had agreed to believe that the Taipings were blasphemers, murderers, and robbers, who ought to be exterminated. It was a little confusing at first, but Ward naturally fell in with what the people of his own race were thinking.



With the Taiping threatening Shanghai itself, Ward had been hired by an Englishman named Captain Cough as his 1st officer aboard the American-built gunboat *Confucius*, part of a collection of vessels paid for by local businessmen. Ward had then persuaded the head of the Taki Bank –who referred to him as “Wah” and would eventually marry him to his daughter– to offer \$133,000 reward if he could mobilize a gang of Western sailors to a successful attack on the Christians of the adjoining city of Songjiang. The bank, acting locally on behalf of the Beijing government, seems to have considered this a no-lose situation, since the Buddhist Confucian forces might gain a city at a bargain price while at the worst they would have rid themselves of a collection of troublesome white men.

“Wah” Ward never bore arms. He led this collection of white and black (not yellow) adventurers by waving his riding crop, cheroot stuck firmly between his teeth:



The following is excerpted from Chapter 3 “Ward and Gordon: Glorious Days of Looting” of Jonathan D. Spence’s *TO CHANGE CHINA, WESTERN ADVISERS IN CHINA, 1620-1960* (pages 57-92; London: Penguin, 1969):

The Chinese merchants contracted to pay Ward \$100 a month for each enlisted man, \$600 a month for officers, and to pay a lump sum for every town captured, on a sliding scale from \$45,000 to \$133,000 according to the size of the town concerned. The merchants also agreed to furnish food for Ward’s force and funds with which he could buy arms. In the force itself, Ward planned to use Chinese only as guides and interpreters, raising his troops elsewhere. This decision was in line with the feeling common among treaty-port Westerners that the Chinese were cowardly and inferior beings. As one young English officer in Hong Kong at this time observed: “I am afraid we bully them a good deal. If you are walking about and a Chinaman comes in your way, it is customary to knock his hat off, or dig him in the ribs with an umbrella. I thought it a shame, and remonstrated with the fellow who was with me today for treating a poor beggar of a Chinaman in this way; but he assured me that if you make way for them they swagger and come in your way purposely. The French soldiers treat them even more roughly than we do.” The result of this attitude was that a Westerner considered any



European to be superior in battle to ten or fifteen Chinese soldiers, a view common to Westerners even in the present century. Ward would learn his lesson much sooner. Having chosen two lieutenants, Edward Forrester (who had been with Ward in Central America) and Henry Andrea Burgevine (a Southerner who, like Ward himself, had arrived in China as the first mate on a clipper ship), Ward began to comb the Shanghai waterfront for recruits. In those days, as many as three hundred ships could be found anchored in the harbor; so it was not a difficult matter to induce layover sailors and navy deserters into joining a high-paying military adventure. Having given three weeks' training to a motley force of about two hundred men, Ward decided to attack Sungkiang, a walled town held by the Taiping forces, about thirty miles southwest of Shanghai. With no artillery to breach the walls, he counted on surprise to bring him victory. But, as Ward was to recount later, his men, by drinking all night, had raised "such a hell of a noise," that the Taipings were more than ready for them. Ward was forced to retreat with heavy losses and pay off his force. His first attempt to form his own army in China had ended in fiasco.



July 16, 1860: Frederick Townsend Ward had not gone to the Orient in order to be put off. His attack on the gate of the city of Sung-chiang had been detected and prevented by the Chinese Christian Army there, and many of his initial gang of rowdy sailors had been killed, but the reward offered him by the head of the Taki Bank of Shanghai, \$133,000 for this adjoining city, still stood, and there were still Western cutthroats in port with nothing to do but carouse who had not yet gotten themselves killed. He persuaded everyone that the reason why his attack had failed was that he had had no cannon and had had no backup from regular Chinese footsoldiers. He managed to recruit another band, amounting to some 200. They attacked the gate again during the hours of darkness on this night, and this time, by the use of cannon and explosives to blow open the gates, and by the use of pistols, repeating rifles, and cutlasses, they managed to gain and maintain control over the gate structure and hold it until the morning. It was rough work, as the Christians on the stairs leading up to the tower presented them with a solid wall of meat that had to be hacked through body by body. Of the attacking force, 62 were killed and 101 wounded, among them Ward himself, leaving only 37 of the invaders entirely intact. Ward, however, had had his fun and would have his money.

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First he accepted the service of Vincente Macanaya, a young Filipino soldier of fortune with a great following among the Manilamen on the docks of Shanghai. Macanaya was able to bring with him about two hundred of his followers. To these Ward added half a dozen Western drillmasters (mostly deserters from the British navy) and a small amount of artillery. By the middle of July 1860, he was back in front of the walls of Sungkiang. With the help of accurate artillery fire, and after fierce hand-to-hand fighting with the Taiping troops, the city was taken.


➡ August 2, Thursday, 1860: Frederick Townsend Ward set out for Tsingpu with a force of 300 Westerners in gunboats with cannon, along with a marching force of 10,000 members of the Kiangsu provincial army under Li Ai-tang. Unbeknownst to them, this town of Tsingpu had just been garrisoned by an army of 10,000 Chinese Christian warriors. Ward would find himself lying on the ground wounded four times in the body and one time, seriously, in the face. The imperialists would be forced into retreat, abandoning their equipment, and the Christians would be able to celebrate the victory of their God. (A second such attempt would likewise be routed.)



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The reward money for the capture of Sungkiang and the possibility of future looting drew more recruits from the Shanghai waterfront. With his newly bolstered force and his newly bolstered confidence, Ward decided to attack Tsingpu, a larger city in Taiping hands. But he had overestimated the abilities of his troops. At Tsingpu he found a well-armed Taiping force behind strong walls, led by another European mercenary, an ex-British first lieutenant named Savage. Ward’s force was mauled in two assaults, and he himself was badly wounded. He lost his artillery, his gunboats and his entire provision train. It was the worst defeat of his career in China, and when he returned to Shanghai to rebuild his army, he was met with hostility and scorn. The Shanghai North China Herald commented in August 1860: “The first and best item ... is the utter defeat of Ward and his men before Tsingpu. This notorious man has been brought down to Shanghai, not, as was hoped, dead, but severely wounded in the mouth, one side and one leg.... He managed to drag his carcass out of danger, but several of his valourous blacks were killed or wounded.... It seems astonishing that Ward should be allowed to remain unpunished, and yet not a hint is given that any measures will be taken against him.” It seemed that Ward’s China career was finished. Taki was unwilling to support him further. The commander of the British naval forces, Admiral James Hope, was furious that Ward had encouraged his sailors to desert. The foreign community in Shanghai was openly contemptuous.



 Late Fall 1860: Frederick Townsend Ward arrived in Paris for surgery to have the various pieces of lead removed from his body. His face would be permanently altered by his wound, and to some extent, his speech as well. (His photographs, typically, would be retouched to conceal his scars.)



1861

➡ Early Spring 1861: After getting the lead out in Paris, Frederick Townsend Ward was back in Shanghai.





May 19, 1861: In an attempt to maintain their neutrality, the English arrested the American mercenary adventurer Frederick Townsend “Wah” Ward and charged him with encouraging their sailors and marines



to desert to join his independent military formation. Having an application for Chinese citizenship pending, he responded, quite a bit prematurely it would seem, that as a Chinese citizen he was simply not subject to such Western discipline. He would escape, dramatically, by rushing at and leaping through a ship window into the dark water, to organize a new military group, this time led and equipped by foreigners but manned by Chinese soldiers, and to continue his activities in support of the *Ch'ing* emperor in suppression of the long-term Chinese Christian rebellion of South China in the vicinity of the port city of Shanghai.



Wah Ward never bore arms. He led his soldiers by waving his riding crop, a Manila cheroot stuck fiercely in his mouth:



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Ward was still without an army and recovering from his wounds when, on May 19, 1861, he was arrested by Admiral Hope for having defied the Allied declaration of neutrality in the civil war. At his court hearing, Ward insisted he was a naturalized subject of the Ch’ing government, but this claim was untrue and Hope ignored it, imprisoning him on board his ship the *Chesapeake*. In June 1861, the *North China Herald* noted: “[Ward’s] force is now disbanded. Some have probably suffered capital punishment at the hands of the Chinese, some have fallen in action, some are expiating their offences against our laws in common jails, and some few have escaped it is hoped with sufficient examples before them never to again engage in such an illegitimate mode of earning a livelihood as enrolling themselves in such disreputable ranks as those of a Chinese Foreign Legion.” Yet the selfrighteous hostility of most Westerners in China toward Ward hardly reflected the realities of their position. For, like Ward, the Western powers were “adventurers.” They had arrived by sea and settled, by means of guile and coercion, onto the Chinese coast. Moreover, their diplomatic and military

representatives had great freedom of action since it took so long for them to request or receive instructions from their home governments. Often they were out to get what they could for themselves or their own countries by any means possible, and accordingly their loyalties went not to the Ch'ing dynasty but to whatever groups in China best promised to forward their interests....


[I]n May 1861, Ward, under arrest in a cabin on the *Chesapeake*, had yet to feel the effects of this change in policy. Contriving to escape dramatically -leaping at night through a porthole, and being whisked away by a waiting junk to cries of "man overboard"-his only recourse was to hide out with the remnants of his Sungkiang garrison. Later that summer Admiral Hope, now of a different mind, having visited the Taipings in person in an unsuccessful attempt to obtain a guarantee. for the security of Shanghai, invited Ward and his lieutenants to a conference on board the *Chesapeake*, assuring them of safe conduct. At this conference, Ward offered the admiral a new plan. In his escapades he had learned from the Taipings themselves that Chinese soldiers, well armed, well trained, and well led, made fierce fighters. Thus "he abandoned the enlistment of deserters and turned his attention to recruiting a native force to be commanded by European officers and patiently drilled in the European School of Arms."



Late Summer 1861: Late in the summer, Frederick Townsend Ward began to recruit a Chinese army. According to Chapter 3 "Ward and Gordon: Glorious Days of Looting" of Jonathan D. Spence's *TO CHANGE CHINA, WESTERN ADVISERS IN CHINA, 1620-1960* (pages 57-92; London: Penguin, 1969):

In his escapades he had learned from the Taipings themselves that Chinese soldiers, well armed, well trained, and well led, made fierce fighters. Thus "he abandoned the enlistment of deserters and turned his attention to recruiting a native force to be commanded by European officers and patiently drilled in the European School of Arms." This was a revolutionary, and to Westerners in Shanghai a laughable, project. In return, the admiral "winked at the fact that there were still a number of British deserters employed as drillmasters at Sungkiang," where Forrester and Burgevine had held together a nucleus of the old force during Ward's imprisonment. Ward worked fast and efficiently with his new Chinese recruits, who were mostly local Kiangsu men. "After a little training they learned their drill thoroughly, became fairly good marksmen and knew how to handle and care for their English muskets and Prussian rifles. Commands were given in English. The Chinese readily learned these commands, and the bugle calls. Artillery practice baffled them at first, but after some instruction they made rapid progress in it and before they were ready to take the field many of them had become expert gunners.... The whole force was well-clad and well-equipped. It wore a uniform something like that of the Zouaves or the British Sikhs." The most promising of the Chinese soldiers were made noncommissioned officers. The Manilamen were brought up to their former strength, and Ward used them as his personal bodyguard.




 Fall 1861: Frederick Townsend Ward had at this point recruited a Chinese army of 1,000 men. However, he never bore arms, and led his soldiers by waving his riding crop:



According to Chapter 3 “Ward and Gordon: Glorious Days of Looting” of Jonathan D. Spence’s *TO CHANGE CHINA, WESTERN ADVISERS IN CHINA, 1620-1960* (pages 57-92; London: Penguin, 1969):

In the autumn the new army won its first victories. Admiral Hope was so impressed that he agreed to keep Ward supplied with arms, artillery and ammunition.

 Winter 1861/1862: The further adventures in China of Brigadier-General Frederick Townsend “Wah” Ward, as excerpted from Chapter 3 “Ward and Gordon: Glorious Days of Looting” of Jonathan D. Spence’s *TO CHANGE CHINA, WESTERN ADVISERS IN CHINA, 1620-1960* (pages 57-92; London: Penguin, 1969):

By winter 1861 Ward had a force of about three thousand men under his command, with adequate artillery, steamers for transport, and the active support of the British authorities in the area. His former Shanghai critics were now all behind him. “The Whilom rowdie companion of ci-devant General Walker, of Nicaraguan memory,” a Western supporter of the Taipings wrote sarcastically, “mercenary leader of a band of Anglo-Saxon freebooters in Manchoo pay,” and sometime fugitive from English marines sent to weed his ruffians of their countrymen, suddenly became the friend and ally of the British and French Admirals, Generals, and Consuls. The surprise of Ward can only have been



equalled by this gratification upon finding his very questionable presence, and still more doubtful pursuits, patronized and imitated. No doubt, at first he felt considerably elated and vastly astonished at the idea of filibustering having become such an honorable and recognized profession. In December 1861 the Taipings captured the treaty port of Ningpo, and Admiral Hope decided to take strong action. He visited the rebel capital of Nanking, and demanded guarantees that other treaty ports would not be attacked ... the Taipings rejected his demands. In January 1862 they advanced again on Shanghai.... Admiral Hope ordered British and French forces to cooperate with Ward's army, and some Ch'ing troops, in clearing a thirty-mile zone around Shanghai. To justify his total abandonment of the British "neutrality" policy, Hope declared that "these Rebels are Revolters not only against the Emperor, but against all laws human and Divine, and it seems quite right to keep them away from the Treaty Ports." It was within this zone that Ward's trained Chinese force, later named the "Ever-Victorious Army" by the Chinese government, did its fighting, normally as an auxiliary to British, French, and Ch'ing troops. Ward proved a brave and effective leader of men within the limits of his opportunities. The governor of Kiangsu, Li Hung-chang, wrote that "Ward who valiantly defends [Sungkiang] and [Tsingpu], is indeed the most vigorous of all [the foreigners]. Although until now he has not yet shaved his hair or called at my humble residence, I have no time to quarrel with foreigners over such a little ceremonial matter." Ward affected an extreme casualness in action. He "wore, in his brief military life, no uniform or insignia of rank, the European dress to which he adhered in battle sufficiently distinguishing him from his men, and he was almost always seen either in the close-fitting English frock-coat which came in with Prince Albert, or in the loose, blue serge tunic much worn by residents of the tropics." He always stood out in battle and, as one observer recalled, "I never saw Ward with a sword or any arm; he wore ordinary clothes, - a thick, short cape, and a hood, and carried a stick in his hand, and generally a Manila cheroot in his mouth." The use of this "stick" (actually a riding crop) and his own bravery nourished among his men a feeling of his invincibility, despite the several wounds he had received. Moreover, in spite of the thinness of his military training, Ward understood the kind of tactics that were needed in the fighting around Shanghai. This area was a particularly difficult one. As a contemporary British journalist described the situation: "It is simply impossible to seize the cunning, cruel cowards [the Taipings], in the labyrinthine lanes of the Delta. All around they have spies on our movements, and know, as well as we do what these are, so they are comparatively safe in continuing their incendiary tactics within a few hundred yards of our column; then off they escape through ditches and across fields, where it is impossible to get at them. This the rascals are perfectly aware of, especially if pursued by foreign soldiers, encumbered with their heavy equipment." Hunting grasshoppers in a hay-field with fox-hounds would be a more sensible occupation than sending soldiers about a country intersected by a network of creeks, in the expectancy of catching swift-footed and slippery-skinned Taipings. Ward made every attempt to acquire steamships and pontoons to give his troops mobility along, and control of, the waterways. In addition, through careful training of his Chinese troops and the judicious use of as much artillery as he could

get his hands on, he tried to minimize these disadvantages. It was this use of the gunboat and artillery which Ward's successor Gordon was to pick up and employ to such effect. The war itself was fought with great cruelty, savagery, and callousness on both sides. Ward's lieutenant, Edward Forrester, recalled the moment when Tsingpu was lost to the Taipings and he was captured: "I suddenly realized that the insurgents were in possession and were making quick work of my people. Borne aloft over their front ranks were the heads of my officers fixed on spears.... The rebels were showing no quarter and were fighting like demons. In an incredibly short time my men were entirely annihilated." The city was retaken by government forces, he added, and Li Hung-chang, when told that there were a great number of high rebel officials among the prisoners, expressed much satisfaction at their capture. "He sent the mayor of Sung-Kiang to me the next day with full authority to cut, kill, or take away those captured. The scene that followed surpasses description. So many hundreds were beheaded that the streets again ran with blood; but even the European officers in my command agreed that the measure was necessary in dealing with such fanatics." A British report of one battle states that "the rebels ran from the fortifications and came to a stand in the main street.... Upon this, the field-piece from the *Imperieuse*, in charge of Lieutenants Stuart and Richardson, swept them down with grape and canister shot; after this their retreat became a flight, when the party of marines and Chinese detached to cut them off did considerable execution, some 900 or 1,000 having been killed and wounded.... After all was over, the village was set on fire, and the foreign troops embarked for Shanghai." A reporter for the China Mail lyrically recounted another attack: "The scene was now most picturesque. A shell had set fire to part of the city close at hand; the early morning sun was shining pleasantly upon the fields, rich with ungathered crops, and the French band played as the troops scaled the walls." Ward and his men, despite official recognition of their role, remained an independent band of adventurers out for plunder. Plunder also was the preoccupation of both the regular British and French troops as well as the troops of the Ch'ing armies. One newspaper, reporting on the aftermath of an allied expedition to which Ward's Ever-Victorious Army was attached, stated: "As the houses were ransacked, great quantities of valuable jewels, gold, silver, dollars, and costly dresses were found, which was fair loot to the officers and men. One blue-jacket found 1,600 dollars, and several soldiers upwards of 500 each, while many picked up gold bangles, earrings, and other ornaments and pearls set with precious stones. It was a glorious day of looting for everybody, and we hear that one party, who discovered the Taiping treasury chest with several thousand dollars in it, after loading himself to his heart's content, was obliged to give some of them away to lighten his pockets, which were heavier than he could well bear - a marked case of *l'embarras des richesses*.... Ward was doing well out of the war, but he could see that his position with the foreign community -which had tried to run him out of town only one year before- was tenuous. Accordingly he moved with great skill to consolidate his position with the Chinese.

1862



1862: As of 1644 when Mongol inheritors of the conqueror Nurhachi (1559-1626) took over the palace complexes of Beijing and began their rule of China by proclaiming themselves to constitute the Dynasty of Purity (*Ch'ing* 清), Mongol bannermen had begun to control all military effort and at no point since then had




any Han Chinese person, whatever his reputation for loyalty, been permitted to raise troops — a Han who could do this, they reasoned, might be able to expel the Mongol overlord caste from the palace complexes by appeal to the race hatred and xenophobia of the masses. For many generations they had made damned certain that nothing like this was ever allowed to happen. At this point, however, the Mongol rulers were between the proverbial rock and the proverbial hard place, struggling as they were to stem off simultaneously the external threat of the Western ghost-men and the internal threat from Chinese Christians or “Taipings” operating out of Nanjing, and began to tolerate the breaking of their hard and fast rule:

- Han Chinese judge and Mandarin scholar Li Hung-chang became acting governor of Kiangsu province and began to organize a local militia called the “Huai Braves.”
- The capable and energetic Han Chinese general Tseng Kuo-fan who had since 1852 been organizing a local militia designated as the “Hunan Braves” took control over the armed forces of the central government and managed to surround and isolate Nanjing.





 April 1862: The Chinese Christian forces of the *Tai-p'ing T'ien-kuo* or “Central Kingdom of Great Peace” out of South China made a last effort to destroy the control of the Confucian Buddhist forces of the Manchu *Ch'ing* emperor over the area around the port city of Shanghai at the mouth of the Yellow River, and this attempt was halted in its tracks in part by opposition from the Western-trained “Ever-Victorious Army” under the direction of the American mercenary adventurer, Brigadier-General Frederick Townsend “Wah” Ward until he was shot in the back (presumably at the instigation of the Chinese commander with whom he was collaborating, Li Hung-chang — it wasn't at all difficult to pop him since he never carried weapons), and then of the British captain known as “Chinese Gordon” (Charles George Gordon).



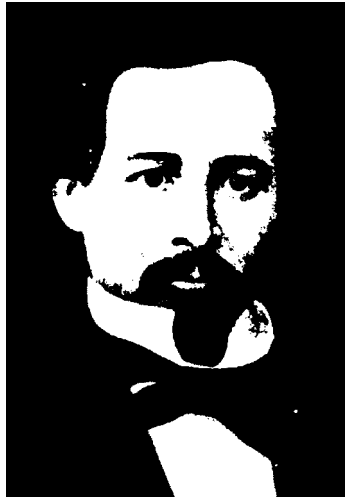
The gentry of the Yangtze valley, who normally would have sided with any localist movement in opposition to taxation and domination by the Manchu foreigners out of Beijing, in this case was more alienated by the anti-Confucianism of the Taiping ideology than they were by an alliance with such *gwailo* Western foreign ghosts, and organized instead under the guidance of Tseng Kuo-fan, a former official still loyal to the central government.<sup>2</sup>

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2. Better the devil we know than the devil we don't know, was their attitude. Heaven was too far away, as ever, and Beijing was still as near as ever.



May 17, Sunday, 1862: The application of Frederick Townsend Ward of Salem MA to become a Chinese subject and change to Chinese dress was accepted, and he was made a Mandarin official entitled to wear the cloth square with the insignia of the 4th class on his chest. Continuing his activities in support of the *Ch'ing* emperor in suppression of Chinese Christians in the vicinity of the port city of Shanghai, he would render




himself, by his death, the most decorated and honored *gwailo* ever, bar none. (Eventually his sister back in New England would be compensated for the theft of his fortune at his death, by our government, out of the Boxer Indemnification moneys we had secured in one of our “Unequal Treaties.” Today, American mercenary adventurers and death-worshippers and “private military contractors” everywhere on the globe worship at the shrine of Wah Ward, and there is a website that features his grave and his photo and considers him to be the Founding Father figure for the American mercenary “Old China Hand” type of guy.) The following is excerpted from Chapter 3 “Ward and Gordon: Glorious Days of Looting” of Jonathan D. Spence’s *TO CHANGE CHINA, WESTERN ADVISERS IN CHINA, 1620-1960* (pages 57-92; London: Penguin, 1969):

The following month Ward married Chang Mei, the daughter of Taki, the Shanghai banker who had helped to finance his forces. The marriage ceremony, was carried through in Chinese style, with Ward arriving on horseback dressed in his Chinese official robes. Communication between bride and groom must have proved difficult, since Taki knew only “pidgin” English and his daughter probably knew none at all, while Ward had only a smattering of spoken Chinese and knew nothing of the written characters. Ward returned to the battlefield soon after the wedding, having spent little time with his bride. It is unlikely that this was any marriage of love; it appears, rather, to have been a practical stepson Ward’s part to bind himself closer to the Chinese and to gain direct financial backing from his father-in-law. The two men went into business together, and by the spring of 1862 Ward had become “joint owner with Taki of two American-built gun-boats. And, with other gun-boats chartered by them ... he was now a Chinese Admiral as well – fitted out an expedition against the river pirates.” By making these very graphic gestures, Ward consciously mortgaged himself to the Chinese. He had realized that to prove his loyalty to his Chinese employers he should fit himself as much as possible into the Chinese system. On March 17, 1862, he and his lieutenant, Burgevine, were naturalized as Chinese citizens; both received the button of the fourth class in the Chinese official hierarchy, and Ward was also granted the honor of wearing a Peacock’s feather. Only nine days later both men were awarded the button of the third class. Having won a series of victories near Shanghai, Ward also received the rank of brigadier general



in the Chinese army. It was at this time that his force received by Imperial decree the title Ever-Victorious Army. In May 1862 Governor Li Hung-chang was told by the Emperor that he should “fraternize” with “Ward and others who seek both fame and fortune,” and go “even to the expense of making small rewards.” In addition to the satisfaction of becoming a general, an admiral, and an official in the Chinese hierarchy, Ward’s “small rewards” to loyalty included his becoming a rich man. But all the benefits he received, the most important, and least tangible, was the new status: he gained both among the Chinese and in the Western community in China. On the Chinese side, the governor of Kiangsu, Li Hung chang, badly overestimating Ward’s influence with foreigners, commented that “Ward commands enough authority to control the foreigners in Shanghai, and he is quite friendly with me.... Ward is indeed brave in action, and he possesses all sorts of foreign weapons. Recently I, Hung-chang, have devoted all my attention to making friends with him, in order to get the friendship of various nations through that one individual.” Though Ward did not control the foreign community in Shanghai, it was true, ironically enough, that by becoming “Chinese” his status in the foreign community increased enormously. By the summer of 1862, this restless ex-first-mate, gold-miner and soldier of fortune could mix not only with the high levels of Chinese officialdom, but with foreign consuls, merchants, and ministers (though he felt more at home in his military camp at Sungkiang). As with all men exiled from their homes, this sort of recognition must have been extremely important to him, and he used his money to improve his image. The American Minister to China, Anson Burlingame, wrote to President Lincoln: General Ward was a man of great wealth, and in a letter to me, the last probably he ever wrote, he proposed through me to contribute ten thousand taels to the government of the United States, to aid in maintaining the Union, but before I could respond to his patriotic letter he died. Let this wish, though unexecuted, find worthy record in the archives of his native land, to show that neither self-exile nor foreign service, nor the incidents of a stormy life, could extinguish from the breast of this wandering child of the Republic the fires of a truly loyal heart. By the summer of 1862, Ward had more than three thousand men under his command, as well as trench mortars and artillery. His newfound status had gone to his head, and he began thinking in more grandiose terms. He drew up plans to expand his force to twenty-five thousand men and to take Soochow, a key city in Taiping hands beyond the thirty-mile zone. On August 14, 1862, he had an interview with Li Hung-chang, in which he discussed the rebel capital of Nanking itself, besieged for years by large Imperial forces. As Li reported their conversation to Tseng Kuo-fan, the commander of the troops in front of Nanking and creator of the provincial Chinese armies which were slowly strangling the rebels: “Ward has seen me today, and urges me to transfer him to help attack [Nanking]. He says that he could arrive there in three days, build forts in three days, and recover the city in another three days – without fail. After victory the wealth and property in the city would be equally shared with the Government’s troops; and so forth.

 September 21, 1862: Frederick Townsend Ward was shot in the back by treachery, presumably by arrangement of the Chinese general with whom he was collaborating, as he observed from a hill a battle against the Chinese Christian or “Longhair” or “Taiping” forces of South China in what is now known as Tz’u-cheng-chen.



Upon his death his fortune was of course instantly stolen by his equally greedy and equally opportunistic associates, and his troops were left without pay and mutinied and were reduced to shaking down shopkeepers to survive during their idleness and neglect. Eventually he would be replaced in command of this “Ever Victorious Army” by Major “Chinese” Gordon (later more famous as the lispng General Charles George Gordon of Khartoum).



Great honor was however done. Ward's body was attired in his Western uniform and a Chinese coffin was secured. Then, in the courtyard of a confiscated Taiping church that had been made over into a Buddhist temple, the coffin containing Ward's body was placed on the ground and a tumulus of earth was mounded high over it.<sup>3</sup>

Here is how Jonathan D. Spence has recorded the conclusion to his story of adventure in a foreign land, and the beginning of another Westerner's story of adventure in that foreign land, in Chapter 3 "Ward and Gordon: Glorious Days of Looting" of his *TO CHANGE CHINA, WESTERN ADVISERS IN CHINA, 1620-1960* (pages 57-92; London: Penguin, 1969):

...on September 21, 1862, while attacking Tzeki, ten miles northwest of Ningpo, Ward, standing in full view surveying the position, "put his hand suddenly to his abdomen and exclaimed, 'I have been hit.'" He died that night, and received the full honors of a Chinese general at his burial. His dog, "a great shaggy black-and-white creature" which died a few days later, was buried near him. Though Ward was only thirty years old when he died, he had managed to forge for himself, in a chaotic time and by whatever methods were at hand, a personal and financial success of imposing stature. He had, as well, managed for the first time to train Chinese troops to fight in the more effective European manner; had provided a model for Li, Hung-chang's own Huai army; had impressed Li with the possibility of China's strengthening herself along Western lines without relying on foreign nations and foreign troops; had helped to clear a thirty-mile radius around Shanghai of Taiping rebels; and had built up the foundations of a force that was to be more effectively used by his famous successor, Gordon. Yet, in the overall picture, the results had been small. He had defended a city of more importance to foreign interests than to the Chinese. He had, even then, lost many battles, and the Taiping rebels soon returned to "the areas he had cleared." He had not truly altered the course of the civil war which was being decided around the rebel capital of Nanking by Chinese troops without any foreign advisers. And he had died before having a chance to enjoy what he had won for himself. "Poor old Ward," one young British officer wrote home to his mother on visiting Sungkiang, "is buried here in Chinese fashion - his coffin over-ground. This place was his headquarters. He came out to China as mate of a ship, outlawed from America, and has died worth a million and a half. He was often wounded, and people had the idea he could not be shot." As the merchants of Shanghai turned to Ward to protect their city, an expedition of 41 warships, 143 troop transports, and 16,800 British, French, Sikh and Indian troops was advancing on Peking to enforce the Treaty of Tientsin and place Western resident ministers in the capital of the Central Kingdom. When the Chinese executed some twenty captured members of the allied expedition, Lord Elgin, in October 1860, ordered the destruction of the Ch'ing Emperor's magnificent summer palace just to the northwest of Peking. Charles George Gordon, a young captain of the British Royal Engineers, helping to direct the destruction of that complex of two hundred buildings, wrote home to his mother: [We] went out, and, after pillaging it, burned the whole place, destroying in a Vandal-like manner most valuable property which would not be replaced for four millions. We got upwards of £48 a-piece prize money before we went out here; and although I have not as much as many, I have

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3. This temple and its tumulus remains to this day, we are given to understand, as a visited memorial to China's best Western friend. In some respects therefore this tumulus may bear comparison to the pyramid of rocks which was being begun near the site of Thoreau's cabin on Walden Pond.

done well. The people are civil, but I think the grandees hate us, as they must after what we did to the Palace. You can scarcely imagine the beauty and magnificence of the places we burnt. It made one's heart sore to burn them; in fact, these palaces were so large, and we were so pressed for time, that we could not plunder them carefully. Quantities of gold, ornaments were burnt, considered as brass. It was wretchedly demoralizing work for an army. Everybody was wild for plunder." But a month later, a bored Gordon wrote to his sister: "My Dear Augusta, we are all of us getting sick of Pekin, a dirtier town does not exist. I am sure one ride thro its filthy streets ought to content any enthusiast." The only consolation seemed to be that, by not arriving in China until late September, Gordon had found himself "rather late for the amusement, which won't vex mother." One can imagine that his mother, daughter of a merchant whaler, had already had quite enough vexation from this fourth of her five sons.

1863

➡ March 27, 1863: At this point Major “Chinese” Gordon (later more famous as the lispng General Charles George Gordon of Khartoum), fresh from the looting and torching of the Summer Palace in Peking, took command of the “Ever Victorious Army” that had been created by the deceased Frederick Townsend Ward, to do battle against the teeming hordes of wicked Taiping Chinese Christians of South China.



Here is how Jonathan D. Spence has recorded the beginning of this Westerner’s story of adventure in a foreign land, in Chapter 3 “Ward and Gordon: Glorious Days of Looting” of his TO CHANGE CHINA, WESTERN ADVISERS IN CHINA, 1620-1960 (pages 57-92; London: Penguin, 1969):

Born on the twenty-eighty of January 1833, Charles George Gordon had embarked on a military career at an early age, as his family wished. But there was something a little too headstrong about him; he seemed always to be getting into one scrape or another. In military academy he had butted the senior colonel down a flight of stairs; and later, just before graduation, he had beaten one of the younger cadets over the head with a hairbrush, losing his chance to be in the Royal Artillery like his father and grandfather. And when he had gone to the Crimea in 1855, as a royal engineer, he had done things in his own way, criticized his superiors, exposed himself too much to enemy bullets and had been wounded. Even worse, he had liked it all and wouldn’t come home, complaining when peace came: “We do not, generally speaking, like the thought of peace until after another campaign. I shall not go to England, but expect I shall remain

abroad for three or four years, which individually I would sooner spend in war than peace. There is something indescribably exciting in the former.” Gordon took the next best course. He went off first to Bessarabia to help a frontier delineation commission and then on to Armenia in 1857 for the same type of work. Yet his admiration went out to those very people who paid no attention to the frontiers he was delineating. “We met on our road a great number of Kurds ... they are as lawless as ever, and go from Turkey to Russia and back again as they like. They are fine-looking people, armed to the teeth, but are decreasing in numbers. They never live in houses, but prefer tents and caves.” When, in 1858, Gordon did return home, he found he rather liked the tents and did “not feel at all inclined to settle in England and be employed in any sedentary way.” So, in late 1858, he was back in the Caucasus with an Anglo-Russian commission, again helping to define frontiers and make peace, a job to which he admitted “I am naturally not well adapted.” Back in England again in 1859 and promoted to captain, he volunteered for the British force gathering at Shanghai to enforce the Tientsin treaty. On July 22, 1859, he left for China. Shortly after Gordon’s arrival in Peking, and the looting of the Summer Palace, the Treaty of Tientsin was ratified; the Emperor returned to the capital, a new group of ministers more willing to deal with the West took over control, and the invading army was withdrawn. But pending the payment of indemnities and to ensure the carrying out of the provisions of the treaty, a garrison of three thousand men under the control of the British general, Staveley, was left in Tientsin. Gordon was assigned to this garrison as head of the Engineers with the job of constructing barracks for the troops and stables for their horses as well as surveying the neighboring areas. He was to spend the next eighteen months at this job. Despite the fact that the “indescribable” excitement of war was lacking, young Gordon found a very describable satisfaction in peace-time life abroad. “Do not tell anyone,” he confessed to his sister Augusta in October 1861, “but I do not feel at all inclined to return to Great Britain. I like the country, work and independence; in England we are nondescripts, but in China we hold a good position and the climate is not so bad as it is made out to be.” In addition, he was able to travel widely in north China, often to areas rarely before visited by a Westerner, informing his sister, “I shall go to the Great Wall if I can in a short time, and thence send you a description and eventually a brick from that fabric.” So Gordon waited for his opportunity in Tientsin, rather than on the Thames, sending home boxes of sables, vases, jades, and enamels, with instructions stating “A to my father, B, C and D for general and fair distribution amongst the ‘tribe’ of Gordons, E and F to my father, G to Aunt Amy ... P, Q and R to my mother ... Y to Henry....” In the spring of 1862, Gordon was ordered to Shanghai where the British forces had been committed by Admiral James Hope to clear the Taiping rebels from a thirty-mile zone around that city. According to the commander of the land forces, General Staveley (the brother-in-law of Gordon’s older brother Henry), “Captain Gordon was of the greatest use to me.... He reconnoitered the enemy’s defenses, and arranged for the ladder parties to cross the moats, and for the escalating of the works; for we had to attack and carry by storm several towns fortified with high walls and deep wet ditches. He was, however, at the same time a source of much anxiety to me from the daring manner he approached the enemy’s



works to acquire information.” In December 1862, Gordon was promoted to major and given the task of surveying the whole thirty-mile zone in preparation for better allied offensives. The job, perfectly fitted to a man content only working for himself, he did admirably, often advancing with a few men deep into rebel-held territory. In less than three months, his task was completed. This year of surveying work, often under dangerous conditions, brought Gordon into contact for the first time both with the Taiping rebellion and with the difficulties of fighting the Taiping troops in the area of allied operations. “We had a visit from the marauding Taipings the other day. They came close down in small parties to the settlement and burnt several houses, driving in thousands of inhabitants. We went against them and drove them away, but did not kill many. They beat us into fits in getting over the country, which is intersected in every way with ditches, swamps, etc.” The rebels left him horrified and brought out the “better Christian” in him as the burning of the Summer Palace had not. “It is most sad this state of affairs, and our Government really ought to put the rebellion down. Words could not depict the horrors these people suffer from the rebels, or describe the utter desert they have made of this rich province.” At the same time, Gordon shared the European’s scorn for the fighting abilities of the Chinese and the general character of their ruling classes, a sentiment typified by this poem run in the British humor magazine Punch just before he left for China:

With their little pig-eyes and their large pig-tails,  
 And their diet of rats, dogs, slugs, and snails,  
 All seems to be game in the frying-pan  
 Of that nasty feeder, JOHN CHINAMAN.  
 Sing lie-tea, my sly JOHN CHINAMAN,  
 No fightee, my coward JOHN CHINAMAN:  
 JOHN BULL has a chance – let him, if he can,  
 Somewhat open the eyes of JOHN CHINAMAN.

“These Chang-mows [Taipings] are very funny people,” Gordon himself commented; “they always run when attacked. They are ruthlessly cruel, and have a system of carrying off small boys, under the hope of training them up as rebels.... I saved one small creature who had fallen into the ditch in trying to escape, for which he rewarded me by destroying my coat with his muddy paws in clinging to me.” If he thought nothing of the Taipings, he thought hardly better of the Chinese government, and said of the country as a whole, “I do not write about what we saw, as it amounts to nothing. There is nothing of any interest in China; if you have seen one village you have seen all the country.” Yet, as with his Bessarabian and Armenian experiences, the people appealed to him. In Armenia, it has been the Kurds, here it was the Chinese peasant. “Whatever may be said of their ruler, no one can deny but that the Chinese peasantry are the most obedient, quiet, and industrious people in the world.” In his personal life, Gordon was a lonely and withdrawn man, ill at ease among his peers and in the presence of women. “He stays with me whenever in Shanghai and is a fine noble generous fellow,” Harry Parkes, the British consul wrote to his wife, “but at the same time very peculiar and sensitive -exceedingly impetuous -full of energy, which just wants judgement to make it a very splendid type.... We have seen a good deal of each other when he is here, for as he is very shy I try as much as

possible to dine alone, and we then tattle on Chinese affairs all to ourselves.” His personality prevented him from relating well to those above him, and scarcely better to those below him (except perhaps the Chinese troops he later had under his command – with whom he could not speak). Drawn to China by contradictory impulses he scarcely understood and haunted by self-doubts, he proved erratic in his friendships, inconsistent in his opinions, and contradictory in his thoughts. “The world,” he confided to his sister later in life, “is a vast prison house under hard keepers with hard rulers; we are in cells solitary and lonely looking for release.” It was only in non-English lands and on his own that he found a part of that “release.” “The fact is,” he commented years later from the Sudan, “if one analyzes human glory, it is composed of 9/10 twaddle, perhaps 99/100 twaddle.” Yet he was waiting in China for just that glory which he often seemed to despise, and in March 1863 his chance came. Since Ward’s death near Ningpo six months before, the Ever-Victorious Army had steadily fallen into disarray. Ward’s second-in-command, Burgevine, another American, had been appointed to command by Li Hung-chang at the urging of British, French and American officials. In many ways Burgevine was like Ward. An adventurer who also had come to China as a ship’s mate, he was brave in battle, sustaining several wounds, and had hopes of carving out his own sphere of influence. But where Ward had had the perception to attach himself closely to his Chinese masters, Burgevine did no such thing. As described by Gordon, he was “a man of large promises and few works. His popularity was great among a certain class. He was extravagant in his generosity, and as long as he had anything would divide it with his so-called friends, but never was a man of any administrative or military talent, and latterly, through the irritation caused by his unhealed wound and other causes, he was subject to violent paroxysms of anger, which rendered precarious the safety of any man who tendered to him advice that might be distasteful. He was extremely sensitive of his dignity.” Li Hung-chang, now settled into Shanghai, feared that Burgevine, whose popularity among his predominantly American subordinates in the Ever-Victorious Army ran high, was more a danger to the Ch’ing in the Shanghai area than to the Taiping rebels he was supposed to fight. Li was soon complaining that Burgevine “is full of intrigues and stubborn. Wu and Yang [the Taotais] both say that he is not so easy going as Ward.” Li would have preferred to disband the Ever-Victorious Army, fearing the defection of its officers to the Taipings, but the foreigners insisted that it be retained to protect Shanghai. So, instead, he set his mind to substituting for Burgevine – the independent adventurer – a British officer for whose loyalty he could hold British officials responsible. Arbitrarily, he ordered Burgevine to take his army away from its base of power at Sungkiang and help with the capture of Nanking. At the same time, he arranged that Yang Fang (Taki) should withhold payments to the army. Burgevine, impetuously doing just what Li must have wanted, refused to move his army and (reported Li) “On [Jan. 4] between 9-11 A.M., ... brought several dozen of his musketeers quickly to Yang Fang’s residence in Shanghai; Yang Fang was wounded on the nose, forehead and chest until he vomited a great deal of blood, and more than forty thousand silver dollars were forcibly carried off.” Li, using this pretext, dismissed Burgevine, and turned to the British. Having already committed themselves to the support of the Ch’ing dynasty, the British government, at the urging of Bruce, their minister at Peking,

and Staveley, commander of the British forces in China, agreed to allow British officers to undertake service with the Imperial forces. With this understanding, Staveley and Li reached an agreement whose main points were: "The force to be under the joint command of an English and a Chinese officer... For the English officer, who was to enter the Chinese service, Captain Holland was nominated temporarily, but Captain Gordon was to take the command when he should have received the necessary authorisation; he was to have the rank of Chentai [brigadier general]. For expeditions beyond the thirty-mile radius the previous consent of the allies [English and French] was necessary. Chinese were to be appointed as provost marshal, paymaster, and in charge of the commissariat... The strength of the force was to be reduced to 3,000, or even below that number, if the custom house receipts should fail... The force and its commanders were to be under the orders of the Futai [Li Hung-chang], who was also to buy the military supplies." Both sides had achieved their goals. Li had replaced an independent leader of a force whose loyalty to the Empire was doubtful with a man directly subordinate to him, held in check by Li's control of the force's money, and guaranteed by British officials. In addition, he had managed to limit the force's power, reducing its strength by fifteen hundred men. The British, in turn, had assured the continuing existence of the force defending their economic interests at Shanghai. On January 15, 1863, Captain Holland took command, but in his first major engagement, at the town of Taitsang (recently reinforced by the Taiping rebels), bad intelligence work, bad reconnaissance, poor tactics, and a mishandled retreat resulted in a disastrous defeat. Some 190 men were killed, 174 wounded, and many guns lost. The force returned, demoralized, to Sungkiang to await its next commander. In March 1863, having completed his surveying work, Gordon took command of the Ever-Victorious Army. The day before he left for Sungkiang he wrote to his mother with some trepidation: "I am afraid you will be much vexed at my having taken the command of the Sungkiang force, and that I am now a mandarin ... [but] I can say that, if I had not accepted the command, I believe the force would have been broken up and the rebellion gone on in its misery for years.... You must not fret on this matter. I think I am doing a good service.... I keep your likeness before me, and can assure you and my father that I will not be rash, and that as soon as can conveniently, and with due regard to the object I have in view, I will return home." For all his hedging to his mother, Gordon was obviously pleased with himself and in no hurry to return to England. Yet for a regular officer in the British Army, the force he was to command was nothing to brag about. "You never did see such a rabble as it was," Gordon wrote later to a military friend. Although the Western officers of the Ever-Victorious Army were "brave, reckless, very quick in adapting themselves to circumstances, and reliable in action; on the other hand, they were troublesome when in garrison, very touchy as to precedence and apt to work themselves about trifles into violent states of mind. Excited by Rebel sympathizers at Shanghai, and being of different nationalities, one half of them were usually in a violent state of quarrel with the other; but this, of course, was often an advantage to the commander." The Chinese troops under these officers were hardly inspired by the recklessness of their commanders. "I can say with respect to the high pay of the officers," observed Gordon, "that there is not the slightest chance of getting any men for less - it is by far

the most dangerous service for officers I have ever seen, and the latter have the satisfaction of always feeling in action that their men are utterly untrustworthy in the way of following them." When Gordon arrived in Sungkiang on March 25, 1863, the morale of the force was at a low point because of the disastrous defeat at Taitsang. Moreover, the officers wanted Burgevine back, fearing, justly, what would happen to them under the command of a regular officer of the British army. The force was mutinous. Gordon wasted no time. Assuring all the officers "that they need not fear sweeping changes or anything that would injure their future prospects," he moved against the rebels on March 31. Militarily, Gordon had been a good choice both for the Chinese and the English. By the end of May, his force had taken several points including Taitsang and was camped in front of the town of Kunshan. What Ward had done by intuition and hard experience, Gordon did by training. In front of Kunshan, for instance, he analyzed the situation thus: "Isolated hill, surrounded by wall; very wide ditch. City very strong at East Gate. Every manoeuvre seen at top of hill, and telegraphed to chief [of Taipings]. Determined to surround the city. We have already, Chiang-zu, at north, belonging to us. Rebels have only one road of retreat towards Soochow, twenty-four miles. Reconnoitre the country on the 30th May. Found that this road can be cut at Chun-ye, eight miles from Quinsan [Kunshani], sixteen miles from Soochow, point of junction and key to the possession of Quinsan held by the rebel stockades. Detour of twenty miles in rebel country necessary to get at this point. Value of steamer." Having followed his own plan and captured Kunshan with great slaughter of the fleeing Taiping troops, he added: "Knowledge of the country is everything, and I have studied it a great deal.... The horror of the rebels at the steamer is very great; when she whistles they cannot make it out." If he was militarily more effective and efficient than Ward, he followed Ward's path, emphasizing the value of steamers in the delta area, as well as of pontoon bridges, and of heavy artillery. He even emulated Ward's style of entering battle: "Gordon always led the attack, carrying no weapons, except a revolver which he wore concealed in his breast, and never used except once, against one of his own mutineers, but only a little rattan cane, which his men called his magic wand of Victory." Li Hung-chang was gratified. "Since taking over the command," he reported to Tseng Kuo-fan in April, "Gordon seems more reasonable [than the others]. His readiness to fight the enemy is also greater. If he can be brought under my control, even if he squanders forty or fifty thousand dollars, it will still be worth while." Soon after, his admiration seemed almost unrestrained: "When the British General Staveley formerly stated to your official that Gordon was brave, clear-minded and foremost among the British officers in Shanghai, your official dared not believe it. Yet since he took up the command of the Ever-Victorious Army, their exceedingly bad habits gradually have come under control. His will and zeal are really praiseworthy." Gordon's main accomplishment in Li's eyes was his ability to keep his force busy and ensure their loyalty to the Ch'ing government. He was, as well, pleased at the victories Gordon was winning, victories which were making it easier for the government to support Tseng Kuo-fan's troops besieging Nanking. But Li had spoken too soon. If Gordon followed Ward's path in military tactics, he did no such thing in dealing with his men. Ward, and Burgevine after him, had avoided disciplining

the officers and men of the Ever-Victorious Army when they were in camp, realizing that a group of adventurers were hardly soldiers in a regular army. The Chinese troops were allowed to return to their villages during harvest time, and both commanders had winked at the looting with which the officers supplemented their less than regular pay. But Gordon was appalled by this state of affairs. Almost immediately, he banned all looting (on grounds that Li Hung-chang would make regular payments from that time on); drunkenness in battle was to be punishable by death; trading in opium and women was to be stopped; and all ranks were to be subjected to proper training and regular drill. In addition, to show his disapproval of the behavior of his officers, he lived and messed by himself. He was determined to turn this force of mercenaries into a small regular army. Gordon's plan soon ran into difficulty. After the victory at Taitsang, his officers insisted on returning to Sungkiang to spend their pay and "prize-money" before heading back into action. Gordon yielded, but once in Sungkiang faced a new threat of mutiny. His men, Gordon commented, were "reliable in action ... [but] troublesome in garrison and touchy to a degree about precedence. To divert them, he started for Kunshan immediately. He decided to make Kunshan his new base, severing all ties with Sungkiang and the memories that went with it. In his diary, he recorded, "G[ordon] determined to move headquarters there, as the men would be more under control than they were at Sung-keong. Men mutiny. One is shot at tombstone outside West Gate. Mark of bullets still there. Men then desert, 1700 only out of 3900 remain. Very disorderly lot. Ward spoilt them. G. recruits rebel prisoners, who are much better men." If he had trouble with his own troops, he threw his Chinese superiors into fits of total exasperation. In the wake of the attack on Kunshan, he quarreled with the Chinese general whose troops were supporting the Ever-Victorious Army. Depressed by the desertions, disgusted with his Chinese opposites, and dismayed by the criticism he received from the British press in Shanghai for his part in the "massacre" at Kunshan, he wrote to Li Hung-chang in July, 1863: "Your Excellency - In consequence of monthly difficulties I experience in getting the payment of the force made, the non-payment of legitimate bills for boat hire and necessities of war from Her Britannic Majesty's Government, who have done so much for the Imperial Chinese authorities, I have determined on throwing up the command of this force, as my retention of office in these circumstances is derogatory to my position as a British officer, who cannot be a suppliant for what Your Excellency knows to be necessities, and should be happy to give." He refused to be "soothed" by the normal Chinese practice of giving "rewards." But Gordon was in some confusion. He did not long wish to remain idle, though to "take the field" again meant a loss of English "honor." Burgevine provided him the pretext for reassuming command. After his dismissal, Burgevine had gone to Peking and, with the backing of the American minister, had managed to get himself reappointed by the authorities there to command of the Ever-Victorious Army. When he reappeared in April, Li reported: "When Burgevine had returned from the Capital to Shanghai full of self-satisfaction, he requested me immediately to reappoint him. I have refused and gave the details to Prince Kung. As the Throne and the law should both be upheld, how can they be ambiguous and timid in determining the rights and wrongs? This is discouraging. Yet Gordon is the best character among the British

officers.... Even if he cannot get rid of the evil habits of the Ever-Victorious Army, these do not now seem to be growing worse." At the beginning of August, Burgevine, disgruntled, defected to the Taipings with three hundred Europeans he had recruited from the Shanghai waterfront, much as Ward had recruited the original Ever-Victorious Army; Gordon, fearing that his own force would desert as well, happily retook the field. The campaign for Soochow began, with Gordon's force acting in conjunction with a much larger body of Imperial troops. This was to be the crowning goal of all the previous campaigns around Shanghai, since Soochow was the most imposing and heavily fortified city under Taiping control in the area. Li, once again reconciled with Gordon, commented guardedly: "The officers and men of the Ever-Victorious Army are not really trustworthy in attack and defence. What they depend on is the considerable number of large and small howitzers on loan to Gordon from the British, and the ammunition and weapons constantly supplied [by the British]. So your official is willing to make friends with the British officials, in order to make up what the military strength of China lacks. Nevertheless, Gordon is quite obedient in assisting the campaigns. After the conclusion of final victory, he may not cause any trouble, or if he does, your official can rein him in sharply." Meanwhile Burgevine, now in Soochow, found he had as little hope of gaining influence under the Taipings as he had under the Ch'ing. The Taipings, on their part, found that Burgevine did not live up to his promises either in providing them with Western military equipment or with effective European troops. Burgevine finally surrendered to Gordon, though he defected again to the Taipings in June 1864. While his predecessor Ward, who had had much the same motivations as Burgevine, had been buried with great honors near a Confucian temple, Burgevine died in Ch'ing hands, "drowning" while government troops were ferrying him across a river. During the negotiations for Burgevine's surrender, Gordon wrote, "Burgevine is safe [in Soochow], and not badly treated. I am trying my utmost to get him out; and then, if I can see a man to take my place, I shall leave this service, my object being gained - namely, to show the public, what they doubted, that there were English officers who could conduct operations as well as mates of ships, and also to rid the neighborhood of Shanghai of these freebooters. I care nothing for a high name." Obviously, by the time Gordon reached the walls of Soochow and the Ever-Victorious Army was settled in for a siege of the city, he was once again nearing the point of handing in his resignation. The European press in China (the "public" of his letter) constantly questioned the fitness of a British officer's serving under the Chinese. This bothered him intensely and reinforced his growing personal disillusionment with the side for which he was fighting. "I am perfectly aware from nearly four years service in this country that both sides are equally rotten," he wrote from Soochow in October 1863. "But you must confess that on the Taiping side there is at least innovation, and a disregard for many of the frivolous and idolatrous customs of the Manchus. While my eyes are fully open to the defects of the Taiping character, from a close observation of three months, I find many promising traits never yet displayed by the Imperialists. The Rebel Mandarins are without exception brave and gallant men, and could you see Chung Wang, who is now here, you would immediately say that such a man deserved to succeed. Between him and the Footai, or Prince Kung, or any other Manchoo




officer there is no comparison.” The fighting under the walls of Soochow proved arduous, the city being held by about forty thousand Taiping troops, and on November 27, 1863, Gordon was defeated. But the city fell on December 5 owing to dissension among the Taiping leaders, most of whom surrendered to the Ch’ing forces. Gordon, refusing his men a chance to plunder the rich city, withdrew his whole force to Kunshan. Li Hung-chang, meanwhile, according to Chinese custom had ordered the execution of the Taiping chiefs who surrendered and whose safety Gordon, as a British officer, felt he had guaranteed. In a hysterical letter, never delivered, Gordon insisted that Li “at once resign his post of Governor of Kiangsu, and give up the seals of office, so that he might put them in commission until the Emperor’s pleasure should be ascertained; or that, failing that step, Gordon would forth with proceed to attack the Imperialists, and to retake from them all the places captured by the Ever-Victorious Army, for the purpose of banding them back again to the Taipings.” This, of course, was a preposterous infringement on Chinese sovereignty, but Gordon was too highly wrought to consider what he was saying. When Li’s Western secretary Dr. Halliday Macartney entered Gordon’s quarters, he found Gordon sobbing and before a word was exchanged, Gordon stooped down, and taking something from under the bedstead, held it up in the air, exclaiming: “Do you see that? Do you see that?” The light through the small Chinese windows was so faint that Macartney had at first some difficulty in recognizing what it was, when Gordon again exclaimed: “It is the head of the Lar Wang, foully murdered!” and with that burst into hysterical tears. Though the initial rage passed, Gordon remained indignant. He withdrew to Kunshan and would have nothing more to do with military campaigns against the Taipings. With him remained his force. Though Gordon was legally no longer in command, having resigned, the Ever-Victorious Army was more of a threat now under this “righteous” English officer than it had been under its previous mercenary commanders. The Chinese resorted to “soothing the barbarian.” On January 4, a Chinese official came to Kunshan, bringing an Imperial decree and presents for Gordon as rewards for his share in the capture of Soochow. Gordon refused these presents, including ten thousand taels of silver from the Emperor and captured Taiping battle flags from Li Hung-chang. Gordon’s official reply, written on the back of the Imperial rescript, stated: “Major Gordon receives the approbation of His Majesty the Emperor with every gratification, but regrets most sincerely that, owing to the circumstance which occurred since the capture of Soochow, he is unable to receive any mark of H.M. the Emperor’s recognition, and therefore respectfully begs His Majesty to receive his thanks for his intended kindness, and to allow him to decline the same.” This was an incredible affront to the Chinese. Li Hung-chang, both fearful of what the mercenary army at Kunshan might do and bewildered by Gordon’s actions, was at his wit’s end. As early as December 27, 1863, he suggested in a memorial: “I hope that the Tsungli Yamen and the British Minister will reach agreement on Gordon’s retirement, and order either that the more than one hundred foreign officers and men in the said Army should all be withdrawn, or that your official should select and appoint several persons to assist in the command of the said Army.” But Gordon, the English officer, was once again beginning to waver in the face of Gordon, leader of a mercenary army. His troops, inactive at Kunshan, were again mutinous; his higher officers

beginning to quarrel over succession to command. Either he had to forget his English honor and take the field, or lose complete control of his army and his chance for glory in China. His British superiors were as exasperated with Gordon as Li himself. "I beg you to do nothing rash under the pressure of excitement," wrote Bruce, "and, above all, avoid publishing in newspapers accounts of your differences with the Chinese authorities." They urged him to take the field again; and Gordon preserving that "honor" to which he had committed himself, insisted through Bruce that the Peking government agree to instruct Li that "in future operations in which a foreign officer is concerned, the rules of warfare, as practised among foreign nations, are to be observed." Having done this, he met Li, who took full responsibility for the Soochow incident. Gordon was satisfied, and several months later was justifying his return to duty by saying: "That the execution of the Wangs at Soochow was a breach of faith there is no doubt; but there were many reasons to exculpate the Futai for his action, which is not at all a bad act in the eyes of the Chinese. In my opinion (and I have not seen Tseng-kuo-fan yet), Li-Hung-Chang is the best man in the Empire; has correct ideas of his position, and, for a Chinaman, has most liberal tendencies." If Gordon was pleased, Li was less so. He had too clear an idea of Gordon's character not to doubt for the future. "Although yesterday," Li wrote on February 25, 1864, "Gordon was glad to volunteer, and was commanded to assist Kuo Sung-lin and others in an attack on I-hsing, he can only be treated as a partisan officer, not as a regular. Gordon is brave enough, but not sufficiently patient. As his bad temper suddenly comes and goes, I do not know whether there will be any change later on." In late March, scarcely a month after Gordon had taken the field again, Li added: "As soon as military affairs in Chiang-nan are settled, the Ever-Victorious Army had better be discharged. Gordon does not disagree with this idea." In fact, campaigning had not gone well and the force had suffered a series of defeats at the hands of the Taiping rebels. As Li explained in June, "Gordon has felt rather discouraged. On (April 27), in the campaign of Ch'ang-chou, even when the city walls had been blown up, it was still not possible to effect an entry. Thus Gordon saw that the Ever-Victorious Army was of no use." The British military authorities, though, were strongly against the disbandment of the Ever-Victorious Army. General Brown was "not for disbanding any portion of the Disciplined Force until we see the fate of Nanking and the retreat of the rebels. I am also for keeping up a corps of disciplined Chinese at Shanghai.... It is a great strategical point and should be made the place of a regular cantonment." But Gordon went his own way. When Li offered him £100,000 to pay off and disband the force, he jumped at the chance. Perhaps he was tired of his role as a mercenary general; perhaps he felt, with the siege of Nanking tightening, that the war was nearing its end; perhaps he simply felt that the force he commanded provided a bad example for the Chinese or a bad advertisement for Western methods; certainly he concurred with Li in his opinion of the force itself. "This force," he wrote at the time of its disbandment, "has had ever since its formation in its ranks a class of men of no position.... Ignorant, uneducated, even unaccustomed to command, they were not suited to control the men they had under them.... I consider the force even under a British officer a most dangerous collection of men, never to be depended on and very expensive. In my opinion more would be done by a force of

Chinese under their own officers, who do not want for bravery when properly instructed.... Do not let us try to govern their own men by foreigners but, keeping these latter as instructors, make them create their own officers." His opinions on the force he commanded hardly reflected his opinions on himself. "I have the satisfaction," he commented, summing up his time with the Ever-Victorious Army, of knowing that the end of this rebellion is at hand, while, had I continued inactive, it might have lingered on for years. I do not care a jot about my promotion or what people may say. I know I shall leave China as poor as I entered it, but with the knowledge that, through my weak instrumentality, upwards of eighty to one hundred thousand lives have been spared. I want no further satisfaction than this." If he had exaggerated the importance of the local victories he had helped to win, he certainly minimized the "satisfactions" he had received. "Allow me to congratulate you," wrote Robert Hart, the young Inspector-General of Customs. "The Emperor has by a special Edict conferred on you the Hwang Ma-Kwa, or yellow jacket, and has also presented you with four sets of Tetuh's uniform, which, you remember, you said you would like to have. Don't, like a good fellow, refuse to accept these things." Hart should not have worried, for Gordon himself commented, "The Chinese tried hard to prevent me having it; but I said either the Yellow Jacket or nothing; and they at last yielded." Concerning this Yellow Jacket and other honors offered him he told his mother, "I do not care two-pence about these things, but know that you and my father like them. I will try and get Sir F. Bruce to bring home Chung-Wang's sword, which is wrapped up in a rebel flag belonging to a Tien-Wang, who was killed on it at ChunChu-fu. You will see marks of his blood on the Rag." In his role as British officer Gordon tended to deny any desire for honors, wealth or glory; but as a mercenary army leader, in exile from an England that he felt oppressed him, he accepted them cheerfully enough. Gordon assembled souvenirs for his parents, but he was in no hurry to return home. Instead for the next five months, he turned to the quieter job of helping the Chinese "create their own officers." He had developed a certain faith in the Chinese -rare in a Westerner in nineteenth-century China- and felt "if we drive the Chinese into sudden reforms, they will strike and resist with the greatest obstinacy ... but if we lead them we shall find them willing to a degree and most easy to manage. They like to have an option and hate having a course struck out for them as if they were of no account." Even Chinese dislike of the West and Westerners, he excused, saying: "The Chinese have no reason to love us even for the assistance we have given them, for the rebellion was our own work indirectly." Thanks to dramatic accounts in the daily press, he had become "Chinese Gordon" to an enthralled Western world, the man who single-handedly had put down the Taiping Rebellion. It wasn't true, but that was less important to him than the fact that the excitement was over. Being a drillmaster for Chinese troops became a bore - "too slow an occupation to be suited to his active and somewhat erratic tastes," explained a friend." The world was hemming Gordon in, and his spirit chafed. In the fall of 1864 he "remembered" his promise to be back in England by Christmas, and as impulsively as he had come to China, he departed. "The individual," he told his relieved mother, "is coming home."

(Well, folks, that’s the way it goes in the live-by-the-sword-die-by-the-sword business, one man’s story leaves off and another man’s story picks up. –The one thing that persists is the sheer stupidity of it all.)

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