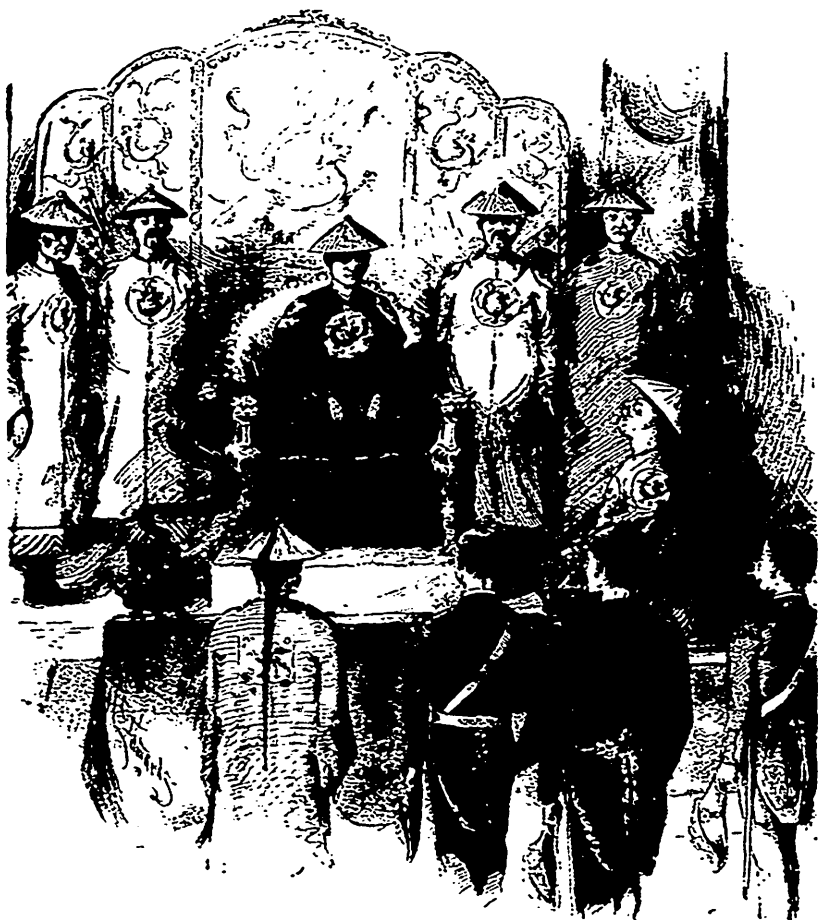


are transacted at midnight, at which time the city gates are opened for officials to pass back and forth. When on rare occasions the Emperor leaves the palace, the public is notified of the streets he will take, and that they are closed to them, so that it is impossible even to catch a glimpse of him. The road he follows is covered with yellow earth (the imperial colour), and the inns at



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which he stops are hung with yellow satin brocade. During his minority he leaves the capital only to worship at the tomb of his ancestors. The present Emperor has arrived at an age when he chooses his wives. All the Manchu girls of his royal clan are sent to him to choose from. There are three empresses, the empress *par excellence*, the empress of the eastern and the empress of the western palaces, six ladies of the palace and seventy-two