

this dynasty suffered the fate of all others, weak emperors following the strong ones, and in the reign of the incompetent Kea-king, who succeeded Keen Lung, rebellions broke out in a dozen quarters, pirates ravaged the coast, and the disaffection extended throughout the realm.

In 1820 this weak emperor died, and was succeeded by Taou-kwang, who proved even less fit to rule than his father, devoting himself to the pursuit of pleasure and leaving the empire to take care of itself. Soon new rebels were in the field, whom the armies proved unable to put down, and the disorganization of the empire made rapid progress. Even the Meaou-taze, or hill-tribes, the descendants of the first inhabitants of the country, rose in arms and defeated an army of thirty thousand men. War with the English added to the discontent, which grew greater until 1850, when the emperor died and his son Heen-fung ascended the throne.

This was going from bad to worse. The new emperor was still more selfish and tyrannical than his father, and under the control of his craving for sensual pleasures paid no heed to the popular cry for reform. The discontent was now coming to a head. In the south broke out a revolt, whose leaders proclaimed as emperor a youth said to be a descendant of the Ming dynasty, who took the royal name of Teen-tih, or "Heavenly Virtue." But he and his followers soon vanished before another and abler aspirant to the throne, the first man with a genius for command who had headed any of these rebel outbreaks.