

## I. Dynasty 411

### Chapter 411 Promoting Potatoes

“Leather boots.”

Niu Ben and other generals suddenly became energetic.

Lu Fei then asked: “Your Highness, what are leather boots?”

Nowadays, the Qingzhou Army wears cloth shoes. This kind of shoes paired with the dark green military uniform of the Qingzhou Army always makes Xiao Ming a little awkward, so he plans to turn the leather shoe industry into Developed in Qingzhou.

After all, leather boots are more durable than cloth shoes, and adding a layer of velvet can also keep them warm. This will ensure that soldiers are not afraid of the cold.

A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. The development of the shoemaking industry can also provide a large number of jobs for Qingzhou, thereby further absorbing the refugees. What’s more, it also has a complete production process from cowhide to leather shoes.

“I can’t explain it right now. You will understand it when the leather boots come out.” Xiao Ming laughed.

All the generals sighed softly after hearing this.

In addition to food issues, Pang Yukun also talked about the current resettlement situation of the victims of the fiefdom, the development of various states and counties, and the income and expenditure of the fiefdom this year.

Generally speaking, because the Northern Expedition was funded by a large number of businessmen, Qingzhou's finances were in surplus this year, and the excess money was invested in infrastructure construction and the establishment of public institutions.

For Xiao Ming, his advantage is to spread knowledge, so popularizing education is particularly important. The more talents there are, the more they can be distributed to various industries to promote the development of the industry.

Then Xiao Wenxuan reported on the government's own situation.

After Xiao Ming proposed that officials should perform their own duties and gave Pang Yukun a textbook on the establishment of government agencies, he refined the functions of the government agencies.

According to Xiao Ming's idea, each state government office is now equivalent to a municipal government. The municipal government will set up departments in charge of construction, agriculture, commerce, etc. to refine the management of fiefdoms. This will not only reduce the monopolization of power by some officials, but also reduce unprofessionalism. random interference.

"Well, generally speaking, all matters in the fief are making progress, which is good." Xiao Ming looked excited. He then looked at Li Kaiyuan and said: "Kaiyuan, this time I signed a business agreement in Chang'an. From then on, From now on, King Wei and King Yong will not tax the Chamber of Commerce

on the royal land. Now the Chamber of Commerce can be said to be free of the burden of heavy taxes. You have to argue and continue to expand the profits of the Chamber of Commerce.”

“Sign the agreement. Yes!” Li Kaiyuan almost jumped up from his chair, and said excitedly: “Your Highness, is this true?”

“Of course it is true,” Xiao Ming tapped the table with his finger, “I will do my best now. Your Chamber of Commerce will open the way. If you cannot bring enough profits to me, I will punish you.”

Li Kaiyuan said with a smile: “Your Highness, if this agreement is signed, the profits of our Chamber of Commerce will definitely be tripled. Your Highness, don’t worry .

, If it cannot bring three times the profit to His Highness, I will come to see you.”

Xiao Ming nodded when he heard this, “Well, you just have an idea.”

Li Kaiyuan laughed happily, this business agreement is not only. It is as simple as tax exemption. At the same time, the merchants of the Qingzhou Chamber of Commerce also have extraterritorial rights in the place where the agreement is signed. In other words, the Qingzhou merchants are not restricted by local laws and avoid being arrested by the local government for various unprovoked reasons.

Li Kaiyuan valued this more than tax exemption, because there had been several incidents in the Chamber of Commerce in which businessmen were arrested and extorted by the local government. Because of this, Xiao Ming added extraterritoriality to the agreement.

After understanding the basic situation of the fiefdom, Xiao Ming announced the adjournment of the meeting, leaving only Li Kaiyuan and Pang Yukun to stay.

“Your Highness, are you keeping us two here just because of Tudou?” Pang Yukun asked.

Xiao Ming nodded, “Yes, now that the potatoes have arrived, we will start promoting potatoes. Your government office is responsible for taking the potatoes to various parts of the fiefdom to popularize potatoes. I and Li Kaiyuan are trying to sell the potatoes. Take some of it.”

“Sell it! Your Highness, even if there are 32 shi per acre, it’s only 96,000 shi of potatoes. These potato fiefs are not enough, so why sell it?” Pang Yukun said anxiously.

He now regards potatoes as a treasure, and whoever touches them will be anxious.

Xiao Ming naturally had his own reasons. A potato is not easy to preserve. Under normal circumstances, a potato can be stored for several months without sprouting. However, once a potato sprouts and turns green, it means it is poisonous and cannot be eaten.

At the same time, according to Xiao Ming’s understanding, potatoes were a high-end food when they first appeared, and they were eaten among the nobles. This meant that the price was not cheap, and taking advantage of the freshness of potatoes was not a waste of money.

After telling Pang Yukun his reasons, Pang Yukun suddenly realized.

“Selling 16,000 dan from 96,000 dan, some of the remaining potatoes will be selected from high-quality seeds to raise seedlings, and the rest will be used as dishes to supply the army and academies. How about that?” Xiao Ming said.

Pang Yukun nodded at this time, “That’s good. If the reputation of these potatoes spreads, a large number of businessmen will come to buy the potatoes next year.”

Li Kaiyuan was calculating how much the potatoes would sell for, and he said: “Your Highness “These potatoes are so delicious, why not sell them for thirty taels of silver and one stone?”

“The price is dozens of times more expensive than rice. These merchants may not buy it. So, let the chamber of commerce publicize the news about the potatoes, and at the same time, I will let you know.” Newspapers focused on potatoes, and hot air balloons also advertised them,” Xiao Ming said.

The three of them agreed to go back and make preparations.

Xiao Ming returned to the palace and wrote a manuscript. This manuscript was naturally an introduction to potatoes. At the same time, he also introduced some characteristics of potatoes, such as green sprouted potatoes that cannot be eaten, how to preserve potatoes, and other common sense.

The reason for doing this is the same as when he asked the newspaper to issue precautions for the use of briquette stoves a few days ago, both to avoid fatal accidents caused by incorrect use.

After finishing the manuscript, he asked his servant to send it to the newspaper office, and asked the newspaper office to print it overnight.

At the same time, Pang Yukun went to the slave plantation. Kui Wu had been harvesting potatoes that day. When he arrived at the plantation, he asked about the potato harvest.

This time, Kuiwu selected high-quality potato seedlings for planting. However, due to uneven fertilizers, the yields were still high and low. The low ones were twenty stones, and the high ones were more than thirty stones. Overall, they were good.

A total of about 90,000 shi was harvested from three thousand acres of land.

When Li Kaiyuan returned to the Chamber of Commerce, he immediately spread the news about potatoes to the merchants of the Chamber of Commerce. At the same time, he posted a notice at the door of the Chamber of Commerce to officially launch potatoes, a brand-new Qingzhou product.

The next day, as soon as the newspaper came out, the word potato immediately became a hot term in Qingzhou City, and the hot air balloon swaggering over Qingzhou with a huge advertisement for potatoes made the astute businessmen immediately smell the business opportunities and hurriedly reported to the Chamber of Commerce. Run.

Chapter 412: The Training of the Academic Princess

“Your Highness, this is today’s Qingzhou newspaper.”

In the early morning, after washing up, Xiao Ming and Fei Yue’er were having breakfast. Now with the influx of businessmen into Qingzhou, Qingzhou’s supplies are becoming more and more abundant. , unlike in the past when sometimes you couldn’t buy good things even if you had money.

Nowadays, Xiao Ming can always drink lotus seed porridge and eat some exquisite pastries for breakfast.

Fei Yue'er took the newspaper from Xiao Huan and read it while drinking porridge. When she saw that green potatoes were poisonous, she was surprised and said: "Your Highness, are these potatoes still poisonous?"

"Yes, green potatoes are poisonous. , so you can't eat it, but don't worry, potatoes that don't sprout are edible and not poisonous," Xiao Ming explained.

Fei Yue'er calmed down, "These potatoes are high-yield and delicious, but I didn't expect to have this shortcoming. It seems that nothing is perfect."

Picking up the newspaper and reading some miscellaneous things published in the newspaper, Fei Yue'er continued Said: "Your Highness, are Aster and Lulu usually not in the palace? What are they busy with?"

Fei Yue'er found that Lulu and Aster were always running out in the past two days. This was very rare in Chang'an's home. After all, the maids were You can't run around.

Xiao Ming smiled when he mentioned this, and said: "Aster is now in charge of the Qingzhou Theater, and Luo Luo is in charge of the largest textile workshop in Qingzhou City. They are two very busy people."

Xiaohuan was a little envious when she heard this, and she said: "Aster and Luo Luo are in charge of the largest textile workshop in Qingzhou City."

The sisters are so powerful, no wonder His Highness values them so much, but the slave and the princess are really bored sitting in the palace all day long. "

What nonsense are you talking about? I'm not bored at all." Xiao Huan rolled his eyes.

Xiaohuan chuckled and stuck out his tongue.

"That's what Xiaohuan said. You are new to Qingzhou and you don't know the people there. Moreover, there are not many ladies in Qingzhou who can accompany you to relieve your boredom. The king is busy with government affairs, which makes you suffer." Xiao Ming held Fei Yue in his hand. Son's hand said.

Fei Yue'er smiled softly, "Your Highness should give top priority to government affairs. As a princess, Yue'er is supposed to share your worries and solve problems for Your Highness. Now that I can't share your worries, I can't distract Your Highness? So Your Highness, please don't worry about Yue'er."

As the saying goes .

Don't be afraid of being busy, just be afraid of being idle. Once you are idle, you will be troubled. Xiao Ming understands this very well. Fei Yue'er's freshness has not worn off yet, and it will probably become even more boring when it passes.

However, Fei Yue'er had a quiet temperament and liked to read when she was bored in Chang'an. Xiao Ming had an idea and said to her: "If you are free, I have some books. You might as well take a look."

"What book?" Sure enough, Fei Yue'er showed a surprised look.

By this time, the two of them had almost finished breakfast, so Xiao Ming got up and took her to the study room of the palace.

In the study, Xiao Ming dug out seven books on textile materials, spinning, knitting, weaving, dyeing and finishing technology, and dye chemistry. They were written for the textile industry. Now he suddenly found that these books were very suitable for Fei. Yue'er.

Since ancient times, men worked and women weaved, so it was not too outrageous for him to let Fei Yue'er read these books. After all, it was within the tradition of men working and women weaving.

"Your Highness, what are these?" Fei Yue'er looked at the seven books one by one, her expression becoming more and more surprised.

"This is all textile knowledge. Don't you usually like embroidery? There are also introductions here. You will benefit a lot after reading these." Xiao Ming said with a smile.

Now that Fei Yue'er is his princess and his pillow, he naturally wants to improve Fei Yue'er's knowledge and make her the woman behind him.

Moreover, the textile industry is just the evolution of female celebrities. Let Fei Yue'er take charge of it. Firstly, it can help her relieve her boring life. Secondly, with a princess personally taking charge of the textile industry, there is no need to worry that this industry will not take off.

Fei Yue'er nodded, opened a book at random, and started reading. She was immediately attracted by the knowledge in the book, and she couldn't keep her eyes away from the book.

Xiao Ming laughed when he saw this. Fei Yue'er is only seventeen or eighteen years old now, which is the age for learning in modern times. What's more, Fei Yue'er is known as a talented woman in Chang'an, which shows that she is extremely smart. He might be able to take Fei Yue'er The son was raised to be a female academic master.

After all, Fei Yue'er will be the one who spends the most time with him in the future, and he will absorb a lot of knowledge through his eyes and ears.

"Your Highness, this is great. The young lady has always been unable to move when she saw a book, but now she won't be bored anymore." Xiaohuan sighed and shook her head, pitiful that she had to study with Fei Yue'er again.

"It seems that the rumors that the princess likes reading are indeed true." Xiao Ming said to Fei Yue'er: "Princess, you can just take a look here. I have something to go out, so I don't know how to ask me at night."

Fei Yue'er .

Fei Yue'er nodded, with a hint of excitement for the new knowledge in his eyes, and said: "Yes, Your Highness."

Shaking his head, Xiao Ming turned and left. He was becoming more and more satisfied with Fei Yue'er, who was the most popular person in the harem. Most of the concubines regard it as an imperial edict that women should be virtuous if they have no talent, and their free time every day is devoted to palace battles.

According to Concubine Zhen, the same goes for many princes' concubines. They either fight among themselves or participate in palace fights with concubines in the harem. They think about messy things all day long, and there are not many women who can be down-to-earth.

It is precisely because of this that she is particularly satisfied with Fei Yue'er, because in her opinion, a woman who loves reading is not bad in character. Although this sentence is that Concubine Zhen judges others by herself, in this era, it is also 89 Not far from ten.

After leaving the palace, Xiao Ming went to the military workshop. Yesterday, Chen Qi said that there was progress in the Tiger Cannon, and he was about to go take a look.

When he arrived at the military workshop, Xiao Ming saw the Tiger Cannon on the testing ground. It was a stubby cannon with a forty-five-degree tilt angle.

"Your Highness, this is the Tiger Cannon for testing. This time we used high-quality molten steel to make the Tiger Cannon's body. The weight has been reduced, but the quality has been improved. This Tiger Cannon weighs only twenty-six kilograms. It can Use it in the field," Chen Qi said excitedly.

Xiao Ming nodded with satisfaction. This time, Chen Qi did not simply imitate the Ming Dynasty's Tiger Cannon, but modified it on this basis. This made the performance of the Tiger Cannon more stable, but the Tiger Cannon being tested was The cannon was obviously not perfect yet, as the tube walls were still somewhat thin.

During the Ming Dynasty, Qi Jiguang made good progress by using the Hu Zun Cannon to bombard Japanese pirates in dense formations. Moreover, the Hu Zun Cannon was suitable for mountain warfare and was suitable for use in mountainous areas such as Japan and Ryukyu. Now Chen Qi It is the right time to develop the Tiger Gun.

"Twenty-six kilograms is too light. You can consider thickening the tube wall to increase the range and keep the weight at about fifty kilograms. In this way, it will not be very heavy in the field. At the same time, increase the amount of gunpowder. This Tiger Cannon The range can reach one thousand meters."

"Your Highness is right, this is just an experimental model, and I am preparing the official model, which is similar to what Your Highness said," Chen Qi said with a smile.

#### Chapter 413 Unsuccessful Explosive Bomb

"Well, since we wait until the official model comes out, we will prepare to put it into production. I hope to have 200 guns next year."

On the testing ground, Xiao Ming patted Chen Qi on the shoulder.

But he remembered something and asked: "Can this gunpowder can withstand the impact of a gunpowder explosion? Will the clay pot not be blown to pieces?"

Strictly speaking, the Tiger Zun Cannon is a modern mortar. This kind of direct-fire artillery is truly The power is that of an exploding cannonball. As such, the combination of the gunpowder can and the Tiger Cannon can exert its true power, because the gunpowder can is already equivalent to a bomb.

The only disadvantage is that it is difficult to control the time when the gunpowder cans explode. When the gunpowder cans were used to attack the city last time, many gunpowder cans either exploded early or delayed at the top of Shanhaiguan City, and even misfired.

According to Niu Ben, it would have been good if only half of the gunpowder cans could actually explode at the top of the city.

It is precisely because of the instability of this original blooming bomb that blooming bombs were not favored by the military when they first appeared. Especially the blooming bombs on battleships that need to be ignited are equivalent to a time bomb.

Because once stored improperly, it is easy to send yourself to heaven.

“Your Highness, I forgot to mention this matter. The gunpowder jar cannot withstand the power of the gunpowder explosion, so the military workshop casts hollow iron eggs.”

With that, Chen Qi directed a craftsman to take out the gunpowder jar from the wooden box on one side. An iron ball was given to Xiao Ming.

Seeing this iron ball the size of a baby’s head, Xiao Ming suddenly laughed out loud. This was the original explosive bomb called a time bomb in the West, and it was also the legendary explosive bomb that was lost in the Ming Dynasty.

This kind of explosive bomb is an iron ball. There is a lead in front of the iron ball that goes into the inside of the iron ball. The gunner cuts the lead according to the distance to achieve the purpose of explosion. Therefore, it is as unstable as a gunpowder can.

This most primitive explosive ammunition was rarely equipped in the ammunition of Western armies, accounting for only one-tenth of the ammunition at the time.

“Yes, yes, but the explosion time of this kind of shell is unstable.” Xiao Ming said with a smile.

He was not angry, but happy. In any case, these were explosive bombs. This was an improvement for the military workshop. Only with this foundation can we continue to develop the next generation of explosive bombs.

Xiao Ming’s words made Chen Qi look ashamed, “Your Highness, one of the reasons why we have been experimenting with the Tiger Cannon is the problem of shell explosion. I found that using the Tiger Cannon to fire such shells is very dangerous, and it is not even as good as throwing stones.” It is safe to fire a car because the explosion of gunpowder in the barrel will ignite the match. “

“You could probably put a hollow wooden tube in the bullet hole and stuff the slow-burning match in the tube while rotating the wooden plug. Extending and shortening the length of the burning match rope will be safer than directly inserting the match rope into the bullet hole,” Xiao Ming said.

When Xiao Ming could not invent the fuse, he could only improve the safety and practicality of this kind of explosive ammunition. The problem with this kind of explosive ammunition is that the gunpowder in

the barrel directly ignites the match, so no matter the length of the match, the match will be fired. The vicinity of the hole is ignited, and because of this, the shell can become dangerous.

By inserting a hollow wooden plug, the length of the burning match rope in the plug can be adjusted by rotating it, so that the stability of the blooming bullet is higher.

However, this kind of blooming ammunition has not yet reached the level of the Napoleonic period in the 19th century. It can only be said to be a generation and a half of blooming ammunition.

“Yes, yes, why am I so stupid?” Chen Qi immediately whirled around excitedly after hearing this. He said: “Your Highness, I will study this kind of corked cannonball.”

Xiao Ming nodded, and did not disturb Chen Qi. Yes, he knew that once Chen Qi found a new idea, he would study it all the way without sleep and food. Talking to him at this time was no different from talking to a piece of wood.

After seeing the Tiger Zun Cannon, Xiao Ming did not leave immediately but went directly to the artillery workshop. At this time, the craftsmen in the artillery workshop were producing artillery.

Because of the huge demand for export artillery this year, the iron molds in the artillery workshop have now tripled, and the artillery for export is being produced day and night.

At the same time, the number of the other two types of iron molds has also increased threefold. One of them is the city defense artillery currently being used in Qingzhou, and the other is the naval gun.

Because the Galen ships require a large number of artillery pieces this year, the production of naval guns is also in full swing. The twelve newly added Galen ships require at least a thousand artillery pieces. This is not only a heavy task for the military workshop, but also a financial burden. A huge expense.

Even if the cost of a thousand artillery pieces is two thousand taels, this is something that can only be accomplished with two million taels of silver, and this does not include the cost of ammunition and shells.

If you don't become a farmer, you don't know that firewood, rice, oil and salt are expensive. Now Xiao Ming deeply understands the pain of cutting meat.

It is precisely because of this that he decisively ordered a defensive posture against the barbarians. He cannot continue to fight like this because the economic benefits brought by fighting the barbarians are too little. If this continues, the war will drag him down.

It was also because of money that he sold arms. If he didn't sell arms, how would he get the money to make cannons and guns?

After walking through the artillery workshop, he gradually made up his mind to continue to expand the sales of export-type artillery in the country. At the same time, the export sales of matchlocks must also be put on the agenda. It is not easy for this military workshop to achieve profitability.

After coming out of the artillery workshop, Xiao Ming entered the musket workshop. At this time, Song Changping was supervising the production of muskets.

In the workshop, he saw some craftsmen already assembling matchlock guns. It seemed that Song Changping responded quickly, and he started to implement the order as soon as it was given.

“Your Highness, this matchlock gun is very simple. Five thousand matchlock guns can be delivered in two months.” Song Changping said confidently.

Xiao Ming picked up an assembled matchlock gun and looked at it. This kind of matchlock gun has no bayonet, only a barrel, which is much inferior to a flintlock gun.

Compared with the profits of artillery, this matchlock gun is more profitable, so Xiao Ming attaches great importance to the export of matchlock guns. He said: “Now that the gun workshop has a business, it can consider expanding production like the artillery workshop. Each type of gun is responsible for part of it.” Production, this way there will be no confusion.”

Song Changping nodded, “Yes, Your Highness, I will arrange this later.”

Xiao Ming continued: “This production is one thing. The development of this new type of gun cannot be delayed. Chen Qi has the Tiger Cannon. You must work harder to improve the range and accuracy of the flintlock gun.”

“Your Highness, your Highness’s team is currently conducting research on new types of firearms. I believe it won’t be long before Your Highness will see a more powerful flintlock gun,” Song Changping said

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Looking at the busy workshop, Xiao Ming glanced at Song Changping with admiration. This guy has always been very honest. If he says he is developing something, he must be developing it.

Chapter 414 Best Selling

The sound of metal clanging filled the military workshop.

After understanding the production situation of artillery and muskets, Xiao Ming gave Song Changping and Chen Qi some production tasks.

The production capacity of the military workshop has tripled, but it is not enough for Xiao Ming. The reason is simple. His current capabilities are too far behind those of the Western powers.

At this time in modern times, even the Dutch, with a land area of only 40,000 square kilometers, had hundreds of warships. In the Anglo-Dutch War, each side invested 8,000 artillery pieces at a time, and this was in the first half of the seventeenth century.

Now in the eighteenth century, the strength of these imperial navies can only become stronger.

Compared with such terrifying figures, Xiao Ming's current power gap is very large, so now he is planning to vigorously develop trade and continue to expand the number of shipyards, otherwise he will really have to fight for colonies with these established empires in his lifetime.

So after experiencing the gloom of politics in Chang'an this time, he didn't want to waste his energy on intrigues in the court. Internal strife would only distract him and drag down Qingzhou's industrial and commercial development.

Furthermore, he now holds two pieces of land, Youzhou and Qingzhou, which are as large as the main island of Great Britain at that time.

After all, the main island of Great Britain was only 240,000 square kilometers at that time. He was just a little short of that. There were still 150,000 to 600,000 square kilometers.

With such a land area, he has no demand for land for the time being. The only remaining problem is to industrialize the land and make the people on the land rich.

While thinking about it, Xiao Ming walked towards the Chamber of Commerce.

Today, Pang Yukun is responsible for distributing potatoes, and has asked the states and counties to go into villages to promote potatoes. To support this kind of promotion, he needs the help of the chamber of commerce.

Ordinary people are not stupid. If they take something they have never seen before, they will not bother to plant it unless they find that this kind of thing can be sold for money.

This requires the Chamber of Commerce to promote potatoes this time. In fact, for Xiao Ming, it doesn't matter how much potatoes he sells this time, or how much he sells them for. The important thing is that he wants to let the local people know that growing potatoes can make money. of.

Entering the Chamber of Commerce, the aroma of potatoes hit your face. In the Chamber of Commerce, there were iron pots set on a dozen briquette stoves, and potatoes were being boiled in water.

Businessmen gathered around the iron pot and were eating boiled potatoes. This way of eating is also the most basic way of eating potatoes.

Inside the chamber of commerce, a cook was frying shredded potatoes and a cook was frying French fries. After the businessman ate the boiled potatoes, he ran over here to wait.

When Xiao Ming entered the Chamber of Commerce, Li Kaiyuan immediately stepped forward, and the businessmen immediately gathered around him with a hint of expectation in their eyes.

“Your Highness, many businessmen have offered to purchase potatoes, but they think the price is too expensive. I just discussed it with them and they think five taels of silver and one stone for potatoes is quite reasonable,” Li Kaiyuan said.

“Fifty taels of silver?” Xiao Ming frowned. This was much lower than the price they expected.

Nowadays, the price of one stone of rice is only fifty cents, which is already ten times the price of rice. This price can be said to be very high.

After hesitating for a moment, Xiao Ming said: "Fifty taels is five taels. Now the main thing is to sell potatoes. One stone and fifty taels, and one acre of land is more than one hundred taels of silver. If this is the case, the people will get rich."

"Yes. "

Ah, this makes me want to go home and plant potatoes," Li Kaiyuan said happily.

Shaking his head, Xiao Ming said: "Don't be too proud. When potato production increases, the price of potatoes will only continue to drop. It will be good to be a little more expensive than rice."

Li Kaiyuan was convinced.

After receiving Xiao Ming's approval, Li Kaiyuan said to a group of merchants: "Your Highness agreed, five taels and one stone. If you want to buy it, you can place an order now."

As soon as he said this, the merchants immediately surrounded Li Kaiyuan and shouted .

"I'll buy twenty stones."

"Give me a hundred stones."

“Two thousand stones, I want to sell them to Chang’an.”

“ ... ”

The merchants were enthusiastic about buying, and Xiao Ming was satisfied.

The potatoes will slowly spread throughout the country of Chongqing. If it turns out as he expected, the Chamber of Commerce will prepare to turn these potatoes into actual profits after purchasing the potatoes.

As a result, merchants appeared on the wharf selling potatoes to other places. Qingzhou’s East Market and West Market responded the fastest, and potatoes soon appeared on the market.

The people who entered the city the next day were surprised when they saw the potatoes on the stall.

Yesterday, the government sent people to the countryside to promote potato planting. Many people are afraid to grow this unfamiliar thing.

Land is the lifeblood of the people, and one season’s food failure is enough to be fatal. However, when they asked about the price of potatoes, the people’s expressions changed.

“Five taels and one stone.” A commoner exclaimed.

The vendor nodded and tried his best to sell, “It can’t be fake. I just bought this from the Chamber of Commerce. I have to make some money by selling it. It costs five cents per pound. It tastes very good. This pot is for trial use.” , try it.”

The people’s eyes rolled. In the past two years, his family’s grain has been sold to the government, and he can earn about fifteen or sixty silver a year.

Compared with before, his family was much richer, and these five cents were not expensive, so he said: “Here are two pounds, take it back and let my family members try it. I might as well plant an acre of potatoes next year to try it.” Try it.”

The vendor immediately burst into laughter. The potato business was pretty good. He had sold a total of three stones of potatoes from morning to now. From this, it seemed that selling the potatoes was no longer a problem. Thinking of this, he thought I will go to the Chamber of Commerce to purchase some more. The potatoes provided by the Qingzhou Chamber of Commerce this time are limited. If I cannot buy them in time, I am afraid they will be gone.

And just as the merchants thought, as the potatoes were sold, more and more merchants came to purchase, and even many people came to purchase potatoes and sold them in the village.

The merchants who usually walked around the streets blocked the chamber of commerce.

These people were not big traders, but hawkers, and each purchase was one or two stones. However, under Xiao Ming's instructions, the Chamber of Commerce was happy to sell potatoes to these small businessmen.

There is no other reason, because these traveling merchants and people are all locals. Now Xiao Ming is supporting local businesses and focusing on supporting the people among the people.

Moreover, these traveling merchants and common people all come from the lowest level of the people. They move around the fiefdom with their goods, and they can also bring the most direct news to Baixin.

These traveling merchants would also venture into places where big merchants were unwilling to go. In this way, the news about Tudou could truly cover every corner of the fiefdom.

Later, Li Kaiyuan handed over the day's potato sales to Xiao Ming. Overall, two thousand shi of potatoes were sold on the first day, which is a good number.

In the next few days, the sales task of ten thousand shi is expected to be completed soon, and fifty thousand taels of silver can be obtained easily.

Chapter 415 Dutch

Chu Palace.

A man shrouded in black robes was escorted by guards to the Phoenix Pavilion in the palace.

At this time, a tall middle-aged man with a stern face was sitting under the pavilion, waiting to take him. The middle-aged man had a stern face, and a black mole between his eyebrows was particularly eye-catching. A cold glint flashed from time to time in his eagle-like eyes.

“Dear Your Highness, King of Chu, why did you come to see me?”

When he came to King Chu, the man in black robes tore open his clothes. Inside was a tall young man with red hair. The young man’s clothes were similar to those of Dayu. He is out of tune with the Chinese people, but he is wearing a black tuxedo, and his blunt Dayu language gives people a very awkward feeling.

Seeing this young man, King Chu’s expression darkened, but there was still some dissatisfaction in his eyes. He said to the young man: “Envoy Rhodes, I think you should explain to me why your fleet attacked my merchant ship. The young man known as

Rhodes

smiled contemptuously, “Dear His Royal Highness the King of Chu, there is only one reason why we Dutch attacked your merchant ships, and that is because your merchant ships are doing business privately at sea. I think the newly appointed Earl Black said this.” It is very clear that from now on, this sea area can only be transported by our Dutch merchant ships. If you need spices, we will sell spices to you from Nanyang. If you need sulfur, we will sell sulfur to you from Japan. What do you want? Porcelain sold to Europe must be transported by our Dutch merchant ships. Isn’t this clear enough?”

King Chu’s face was as black as dripping ink. He said: “I don’t care about your new bullshit count. This was not part of the agreement we signed.”

“Now it is! His Majesty King Chu, and if Earl Black knows that you are humiliating him, he will definitely be unhappy, and your supply of matchlock guns may be cut off by then. .” Rhodes said teasingly.

He didn't care what King Chu thought at all. The Dutch had the final say in this sea area now.

The King of Chu's eyes were filled with anger. Since the new earl who managed Ryukyu took office three months ago, the Dutch suddenly tore up the commercial agreement they signed. They no longer satisfied the most favorable treatment of Chu State and began to demand the entire Chongqing State. Open the market and prohibit private trade by any merchant ships in this area.

“Do you think I still care about your matchlock guns now? Now we in Great Chongqing also have matchlock guns. Go back and tell your count that if he breaks the agreement, he will bear the consequences. I will not be bullied by you casually. King Chu said angrily.

Rhodes's eyes narrowed, he caught the information in King Chu's words, and he asked: “You also have matchlock guns now?”

“Of course, on the same day that your count took office, King Qi and the barbarians in the north There was a war, and they defeated the barbarians using matchlock guns. So, don't threaten me with matchlock guns again, otherwise I can also purchase matchlock guns from King Qi, and remember, this belongs to the Kingdom of Chongqing. We have the final say over the land,” King Chu threatened.

Over the years, he has made a fortune relying on trade with the Dutch, and ocean trade has made him rich in capital. Now that the Dutch have cut off his trade lines, they have cut off his financial path.

It was for this reason that he was so angry.

Moreover, he now has fifteen thousand musketeers in his hands. The most important thing is that by imitating Lin'an craftsmen, he has been able to make slightly less powerful muskets. Last year, he also purchased hundreds of artillery pieces from Qingzhou.

These artillery were installed on the warships by him. He believed that he could challenge the Dutch.

Because according to the information he obtained, the Dutch army stationed on Ryukyu Island was only 10,000 people. Although his fleet was not as good as the Dutch fleet, he had 3,000 large merchant ships.

Using these merchant ships, he was fully capable of transporting troops to Ryukyu Island to fight the Dutch.

In the past, he got along well with the Dutch and never thought of using force, but now that the Dutch have gone too far, he can only consider this as one of the options.

"How is it possible? The most you can do, King Chu, is to imitate a matchlock gun. How could this King of Qi make a matchlock gun?" Rhodes looked like he didn't believe it.

The King of Chu snorted coldly and said: "It is said that a missionary taught him. In short, the matchlock gun is no longer a secret. Envoy Rhodes, please go back and convey the king's news to Earl Black. If the agreement remains unchanged, we will still live in harmony, but if you continue to monopolize the trade at sea, I will have no choice but to be polite."

“Okay, Your Highness King Chu, I will inform Earl Black.”

Rhodes put on his black robe again and led the guards. Go down to the dock outside Lin'an City, enter a merchant ship, and row toward the fleet in the east sea.

In the Prince of Chu's Mansion, after Rhodes left, a young man wearing a purple round-neck gown appeared in front of the Phoenix Pavilion. The young man had a long and thin face and had eagle eyes like the Prince of Chu.

“Father, why are you talking to the Dutch so much? Just drive them away. The sea route will be ours.” said the young man. He was none other than the eldest son of the King of Chu, Li Chuyuan.

King Chu's eyes were deep and he said slowly: “The Dutch fleet is not that easy to deal with. Let's talk if we can. If we start a war with the Dutch rashly, we will only lose our troops. We cannot lose our troops in vain. After all, King Qi is now powerful. This time the second prince was exiled to Bazhou due to the assassination incident, which shows the influence of King Qi on the court now. It's a pity that King Qi has ruined everything after our layout for so long.”

Li Chuyuan said angrily: “This should be damned. The King of Qi is really tough. He didn't kill him even if he had two chances, but now he is getting more and more powerful.”

After a pause, Li Chuyuan suddenly said: “Dad, you and the Dutchman just talked about the muskets on purpose. This time we are not planning to divert trouble to the east and let the Dutch deal with the King of Qi. “

“Hey, my son is still smart. The Dutch sold us a matchlock gun for 500 taels of silver, but Xiao Ming sold it to the court for only 100 taels. , it is precisely because they have tasted the sweetness that the Dutch will ask the Great Chongqing to open all trade. This time the Dutch will be furious when they know that King Qi can produce matchlock guns, which will ruin their business. “The King of Chu was very proud.

Li Chuyuan said: “My father is wise. If King Qi falls this time, we can no longer wait. We will immediately send troops to seize the land south of the Yangtze River. Our Li family has waited for too long. This throne will also be given to our Li family.” Sit down.”

The King of Chu nodded slightly. The accumulation of several generations made Chu land very rich. There were so many copper coins piled in the treasury of various states that they could not be used up, so much so that the ropes that bound them rotted away.

With such a strong capital, why did he still listen to the imperial court’s orders and just wait for chaos in the north? However, both plots were disrupted by the King of Qi.

As the father and son were talking, suddenly a guard hurried in and shouted: “His Royal Highness King Chu is in trouble. After the Dutch envoys boarded the ship, the Dutch warships began to bombard the dock. Several merchant ships in the dock sank. .”

Chapter 416 The Battle of Qiantang

“These damn Dutch.”

The news brought by the guards made the King of Chu furious. He underestimated the barbaric nature of the Dutch.

“Father, what should I do?” Li Chuyuan was also very angry. He gradually realized the true colors of these Dutch people. They were a group of greedy businessmen.

King Chu hesitated for a moment and then made up his mind, he said: “Send our warships, we will let the Dutch know how powerful this king is.”

“Yes, father.” Li Chuyuan responded and headed for the dock.

Lin’an City, Cao Mansion.

At this time, news of the attack on Lin’an Wharf quickly spread here. After receiving the news, Cao Kun, the head of the Cao family, immediately called his eldest son Cao Zhengtong to him.

“Father.”

Cao Zhengtong was about twenty-six years old. His face was a little pale and his body was a little thin. It seemed that he had just recovered from a serious illness. Cao Zhengtong was still a little weak when he spoke.

“Zhengtong, you set off for Qingzhou immediately. This time King Chu hastily started a war with the Dutch and will suffer a big loss.” Cao Kun said nervously, “If we are defeated, our Cao family’s caravan may no longer be able to go to sea. , after you arrive in Qingzhou, immediately contact Zhengyang to summon the merchant ships that are transporting goods throughout the Chongqing Kingdom. At the same time, re-purchase merchant ships from Qingzhou and organize a fleet. After all, the King of Chu is watching us very closely. We are in Chu. The fleet can’t move.”

Cao Zhengtong said in confusion: "The King of Chu is strong, so he should have no problem dealing with the Dutch."

"The King of Chu is strong, but there is no way to defeat the Dutch at sea. His ships can be attacked. But the Dutch warships." Cao Kun said anxiously, "Don't be stunned, hurry up and do it. The only one who can defeat the Dutch now is King Qi. The hope of our Cao family lies in Qingzhou, not Lin'an. King Chu will eventually fight against the Dutch. There is no difference between the other dignitaries of the Chongqing State, but the King of Qi can allow our Cao family to continue to prosper."

Cao Zhengtong's expression became serious, and he nodded and said, "Yes, father, I will go to Qingzhou and bring the people here. Tell King Qi about it."

"Well, go quickly and tell us about the shipyard." Cao Kun sighed.

Accompanying a king is like accompanying a tiger. Over the years, the Cao family has offered countless amounts of money to the King of Chu. However, the King of Chu is greedy and is now planning to annex the Cao family directly.

His informant in the Prince of Chu's Mansion had already secretly told him about this matter. Because of this, he immediately decided to start arranging the Cao family's property in Qingzhou.

Although the King of Chu was a little wary of this, his real purpose was still unclear, and he thought that the Cao family was just running business in Qingzhou normally.

But in fact, he was preparing to transfer the Cao family's assets. Once the King of Chu took action, they would flee even if they gave up their property in Jiangnan.

While the father and son were talking, Li Chuyuan led a hundred warships to attack eastward from the Qiantang River outside Lin'an City. On the ten warships in front, there were ten cannons on each deck, with about five cannons on each side of the deck. .

Standing on the largest building ship, Li Chuyuan was full of confidence. In the past, they had no artillery and were naturally afraid of fighting the Dutch at sea.

But now that they are equipped with ten warships equipped with artillery, plus traditional warships, he believes they can fight the Dutch.

Going eastward along the river, Li Chuyuan saw the Dutch warships blocking the outlet. At this time, a total of ten Dutch warships were shelling the coastal pier.

These Dutch warships all had three decks, with a row of guns on each deck.

Facing these Dutch warships, Li Chuyuan issued an attack order. When the war drums sounded, hundreds of warships rushed towards the Dutch warships.

At this time, on the Dutch battleship Liberty, a slightly fat middle-aged man was observing these battleships rushing out of the river mouth with a monocular.

The middle-aged man wears a brown vest, has long curly brown hair, shiny leather shoes and stockings, and black pants on his legs. He is the new Earl Black of Ryukyu Island.

“Lord Earl, do you want to retreat and lead them into the deep sea to defeat them one by one.” Rhodes thought he had given a good suggestion.

“No need. These battleships are unorganized and have insufficient number of artillery. They are just using the chaotic warfare method from fifty years ago. Although they are large in number, they are not our opponents at all. Today I will let these stupid kings of Chu understand what It’s a naval battle!” Blake put away his binoculars and said to a crew member: “Hang the blue flag.”

The crew received the order and immediately raised a small blue flag to the top of the battleship.

At this time, the Dutch warships, which were originally scattered in the sea, seemed to have received an order and immediately began to adjust their direction. The scattered battleship formation immediately changed into the word “one”. This is exactly the array warfare method in naval battles.

In Black’s eyes, the King of Chu’s fleet at this time was just using random warfare. This type of warfare did not have a unified command. Each ship fought independently, and there was no unified dispatch at all.

In fact, fifty years ago, the Dutch also used a chaotic warfare method. However, they only began to change this independent warfare method after losing to the British array warfare method with three times the number of troops in a naval battle. Law.

Looking at a hundred mighty battleships at this time, Blake was not nervous at all. When the battleships were arranged in a “one” shape, he ordered to open fire.

“Boom boom...”

Ten warships opened fire at the same time, and five hundred artillery pieces opened fire at the Chu King’s fleet rushing out from the river mouth. In an instant, raindrop-like shells flew towards the warships rushing out densely.

After a round of firing, the Dutch fleet immediately began to rotate in a U-shape, and the other side of the first battleship immediately fired another salvo of artillery.

Under the continuous attacks, seven warships of the King of Chu that had just rushed out of the river mouth immediately began to sink. These seven warships were like rocks blocking the route of other warships. Even driven by the river current, some warships were unable to dodge in time. Hitting each other.

Suddenly, King Chu’s fleet fell into chaos.

The soldiers on the fleet were even more frightened and overwhelmed by the terrifying artillery of the Dutch. The land of Chu was rich, and there had been no war at all since the founding of the Great Yu Kingdom.

The people were content with enjoying themselves, but the soldiers were afraid of war. When Li Chuyuan ordered the war against the Dutch, many soldiers were already frightened.

At this time, looking at the corpses floating in the river, the screaming soldiers, and the red blood, more soldiers lost their will to fight.

Li Chuyuan's expression suddenly changed when he saw this hell-like scene.

He was used to hiding in the house to plot conspiracies and was good at calculations, but the real battlefield was completely different from what he thought. Looking at the sunk battleships one after another, his legs began to tremble.

"Retreat, retreat!" Li Chuyuan roared.

Under this order, chaos in the fleet began. After losing ten battleships, the rout began.

On the Liberty, Black looked at the chaotic King Chu fleet and said with a ferocious smile: "It's time for King Chu to re-sign the trade agreement."

Chapter 417 Beating the Cao Family

Outside Lin'an City.

Cao Zhengtong, who was about to set off, suddenly learned that the King of Chu's fleet had been defeated by the Dutch. The fleeing people and disintegrated soldiers described the battle scene as very terrifying.

With a faint sigh, Cao Zhengtong urged the carriage forward. Just as his father expected, King Chu's fleet was nothing more than a showpiece and vulnerable to a single blow.

Along the official road of Lin'an City, he headed north. After seven consecutive days of driving, he finally saw the legendary Qingzhou City.

At this time, Cao Zhengyang was waiting for him at the dock outside Qingzhou City. The servants had arrived in advance to tell Cao Zhengyang the news of his arrival.

"Brother." Cao Zhengyang looked at Cao Zhengtong, who looked a little pale, and asked, "Brother, has something happened at home? Where is my father?"

"Don't worry, my father is fine. He came to Qingzhou this time. Father's order, by the way, you bring me to King Qi now, I have something important to tell King Qi," Cao Zhengtong said.

He is the legitimate son of the Cao family, and his status in the family is much higher than that of Cao Zhengyang.

Cao Zhengyang nodded and immediately led Cao Zhengtong to Prince Qi's Mansion. After the announcement, they waited for Prince Qi's reception.

In the palace, Xiao Ming was explaining the knowledge in the book to Fei Yue'er. These days, Fei Yue'er was completely immersed in the books he gave her. If there was anything she didn't understand, she would ask Xiao Ming in time.

"Your Highness, Cao Zhengtong and Cao Zhengyang, the legitimate sons of the Cao family, would like to see you." said the servant guarding the door.

Xiao Ming frowned. This was Cao Zhengtong's first time in Qingzhou. He said, "Let them in."

"Your Highness, I will leave now." Fei Yue'er is very sensible. Every time a guest comes over, She will actively avoid it.

Xiao Ming nodded. These days, he and Fei Yue'er have become more and more like a couple, and they get along very naturally.

Fei Yue'er left, and the servant came over with two men, one of whom was Cao Zhengyang, and the other one was probably Cao Zhengtong.

"Cao Zhengtong, a common man, has met His Royal Highness the King of Qi." Cao Zhengtong and Cao Zhengyang bowed and saluted at the same time.

After waving his hand, Xiao Ming looked at Cao Zhengtong, "Zhengyang said that you are frail and sick. You have been living in Lin'an and basically don't go out. Why do you have to go to Qingzhou after a long and tiring trip this time?"

"Back to Your Highness, this time the common people went to Qingzhou to suffer the consequences. My father ordered me to deliver a message

to His Highness

at the same time. The King of Chu's fleet went to war with the Dutch and was defeated.

This King of Chu is stirring up trouble, and even King Qinglong has something to do with King Chu. King Chu's fleet was defeated by the Dutch, so he vented his anger on his behalf. He smiled and said: "But this matter has nothing to do with me. "

Cao Zhengtong was stunned. He said loudly: "Your Highness does not know. Now there is a new Dutch Count on Ryukyu Island. His name is Claire. Since he came, he has banned other merchant ships from participating in maritime trade. It is for this reason. Only the King of Chu would go to war with the Dutch. Now only His Highness can build warships that can rival the Dutch fleet, and only His Highness can defeat the Dutch and regain the maritime trade rights of the Great Chongqing."

"Xiao? Ming sneered, "Hasn't this maritime trade been monopolized by the King of Chu? Even the King of Wei is angry with the King of Chu, and I have nothing to do with maritime trade rights." Xiao Ming said lazily.

"Don't His Highness want it? What a pity. If His Highness masters all maritime trade and uses Qingzhou's goods, Qingzhou will be rich in a few years." Cao Zhengtong said.

His eyes narrowed dangerously, Xiao Ming glanced at Cao Zhengtong lightly, and said: "If you have anything to say, just say it directly. I don't like to beat around the bush. Your father didn't ask you to come to Qingzhou just to tell King Chu that you are embarrassed." "

Your Highness is wise, this time my father asked the grassroots to come here to contribute to His Highness's shipyard. As we all know, there are many shipyards in the south of the Yangtze River, and 80% of the merchant ships in the Great Chongqing Kingdom come from the south of the Yangtze River, but our Cao family There are thirteen shipyards under its banner. Six of these shipyards are in the fiefdom of the King of Chu, and seven are distributed in other places. If His Highness is willing, the common people can move all the shipyards to Dengzhou to help His Highness to Dengzhou. We will build the state into a shipbuilding industry center," Cao Zhengzheng said.

"Then what do you want to get?" Xiao Ming said.

"Similar to the Northern Expedition, if Your Highness obtains a trade route in the future, please allow the Cao family's merchant ships to participate in maritime trade." Cao Zhengtong said.

The real purpose of his coming this time was this. The defeat of the King of Chu meant that the Cao family's route to wealth was cut off, and it was impossible to take it back with the King of Chu's ability.

But the Cao family knew about Qingzhou's warships, and also knew what Qingzhou's three warships had done. They were the ones who dared to fight the British fleet and even sunk British warships.

Because of this, the Cao family decided to place a bet on King Qi.

"Hahaha..." Xiao Ming laughed, "Your Cao family is indeed rich in financial resources. Now the large grassland in Youzhou belongs to your Cao family, and the banks in these six states also belong to you. Now you have to participate in the trade routes. Are you ready to buy my king's fiefdom now?"

Although Xiao Ming smiled, Cao Zhengtong felt cold all over. He suddenly realized something and said cautiously: "Your Highness, our Cao family is just a businessman. It is also to preserve the foundation of the Cao family. The King of Chu is now sharpening his sword against the Cao family. We are just trying to survive. Your Highness, please rest assured. Since we have entered Qingzhou, our Cao family is His Highness's ministers. "

"Humph, you know this best. Well, my fiefdom is a place where commerce flows freely, and I am very tolerant to merchants, but there are some things that you merchants cannot touch, understand?"

Cao Zhengyang's back was soaked with cold sweat. He lived in Qingzhou a lot. Time will naturally get to know this King of Qi, who is a truly dangerous person.

Cao Zhengtong said cautiously: "Your Highness, the common people understand. Our Cao family is willing to help Your Highness build a shipyard. As for the future, we will only obey His Highness's orders."

"That's pretty much it." Xiao Ming regained his smile.

As soon as the Cao family comes to the fiefdom, they will make deals with themselves, asking for this or that. If they don't beat them now, they will not go to heaven in the future. They really regard this place as a Western country of free capital, and they can ask for prices from them!

Cao Zhengtong felt a cold sweat in his heart. It was indeed his mistake this time. He should discuss the matter with Cao Zhengyang first.

“If you can help me build a shipyard, I will naturally repay you in the future. Remember, you can take what I give you, but you can’t have any ideas about what I don’t give you.” Xiao Ming reminded.

Cao Zhengtong and Cao Zhengyang nodded again.

Xiao Ming waved his hand and asked the two of them to leave. At this time, someone called Wang Xuan over and said, “Now go and collect news about Chu Land and report it to me.”

#### Chapter 418: The Fisherman Gains

In the main hall, Xiao Ming and Wang Xuan stood opposite each other.

After receiving Xiao Ming’s order, Wang Xuan said: “Your Highness, the secret guards have gone to Chu. If such a big event really happens, they will probably get the news soon.”

Wang Xuan’s tone was very confident. In the past two years, the government has The government invested a lot of money in the secret guards, which allowed the secret guards to expand rapidly. Now there are thousands of secret guards under his command.

These secret guards are distributed in key monitoring areas and have strict organization. It is they who deliver a steady stream of messages back.

Nodding, he said to Wang Xuan: “Yes, but the work of the secret guards needs to be strengthened. Your arrest of Shanxi merchants this time has been known to the emperor for a long time. It seems that the emperor also has an organization to spy on intelligence.” “

Wang Xuan nodded, "We did neglect it. Later we found out that they were from Lijingmen."

"This is not bad. You finally have an opponent to compete with. Also, Chang'an and The monitoring of the barbarians cannot be relaxed. The dynamics in these two places are also very important."

Wang Xuan nodded and turned to leave.

Watching Wang Xuan leave, Xiao Ming fell into deep thought. The news that Cao Zhengtong brought this time really surprised him. He did not expect that the King of Chu would go to war with the Dutch.

I have to say that this shows that the Dutch really pushed the King of Chu into a panic. However, the emergence of such a domineering Dutch earl in this area is not good news for Xiao Ming.

Now that the maritime trade routes are completely blocked, this is also a huge problem for Xiao Ming. As Cao Zhengtong said, navigation routes are wealth.

He could not let such a huge wealth be in the hands of the Dutch.

The Silk Road on land has been cut off, and now the sea routes have also been cut off. Xiao Ming is really one of two people, and the country of Chongqing is really a mess.

Two days later, Wang Xuan brought news of the Qiantang naval battle in Chu. The King of Chu's fleet was destroyed by the Dutch. More than thirty ships were destroyed, and the crown prince Li Chuyuan was almost captured by the Dutch.

Lin'an Wharf was reduced to ruins by the Dutch. Finally, under the coercion of the Dutch, the King of Chu had to sign a new negotiation agreement on the Dutch warship.

This agreement recognized the Dutch's ownership of maritime trade. All ships passing through the trade routes must pay heavy taxes to the Dutch. At the same time, all goods sold by the Dutch to the Chu Land were exempted from taxes, etc.

"Is this news reliable?" Xiao Ming asked, taking the news from Wang Xuan.

"It's very reliable. It is said that in order to humiliate the King of Chu, the Dutch disclosed this agreement to the local maritime merchants. It was from these maritime merchants that the news came." Wang Xuan said.

Xiao Ming sneered twice and said: "I didn't expect it, I didn't expect that the King of Chu really set a precedent for the Chongqing Kingdom. He was the first to sign the first unfair treason treaty in history under the threat of force from the colonists. Agreement."

"The King of Chu has always been very ambitious. I am afraid he will cry to beg His Highness to purchase arms this time." Wang Xuan suddenly laughed.

“Hey, it’s really hard to tell. I was taught a hard lesson by the Dutch this time. With the King of Chu’s peeing, he will definitely purchase a large amount of arms. And because of this, the Dutch will definitely not sell arms to Chu again. King.” Xiao Ming suddenly looked forward to it.

While the two were talking, suddenly the voice of a palace servant came from outside the door, “Your Highness, the envoy of the King of Chu is outside the door asking to see you.”

“Your Highness, this is called Cao Cao, and Cao Cao will be here.” Wang Xuan laughed.

Xiao Ming nodded, “It seems that the King of Chu is very angry this time. As the saying goes, the fisherman wins when the snipe and the clam fight. In the past, the King of Chu waited for me and the barbarians to fight and both sides would suffer. Now we can finally see him.” It’s a joke.”

After saying that, Xiao Ming asked Wang Xuan to temporarily avoid it and let the Chu King’s envoy come in.

“Li Wei, please see your highness.” The person who came was an old man, about fifty years old.

Frowning, Xiao Ming said, “Excuse me. What’s the purpose of this envoy?”

“Back to Your Highness, His Highness the King of Chu sent me here to purchase artillery and muskets. His Highness the King of Chu sent me here to purchase artillery and muskets. “

I would like to send a message to the King of Shu, please express your gratitude to the descendants of Yan and Huang, and please provide a thousand naval guns for Chu.”

“A thousand naval guns?” Xiao Ming almost jumped up and said, “The King of Chu is crazy. Okay, where did I get so many naval guns? Hey, how did King Chu know about the naval guns?”

At the end of the sentence, Xiao Ming suddenly said in surprise.

Li Wei was not in a hurry, he said: “It was the Dutch who told His Highness the King of Chu about the naval guns. It was actually to show off. His Highness said that as long as they can get a thousand naval guns, His Highness the King of Qi’s request He can consider it.”

Xiao Ming rolled his eyes. A thousand naval guns is really a big deal. This is enough for King Chu to build a fleet with powerful artillery.

Moreover, these naval guns are generally heavy guns, and the price is much more expensive than ordinary city defense guns. A thousand guns are a lot of money.

Overall, this business is really tempting, but Xiao Ming doesn’t have enough naval guns himself, let alone those for the King of Chu.

So he said: “I’m afraid there is nothing I can do to help. The number of artillery produced in Qingzhou is limited. One thousand is too many.”

Li Wei still looked unhurried. He continued: "His Royal Highness King Qi, wait a moment. His Highness King Chu has said Qingzhou is short of ships, not cannons, and Chu is short of cannons, not ships. The complementarity of the two benefits everyone. His Highness the King of Chu is willing to exchange merchant ships and shipyard craftsmen for cannons. I hope His Highness will think twice."

"Merchant ships and craftsmen. ." Xiao Ming's heart beat unsatisfactorily.

This time King Chu was really right. What he was short of now was indeed ships. Both merchant ships and shipbuilders were in short supply, and they were in urgent need.

After pondering for a while, he said: "I can squeeze out some naval guns, but the number will not be large. There can only be more than thirty. The remaining naval guns will be delivered in the next few years. In addition, , I have no choice. "

This time King Chu was beaten by the Dutch. After all, the agreement has been signed. With each passing year, King Chu will lose more.

"His Highness said it can wait," Li Wei said.

Xiao Ming nodded, "That's okay, but the old rule is that the deposit must be in place, otherwise I won't be able to do this business. I need to meet the merchant ships and craftsmen first."

When such a large order came, Xiao Ming could only let the military workshop continue to expand. These thousand guns seemed like a lot, but in fact they were the size of ten Galen ships.

And the delivery divided into several years is not enough to pose a threat to him, because in three or four years, who knows how far the Qingzhou Navy will develop. By then, these naval guns will probably be obsolete.

“As Your Highness wishes.” Li Wei nodded heavily.

#### Chapter 419 Bribery

A hint of the aroma of food drifted into the main hall from the direction of the dining room.

Xiao Ming, who had received huge benefits, was in a good mood. He said to Li Wei: “Since it’s already dinner time, why don’t the envoys have dinner at the palace.”

Li Wei was a little flattered when he heard this, and he said: “I don’t dare. How dare you be so humble? Your Highness

is sitting at the same table.”

“It doesn’t matter, it doesn’t matter. There are not so many rules here, so the envoy should not come out.” Xiao Ming said carelessly, and he said to the servant outside the door: “Let the dining room prepare an extra meal. “

Li Wei became more and more frightened. He couldn’t help but feel a little nervous at this time. He was not a person who was not favored by the King of Chu, otherwise he would not have traveled long distances to serve as an envoy at the age of fifty. .

After all, in the Chu region, the envoys were served by humble people. Even if these people died in the hands of the enemy, the King of Chu would not feel sorry for them. Therefore, being treated so grandly by Xiao Ming, he was a little overwhelmed.

Xiao Ming saw Li Wei's expression and asked Li Wei to go out first. At this time, Wang Xuan came out from behind the screen at the back of the main hall.

He asked: "Do you and your secret guards know about this Li Wei?"

"Back to your highness, we, the secret guards, have records of some high-ranking officials in the Chu region, but not this Li Wei. If your guess is correct, this Li Wei should be an unknown person." A well-received minor official."

Xiao Ming nodded, "There must be secret guards in King Chu's fiefdom. Overtly, we must try our best to bribe officials to work for us. Remember, you secret guards are not just for this purpose. The most important task in gathering intelligence is thorough penetration."

Wang Xuan nodded. In fact, their secret guards have been executing an extremely secret plan. Only Xiao Ming and him knew about this plan, and even officials such as Pang Yukun did not know about it.

In this plan, their work as secret guards was further expanded. They were not only responsible for espionage work, but also for bribery and infiltration officials. These officials included those from the imperial court, some from feudal lords with different surnames, and even targeted barbarians.

In addition to officials, their work also includes infiltrating the people. Just like what the King of Chu did in Yongzhou, their secret guards are also looking for contradictions in the Chu land and are ready to detonate them at any time.

“Your Highness, we are already starting this work, but this plan costs a lot of money, this money?” Wang Xuan chuckled and started to ask for money.

There is no way, now Qingzhou’s finances only have so little money. Whether it is Niu Ben, Pang Yukun or Chen Wenlong, they are all staring eagerly at the treasury’s accounts. If he does not open his mouth for the secret guard, this work will not be carried out.

Xiao Ming’s face turned green, and he cursed with a smile: “They are all a bunch of vampires. You really want me to suck you dry.”

“Your Highness, I am helpless. These officials have big appetites. If you don’t feed them well, Yes, they won’t be obedient,” Wang Xuan said with a bitter smile.

“Okay, okay.” Xiao Ming spread his hands, “I will talk to Pang Yukun about this, but you have to report the required expenses in detail. This money cannot be given randomly.”

“Yes.”

Wang Xuan He smiled. Unlike the army and government officials who could ask for money openly, their secret guards could only go through Xiao Ming. Now that he had received Xiao Ming’s permission, he resigned and left the main hall.

With a sigh, Xiao Ming frowned. Qingzhou's development now requires money everywhere. It seems that he has to speed up the production of more goods and open up maritime trade routes, otherwise sooner or later he will have a fiscal deficit.

While he was thinking about the money, Zi Yuan came over and asked him to come over for dinner. Because there were guests this time, Fei Yue'er chose to avoid it.

Naturally, Xiao Ming had bad intentions when he left Li Wei to eat this time.

Li Wei was in charge of the artillery purchase negotiations this time, and what he said when he returned was of course crucial, so Xiao Ming wanted to test Li Wei, find his flaws, and buy him off.

Since there were only two people eating, Ziyuan arranged the food in the pavilion of the palace, so that they could enjoy the scenery of the palace while eating.

After raising his glass and taking a sip of wine, Xiao Ming observed Li Wei. Although his clothes were not bad, they were a bit shabby.

The pursuit of scholars in this era is actually very simple, nothing more than a wealth of wealth, a wife in the clouds, and a successful career.

Aster glanced at Aster, who understood and immediately turned around and left. After a while, two singers from the royal palace came and sat on both sides of Li Wei, their songs were charming and unparalleled.

Li Wei was a little cautious when he saw this, but he also understood that this was just the way a vassal king would treat guests, so he had to reluctantly entertain, but he was very polite.

“Not lewd.” This was Xiao Ming’s conclusion.

He didn’t just look at the surface, Li Wei’s eyes were also very clear and showed no lustful or evil look.

Xiao Ming smiled and said: “Envoy Li, for this business, I hope that the envoy will go back and have a good word with the King of Chu, and send more craftsmen and merchant ships. If the envoy can ask the King of Chu to send more, I am willing to give the extra part to him.” How about giving a portion of the profits to the envoy?” Li Wei knew that Xiao Ming must have impure motives for keeping him as a guest. He said, “Your Highness, Ding is Ding Mao and I am afraid that I can’t make the King of

Chu

change his mind.”

Ming was a little surprised. Li Wei was neither greedy nor lewd. This was really difficult to handle. He naturally knew that Li Wei’s words were just an excuse.

Living in modern times, he naturally knows that although the ambassador is under domestic orders, the ambassador is very maneuverable in the other country. Li Wei is responsible for the artillery procurement and may be stationed in Qingzhou in the next few years to supervise this matter. There are many things that can be said to be tricky.

After pondering for a while, Xiao Ming said, "You speak softly. Does it mean that the envoy's official position in Chu is very low?"

"This..." Li Wei's eyes suddenly flickered, seeming a little annoyed.

Xiao Ming immediately caught Li Wei's change. It must be said that the King of Chu was very shrewd. He probably saw that Li Wei was not greedy for money or sex, so he allowed him to visit.

But what he didn't estimate was that Li Wei was always dissatisfied with his official career.

"Hey, the envoy looks like he is fifty, what a pity." Xiao Ming deliberately provoked Li Wei. He now wanted to open a breakthrough in King Chu's fiefdom.

Li Wei's face became more and more ugly. He was also a famous talent in Chu land back then. For decades, he was just a small guest in the Prince of Chu's palace, and he always had hidden dissatisfaction in his heart.

But he concealed it very well, and King Chu didn't notice anything strange.

“Both the senior officials and the junior officials are all working for the King of Chu, so there is no pity.” Li Wei said still cautiously.

“The envoy’s integrity is admirable. If the officials in the imperial court are as generous as the envoy, why worry about the imperial court’s Honglu Temple having no successor.”

“The imperial court?” Li Wei looked moved.

Chapter 420 Value for money

Li Wei’s hand holding the wine glass froze in front of him, and the word “court” moved him a little.

Chang’an is at the feet of the Emperor of Chongqing. Being able to hold an official position in Chang’an is the lifelong ideal of many people in the officialdom.

“Yes, it’s the imperial court.” Xiao Ming’s words became more explicit, “Now the Minister of Honglu Temple will step down in three years, and now many officials are vying to get it. Although Honglu Temple is not a lucrative position, , but he is also a fourth-rank official.”

Li Wei struggled for a moment, and suddenly said: “But what does this have to do with me? I may stop here in my life.”

“Not necessarily, if the envoy is willing, I will. With the king’s current status, it is no problem to recommend someone to the emperor as the minister of Honglu Temple, right? If the envoy is willing to work for me, I will guarantee that the envoy can be appointed as the minister of Honglu Temple in three years.”

Xiao Ming said. To put it bluntly, Li Wei is obviously a person who attaches great importance to his official position. There is a huge difference between a Biejia under the command of the King of Wei and a fourth-rank official in the imperial court.

Moreover, if the recruitment failed, Xiao Ming would not suffer any losses. At most, he would not be able to take advantage of King Chu.

Li Wei fell into deep thought. His father was once a ninth-rank official in the imperial court. His last wish before his death was that he would one day become a highly respected minister, but there was obviously no hope under the command of the King of Chu.

As King Qi said, I am getting older and older, and if I wait any longer, I can only go home and farm.

And once he obtained the official position of Minister of Honglu Temple, he could enter the court to discuss affairs. What an honor it was. He said: "Your Highness means what he said."

"Seriously."

Xiao Ming smiled, just as he once said The same as before, betrayal did not happen just because there was not enough benefit. People live selfishly, and few people can completely abandon temptation.

Li Wei continued: "It is empty talk, but please make a written statement. If Your Highness regrets it in the future, even if I die, I will let the people with lofty ideals in Dayu know that Your Highness is a person who does not keep his word."

After hearing this, Xiao Mingda With a smile, he said: "How difficult is this."

After that, he asked Ziyuan to prepare pen, ink, paper and inkstone to write down his promise. Then he said to Li Wei: "Since it is a promise, two people need to sign it."

Xiao Ming wrote his name and handed the pen to Li Wei.

Reaching out to take the brush, Li Wei held the pen and stayed on the writing for a long time, because he understood that once he wrote his name, he would have to listen to King Qi's orders in the future.

If he doesn't obey, King Qi can also use this evidence to ruin his reputation.

But the humiliation of being sent to Qingzhou and the depression of these years finally made him make up his mind and write his name on the paper.

"His Highness will give you orders in the future, and I will do my best." After signing, Li Wei stood up and saluted.

Xiao Ming waved his hand and asked Li Wei to sit down. This was the first time that Xiao Ming tried to win over a minister. Fortunately, he did not expect to succeed. Now he finally understood why the ministers in the court had chosen different vassal kings.

These vassal kings with different surnames have been operating in Dayu for such a long time, so naturally they are better than him at wooing important court officials.

“Messenger, don’t be nervous. I will not let you do dangerous things. I just need the envoy to inform me of the information about Chu Land from time to time. At the same time, if the King of Chu has any tricks in this transaction, please let the envoy know. “

Having already signed, Li Wei was also very conscious. He said to Xiao Ming: “Xia Guan is only serving as a Lin’an farewell driver in the Prince of Chu’s Mansion. The title of this farewell driver seems to be quite big, but in fact, it is just recording daily affairs for the Lin’an governor. , but because he is like this, he knows something about some secret things.”

Xiao Ming raised his glass and drank, waiting for Li Wei’s next words.

“Now the King of Chu’s army has a total of 15,000 musketeers and more than 3,000 merchant ships. These more than 3,000 ships are large merchant ships, excluding medium-sized merchant ships and small merchant ships. If you add the two together, the King of Chu has enough Eight thousand merchant ships. This time the King of Chu and His Highness purchased artillery. They did not want to give large merchant ships to His Highness. They just wanted to use medium-sized merchant ships and small merchant ships to exchange artillery with His Highness. At the same time, there were a total of thirty shipyards under the King of Chu, but this time The King of Chu has no intention of handing over the real core craftsmen to His Highness, but just handing over ordinary craftsmen to His Highness...”

Li Wei told Xiao Ming everything he knew.

Before he went to Qingzhou as an envoy, the King of Chu told him many of the bottom lines of the negotiations. Naturally, he knew all the tricks involved, but the King of Chu would not have thought that Li Wei would tell the truth now.

Envoys in Dayu have always played a very miserable role. Envoys sent to the barbarians basically risked their lives, because the barbarians would be killed if they were unhappy.

At the same time, vassal kings would also send envoys to each other. If the envoys proposed things that made the other party unhappy, they would be humiliated even if they were not beheaded.

So when the King of Chu selected him as an envoy, he was already extremely disappointed with the King of Chu.

Xiao Ming nodded frequently. It was true that King Chu wanted to buy artillery, but it was also true that he wanted to pass off inferior artillery. If he had not bribed Li Wei today, he would probably let King Chu take advantage of the loophole again this time.

In addition to the intrigues in this trade, Li Wei also talked about the affairs of the King of Chu and the Cao family, and the situation of the transaction between the Dutch and the King of Chu.

Generally speaking, the Dutch now mainly buy porcelain, silk, tea and other items from the Chongqing Kingdom, while the King of Chu only buys matchlock guns from the Dutch.

Moreover, the matchlock guns were sold for five hundred taels each. A few days ago, the Dutch sold the mirror to the King of Chu at a high price, causing the King of Chu to suffer a lot of losses.

“The real reason for the Dutch’s dissatisfaction with the King of Chu this time is that the Dutch feel that they have suffered a loss in trade, because the purchase of porcelain, silk and tea has drained the Dutch’s money.” Li Wei concluded.

Xiao Ming nodded. In fact, the problem Li Wei mentioned was the trade deficit. Now the Dutch are obviously aware of this. Long-term trade has made the Chu land more and more wealthy, but the King of Chu rarely buys their goods.

Britain’s huge trade deficit with the Qing Dynasty made the British eventually import opium into the Qing Dynasty. It seems that now the Dutch are also going crazy because of this matter.

Xiao Ming is very satisfied with the information Li Wei told. He will continue to provide information in three years, and at the same time, he will continue to uncover the traps in this trade to prevent him from being fooled by the King of Chu.

After the meal, Xiao Ming sent Li Wei to Wei’s restaurant to rest, while he was planning how to get the King of Chu’s large merchant ships and high-quality shipbuilding craftsmen.

While he was thinking, a sudden “boom” of explosions came from the direction of Bowen College, which startled Xiao Ming.

In order to facilitate the teaching, Bowen College was only a few streets away from the palace. I don’t know what happened with such a huge explosion.