

DS
757.6
.K55
1839

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2011 with funding from
Brigham Young University

HAROLD B. LEE LIBRARY
BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY
PROVO, UTAH

751.03

K580

OPIUM CRISIS.

A LETTER

JAMES P. STURGEON

ADDRESSED TO

CHARLES ELLIOT, ESQ.,

CHIEF SUPERINTENDENT OF THE BRITISH TRADE
WITH CHINA.

BY

AN AMERICAN MERCHANT,

RESIDENT AT CANTON.

LONDON:

EDWARD SUTER, 19, CHEAPSIDE;
DUNCAN AND MALCOLM, PATERNOSTER ROW; AND
HATCHARD AND SON, PICCADILLY.

M DCCC XXXIX.

EDWARD SUTER,
PRINTER,
19, CHEAPSIDE, LONDON.

THE L...
BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY
HAROLD B. LEE LIBRARY
BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY
PROVO, UT PROVO, UTAH

TO

CHARLES ELLIOT ESQ.,

&c., &c.,

CHIEF SUPERINTENDENT OF THE BRITISH TRADE WITH
CHINA.

JAMES T. SMITH.

DEAR SIR,

THE very frank way in which you have often permitted and invited me to compare opinions with you on passing affairs, induces me to lay before you, in this form, my view of *the opium crisis*.

In doing this, I will not go back beyond the close of 1836, when I first had the pleasure to meet you in China. I had scarcely assumed the direction of my mercantile affairs (after an absence of nearly four years) when the position and prospects of the opium trade forced themselves upon me. Happily, the wise and Christian guardianship under which I first visited the East, when a mere boy, had supplied the place of unformed principle, and kept me aloof from the seductive traffic. Distance from the scene of the commerce—from the vortex of its gains, and an acquaint-

ance with the temperance movements of the West, had now given me clearer views of the subject. I proceeded to collect information, and to form conclusions concerning it. In doing this, I was much aided by the valuable documents, State papers, &c., first published in the "Chinese Repository" for 1837, and afterward collected with additional tables, under our own auspices, and for the especial use of your Government. With the great eras of the opium trade—its rise previous to any certain record; the increase of the growth in the hands of the servants of the East India Company; the assumption of it by the Company itself in 1773; the gradual augmentation of the supply under their forced cultivation; the prohibition of the import by the Chinese Government in 1800; the repeated interdiction of it under heightened penalties; the expulsion of the opium ships from Whampo in 1821; the consequent formation of the depôt at Lintin, &c., &c., I was already familiar. Having been early convinced, that *the effects of the drug were deleterious*—a fact denied or doubted by the importers, I was prepared to see the subject treated, as it was in the able memorials of 1836, with the seriousness due to a great State question. At the same time, having some acquaintance with Chinese character, and with the weakness of Pagan virtue, I did apprehend that the mere mooted question, Shall the drug be legalized? was a sign of its future decision; the first note, in fact, of a

great victory already won by appetite over conscience.

The Memorial of Heu-Nae-tsze, the first mover of the legalization, appeared to me particularly remarkable, as a complete abandonment of the old principles of paternal government. It instituted a direct comparison between the people and the silver of the empire—its men and its money; and openly sacrificed the former to the latter.

When this celebrated Memorial was laid before the Emperor, his reply (dated 12th June, 1836, received at Canton 2d July) was a simple reference of the subject to the high officers of Knang-tung, without a word in its favour. Notwithstanding this ominous silence, the provincial officers committed themselves to a full adoption of the principle of legalization. The news of this discussion, and the opinions thus expressed in favour of the drug, went abroad to the opium marts, exciting everywhere confident expectations that the measure would be speedily carried. A new stimulus was thus given to culture and speculation. But these hopes were soon to be disappointed. In October of the same year, within four months of the arrival of the first Memorial, there were received at Canton two further papers, submitted to the Emperor by high officers of State, wherein the plan of the legalizationists was utterly and ably reprobated. These statesmen reasserted the old Chinese doctrine, that the people are the

glory of the empire, and pronounced their sacrifice, the proposed abandonment of their lives and properties and virtues to foreign seduction—a dereliction of every national interest, and every patriotic duty.

It was no longer doubtful which of these sets of principles swayed the breast of the Emperor. By a decree, received at Canton before the close of October, the drug was declared “to have pervaded the country, with its baneful influence;” and the provincial officers were commanded “to apprehend the traitorous natives who sell the drug,” and all others concerned therein; and to report faithfully the measures necessary “in order to stop up the source of the evil.”

The interval of excited expectation between the first proposition to legalize, and the clear expression of the Imperial sentiments to the contrary, was less than four months, or from 2d July to 28th October. Yet, short as was this period, we are told by the able Minister Choo-tzun, that the effect in China was,—“crafty thieves and villains have on all hands begun to raise their heads:” and abroad, we know the cheer was sent up, “A few more doses of the drug, and all is ours! The opium trade for ever!”

Such were the developments of 1836, including, before its close, orders for the expulsion of the leading opium importers from China. These commands, it is well known, were never executed, though backed in 1837 by rescript from Peking;

the Cohong, on whom the execution devolved, forbearing to press the departure of the proscribed, with their opium vessels.

At this time, when affairs began to put on a threatening aspect in the great market of consumption, every stimulus was being applied to the growth and preparation of the drug in India.

The East India Company, whose manufacture had fluctuated between 3,000 and 5,000 chests through the first twenty-four years of Chinese interdiction (1800—1824), rose rapidly to 10,600 in 1833, and to near 17,000 in 1837!

The Malwa product went on with even greater rapidity—from 1,600 chests in 1821, to upwards of 20,000 in 1837! The total profit and revenue accruing to the East India Company on both descriptions, for that year, exceeded 12,000,000 rupees.

To this period we must still look back, as “the palmy and flourishing day” of the opium traffic. There appeared, at this time, no assignable limit to its increment; for the East India Company, flushed with the success of the fiscal measure, went on to extend the production in Bahar and Benares; while the free cultivators of Malwa, pushed its growth in that province with even greater energy. In the market of sale, the demand seemed to increase with the supply, “growing by what it feedeth on,” until the impoverishment of the empire, and the disruption of every tie of morality and order, were matters of

real apprehension. From a table, constructed by a foreign dealer and appended to the documents published by your order at this time, it appeared, that the number of smokers had multiplied nearly six times in the fifteen years between 1820 and 1835; nor was any reason then seen, why the use should not go on extending in the same dreadful progression.

To resume the narrative. The hopes which had been raised on the project of Heu-Nae-tsze, were rather diverted, than overthrown, on its rejection. It seemed, as if a compensation had been found, in subaltern connivance,* more valuable even than Imperial favour. The breaking up of the native communication between the Lintin depôt and the city (in May, 1837), was followed by the substitution of foreign bottoms, and so boldly and profitably were these employed, that the deliveries for July were 4,000 chests, and the opium fleet came to number twenty ships, and between thirty and forty smaller vessels. To such a height did the daring of the trade rise, in the course of 1837 and 1838, that the waters of the coast from Hainan to Chusan became its arena; the drug being delivered to the extent of several thousand chests at Whampo; ascending the river miles above the

* I say "subaltern," for all the respectable Chinese, with whom I converse, contradict the assertions of the opium importers, that the *highest* provincial officers are the connivers. If any one has *proofs* of such implication, let him produce them.

city ; and at last, finding its way into the foreign factories.

This enormous abuse of leniency, or even of connivance, could not continue on any other supposition, than that all faith was undermined, and social order about to give way, before the reign of demoralization.

On this point, I remember, that we more than once compared opinions, and I do you but justice, in recalling your declaration, made some months before it was realized, that we were on the eve of an explosion. "A crisis must come," had already been the language of the "Chinese Repository." Yet so little was this believed around us, that the opium-boats went about their nightly work, long after the issue of the edict commanding their seizure. The deliveries for July (1838) were 3,100 chests, and one of the papers of that month, after reporting the presentation of a further memorial at Court, and the issue of another decree, added, "We do not think this edict will have much influence on the opium trade, 'though the Chinese seem to think his Majesty in earnest.' "*

It was soon after your return to Canton on the business of His Britannic Majesty's ship Wellesley, that I felt constrained to assume a less silent part

* The Bombay Press, a few months before, had not only hazarded the opinion that the opium trade *would not* be done away ; but had predicted that "an insurrection would be the inevitable consequence, of the Chinese people being deprived of their favourite enjoyment, by any act of Government."

on the stage of the approaching crisis. I then took occasion to declare my conviction (in the Canton Paper of August 18) that "the opium question could sleep no more," and desirous not to stand alone in future efforts, I proposed, as a test of feeling, the following pledge, "We, the undersigned, believing that the opium trade with China is fraught with evils, commercial, political, social, and moral; that it gives just offence to the Government of this country; arrays the authorities and the people against the extension of our commerce and the liberty of our residence; and defers the hope of true Christian amelioration; do hereby declare that we will not take part in the purchase, transportation, or sale of the drug, either as principals or agents; and that (abstaining from all personal inquisition, imputation or censure) we will use our hearty exertions, to bring about the time when the trade in question shall cease." Following up this communication, I ventured to call a public meeting, to ascertain and exhibit the feelings of the community at large. "We do not know," was the reply of the press, to these invitations, "of any one permanently established here, who could possibly give the pledge recommended by Messrs. Olyphant and Co.," all being more or less interested in the drug. It is scarcely necessary to add, that the call for a public meeting failed. But still confiding in the cause, I then drew up a Memorial, the design of which was, to bring the principle of non-parti-

icipation in opium, to bear on the amelioration of the general trade with China. This Memorial was generally circulated and canvassed in October, but not a signature to it was obtained in the Residency. When it came to be presented to the senior Hong merchant, for transmission to the Governor, bearing only the name of its author, the cautious old man received it; but after some days, it was returned unopened; with the explanation, that the foreign residents had been consulted respecting its contents, and deemed it unfit for presentation. "How is it possible, Howqua," was my question, as the unfortunate Memorial was again deposited upon my table, "that this opium trade can go on at this rate, (the deliveries for the five months to September 1 had exceeded 10,000 chests,) and you keep silent; taking counsel with those who *are* its introducers, and refusing the petitions of those who *are not*; and no day of recoil come?"

In the month of September, many seizures took place, and a further check was put upon deliveries by a bloody collision between the officers and the native smugglers at Whampo. The trade revived again in October, and 2,256 chests were disposed of; but the numerous apprehensions of the next month, reduced the deliveries to 1,200, and excited serious fears of what was yet to come. Accounts of still more extensive seizures at the northward now arrived, and at length, the detec-

tion of a quantity of the drug, in the act of being carried into a foreign factory, December 3 (only six days after a strenuous remonstrance on the very point, from the Cohong) compelled that body to declare a general stoppage of trade. Business was already at a stand; one of the Hong merchants was gone to wear the Cangue at Whampo; the rest were busy devising a mode of ejection for the detected foreigner; when it pleased the Governor to try the effect of a public execution, of a native opium-dealer, before our own doors. A report of the attempt of the resistance made to it, by the residents; their accidental collision with the mob; and their exposure to the violence of the populace for some hours; reached you at Whampo, and on the same evening (December 12) you were again at Canton. The implicated individual was now constrained to retire from the city, and it being evident, that the restoration of the trade depended on the withdrawal of the smuggling boats, you lent your authority, to engage their departure beyond the Boque. In these efforts you were seconded by the Chamber of Commerce, who took under their care, the provision of a line of passage-boats, to ply under licence on the river. Had my own wishes been consulted, that body would have gone on to express itself deeply impressed with the sense of approaching danger, and to prepare men's minds for it; but my resolutions to that effect, were laid

aside without a hearing. The alarms of the 12th were gradually forgotten, and trade resumed its course on the 1st January.

Meantime, two important documents had been laid before the community, both under date of the 16th December. The former, addressed by the Governor to the Chamber of Commerce, in reply to their remonstrance against the attempted execution of the 12th, produced, as well it might, a deep impression on the residents. It declared, that "the penalty of death to which Ho-ban-kin had subjected himself, was the result of the pernicious introduction of opium into Canton by depraved foreigners." Hence the command that "the criminal should be led out to the ground *adjoining the foreign residences and there be executed.*" "It was designed to strike observation, to arouse reflection, that the depraved portion of the foreign community might be prevented from pursuing their evil courses, &c." For, it is added, "those foreigners, though born and brought up beyond the pale of civilization, *have yet human hearts.* How shall they not be impressed with awe and dread and self-conviction."

This remarkable reply at once placed the fearful act in its right aspect. It was not a disrespect to flags—a public insult—it had no national bearing whatever. It was a holding up before the eyes of the introducers of opium, one of the miserable partners of their trade, one of the wretched

victims of their seductions. Awful as was the mode of appeal, it was yet a most moving appeal, to what its director knew that barbarism could not extinguish—to human sympathies. It was while reading this humiliating paper, that I resolved to interfere no more with the threatened executions. It was not for me ; it was not for my nation ; to remonstrate. It was for the opium-importer to look on, until his heart sickened, and his hands refused to continue the deadly importations. My sorrow should go with him, if he were called to attend again on the scene of agony, but it should be the grief of indignation. My pity, my appeal for mercy, I would reserve for the mangled and dying victim.

The second of these papers was, a proclamation to the people of Canton, from the Governor and Lieut.-Governor, warning them of the severe regulations about to be issued, for the prevention of opium-smoking. It informed them that “the high officers of all the provinces had been commanded to consult together on the subject of the drug, and to lay the results of their deliberations before the Emperor.” They had done so, and “in the multitude of these Memorials, though there were small discrepancies of opinion,” yet “they differed only in degrees of severity, none advocating lenient measures.” They go on to warn the people, that “in a few days, a new and severe law will be put in force ;” conjure them by every precious interest to prepare an escape from

its penalties ; and appealing from the love of life itself, to the higher sentiments of patriotic attachment, they entreat “ the sons of China no longer to take the substance of their native land, and give it to foreigners.”

Convinced by the urgency of these appeals, that sterner measures were at hand, I again sought (January 5th), and again ineffectually, to turn the minds of the residents toward the necessity of drawing a line between the licit trade and the illicit. And as it was held, that arrangements could not be made *at once*, to put a period to the opium trade, I proposed that the whole control of that branch should be transferred to parties no longer connected with Canton, but resident at Macao, and on board the shipping. These well-meant warnings disregarded ; denied a hearing in the Consoo-house, in the Chamber of Commerce, at the factories ; I resorted to my only remaining expedient, a Memorial to Congress.

Before the close of January, it was reported in the public prints, that a new agency was to be called in, to suppress the opium-traffic—an IMPERIAL COMMISSIONER—and that the individual to fill this high office, had already been selected. The foreign community were not long left to collect the facts of this appointment from rumour. The first report was soon followed by a formal announcement of the event, in a proclamation from the Governor ; a paper *now* seen to be full of meaning. It spoke of the long duration of foreign intercourse ;

charged the hurtful traffic in opium on the lust of gain ; taunted the residents with their favourite epithet, “ honourable men ; ” * and declared that the indignation of the Emperor was now aroused, his line taken, and his will waiting only to be carried into execution. Pursuing the same strain of mingled statement, warning, entreaty, and invective, it told of the preparations making to uproot the traffic ; adverted to the apprehensions and the executions that had lately taken place ; and asked, if while the people of the country are thus severely visited, the villainy of the foreigner can escape an even-handed justice. “ Most earnestly do we command you,” said the authors of the proclamation, after a long preamble, “ to turn from your vile courses, AND SEND BACK TO ITS COUNTRY EVERY ONE OF THE RECEIVING SHIPS NOW anchored in the outside waters.” To enforce this command, the proclamation notifies the appointment of the Commissioner ; his hourly expected arrival ; his object—to eradicate the vice of opium-smoking ; and closes with earnest, reiterated

* This taunt is to be explained by reference to the low place assigned to honour and truth by the Chinese, and the equal degradation the sacred duty of benevolence has suffered, in our conventional morality. That men who are daily tempting multitudes to ruin, and so placing themselves on a level with the criminal under the cord or the axe, should boast of honour and good faith ; stumbles these Pagan officers. Is it free from inconsistency ? Can the edge of these sarcasms be blunted, but by the presentation of a Christian symmetry of character ?

entreaties, that the foreigners would take the counsels offered, turn to the path of safety, and *thus escape far more serious alternatives.*

This language, coming from the highest officers of the province, *did* make some impression. Still along with admissions of an altered state of things, we find the leading press commenting—"It is impossible to say how far the local Government may be in earnest in its threats, and indeed, if it be so, whether it can put in execution its measures." Yet the same paper contained the Imperial edict, appointing the Commissioner; conferring on him ample powers; requiring from him the fullest co-operation from the local officers; and closing with the animated exhortation—"Let the same desire (to free the people of the inner land from their dire calamity) O, my servants, which fills the breast of your Emperor, incite and urge you on!"

In any other place, and under any other circumstances than those of blinding interest, appeals like these would have carried conviction to every mind. Even had all the local extravagancies of the river smuggling, and the bolder resort to northern harbours been forgotten, or never existed, it should have been remembered, that foreign opium had carried demoralisation into the heart of the land, corruption into the public offices, and disgrace into the bosom of the Imperial family. Then this indignant cry from rulers and people would not have passed by as the idle wind, that

one regardeth not. The memorialists of 1836 had acknowledged that the retainers of Government were the largest users of the drug. When, therefore, these very classes became the persecutors of the traffic, the common sense of its conductors should have told them,—some higher principle was at work ; some moral energy, or State necessity ; something stronger at all events than the unnatural taste. They lost the benefit of the warning ; they slumbered on ; because, “the drug is a harmless luxury,” was their creed. Denying the cause of all this movement—the injurious effects of opium—they were bound, in all philosophy as well as interest, to deny the effect also. They overlooked the warnings of the province and the court, and waited for *the arrival* of the Commissioner, to afford a further diagnosis.

The long-expected officer still delayed—*as if on purpose for the local cautions to take effect and the opium ships to disappear*—when the execution of February 27 was carried into effect on the factory square. The opposition of the moment was ineffectual ; the act was accomplished ; and the hauling down the consular flags was resorted to, as the only expression of disgust in the foreigner’s power. In this act, for the reasons already stated, I did not concur. And beside those reasons, I feared the local officers would infer a consular resistance to the *measures for suppressing the use of the drug*, if indeed the absence of the flags were noticed at all.

The winter of 1837—38 was now over, and early in March, we find the press reluctantly admitting, that “Canton *must* cease to be the centre of the opium trade.” Yet, while coming to this conclusion, and also to a sense of the heavy losses which must attend the suppression of the import, the same organ could exclaim: “What is to be done with the 15,000 chests of the drug which will be accumulated within the Chinese waters within a few days? Must its owners sit down quietly under so enormous a loss, without a hope of redress? Ought they not rather *to insist on the Chinese taking off this stock*, though they may not allow of any importations hereafter?” The effrontery of this language might have been called unparalleled, had not another of the prints contended, some time before, (while condemning your measures for the exclusion of the river boats,) that there had already grown up in their favour, “a prescriptive right of smuggling,” on a connivance of a few months. To this, and much other language of like tone and import, the Commissioner was making ready a decisive answer. On the 10th March, he arrived; and on the eve of his appearance, the last of the small craft, yielded to your instances, backed by the Chamber of Commerce, and reluctantly left the river.

Bringing with him a high character for ability and probity, invested with powers, such as have only two or three times before, been conferred on a subject since the accession of the Tatsing

dynasty, the Imperial Commissioner *Lin*, Governor of Hooquang, &c., &c., entered the provincial city. We heard but little of him during the first week of his stay, except that his inquiries of the Hong merchants and others were close and searching, and that he often surprised them all, by the variety and minuteness of his information. A story was current at this time, respecting the audience at which the Commissioner received his appointment, which may perhaps be worth repeating. It was said that the Emperor, on calling to him his faithful servant *Lin*, told him of the flourishing state of the Empire, when he received it, and declared with tears, he could not meet his august father, and grandfather after death, unless the vice of opium-smoking were eradicated.

On the 18th, the result of all these inquiries was made known to us, in two edicts of remarkable energy. The first was addressed to the foreign residents. It reverted, in the opening, to the profitable commerce they had enjoyed for so long a period; professed a full knowledge of their past connexion with illicit traffic; but declined to enter on any retroactive measures. The preamble passed, the Commissioner proceeded to declare all the foreign opium still lying within the Chinese waters, forfeited to Government, assigning three days for the submission of its holders, and for the receipt of their pledges, that they would cease to introduce it into the country. Disobedience to these commands, was threatened with stoppage of

trade, personal restraint, and even severer penalties, while compliance was encouraged by promise of pardon, and by the hope of further Imperial favours.

The second of these edicts addressed the Hong merchants in a tone of bitter upbraiding. Their creation, their existence, as a monopoly, was declared to be for the express prevention of illicit intercourse. How they had answered the end of their being, was severely inferred from their practice ; especially in giving regular bonds for the shipping coming within the Bogue, while perfectly aware that opium had been discharged from them, at the outside depot. These and other grave charges were summed up with commands, making them responsible for the submission of the foreigners, and failing this, menacing one or more of their number with exemplary punishment.

These edicts fell like a thunderbolt on the whole trading community. And yet some doubted, if compliance was necessary ; while more than one leading authority pronounced the whole demand, a mere *ruse*—the Commissioner's trick to make money. As to delivering the opium without the Bogue, it was declared wholly impossible. " Had the Commissioner come down with any reasonable proposition, had he even ordered all the ships back to India," said one and another, " we would have yielded ; but as to giving up the property of our constituents to be burned, it is absurd, impracticable." Unhappily, the last, energetic

warning, TO SEND AWAY THE OPIUM SHIPS, had been given six weeks before ; given, but not taken.

Meanwhile the three days were fast passing by, and it became plain that the resistance of the foreigners was filling the Cohong with intense anxiety. Feeling for them, as the weak but innocent sureties for the real offenders, and having been informed by them, that my name had been given in to the Commissioner as that of a resident always averse to the opium traffic ; I sought to be permitted to interpose by a Memorial in their favour. Believing, from the first, the sincerity of the official measures, (because I believed their cause, the ravages of the drug,) and aware the residents had no power to resist them, I was prepared to sacrifice the future traffic, if my neighbours and the Cohong could be saved from ruin. My conviction was, that the only chance of accommodation lay, in an immediate compliance *in forma* ; annexing stipulations which would substantially secure the interests in peril. I therefore suggested that the whole drug should be delivered up to the Commissioner ; he acting in concert with you, and accepting your guarantee to reconvey the opium to the places of its origin, and to return to him landing certificates from the East India Company, or other high authority. To commend this mode of accommodation, I stated the advantages to be derived to China, from the possession of the pledges of great Western powers, not to grow opium for her market, or clear it for her

harbours. It is scarcely necessary to add, that these wishes were not acceded to, and the disastrous alternative, became the reality.

The three days passed ; a pledge to abstain from the traffic, brought forward by a portion of the residents, in order to stave off the other demands, was overruled ; and a verbal message to the Cohong, conveying no idea but that of delay, was all that reached the Commissioner. Irritated by this message, he threatened the immediate execution of the bearers. Alarmed in their turn, they hurried back to the merchants, and begged for opium—opium. *Some* credit was now given to their distress, their possible danger, but it was proper to do the thing in a mercantile way—to buy them off as cheaply as possible. A compromise was struck between generosity, pity, and calculation. A thousand and thirty-six chests were subscribed, as a bait to the Cerberus—as a Cohong ransom.

It is needless to add, that the poor tender was rejected. The wise were caught in their own craftiness. They could give opium then. It was not so absurd, so impracticable. ALL, if you please, then. This was the practical language of the apparent change in the Commissioner's measures, when turning from the native to the foreign surety, he slackened his grasp on the Cohong, and took a firmer hold on the residents. Releasing, in a measure, the already degraded senior of the former body, he turned to the leading opium

agent, and required his appearance within the city. Escape had been guarded against by the measures of the previous day (the detention of ships, chops, &c.), and additional guards were now posted. The Sabbath intervened (December 24); and in deference to the foreigners' "worship day," proceedings were suspended. Early in the evening your arrival was announced; and acting on the spur of the occasion, you proceeded immediately to the house of Mr. D. * * * and removed him to your own roof, under your own protection. The departure of this gentleman from his own premises, while the truce was still pending, had no sooner taken place, than the idea of an escape spread through the native guards, officers, &c. It was hastily communicated to their superiors, and the reply came back to us, in the cry of "Kwan-chap," "Kwan-chap," ringing through the neighbourhood. The avenues to our residences were shut up; our native servants were ordered away; and a strong land and water guard enclosed us. I then read, for the first time, your official notice of March 23, issued at Macao, evidently under erroneous apprehensions. It was now backed by a further communication, in conformity with which, you proceeded to ask passports for your countrymen, leaving it to them to continue at their own risk within the empire. This call lying unanswered, you issued a farther notice (6 A.M. 27th), declaring your duress, and requiring all the British owned opium within

the Chinese waters to be surrendered to you before the close of the day, "for His Majesty's service," holding yourself and the British Government responsible for it, in order that it might be delivered up to the Chinese Government. Such was the turn given by you to the OPIUM CRISIS; nine hours after a leading opium holder had declared to me his full belief that the Commissioner was a rogue, and his whole demand a mere scheme to extort money!

In obedience to your order, 20,283 chests of the drug were transferred; the ships were placed under your direction; their lading tendered to the Commissioner. Along with your act of surrender, there went in to his Excellency a solemn pledge on the part of the community, that they would traffic no longer in opium. Thus within about seven months of the unanimous rejection of a proposed *voluntary* pledge; the residents were brought to an equally unanimous signature of a *forced* one. A further singularity was, that this act of self-renunciation should have been dated the very day (25th March) fixed on by the London Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, for the award of my partner's prize of 100*l.* for "the best essay on the opium trade, showing its *effects on the INTERESTS of those connected therewith, and the course they ought to pursue*, in regard to it." The mention of this coincidence will recall to your recollection the conversation we had on the subject the same evening, in the verandah of the

British factory, and in the course of which you remarked, that the writer of the pledge was certainly the deserving candidate.

It is due to myself to add here, that after waiting beyond the prescribed time for a general compliance with the official demand, I sent in to the Commissioner my individual assurance of entire freedom from the traffic, and received in reply a full exoneration. This public testimony, however valuable on various considerations, did not bring with it the slightest immunity from restraint, much less any mark of favour.

We had now passed the critical point of the opium crisis. Some days were still lost, in references to the consuls of other powers, respecting opium* not British owned, and in negotiations about the time, place, and mode of delivery, &c., &c. Your circular of April 3d at length announced an arrangement, and immediate steps were taken to transfer the drug; the Commissioner cheering you with the memorandum, "the earlier the delivery, the earlier the restoration of intercourse." At the same time, his gradual withdrawal of restrictions, and his tariff of penalties, in case of any breach of faith, bore evidence, that he was far from according the same

* In fact, there *was* no other. But this was accident. Other nations have shared in the trade. From the records kept at Canton, it appears, that the quantity imported under the American flag since 1800, is about 10,000 chests.

“full sincerity,” for which he himself claimed credit. The decree of March 17th condemns the confiscated opium *to be burned*. The drug, prepared to light ten thousand pipes in the secret places of vicious indulgence, is to waste its poisonous “sweetness on the desert air.” Instead of kindling the fires of lust and phrenzy in the brothels and tchartchees of a hundred voluptuous cities; it is to turn to a heap of harmless ashes, on the heath, in open day. So, at least, I believe. I am aware that you, and its surrenderers generally, ridicule my simple idea. I adhere to it, however, because the Chinese have now given us some reason to think them sincere. Moreover, without vouching for the Commissioner’s truth, a delicate thing where a Chinese is concerned, I can fancy he has his eye on a prize of greater value than money can buy. The highest honours, the richest emoluments, the favour of his master, and the profound gratitude of his countrymen, * are his, if he be not tempted from the right way. Whether he stand or fall, let it be remembered that the remainder of this letter proceeds on the expectation that the opium will,

* A confidential servant of mine is just returned from the country. I ask him, “What all man think? He glad opium finish?” “All good man glad. *All that woman, number one glad,*” is his reply. Yes, the tears of many a wife and mother will now be dried.

at such time and place as may be chosen, be destroyed. The very principle of the war upon the traffic forbids that it be converted to any purpose of profit, use, or sale. This MS. must, however, be closed before the ceremony will be performed. In place of a description, we can only assist our friends at a distance, to a sketch from the recollections of boyish days. Let us call up together the classic imagery of a well-remembered page. Imagine the “*ingentem pyram, pinguem tædis et robore secto,*” and upon it the “*velamina nota,*” the “*cuncta monumenta,*” the “*exuriasque omnes*” of the accursed trade. The mourners, “*triste ministerium,*” stand around. We recognise none, for “*. . . subjectas more parentum,*” *aversi tenuere faces . . .*

The “*novissima verba*” are heard—“*ceu saxa morantur, cum rapidos amnes,*”—as the flame ascends.

“*Conditur in tenebras altum caligine cœlum.*” “*Spargitur et tellus lachrymis,*” as they gaze; “*spectant, neque avelli possunt.*” They mutter “*magnum reginæ nomen,*” as the “*semusta busta*” slowly consume.

“*Nec numero, nec honore, cremant.*” Fancy shifts the scene; we stand “*in tectis prædivitis urbis * vel * vel *.*” “*Hic matres, miseræque nurus; hic chara sororum pectora mærentum.*” The pageant melts away in tears. The heath is again before us—once bare, now luxuriantly green.

“ You idle son of Han, how name you this spot—
—that hill ? ”

“ Afooyung-shan. ” *

“ Ah ! the place of the funeral pile. ”

“ Afooyung-shan, ” the echo repeats, and a voice adds, “ . . æternumque tenet per sæcula nomen. ”

The events I have thus far been engaged in detailing, mark a crisis long to be remembered. When the excitement of the moment is passed from our minds, it will only disclose the more clearly, that a lasting, an indelible impression has been made on our community. The blow which has just been struck here, too, will fall again with still heavier force on British India. It will be renewed in fainter, but yet painful shocks, in Europe, and its farthest vibrations will reach even to other countries. So important a crisis cannot pass unstudied. It will be looked into for instruction, for amusement, for novelty ; and when curiosity has tired of the subject, Parliaments will take it up, to determine what public measures should be based upon it. Allow me to presume on this common interest, and to lay before you, with all frankness, a disinterested opinion (not on the whole theme, but) on two or three points of paramount importance.

I confine myself within these limits, because there is an end *now* of my old business—of dis-

* Scilicet—Afooyung—*Papaver* (Arabic, Ufyoon—Hindoo, Ufeem—Spanish, Anfion), et Shan-collis.

suading from the traffic in opium. I will not go into any investigation of the joint agency of the East India Company and the Indian merchants, in bringing on the crisis ; nor into any defence of the Chinese course ; nor into any speculations concerning either party's future conduct. My letter being addressed to you, as Superintendent of British trade, I will do no more than state why I have not concurred in your management of the opium affairs, and how far I desire (or deprecate) the future interference of your Government.

On the first point, I premise, that the prohibitions of the Chinese law (against opium) are of nearly forty years' standing ; and their existence, their steadily increasing severity, and the exposure of foreigners to their penalties, have been fully known to Western statesmen. It is the policy of Western nations to vindicate, and let each other vindicate, their own laws. Their public representatives in China were not bound (perhaps would not have been permitted) to try and punish fiscal offences. But duty and policy concurred to make it incumbent on them, to draw and preserve a clear line of distinction between private violations of law, and the *flag* under which they were committed. Western Governments could not refuse authority to do this ; indeed the law and standing instructions of the consular office supply them. Thus, the " Lex Mercatoria " says (of the British Consul) " He must take special notice of all prohibitions, so that he may admonish all British sub-

jects against carrying on an illicit commerce," and "it is his duty to attend *diligently* to *this* part of his office, in order to prevent smuggling, and its consequent hazards."

The same spirit pervades the "general instructions." "It is his principal duty," say they, "to protect the *lawful* trade and trading interests of Great Britain, and while supporting the same, he will caution all British subjects against carrying on an illicit commerce; and he will not fail to give this department immediate notice, of any attempt to contravene the laws of either nation." Equally express are the consular instructions of the United States of America; by the forty-fifth article of which, "the Consuls are required, on the one hand, to protect their countrymen when injured or oppressed; and, on the other, firmly to refuse them support, when wilfully guilty of any infraction of the laws, particularly in any attempt to defraud the revenue, *and giving aid to the proper officers, in preventing such practices*, which though they may prove a pecuniary benefit to the individuals concerned, leave a stain on the national character." It is not necessary to multiply specimens of the same tenour; and in giving these extracts, we admit the full weight of the argument, "China refuses all compacts with us, and we owe no obligations to her." We strip these regulations of everything they derive from compact or consent of parties, and leave them, the naked exponents of what is due, by every community, to its own in-

terest and its own honour. Even thus sifted and reduced, they convey one clear principle, that policy and duty require the national flag to be borne, in every part of the world, *above* implication in individual irregularities. These may, and do, and will go on, but not under *its* cover.*

Let us apply this principle to the course of the British representative, regarding the illicit introduction of opium into China. (I pass by my own country, because, the system to which the American Consul belongs, is so hollow, so feeble, so worthless, as really not to merit the name of a national establishment.)

In doing this, I will not go back to the period when the East India Company enjoyed its monopoly of this trade, and when its own servants—the servants of the same masters—were employed in growing the drug in one place, and in disowning it in another. I will keep within the nearest possible range; taking examples from your own course only; and that *since* the decision of the Court of Peking *against* the legalization, became manifest.

* It is no argument, that these things are now going on extensively in China. So far as *we* all are culpable, *we*, and *not our flag*, should suffer. *A definition of our duty* is the boon we now want here, not IMPUNITY. The obscurity of Chinese law on many points is a valid plea; but no such obscurity existed with respect to the article—opium. Since the commencement of the present century, it has been steadily, clearly, and strictly prohibited, not by local, but by Imperial authority.

That decision was first made known to us, along with an order requiring certain British subjects to leave China, on account of their extensive and notorious connexion with the trade in opium. The order was first issued by the Provincial Governor, on an Imperial rescript of inquiry, and was dated 23d November. Yet I find, by reference to your despatch to Lord Palmerston, of the 7th February following (1837), that “you were prepared,” at that time, “to offer every opposition” to the execution of the decree of expulsion, although aware, “that the step was taken with a view to put a stop to the traffic in opium.” Whether the subsequent shrinking of the authorities from the execution of their order, even when backed by an Imperial sanction, had any connexion with your prepared resistance, I have not the means to determine. I only remember hearing you say some time later, that you had warned the local Government to beware how they laid hands on any subject of his Majesty. The long and flagrant course of river smuggling, which marked the years 1837 and 1838, extending to almost every passage in the waters of Canton, and connecting with equally bold violations of Chinese harbours to the northward; passed, so far as I know, without any explanations, on your part (except the caution just mentioned), down to the suspension of trade in December. Yet the character of the system was the same throughout those years, as afterward; when (December 22) you declared it to be

“intensely mischievous to every branch of the trade; rapidly staining the British character with deep disgrace; and exposing the peaceful maintenance of intercourse with China, to imminent jeopardy.”

For your interposition, *after* those irregularities had stopped all exchanges, I give you all credit and honour. Standing as you then did, in direct opposition to the interests of influential residents, and assailed by a portion of the public press; your firm resolve, that the river smuggling should cease, was worthy of the flag intrusted to you. What gave (and still gives) me dissatisfaction, was, the extreme lateness of the interposition, and its restriction to the smuggling *within* the river. *Too late, too late*, seemed at the time, to be written on your official acts; while the natural inference from the distinction made by you, between *inside* and *outside* smuggling, was, that the views of his Majesty's Government were severe toward the one mode, and protective of the other. The press of the day, I remember, took up this piece of geographical casuistry. One paper remarked “Capt. Elliot has stated to the Viceroy, that his Government disapproves of the smuggling of opium *on the river*. Is he prepared to inform the Chinese Government that the same are his Majesty's sentiments with regard to the Lintin trade?” (The friends of this paper were opposed to the former, but deeply engaged in the latter.) “*We should think not*. That the Viceroy will shortly require

him to order those ships away, we have little doubt, and what will then be Captain Elliot's answer?" Then came the estimate of the value of your presence, calculated to the meridian of this probability, "Much better had it been, if Captain Elliot had been at Macao, *doing nothing*, and better probably also for the British community." In this conclusion, the river smugglers were of course unanimous. They saw, too, that the inside and outside deliveries, stood in fact on the same footing; the former only being a little less gentlemanly, and a little more hazardous; and resented your dividing *line*, as drawn on purpose to cut off *their* profits.

I need not repeat, that I too thought the distinction groundless. You will remember that I had long before this ventured to say, in frank conversation, that, were I in your place, I should not hesitate a moment, to lay before the Chinese authorities, an exposition of our own fiscal doctrine and practice. So convinced, indeed, had I long been of the necessity of such explanations, that I had a year before, endeavoured, by enlisting public opinion, to engage my own Government to declare itself. I make these references, not to establish a title to superiority, but to prove that no new moral sense, or extraordinary prescience, were needed at this time, to guide a public man in the discharge of the consular duty.

Another period of official silence followed, unbroken, I believe, on your part, while the checked

deliveries of the drug, and the reports of each passing day confirmed the apprehension, that the Imperial Government was maturing its last measures for the suppression of the traffic. Even at the close of January (1839), when the provincial officers were spending paper and pathos in vain persuasions, TO SEND AWAY THE OPIUM SHIPS, I am not aware that you manifested any concern for this large amount of British property.— The Chinese were now silent in their turn: they were not believed: they gave over warning: another strain was now to be adopted.

The Commissioner came; and by a decree under the famous seal that confers Imperial power on its keeper; the seal that Changling carried to the re-conquest of Turkestan; he confiscated the contraband opium within the Chinese waters.* His proclamation reached you at Macao, along with vague reports of naval preparations, &c., &c. It was under these excited feelings, that you issued your two circulars of 22d and 23d March, which threw your policy into still deeper embarrassment. Let us look for a moment at these documents; comparing them first with your prior notice of December 18th; and second, with the fiscal acts and practice of your own Government.

In the first place, then, you (December 18th)

* The opium ships all lie within the *nearest* limit prescribed in the clauses of the Act 3 and 4 Will. IV.

warned the British owners of small craft engaged in the opium traffic *within* the Bogue, that “Her Majesty’s Government will in no way interpose, if the Chinese Government shall think fit to seize and confiscate the same:” whereas, on the issue of the decree of March 17th, confiscating the *materiel* of the same traffic *without* the Bogue, you charged the several commanders named in your notice, with “the duty of protecting” the same property. Again, in the former notice you declared, that “the forcible resisting of the Chinese officers in the duty of searching and seizing, *is a lawless act*; liable to the penalties of forcible resistance opposed to officers of our own Government:” while in the latter, you directed “*all* ships of her Majesty’s subjects at the outward anchorages, to proceed to Hong Kong, and hoisting their national colours, to be prepared to resist every act of aggression on the part of the Chinese Government.”

To understand the character of the resistance forbidden in the first notice and required in the second, it is necessary to refer to the Act 3 and 4 Will. IV. for the prevention of smuggling. It is there enacted, § 58, that “if any persons, to the number of three or more, armed with fire-arms or other weapons, shall within the United Kingdom, or any harbour thereof, assist in the running of any prohibited goods, or in rescuing any goods after seizure, or in preventing the apprehension of any person guilty of such offence, &c., &c., he (or

they) shall, on conviction, be adjudged guilty of felony, and suffer death as a felon."

In explanation of this strange transmutation, whereby acts felonious in British waters, become not only innocent, but honourable and necessary in those of China; we are told in your notice of the following day, that you "were without confidence in the justice and moderation of the Chinese Government." The reasons assigned for this withdrawal were, "the unexplained execution in front of the factories; the naval preparations; the detention of foreigners at Canton; and the threatening language of the Commissioner and his associates."

With regard to the first of these causes—the execution—I have already stated, that the officer who commanded it, had declared it to be—an appeal to the sympathetic natures of the importers of opium; compelling them *to see*, what they had refused to take on testimony—the bitter fruits to others of their seductions.

As to the naval preparations of the Chinese Government, it was to be remembered, that the small craft engaged in the river-smuggling, had had more than once returned from their swivels, the fire of the forts and cruisers; that the opium ships were supposed to have the same orders with vastly superior force;* and finally, that the

* We know indeed, from common report, that these ships have again and again fired into the preventive boats; pursuing,

Governor had been assured two months before, that “your gracious Majesty would not interpose in behalf of those British subjects who continue to practise these dangerous disorders.” These preparations therefore were not unnecessary, nor were they pointed at her Majesty’s peaceable subjects, but at persons and property already disowned by you, as the British Superintendent. Were they then a justification for your revocation of your assurances? Did they authorize a combination of the outside fleet to resist an officer, still relying on your prior declaration? and actually guided by it, to the measure of confiscation? Could her Majesty’s sloop be properly employed to head this resistance, when her Majesty’s neutrality had been so lately promised? or had a fair understanding been had with his Excellency, that the “interposition” withdrawn within the Bogue, was *not* withdrawn without it? If not,—and we have no evidence of this—there was no breach of “confidence.” This point should not be obscured by any doubts as to the limits of the Superintendent’s jurisdiction. His authority to engage good order is, at least, as extensive, as to abet resistance.

The reasons still to be considered, are—the confiscation of the contraband opium, by decree of

boarding, and rescuing Chinese smugglers. These conflicts have not always been bloodless. Six years ago, Mr. Marjoribanks said—“Conflicts *have taken place* between the Lintin smugglers and the Chinese vessels, *when natives have been killed.*” See also “Davis’s China,” vol. i. p. 126.

17th March ; the detention of the persons of the holders as securities for its surrender ; and the Commissioner's vague allusions to dangers to be apprehended from the public indignation aroused against the importers.

To appreciate the point of confiscation, in its application to British property, it may be well to place it by the side of § 44 of the Act before cited. Its language is—" Any persons assisting or being concerned in the harbouring, keeping, or unshipping any prohibited goods, or into whose possession such prohibited goods shall knowingly come, shall forfeit treble the value, (or a minimum, &c.)" The same Act extends the forfeiture to the vessel concerned, and conveys the most extensive rights of question, search, apprehension, &c. Now in the present case, the facts, that the confiscated property was contraband ; was within the Chinese waters ; and the persons detained, did comprise the illicit importers ; are admitted. The objectionable part of the Commissioner's course, to a British eye, is—his singular, his purely Chinese mode of procedure. Instead of arresting the persons of the well-known contrabandists,* and seizing their goods, by force of arms, overpowering opposition ; the Commissioner demands the surrender of the confiscated

* This refusal to touch the *persons* of British subjects is as steady as if the Chinese had read, ("Quarterly Review," No. 100), "The moment our violations of law drive them to seizing the persons of offending parties, we fear, hostilities will become inevitable."

property, after repeated warning to remove it, letting the owners and their vessels go free, (and even promising rewards,) on condition of non-resistance. But such surrender being delayed, he proceeds to treat the owners, not as individual felons, resisting, each for himself, an act of seizure; but as a community in open insubordination to the regular Government. He throws around them his land and water-guard; cutting off their communications; constraining them to yield; as the Chinese way is, to reduce a refractory village. This mode of dealing with a handful of defenceless men is certainly very un-English; "contrary," as you say, "to the genius of our countries;" but it differs, as respects the guilty, chiefly in its cumbersome forms and respectful leniency. It raises the culprit to the rank of an enemy; taking him prisoner, not by writ of arrest, but by articles of capitulation.

One strong, to us insuperable, objection lies against this Chinese process, viz., it is sure to involve innocent parties with the guilty. All that can be said on this point, is; that the system of responsibility, unjust and indefensible as it is in itself, runs through the Chinese polity.* In the

* This is not the place to discuss its merits or make its apology. It certainly puts a number of new—perhaps necessary—supports and traces into the framework of Pagan society. And when men grow up under it, and are taught "to look not on their own things only, but also on the things of others," as a common duty; its weight, though insufferable to us, does not seem to be

present case, almost the whole resident community, whose party you espoused, *were* implicated, and the exception and the stranger have their proper remedy pointed out, and still open, in the justice of the Emperor! I will dismiss the "reasons," with a few words on the Commissioner's allusions to "public indignation," which seemed to you to wear "a dark and violent character." I have been present at several of the collisions, which have taken place in our day, between the residents and Chinese; and have remarked, that the sympathies of this people have always been ranged on the side of their rulers, and against the foreigners. I have heard of late some outbursts of the native sense of injustice, at the impunity of the foreigner, under regulations, which punish the Chinese opium-dealer with cruel severity. I was an eye-witness of the riot of December 12th, when the populace turned upon us, at an idle blow, and but for the interposition of the city-guard, would have forced and rifled the factories. The allusion of the Commissioner to "popular indignation," is *to me* full of meaning; yet I am concerned, not so much

insupportably heavy. As to *the authors* of the system, the fact is this. They have upon their hands a vast people, and the problem is—to maintain social order. The aid of Christianity, with all its motives and restraints, they have not. They call in the system of mutual responsibility. The instrument often works harshly; but are we sure there is within their reach, any better, or indeed, any other?

because he made it, as, because I see, the introduction of opium has lost us the affections of the good, has made us panders to the appetites of the bad ; and we may well fear, lest we one day suffer by the outbreaking of passions, to whose excitement we ourselves have ministered. The truth probably is, that the Commissioner was minutely informed of the riots of December 12th, and he meant to bid us remember, that so far from having an appeal open to the people, we needed police protection against them. To charge him with a design *to set on the canaille*, is not only to wrest his meaning, but to forget our recent obligations. From the strain of these remarks you will see, that the reasons assigned in your notice did not justify you, to my mind, “in holding it to be impossible to maintain continued peaceful intercourse.”

Leaving Macao with these belligerent feelings, and forcing your way to the city, in spite of considerable opposition, you reached the British factory (from which the flag had been removed the 27th February,) early on Sunday evening, the 24th ult. And here, again, I find steps taken, involving a further dereliction of the one great principle. Your first act was, to remove the opium importer, who had been pitched on by the Commissioner to answer for the traffickers in the drug, to your own roof, and to call on all British subjects to stand by you, while so doing.

Now, I must not be regarded as in any degree

wanting in sympathy for that gentleman, in his critical position. On the contrary, he was already in possession of my written opinion on his peculiar case, and will bear me witness, that I maintained his right to demand, and the duty of the holders to deliver, every chest of the drug, at whatever moment such surrender should be necessary to his extrication. Throughout the several stages of the crisis, my avowed belief was, that THE OPIUM was the Commissioner's object; and my doctrine was, that so soon as a single life, native or foreign, was perilled by its being withheld, so soon the duty of the agent to his constituent gave way to the higher claims of humanity. "The pocket of a constituent must not be placed in competition with the neck of a neighbour," was the language I had held in the public meeting of the day preceding. It was not selfish apathy, therefore, which made me regret the removal of the individual in question to the asylum of the British factory. My objection was, that the act formed part and parcel of a system, calculated directly and inevitably to saddle the whole illicit trade, with all its obloquy, on the British nation. "To separate her Majesty's Government from any direct or implied countenance of these things," was your text three months before (Dec. 31st); and now the comment is, your official residence converted into a sanctuary for the representative of the disowned traffic. Instead of re-stating the doctrine in all its length and breadth, and

urging every plea of forbearance under its cover, you overthrew it, without adding anything to the security of the party in danger. The ransom was not reduced, nor was he the less a prisoner.

Much to the credit of the Chinese (and just in their way), they forbore to press the right of arrest; contented themselves with precautions against escape; accepted you as the voluntary substitute for the cited individual; and, forgetting him entirely, proceeded to negotiate with you, as the real controller of the confiscated opium. Your order of the 27th made you such, and your public assumption and transfer of the enormous heap completed the identification, so long going on, between the traffic and your Government.

Now, on closing this short review of a short period, I must be permitted to repeat that, if there were one principle of more importance than any other—a principle never to be contravened, never to be lost sight of, in the progress of this question, it was, the separation of the British flag—the British name, from all responsibility for the illicit commerce.* What, then, must be our decision

* This principle, for its commercial value, had been long before recognised, in its application to the trade with China. The Factory said of the outside smuggling, so early as 1826, "Should the Chinese, becoming sensible of the evils resulting from the progressive extension of these illegal transactions, be induced to resort to violent means, *it will remain our duty, so to distinguish and separate the important interests committed to our charge, as to prevent their being involved in embarrassment.*"

on a course of measures which, instead of accomplishing this grand end, has, within the period of two years, completely identified the two; exhibiting the British factory at Canton as the refuge of the opium importer; her Majesty's sloop at Hong Kong as the armed defender of the drug after confiscation; and the British Superintendent himself as its open assumer, its real controller, its forced transferrer, its public deliverer, to the extent of 20,283 chests; and all "in the name and for the service of her Majesty's Government."

I am aware that a state of duress, "paramount motives affecting the lives and liberty of all foreigners present in Canton," was pleaded in bar of the natural verdict on these premises. I admit it as softening, but not as reversing, the judgment. For, in the first place, no duress existed throughout the earlier stages of the case (all 1837—38); while fifty or sixty sail of British craft were drugging the land, and arousing the Imperial Government to these severities. And afterward, when the detention began, it bore solely on the one point—submission to the act of confiscation. Refusal to comply extorted the second order,—“Let Mr. D. * * * appear within the city.” To the decree itself, the foreigners replied, “Go, and seize the opium.” To the citation, Mr. D. * * *

The day of violent means having come, on whom did this “duty of separation” devolve, if not on the *Superintendent of the trade of British subjects*?

replied (like Leonidas), "Come, and take me." Had the Commissioner followed these two forms of English process, there would have been no duress. The quarrel with him is, that he preferred Chinese to British practice, and insisted that no man should quit his own factory (a comfortable prison), until the opium should be delivered to his order, as it would be to the order of a purchasing broker. Had he yielded, the British residents would have gone to prison, but *he* would not have given satisfaction. This was, in fact, impossible; for while the residents were bidding him send and seize what he had confiscated, *you* were counselling armed resistance. The seizure was held to be law by the British subjects within the Bogue, and hostility by the British Superintendent without it. But for Chinese quakerism, the waters of Hong Kong (the red river) would have baptized afresh, before this point of process had been decided. The Chinese officer, ignorant alike of British practice, and of its differing interpretations, went on in the way with which he was most familiar. So much for the duress, as it concerned the residents. As respects the British representative, it began with his forced entry within the guard, and his removal of an individual under arrest, to his factory. He pressed within the guard, and it closed upon him. He carried an obnoxious party within his own residence, and duress followed. The Commissioner subsequently (March 29th) disclaimed the intention to imprison, and told you

frankly what he thought of you. "When you came in a boat to Canton, and wished to take D. * * *, and abscond with him," preventive steps became necessary. For the same reason, he says (and not to inflict annoyance), the native servants were removed also. This suspicion of the intended abduction of Mr. D. * * * was, of course, entirely groundless; and yet it did prevail extensively among the Chinese around us. Your offer to meet the Commissioner with Mr. D. * * * did not counteract it. To throw him off his guard seems to have been the interpretation given to the proposition by that officer. A daily expenditure of 2,000 or 3,000 dollars, in guarding the foreign factories, is some farther evidence of sincerity.

But I must not lose myself here, in a more complicated question. I cannot argue—I can only *feel*—on the subject of the Chinese disrespect of all foreign representatives. I am aware that the European code suffers trading Consuls to be dealt with as traders; that the representatives of your country here, from 1600 down to 1834, were traders; and that no preferment, no diplomatic privilege, has since been accorded to you as their non-trading successor.* Still all my personal feelings rise in

* "You must not expect," said Mr. Marjoribanks, in 1833, "that your 'Superintendents,' will be received, (by the Chinese) with any more regard or attention, than those appointed by the East India Company."—*Letter to Mr. Grant.*

rebellion against your detention, and I trust there is in reserve for you the generous satisfaction of contributing to the peaceful introduction of a better system.

Before I quit this part of my subject, let me add, that I have dwelt on it so long only because of its great importance. There is danger lest the error here pointed out go on repeating itself in future intercourse. If your own language be taken, without allowance for a moment of excitement, it has already gone far to involve two great nations in causeless hostilities. This consideration has made me break through the restraints imposed by the recollection of many kindnesses. It has made me take up the language of censure, where I would gladly have used only that of esteem and gratitude. It has made me treat as a beacon an official course, well deserving, in many respects, to be pointed to as a high example.

It remains for me to treat THE CRISIS as past—the sacrifice as made; and to look forward to the expected interference of the British Government.

What is to be the nature and extent of this interference? What is due to the honour of the flag?—to the sufferings of the merchants?—to the safety of future commerce?

I am not a guardian of British honour, yet I will venture to say, the position of your Government, hitherto, has been this. From its remote point of view, it has suffered itself to look (and you to look also) on the side of *the magnitude*

*and profitableness of the opium traffic.** The interests of commerce; the growth of mercantile capitals, colonial revenues, the prosperity of whole provinces, have seemed to be identified with it. It was not for statesmen to discuss doubtful points of morality; the Chinese were the last people to throw away scruples upon; the poppy was enriching all Bahar, Benares, and Malwa; it was animating the dock-yards and counting-rooms of Bombay and Calcutta; it decorated some important pillars in the pile of Indian empire. Away with temperance doctrines—with unstatesmanlike delicacies—with paragraphs out of consular instructions! Your superiors were warned that a storm was gathering; but to them it seemed a light cloud and a faint flash, far off on the Eastern horizon. They will soon hear that it has broken upon *us*, with awful fury. They will see it sweeping on toward them; they will learn of the fields it has blighted, the fortunes it has swept away, the revenues it has marred, in India. As the last force of the tempest is dying away in their own vicinity, what shall they do in view of its ravages?

I answer—Had the blow which has just fallen

* I confess my inclination to suspect that you have been more than *permitted* to waive consular law, and to forget the honour of the flag in the interests of Indian revenue and Indian commerce. If this have been the case, let me recall my censures, or rather let them fasten on the authors of the new “code,” and the new “instructions.”

here, been unprovoked ; had the late confiscation been a spoliation of lawful commerce ; it would be the duty of the British Government to demand and enforce reparation. However incóvenient the process of recovery ; however critical her own position as respects the peace of Europe, and India ; a just cause might have been relied on : and if in its prosecution, the blockade of ports, the sack of cities, &c., &c., became necessary, the law of nations might be pleaded. But the fact is far otherwise. For nearly forty years, the British merchants, led on by the East India Company, have been driving a trade, in violation of the highest laws, and the best interests of the Chinese empire. This course has been pushed so far, as to derange its currency, to corrupt its officers, and ruin multitudes of its people. The traffic has become associated in the politics of the country, with embarrassments and evil omens ; in its penal code, with the axe and the dungeon ; in the breasts of men in private life, with the wreck of property, virtue, honour, and happiness. All ranks, from the Emperor on the throne, to the people of the humblest hamlets, have felt its sting. To the fact of its descent to the lowest classes of society, we are frequent witnesses ; and the Court gazettes are evidence that it has marked out victims for disgrace and ruin even among the Imperial kindred.* These are the forces which

* “ Three princes of the Imperial blood have been deprived of their honours, and otherwise punished, for bad practices, of

have driven the Government to its harsh alternatives. These are the preamble to the decree of confiscation. Under these circumstances, the act was *not spoliation*.* It cannot be made the ground of a demand of indemnification. On the contrary, honour and interest engage the British Government to take up an entirely opposite course; to

which opium-smoking is the principal. Heuhaetse, for proposing its admission, is dismissed from the public service.”—*Chinese Repository*, vol. vii. p. 456.

“The people of Tientsin are in consternation at the late death of the heir of the Crown (eldest son of Taouquang), which was occasioned by opium-smoking. *The Emperor felt this loss very keenly.*”—*Gutzlaff's Journal, Chinese Repository*, vol. i. p. 186.

* I have omitted two of the arguments used to make out a case of spoliation—the previous proposition to legalize, and the connivance of the local authorities. The first, is to my mind insufficient, because a commission of inquiry into an existing law, does nothing to invalidate its legal force, until repeal—formal repeal—follow. In this case, not only did this fail to be the result, but the opposite effect, the confirmation of the law, had been evident two years before, and the mover of the inquiry was already disgraced by his Sovereign. The second fails also, because it is probable, the connivance did not reach to the higher officers; and subaltern participation, whether in China, or Spain, or Mexico, only adds to smuggling, the corruption of the officer. Besides, there is strong reason to believe, the highest provincial authorities were unusually neglectful of the common precautions, because they dreaded collision with the British Government, and therefore shrunk from their duty. Above all, the greatest degree of connivance, even in the provincial Government, is not a legal protection from well-known Imperial laws, for parties wilfully using corrupt means to sway him (the officer) from his duty to enforce them.

repress the risings of natural passion ; and to make the crisis itself, the turning point in their annals of intercourse with China.

Justice forbids that the steps, taken by the Chinese, to arrest a system of wrongs* practised on them, under the mask of friendship, be made the pretence for still deeper injuries. Interest condemns the sacrifice of the lawful and useful trade with China, on the altar of illicit traffic. Still more loudly does it warn against the assumption of arms in an unjust quarrel, against—not the Chinese Government only—but, the Chinese people. Strong as Great Britain is—in any good cause irresistible—she cannot war with success, or even safety, upon the consciences—the moral sense—of these 3 or 400,000,000.

To make a proper use of the crisis in a public sense, these things are necessary. First, To make it the occasion of frank explanations as to the past course of the British Government, especially with reference to opium ; taking blame, so far as blame is due ; and stating the extenuations which grow out of Chinese connivance, and the European theory of international independence. Second, To make it the occasion of the introduction of a consular reform, which will secure to the mer-

* The mere carrying out their present set of preventive measures, will cost the Chinese millions. All this expenditure, be it remembered, brings no return. It is not to ensure revenue *receipts*, but to enforce prohibitions.

chant (what he wants above all things) a clear definition of his duty ; and to the flag, a plain and proud superiority to every imputation. Third, To make it the occasion of tendering to China, such guarantees as it is in the pleasure and power of Great Britain to give, against the farther extension of her colonial possessions. And when these assurances are given, let it be made imperative on the British representative and his countrymen in China, not to undo or unsay them. Let the rule be made *final*, that boasting, and recrimination, and threats of vengeance, and menaces of territorial occupation,—the *non felicia tela*, of so many contests—be thrown aside, and the discourse of Briton with Chinese, be henceforth, of TRUTH AND PEACE together. Let these things be done, and the opium crisis will be a common, public blessing.

To make a proper use of it, in a private sense, let it be seen (as I fear no one sees it here) in the light of Divine providence. The opium trade has dishonoured the name of God among the heathen more extensively than any other traffic of ancient or modern times. “The flowing poison,” the “vile dirt,” the “dire calamity brought upon us by foreigners,” these, and a hundred like them, are the names it bears, in the language of this empire. Its foreign origin has been bruited everywhere, and its introducers and their character branded in every city and hamlet throughout China. In the very act of its suppression, in the hour of the

crisis, as if to connect the foreign faith more closely with the foreign practice—the importers of the drug obtained a suspension of the Commissioner's proceedings, on the ground, that it was their *Sabbath*. Far be it from me to censure the request; but how unhappy the inference, that the dealing in the drug, and the strict observance of Christian worship can go on together: and the worshipper gain no light upon a principle of benevolence, clear even to the Pagan. Under these circumstances, with what spirit should this blow be received by the immediate sufferers? With self-justification? with angry and vindictive chafing? No. "I have done wickedly: I will do so no more," should be their language. This submission is the more becoming, because the work of Providence is not yet finished. The Power which has willed that the past connexion between the Christian name and the opium trade be severed, has yet to vindicate Christianity and all His ways, to these Pagans. Let no one cross his path. Rather let each lend himself, a ready instrument, to the high and necessary vindication.

I come now to the question of relief due to the British merchants, suffering under this severe revulsion.

The quantity of opium delivered up to the Chinese Government, is 20,283 chests; estimated to have cost its present owners some 10,000,000 dollars; of the quantity thus sacrificed, about

7,000 were purchased from the East India Company ; about 12,000 from the free cultivators of Malwa ; less than 1,000 are the growth of Turkey. The whole 10,000,000 dollars are British property. The question is, what claim have the immediate sufferers to relief, in law or equity ? We have seen that they have none on the Chinese, for restitution or indemnity. Strict legal justice would, I presume, also deny them any other remedy. But the case is one of wide calamity ; and owing to the complexity of commercial arrangements in our time—our advances, exchanges, &c.—it is said that the loss, if left as it has fallen, involves many entirely innocent parties. It seems, therefore, proper to waive legal definition ; to take the case out of the dominion of accident ; and apply a broad and generous equity to its settlement. This principle would suggest, that an interest in the creation of the trade, a sanction lent to it, incur a share of the responsibility. If this inference be a valid one, the suffering merchants have a lien on two great sureties, the East India Company and the British nation.

As respects the first of these parties, it is admitted that they are the authors of the opium trade with China. The export in that direction was a trifle ; perhaps insufficient for medical uses ; when they assumed and monopolized the cultivation, first by their servants, next for their own revenue. The whole soil of British India was

laid under restriction or under ban, that this monopoly might be supported. Not only were acres and ryots subsidized for this purpose; but the higher qualities of the Company's own servants—integrity, care, science—were impressed; and all, to furnish what? A medicine for the supply of the native (or the British) army? No. “The unfortunate superabundance of narcotine, &c.,” in Indian opium,” Dr. Butler informs us, “forbid the manufacture.” What then? To gratify an immoral, an irrepressible taste in the Indian population? No. “Very little,” says Mr. Thornton, “is consumed in India.” What then? What is it that has made “the provinces of Malwa, Bahar, and Benares, the chief localities of the opium cultivation?” Why are “vast tracts of land, in those districts, formerly occupied with other articles, now covered with poppies?” Although so wide-spread, why is the culture “still rapidly on the increase?” The accurate Dr. Butler, the Superintendent of the manufacture in Benares, will answer: “THE GREAT OBJECT OF THE BENGAL OPIUM-AGENCIES IS, TO FURNISH AN ARTICLE SUITABLE TO THE PECULIAR TASTES OF THE POPULATION OF CHINA.” The same scientific officer goes on to enumerate the qualities (solubility, flavour, &c.) for which the Chinese value the drug, and repeats, “that *the aim* of the agencies, *in the whole process of production*, is TO PREPARE THIS ARTICLE.” He again reminds his successors, that “the Chinese are great epicures

in the flavour of opium ;” and by way of giving them a lofty standard, adverts to the time, when “ distillation in vacuo, the most perfect chemical process,” will be applied, to carry the extract from the poppy, to the “ acme of perfection.”

So systematically have power, and wealth, and science been prostituted, by the *friendly* Bengal Government, to the seduction of the Chinese ; the Company having all the while their agents at Canton, and knowing full well, that the growth which was whitening the fields of India and filling their treasury ; was crowding the brothels and dungeons of China with crime and wretchedness.* To compensate for thus overlooking all moral obligation, the Company paid profound respect to the interdict of the Chinese Government. They declined to carry the drug, after growing it, to the place of sale, and sought, in the Indian merchants, a party who would take such shreds of profit as monopoly prices left, and bear the risks and obloquy of smuggling. They called these men to their auction-sales, put the drug into their hands, and left them to act upon the invitation and the example. But how unavailing these unmanly efforts to share the profits of illicit commerce, without its hazards. The blow has fallen, when least expected, and a large

* On the prohibition of the drug in 1800, the East India Company's supercargoes recommended to the Court of Directors to endeavour to prevent the shipment of opium to China, either from Bengal or England.—*Opium Documents*, p. 65.

portion of the loss and obloquy should light on the East India Company. In consideration of the heavy loss they must sustain on their remaining stock, let them only refund to the purchasers of their opium at the sales of the present year, their profit on the same, i. e. the sale price, less the cost of production.

Having satisfied these least claims of their suffering *employès*, the Company should proceed to take measures for their own relief, and for the protection of society in India, Europe, &c.

Beyond the quantity actually surrendered, it is estimated that there are 80,000 chests of the drug in existence, viz. a considerable portion of the produce of 1838, and the whole crop of 1839; now just gathered. Under this enormous accumulation, it is evident that the cultivation of the poppy, throughout India, should immediately cease. The lands which have been engrossed by this deleterious culture, should be returned to uses not incompatible with human life, virtue, and happiness. The Company should further arrange to spread the sales of the opium in their go-downs, over a series of years; and exert their utmost influence to bring the Malwa chiefs into the settlement. This course is recommended by reasons of finance. It is still more desirable, in order to guard against the extensive demoralization to be feared, from flooding the markets of India and the West, with opium at very low

prices.* Already, we are told, the use of the drug is insinuating itself into the habits of a morbid portion of Western society. (The consumption of Great Britain for 1831—32, was over 28,000 lbs. per annum.) Little, probably, is needed, particularly in communities where spirits are discountenanced, to bring in this more refined, more easily concealed substitute, and create a public taste for it. Such a taste once spread, and fixed, by transmission through one or two generations, and how shall it be eradicated?

It is undeniable, that some of the most important ends of Providence in our day, are being brought about by the agency of national tastes. The manner, in which England and China are and have long been bound together by the taste for tea—is a good instance. And let it be remembered, that the same Providence which uses these peculiar predilections, as means of national friendship and wider evangelization, can turn them also to purposes of social chastisement. May it not be, that any such retributions—the recoil of a

* “A very inconsiderable rise or fall in price,” says Mr. Crawford, “will augment or diminish the consumption, in a surprising degree, even in countries where the people have long been accustomed to the habitual use of it. It is more seductive than any other intoxicating drug; and the free use of it more deleterious.”

depraved taste—the reaction of temptation on the tempter—await the Western states in commerce with China.

A return of their profit, by the East India Company, would be a great boon, perhaps a full relief to the holders of the Bengal drug. To place the importers from the other side of India on a like footing, we must recur to the other great party to the traffic, the British nation. A few words will suffice to show that both Parliament and society at large have been at fault, and that the immediate (in some cases, accidental) sufferers have a lien on them. Of course, this claim is stated to be—*not in right, but in equity*. Had your demand of the opium added any thing to the necessity of the surrender ; and had it been in the ordinary course of your official duty ; the strong promise annexed, would have been good against your Government. But as the case was, I suppose you could as little bind the Commons of England to a grant of 1,000,000*l.* to 2,000,000*l.*, as the Queen of England to a marriage-settlement. I, therefore, waive the question of right to indemnification, as founded on your assurances. Perhaps too, the interests of the sufferers might be prejudiced by any talk of encroachment on a jealous body's favourite prerogative. Let the forced surrenderers of opium, then, assume another tone, and throw themselves on the equity of their country ; claiming its sympathy with their losses, because it was party to the tenure of the property

while held, and to its relinquishment when sacrificed. To prove this participation, it is enough to recall the fact, that the traffic is the creature of the East India Company; itself the organ of the British Government. Besides, the revenues of India, and the commerce of India, the opium branch included, have repeatedly passed under the scrutiny and received the sanction of Parliament. Not to go back after earlier evidences, the Report of the Lower House in 1832, is decisive proof on this point. After stating the annual revenue from the drug at near 1,200,000*l.*, the Committee decide, "it does not appear advisable to abandon so important a source of revenue," and Parliament concurred in the conclusion. That the Commons were perfectly aware, *who* paid this subsidy, is evident; for it is stated in the same paragraph, and as a recommendation too; that "the tax is one which falls principally on the foreign consumer." The authors of the Report saw, that "the want of exclusive control over the production and *consumption* of the article," made it "a precarious source of revenue;" yet they deliberately declared this monopoly "less liable to objection than any other." The effect of these authoritative decisions on the mercantile classes, and on society at large, could not but be powerful. By them, the opium manufacture, and the trade inseparable from it, received the highest sanction bestowable in one country, on an article proscribed in another. The British merchant

went out from the high places of legislation to attend the sales of the East India Company. Authority, example, sympathy, were on his side ; what cared he for the interdicts of the strange, despotic, repulsive Government of China !

Misled by Parliament, he was confirmed in error, by the decisions of society. The same lax morality, which threw respectability around the traffic in spirits,* was no less indulgent to the traffic in opium. The Hobbists, it is true, reprobated the trade, as an illicit one ; but then, every man in China *does* offend ; and why is not an illegal crossing one's own threshold, or prying into Chinese politics, or staying over summer at one's factory, as bad as selling opium ? Away with the Bible and the Leviathan together !

No order of society was proof against this illusion. For instance ; among the opium surrendered to the Commissioner, was a quantity sent out by the first mercantile house in London (perhaps in the world) ;

* Will not the Blomfields, the Stanhopes, the Noels, the Harrises, take up this argument, and tell the people of England, that in the application of the principle of benevolence to the matter of intemperance, they are below the Chinese. Ought not this uprising of a Pagan empire against the demon of seduction, to react with power on Christians in the west ? My oldest friend in China—a man familiar with the language—says : “ I have talked with many hundreds about the use of the drug, and never found *one*, to defend, or even palliate it.” Among all its victims it has no advocate. The licensed and gilded gin-palace courts every passer-by : the smoker threads his way to his secret haunt, guilty and ashamed.

a family numerously represented in the highest walks of British society, in the House of Commons, in the Administration, in the Peerage of England. Higher proof it is not necessary, it is not possible, to give—that the opium trade has been patronised by the country. Its magnanimity binds it to acknowledgment; its generosity to sympathy and reparation. Let it take up the case, and grant a liberal relief—say 1,000,000*l.* sterling. Let the Administration respect the pledge of their active and faithful servant, given, doubtless, in accordance with the spirit of his private instructions. Let not the economist murmur.* *He* would have been the last man to authorize a prospective sacrifice of the opium-trade, in time to satisfy the just demands of China. Let him be assured too, that *when the crisis came*, the surrender of the drug was the cheapest rate at which you could ransom the holders, and the whole British intercourse with this empire. By that act, *when made*, the nation were not losers, but gainers.

I leave this topic with the single remark, that I have no personal interest in the relief; or, if any,

* “We do not see,” says Dr. M'Culloch, “that the East India Company are warranted in subjecting a profitable article of cultivation in India, to the fetters of monopoly, that the morals of the Chinese may be preserved.” “It is unnecessary to dwell upon this view of the matter.” The “Westminster Review,” January, 1834, thought Mr. Marjoribanks guilty of “the most absurd foolery,” in not filling the Amherst with a cargo of opium.

in its being withheld rather than granted. I cannot, however, see, without pain, this wreck of property; this breaking up of a liberal, enlightened, generous community. The opium trade, like an enormous excrescence, has long been interfering with its usefulness, and endangering its safety. Happy had it been submitted *voluntarily* to a kind and skilful operation! Yet, rude as has been the mode of excision, a skilful legislation can heal the part, now torn and bleeding. A moderate relief will preserve the existing establishments;* and prevent, at the same time, an unhappy reaction on British credit, as well as on markets, supplies, stocks, &c., &c.

We come now to the last consideration—what is due to the interests of the future commerce?

It is perfectly clear to my mind, that foreign trade is well regarded by the Imperial Government. In all the early memorials on the opium question, it was received as an axiom, that the legal trade must not be interrupted. If we find propositions to interdict it, in the ultra papers of a later day, they are clearly traceable to the despair of stopping the import of opium by any milder measures. Such a necessity cannot be argued any longer. And, indeed, the instrument of the suppression is full and reiterated in his

* I say *establishments*, for there are strong reasons why the leading *individuals* in the opium traffic should retire from the scene.

assurances, that the legal trade shall continue under favour. Nay, he extends these pledges to the opium dealers, giving them oblivion of the past, immunity from corporal punishment, and liberty of commerce, on the sole condition, and in the very moment of compliance with the confiscation. All the native testimonies are on the same side, and afford ample proof, that opium apart, the foreign trade never had a firmer hold on the national policy. A revival of the opium traffic—a rash act of hostility—even a refusal to satisfy the Government that the renunciation of the import is sincere, may hazard it, or cut it off for ever.

It should, therefore, be impressed upon the minds of Western statesmen, that the Chinese do and will hold the legal trade—the privilege of commercial intercourse, in pledge for the illicit; and as they value this privilege, they should guard against the clearance of opium for the ports of China. They should beware, too, of rashly committing themselves to any measures of coercion, to any resort to force, where the distance makes the effort most costly,* and the conscientious resistance of this people renders failure probable, and success fruitless. If we are ever to have a war upon China (which God forbid), let it

* “The little armament sent from India to occupy Macao, in 1808, for a few months, was stated to have cost 500,000*l.*” This was commanded by “Admiral Drury, who was foiled in his diplomacy, and beaten back in his boats.”—*Quarterly Review*, No. 100.

be a war upon the Government, not upon the people. Let it be in a cause which, if it do not neutralize patriotic resistance, will at least make a secret ally, not an open enemy, in every man's conscience.

It is expected that some (perhaps a great deal of) difficulty will be met with, at first, in satisfying the Chinese of the sincerity of the late opium dealers, in their pledge to refrain from the import. Long experience of the evasion of bonds, will show itself in demands of fuller promises, under heavier penalties. The amount of delay and difficulty this adjustment may occasion, cannot yet be estimated. My own hope is, that the Commissioner will be content with the reference made by you and the other foreign Consuls, to your own Governments ; and that this reference will become, under skilful management, the germ of national treaties with China. How much higher satisfaction would such a use of the present opportunity yield, than any hostile blow, however successfully struck, could win ; since it must fall chiefly on the innocent, and leave an ugly scar on the national intercourse.

If in addition to this public security, further bonds should be required of the residents individually, it becomes them to grant such, and such only, as would be sanctioned by their country. If the Chinese system of responsibility be stretched beyond this point, their protest, coupled with a frank statement of the reasons of dissent, will

probably prevent any long suspension of intercourse.* If not, let them retire for a little while, leaving an open field to public negotiators.

These last fruits of the drug, these last dregs of the opium traffic, will probably have been disposed of, before your despatches reach England. Presuming then, that counsel will be taken by your Government from the friends of peace, the friends of legal trade and Eastern amelioration; what are our prospects? I reply, I regard the present moment as, in every sense, the commencement of a better era. If, as merchants, we have had any favour with this Government, while our trade has been so injurious, we have every reason to believe that more countenance and liberty await us, as it clears itself from reproach, and its utility to the empire is gradually developed. A short period of deranged exchanges past,† and we

* The bond first required by the Commissioner is not, we take it, an attempt entirely to supersede legislation, by special contract, though the engagement has that aspect. It is rather intended to convey the foreigner's assent to the principle—that he be dealt with as the native—and to carry out the parallel in the item of capital penalties. It is, on the one side, a curious exemplification of the “control social,” and on the other, a very harsh and hazardous requisition.

† The subject of currency, everywhere difficult, is peculiarly so in China. Our readers know, that the vast financial and commercial operations of this empire have to be carried on without the aid of paper, and with no coin but a base copper one; thus throwing the chief weight of exchanges on defaced dollars, and sycee (pure native) silver. The quantity of metal

shall find new customers and new producers in hundreds of families, no longer sinking to rags

required for these purposes, must be greater, year by year, as the resources of the empire develop, and its transfers multiply, under the hand of peaceful industry. It is only on this admission, that an abstraction of 50,000,000 or 60,000,000 dollars, caused by the sales of opium, within the last fifteen years, can have been felt as a great embarrassment, calling the Imperial Council together to consult on checking it.

We learn from the opium memorialists, that the silver mines of China are not abundant, and that the laws in force respecting them, are framed, (not to check their produce, and so lessen the dangers of excessive wealth,) but to protect them from exhaustion. It should not surprise us to find this motive working in China, since it has shown itself so often in Western legislation, and was, a century ago, a main argument with the Japanese, for restricting their trade with foreign countries. These fears of exhausting their mineral wealth, unfortunately became connected, in the minds of Chinese statesmen, with vague apprehensions of a time to come, when, with weakened sinews, they should have to stand in collision with Western nations. There was enough, in actual experience, and historic knowledge of European doings in the East, to suggest the apprehension. Had any thing more been needed, to prompt the foresight, such sentiments as the following, from a Canton paper of April, 1833, would have been sufficient: "Perhaps nothing could contribute more readily to the final reduction of the Chinese people to reasonable terms with foreigners, than this steady and never-ceasing impoverishment of the country, by the abstraction of the circulating medium, [by the export of the returns of the opium trade.]"

To keep to the financial subject—if the Chinese check the outgoings of silver where they now are, they will still remain large debtors, as to their currency, to foreign commerce.

For instance, the trade of the United States has given them, since its rise in 1784, over 100,000,000 dollars. An equal sum

and beggary, by the use of opium. As private men, we have already held some place, for other reasons,

has come in, through a channel often left out of account, from Spanish America *via* Manilla. The best authorities state, that 400,000,000 dollars in specie, reached the Philippines, chiefly from Acapulco, in the 250 years of their intercourse. That one-fourth of this passed to China, is a moderate estimate. In the controversy between the rival merchants of Cadiz and Manilla, the former always traced the decline in the profit on Spanish fabrics, in the markets of New Spain, to the interference of those from China. The latter replied, not *our* supply of Chinese silks, &c., but the far greater one poured in by other flags, clandestinely, or *via* Spain, has cut down your per centages, and thrown the Spanish looms out of employment. In evidence of this, they pointed to the 3,000,000 or 4,000,000 dollars, of Spanish American coinage, annually imported at Canton, under the colours of England, Holland, &c. To this statement (with due allowance for its partisan origin) we have to add the fact, that, out of the 30,000,000*l.* or 60,000,000*l.* sterling, variously estimated to have been drawn from Japan, during sixty years of free export, a considerable proportion came to China, *via* Macao, &c., for the purchase of raw silk—the staple of that commerce. It seems a low estimate to set down these sources, as equivalent to the American, which gives an aggregate import of 400,000,000 dollars. Deducting from this vast sum the 50,000,000 dollars lately redrawn, and we still leave the Chinese debtors for 350,000,000 dollars. If to this we add the produce of their own mines, which we are told, forms the whole currency of the middle and western provinces, it appears, they must be in possession of a circulating medium of not less than 500,000,000 dollars. It is true, however, that the want of mutual confidence, banking knowledge, &c., leaves a large proportion of this in private hoards, unemployed and unavailable. Its weight too, and the necessity of examination at every transfer, make it a most expensive, as well as an inconvenient medium.

in the regard of the Chinese, and our standing must improve, as we disconnect ourselves from the authorship of vice and misery, and become the representatives of a commerce, useful, and useful only. If we feel any interest in the honour of our flags, and the extension of commerce beneath them, we must rejoice to see the Chinese exclusive deprived of his strongest argument against our character and our intercourse. As residents in China, and intrusted with large interests, we have new securities for life and property in the suppression of the opium traffic. The image of national demoralization, and all its attendant insecurities need no longer alarm us. It is our duty as individuals to take up the work where the Commissioner leaves it. All revival of this deadly traffic must be made impossible, if we can prevent

It is yet too early to attempt to trace the effect of the suppression, on what more nearly concerns us—the foreign exchanges. The United States will continue to need 6,000,000 or 7,000,000 dollars annually, for their purchases of Chinese produce; and Europe, more than twice that sum—say 15,000,000 or 16,000,000 dollars. To meet these drafts, Great Britain may furnish 3,000,000 or 4,000,000 dollars; British India, 7,000,000 or 8,000,000 dollars; Farther India, 1,000,000 dollars. The United States can scarcely add, with the help of Mexico, &c., 1,000,000 dollars. The gap of 8,000,000 or 10,000,000 dollars must be met, at first, by lower costs, but chiefly by specie, until an increased demand for foreign articles of utility, grow up in place of the staple of intoxication. To meet it *fully*, free admission to northern ports *alone*, is wanted. The course is, *first* deserve, and *then* demand, the freedom.

it. From the vantage ground on which we now stand, we must carry on a spontaneous work of reform, until every irregularity, however sanctioned, has disappeared from our practice. Nor need we limit these congratulations to our commercial prospects. It is matter of thanksgiving, that whatever shall be done hereafter for philanthropy, and for its highest form, Christianization, will not be overborne by opium. It will be no longer true, that for every dollar spent by British Christians for the evangelization of the Chinese, thousands are employed for their depravation. Public sentiment in England, will, I trust, take hold of this fact, and give it a wider bearing and application. It cannot be that the British public will continue to sanction a system, which first possesses itself by force of the rich soil of Hindostan, and then converts it into a vast nursery-ground for the dissemination of depravity and ruin.* If “*homines ad Deos nullâ ne propius accedunt, quam salutem hominibus dando,*” to what comparison do they expose themselves, even by delaying the withdrawal of this sanction. Nay, my dear Sir, I may go farther and predict, that the sufferers by this blow, and you yourself, the reluctant witness of the stroke, will one day

* “The *Indian islanders,*” says Crawford, “*may have been taught the use of opium by the Arabs; but the extensive and pernicious consumption which now distinguishes their manners, is to be ascribed to the commerce of Europeans,*” &c.

rejoice over it together. When the smart of immediate censure and loss is past, you will take the sharp infliction kindly, as coming not from Chinese injustice, but from the hand of Providence. Had the importers of the drug listened to any one out of a thousand homilies, they would have escaped unharmed. Had you begun, even but a few months ago, to make known the feelings of the British public, and the tenour of British law, another turn would have been given to the crisis. Perhaps it is well for Western society, that so large a draft has been made, by the Commissioner, on the means of intoxication. All its powers of resistance may yet be tasked, to withstand the still existing forces of temptation.

Again, I repeat, nothing would have induced me to send to the press, a word of censure on an officer, to whom I am, with my countrymen, so much obliged; but the fear, that the belligerent language I have been hearing for the last month, may make an unhappy impression in England. I have listened to it with pain, for its effect is, to steel the Chinese against you; and so, to embitter to them, the most copious fountain of blessings. I would not have images of aggression, ideas of resistance, associated in the Chinese mind, with the name of Englishman. Much less would I have the reign of a youthful Queen, (whose countenance of other promise, it gives me pleasure to recall,) stained with the blood of

thousands, whose only crime, if guilty, is, that they came foremost at the call of country and conscience, to fight for the preservation of their pagan virtue.

Much rather would I see your nation bringing strong mercantile, and political, and moral influences to bear on China; and you yourself giving your aid, for years to come, to make them work, as they ought, in peace together. Years *must* probably pass, before the long, and frank, and friendly, and reiterated explanations needed to inform and persuade the Chinese of your wishes and their justice, *can* take effect; but the path of candour, and peace, and truth, and that path alone, will conduct to "the permanent stability of the British trade with this empire." In this work of mingled statement, argument, and remonstrance, every Western State will, I trust, be proud and happy to bear you company. Hostilities, colonial usurpations, would array their interests and influence against you. One word of invitation will bring their plenipotentiaries to your side, and unite the moral power of the Western world, in one irresistible pressure on the barrier walls of China. In calculating the forces thus at your command, let us not leave out of account, the power and promises of Christianity. The energies and truth of God go with us in every effort to hasten the reign of universal amity and freedom; but that era *must* be coeval with the time, when "nation shall not lift up

sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”

I am, dear Sir,

Ever truly yours,

C. W. KING.

Canton, April 25th, 1839.

P.S.—The regular factory servants returned on the 18th, and it was confidently hoped that a few days would restore the intercourse. But, unhappily, there had been included in the 20,283 chests, some parcels belonging to parties who refused to sanction the surrender. Other considerable quantities had been disposed of up the coast, and some commanders obeyed with reluctance the orders to deliver. These delays concurred, with some unexplained movements at the Bogue, to irritate the Commissioner, and to induce him to withhold the “measured permission,” several days after the stipulated period. This deviation from his pledge, though the effect of irritation, rather than of original design, was quite indefensible.

On the 4th May, the passage-boats and ships at Whampo, were set free; the vessels lying without the Bogue, and sixteen obnoxious residents, being required to wait the completion of the deliveries. On the 8th, the Commissioner replied to the suggestion made him by you, that the Chinese Government should pass its own laws, without consulting foreigners. “Let it be even as

is requested," he says, "let such of the foreigners as desire, leave the empire, and let those who stay, know, that hereafter the smuggling of opium shall be punished capitally." This edict drew out your comments of the 11th, followed on the 19th, by an injunction on all British subjects not to bring their property or vessels within the river, on pain of losing the protection of their Government, either for such property, or for any other left behind at the factories. This extension of the penal implication to property lying beyond the injunction, was designed, no doubt, to bind the British subjects to quit Canton, in their five millions of claims on the Cohong, as well as by their floating property. This notice was repeated on the 22d, and a further injunction laid on the British residents to withdraw from Canton.

These official acts do not admit of private comment. They presuppose the possession of strong and explicit instructions not yet made public. Without such authorization, this blockade of the port to the valuably laden British ships arriving in the Chinese waters, would seem indefensible. It would not merely be an imitation of the worst part of the Chinese system, an involvement of the legal trader with the smuggler; it would not only prejudge the question, before it was submitted to the home Government, but it would bear all the marks of a deliberate plan to complicate the question of peace or war, until the latter became the only alternative. It would

look like a cool calculation, that now is a good time, to add to the five millions of doubtful claims, and the ten millions of confiscated opium, a further five millions of damages and interest; in order to neutralize the opposition of the manufacturer or the shipowner, and to bind him in a forced alliance with the claimant and the opium trader. I would not lend any force to such appearances, and therefore abstain from any remark on this measure. It is for its real authors to explain its motives, as well as to show, that the British naval flag is not here called in in order to bring off the offenders under the merchant flag, in such a way, as to convert their punishment into triumph.

As respects the "new law," I firmly believe its origin to be, in the honest and pure intents of the Emperor. He acts as if he felt, that the suppression of the import of opium, is indispensable to the safety of the State and the welfare of the people. "A stroke of his pencil," says the 'Friend of India,' the best of the Indian papers, "could have taken away our iniquitous gains, and turned them into his own coffers. But HE had too much magnanimity to make a gain of the continued ruin of his people. WE are in the position of the greedy, pestilent, persevering corrupters of his subjects. HE is straining every nerve to save them from our destructive influence. He has humbled the British name and honour beyond all expression." Of this man, of this Government, the only

one concerned in the business, which exhibits either honourable principle or conduct, the Yumchae Lin is the able and energetic, though not infallible instrument.* Having struck a decisive blow at the opium traffic as it is, he goes on to devise securities against it, as a future evil. Of the necessity of such guarantees, let the British people judge, when they learn, that there are countrymen of theirs here, who avow their determination to repair to the coasts of China in heavily armed vessels, and to force the trade at every hazard. You, Sir, will assist their judgment, if you will repeat in your despatches, those expressions of detestation, and those purposes to punish, which you have so often uttered here to all of us.

With such unprincipled avowals in his ears, the Commissioner seeks security, where British legislators have sought it, against forgery and larceny, &c., in capital punishment. This is his last grand offence. This is the seal to the declaration of hostilities !

I must not be understood as defending the Commissioner in his several acts ; or as approving in particular the new law with its capital penalty. His involvement of the whole community in indis-

* It is a sufficient proof of the humiliation and the instrumentality, to have Yumchae, Yumchae, cried after you, by every idle boy, as the foreigner now has, when passing the Chinese hamlets.

criminate embargo had no excuse but in ignorant custom, and wrong ideas of State necessity. In other instances, such as the delay of the passage licence, the proscription of the sixteen, &c., he has evidently blundered. His demand of a penal bond was a further error, however sanctioned by national usage. The exchange of the special contract for a general law, though accompanied with assurances that only the actual smuggler shall suffer, is yet unfair on the foreigner. It is made so by mutual ignorance and distrust, by the frequency of mistake in the identification of foreigners, by the absence of the checks enjoyed in Western courts of justice, and by the denial of access to the dispenser of pardon.

As to the operation of the law, it is to be remembered that it has been already a sufficient source of solicitude to be here exposed to the one chance of capital punishment in the case of accidental homicide. A second chance, though not yet realized, is now added to the exposure, and there is, therefore, double reason for private dissatisfaction and public remonstrance. Western States will not submit to the execution of their innocent citizens for accidental homicide, any more than to the impressment of their seamen. They will remonstrate against a law they cannot suffer to operate. Remonstrance and warning disregarded, they will, if they see fit, make the actual perpetration of the injustice, the ground for hostilities.

A few memoranda are all I will add to this postscript. 1. It seems to me that the whole question of peace or war should be referred to the Government and people of Great Britain (&c.), and no effort made here to deprive them of the right of decision, by pressing local exasperation to the very verge of hostilities.

2. The whole question being thus referred, all persons of all nations already embarked in lawful trade with China, should be allowed to complete their affairs, and not be driven to taste, in their innocent occupations, the bitter fruits of others' illegalities. To cut them off from this opportunity is to assume the responsibility for their unmerited losses.

3. While thus engaged, their public representatives should make every effort, not to weaken, but to ensure their safety, by every method not inconsistent with national honour. Every harsh act of the Chinese Government should be protested against. The unfairness of the new law should be pointed out, and warning given, that the first foreign life unjustly sacrificed to its provisions will be held, in Western usage, sufficient cause for hostilities. The continued residence of foreigners at Canton should be declared to be under these protests, that it may not be mistaken as conflicting with them.

4. To make the reference adverted to effective and final, the Western States in commerce with China (Great Britain, the United States, Holland,

&c.,) should undertake a combined mission. This mission should be instructed, *first*, to review the opium question, commercially, politically, morally; and so to settle and dispose of it, that any subsequent difference or appeal to force shall have no connexion with it whatever. Every excuse for that noxious commerce should be abandoned, and all the aid it is consistent with Western usage for one Government to lend to another, in the maintenance of the law of contraband, should be spontaneously proffered to China. This stumbling-block removed, the question of general intercourse, with its past damages and future amelioration, should be taken up, and never given over until every just demand be granted. If such satisfaction should be refused at first, let the demand be renewed from year to year, until the fairness of the foreign party be demonstrated, the wrong put upon the Chinese Government, and the native patriotism of the people neutralized by the sense of justice. THEN, if an appeal to arms must come, it will not be an opium quarrel. It will be a conflict with the mandarin, not with the people. It was with such an appeal to the justice of his cause, that the founder of the Tatsing dynasty thought it necessary to preface his march upon the frontiers of China. With no less clear a right, or full an exposition, should Christian Europe become its invader.

5. As a local and private affair, I hold myself, and would have my countrymen hold themselves,

bound to respect the acts of the British Superintendent, and to refuse all commercial connexion with British subjects, except with his express sanction. But at the same time, as a citizen of a State unrepresented in China, I feel bound to wait, in a neutral posture, its decision on the late crisis. Whenever it commands me to leave this country for the public service, I shall not hesitate to do so. But, until its decision be expressed, I prefer, with my present views, to keep my post. The commercial interests intrusted to me require my care, and I feel no obligation to sacrifice them on the altar of the opium traffic. I will not add, voluntarily, to the injustice already done me ; nor, while exclaiming against an unfair implication with others, will I justify the involvement, by identifying myself with their illegalities. I will not stoop to profit by the losses of others, but having had no part in the causation of these evils I will not assume voluntarily any part in the consequences. Moreover, I fear lest the unanimous withdrawal of all the foreign residents from China should convey the idea of a common insensibility to the evils of the opium trade, and of a determination to stand or fall with it. Instead of operating to drive the Chinese to concessions for the sake of the legal trade, it may bring up the question, whether, if the foreigners will not traffic, except opium be the staple, it be not better to shut them out for ever. I am not disposed to underrate the value of the foreign trade to China ; and yet it is

certainly richer in the *possession* of its staples and its silver, than in their *barter for opium*. Japan, inferior in population, wealth, command of climate, &c., has long dispensed with external communications, and, in the present state of feeling, the same policy may easily be forced upon China. Such a change, were it a matter of indifference commercially, could not but be deprecated, as a backward step in the progress of Eastern amelioration. To prevent mutual distrust and exasperation from producing this result, is the strongest inducement not to quit China.

As a matter of personal safety, I may add, that had I been a dealer in the drug, I should certainly prefer to absent myself, for a time at least, until the new regulations were seen in practice. But being known as a steady opponent of the traffic, when it was lucrative and easy, I feel above the suspicions of the native, or, what is worse, the malice of foreign desperadoes, now that it is losing and dangerous.

6. Finally, there are two powers in the hands of Great Britain, capable of being wielded for the subduing of the Chinese—the power of inflicting infinite harm, and the power of imparting infinite blessings. To recommend the latter means, is the object of this publication. If, however, all confidence in truth, in peaceful policy, is lost; if resistance to rival aggrandizement can be reconciled with these remoter usurpations; if it be consistent to uphold the Mohammedan power in

Europe with one hand, and to force changes on Asia, in the name of Christianity, with the other—seize the present occasion to make war on China. And, as there is no assignable stopping-place between the assumption of arms, and a thorough reduction of the Chinese spirit and force, take measures accordingly. Find the way to the mouths of the “two rivers” by sea; and the way to Yunnan by land from India. Cut off the coasting trade, and destroy the canal approaches to the Imperial residences. Look out for some talented traitor; call him the sole representative of the old Ming family; set up his throne in the deserted courts of its ancient capital. Make free intercourse with the southern half of China the price of this “protection;” and on coming away, bring a reimbursement, and leave a subsidy. Superiority in arms and discipline *may* make all this easy. To render it more sure, let it appear, that Providence shall always wait in vain for Western piety to give Christianity to the East, and that its angry ambition is the only means within its reach, I mean its only *human* instrumentality.

Macao, 29th May, 1839.







BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY



31197 20215 0527

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

IC 1987

