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CONTRABAND OPIUM TRAFFIC,

THE

DISTURBING ELEMENT IN ALL OUR POLICY AND
DIPLOMATIC INTERCOURSE WITH CHINA.

BY

MAJOR-GENERAL ALEXANDER.

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THE following Letters were all written and sent to the Newspaper to which they are addressed before the meeting of Parliament. The Editor could only publish them as Parliamentary and other intelligence afforded opportunity and space in his columns. The debates that have taken place in both Houses do not in any way alter or weaken the important question that is at issue, regarding the Opium Monopoly and its consequences; which are substantive evils, to be dealt with according to their own demerits.

It would be manifest injustice to impute the sole blame for the iniquity and impolicy of the opium traffic to any particular individual, or set of statesmen, who have been in power during the present century. Whig or Tory, Liberal or Conservative, Free-Trader or Protectionist, each in succession has received the system as it was before them; and the same may be said of the Directors of the East India Company. I believe that I can trace in the Blue Books and other authentic sources of information, an outline of policy indicated by Lord Palmerston, which, had it not been for the continually disturbing influence of the opium contrabandism, would have maintained a peaceful and highly beneficial intercourse with China. Of Members of the

Court of Directors, and Officers of the East India Company, with whom I have had conversations, and to whom I am indebted for information, I can but say that, whatever may be their views on this subject, whether they agree with me in part, altogether, or not at all,—so far as the best years of a life spent in a country and among a people to whom I am gratefully and sincerely attached, enables me to form a judgment—England has never had a body of gentlemen sitting in Leadenhall Street, among whom there were individuals more capable of administering the affairs of our Eastern Empire, were they entrusted with sufficient power and responsibility for such an important duty.

CONTRABAND OPIUM TRAFFIC.

No. I.

To the Editor of the Morning Advertiser.

SIR,—As this country is, or is about to be, engaged in another war with China, the moral guilt and material expense of which must fall upon the professedly Christian and most really tax-paying population of Great Britain, it may be well to review the policy that led to the former, which is generally known as the opium war, in order that the community may be enabled to bring the powerful influence of sound public opinion to bear upon their representatives in Parliament on the present occasion.

There are already before the public proofs taken, not only from Parliamentary Blue Books and official documents, but from the most unquestionable personal authorities, that the East India Company maintains an illegal monopoly of opium in India, for the sole purpose of indolently raising a smaller revenue where larger might be obtained; and that this revenue is principally derived from the opium sold for the notorious purpose of being smuggled into China, contrary to the laws of that empire.

Additional evidence that the East India Company is illegally engaged in trade will help to bring the subject more clearly before your readers. By an Act of Parliament, 3 and 4 Wm. IV. cap. 85, it was distinctly decreed that the East India Company of Merchants, trading to the East Indies, shall close their commercial affairs, sell all their merchandise and warehouses, and abstain from all commercial business. The charter

under which they had hitherto been privileged to trade was taken from them; and, ceasing to be merchants, they became what now the East India Company is — a Board of Administration for carrying on the government of India, as directed or permitted by the Board of Control. With only a semblance of power for good or evil, the East India Company, as now constituted, is little else than a buffer to bear the odium which should fall upon the Ministers of the Crown for the continuance of monopolies and the cause of unjust war.

Not only is the proof of the East India Company being engaged in trade palpable in the notoriety of the illegal salt and opium monopolies, but it is irrefutably borne out by the evidence of its own officers. Mr. W. Prideaux, holding high and responsible office in the India House, was examined before a Select Committee of the House of Commons on the 3rd of June, 1847; and speaking with reference to a return that had been laid before the House in the preceding session, he stated, “The return is not the value of opium exported, *but of opium sold by the East India Company in Bengal.*” He then shows that of the opium exported from India, roughly estimated at the amount of five or six millions sterling, the quantity “*sold by the East India Company*” amounted to about 2,577,500*l.*; the remainder of the revenue must, therefore, have been derived from the opium grown in independent native states, upon which the East India Company levies a duty of about 40*l.* a chest, in order to keep up the price of their own drug in Bengal. Mr. Prideaux was asked by Mr. Moffatt, M.P., (q. 4670), “Is it your belief that that quantity of opium goes exclusively to China?” and his reply was, “It is all exported; and by far the greater part goes to China.”

Mr. Prideaux was questioned by Mr. Harcourt, M.P., (q. 4679), “Is the amount realised from the opium sold by the Company to be considered as revenue derived by the Company, or does that include the cost?” Answer — “It includes the cost.” And the next question in the Blue Book elicits the cost and sale prices in the East India Company’s illegal traffic; it shows also the amount of revenue derived from the measure of imposing a duty, which, taken separately, may be justified. The simple fact is, that the Indian Government under the East India

Company derives a fiscal *revenue* from a duty on opium grown in foreign states, and a *profit* from the illegal monopoly of, and trade in, the drug produced in its own territories.

Hugh Stark, Esq., Chief of the Revenue department of the India Board, shows the nature of the East India Company's connexion with opium in the following words:—"The opium monopoly exists all over India; the cultivation has been largely extended, with a view of competing in Eastern markets with the opium of Malwa and Turkey. The Company have relaxed in their price of opium; their object is now to sell at a low price, to enable merchants, who buy at the Calcutta sales, to compete with the merchants who procure supplies from Malwa and Turkey, for the China markets;" and Lord W. Bentinck, in a letter to the Court of Directors, dated 21st September, 1830, which was produced before the Parliamentary Committee, in 1840, writes:—"The final effect of an increase beyond assignable limit in the quantity of the drug exported to China, from both sides of India, is a result beyond the power of our foresight to discover, or even at present to hazard any speculation upon." That of which Lord W. Bentinck could not foresee the final effect, has been borne onward by monopoly, until, as Lord Dalhousie shows in his celebrated minute on his administration in India, the revenue in 1856 was anticipated to realise 5,000,000*l.* sterling, which would require an importation, into China, of not less than 120,000 chests of opium.

To put the question still farther beyond dispute, we have the evidence of Mr. Jardine, one of the principal merchants in China, who, when examined before a committee of the House of Commons, in 1840, stated, "In Calcutta the Company's sales are recorded, and there is no difficulty in getting the price-currents; the highest and lowest prices are given, and the average struck by their own servants." Mr. Colquhoun, a member of the committee, asked him, "Have you ever had any communication with the Board of Salt and Opium in Calcutta on the subject?" Answer—"Yes, we have had musters (samples) of opium sent on to us in small quantities, packed in different ways, with a request that we would sell it, ascertain the kind of package that suited the Chinese market best, and report on the same to the board." The correspondence was

official, "signed by the secretary by authority of the board," and, as Mr. Jardine believed, emanating from the Supreme Government of India. There was also laid before the House of Commons that same year extracts from a letter from W. H. Fleming, Esq., formerly a judge of circuit and inspector of opium, in which that gentleman states, "that the system of monopoly, even in a commercial point of view, appears to me beneficial, as being perhaps the only means of ensuring a supply of the pure drug of a uniform quality, and prepared in a particular manner to suit the Chinese, which, if not attended to, would, I apprehend, greatly injure the trade."

Having thus established the *fons et origo malum* in the fact of the East India Company's illegal exercise of monopoly, I shall proceed in other letters to show the consequences that led to the crisis of the first opium war, and give an insight into British diplomatic relations with the Chinese.

I am, Sir, yours, &c.

R. A.

No. II.

SIR,—In the latter years of the last century opium was a legal import to China on payment of a moderate duty, and the drug used for medicinal purposes did not exceed in quantity about 200 chests a-year.

About the year 1773 the East India Company of Merchants entered upon this trade, and, exercising delegated sovereignty in India, they instituted a monopoly of the drug. So rapidly did the importation increase, and so fatal was the use of opium to the morality and prosperity of the Chinese, that in a few years the Emperor made it contraband, and published laws to restrain his subjects from the deleterious use of it. As it has always been a principle of Chinese policy to avoid and forego every claim of jurisdiction over foreigners, even in Chinese territory, while the Emperor and his officers legislated for and punished his own subjects, remonstrances and admonitions only

were addressed to the English authorities, through the channels of communication recognised by both nations. In those days the only British authorities in China were the factors and agents of the East India Company; and as the Company was determined, in spite of remonstrances and expostulations, to push on the contraband trade, the difficulty soon arose of reconciling this with the political good faith to be observed towards a friendly power. The diplomatic course followed by the Company was to ignore and disclaim the trade which their monopoly had so suddenly increased, and by which alone it was sustained. Not a grain of opium was allowed to be taken to China in their own ships; the captains and officers were prohibited, under heavy penalties, from engaging in the traffic; and when they petitioned to be allowed to participate in what afforded such large profits, they received a peremptory refusal of their request. This sufficiently indicates the policy of the East India Company of Merchants, and that they acted under a perfect knowledge of the illegal nature of the opium trade, and of the political embarrassments which were always to be apprehended. The excuses made by the East India Company have been and are, that they do not export opium, nor smuggle it into China, and that the profit upon their illegal monopoly comes in aid of the revenue, and affords relief to their finances. But, *qui facit per alium, facit per se*; and the subterfuges to which I shall show that our diplomatists have been driven, brands our nation with the indelible stigmas of false policy, immorality, cruelty, and deceit.

In order to arrive at subsequent facts, I sketch but an outline of what has been perpetrated in defiance of Chinese laws, and is now carried on in continuous violation of our own Acts of Parliament. In 1840, a Select Committee appointed by the House of Commons to inquire into the trade with China, and *report thereupon*, concluded that important duty with these words:—"Your Committee feel that they shall best discharge their duty by laying before the House, *without any observation on their part*, the evidence which they have taken on the subject;" such evidence having gone largely into the opium question, and the political embarrassments in which it had embroiled us.

In 1847 another Select Committee, appointed to take into consideration the state of our commercial relations with China, did furnish the House with a report upon the subject, from which I extract these passages :—“The difficulties of the trade do not arise from any want of demand in China for articles of British manufacture, or from increasing competition of other nations.” “The payment for opium, from the inordinate desire for it which prevails, and from the unrecognised nature of the transaction, absorbs the silver, to the great inconvenience of the general traffic of the Chinese.”

“Unless we can look forward to an increased consumption of those products in which China has the means of paying, the adjustment (of the balance of trade) can only be made at the cost of largely diminished exports, and of restricted employment to every branch of industry connected with them.”

With regard to Ningpo and Foo-chow-foo, the Committee reports that “the British trade has hitherto proved but trifling. The opium trade, however, flourishes at Foo-chow-foo, with its usual demoralising influences on the population, and embarrassing effects upon the monetary condition of the place; the latter would be diminished by the legalisation of the traffic; the former, we are afraid, are incontestible and inseparable from its existence.” Opposed to the suggested diminution, not entire removal, of a monetary inconvenience, and the continuance of a demoralising traffic, we have the noble declaration of him whom the opium smugglers call the barbarian Emperor of a barbarous nation, that “nothing will induce him to derive a revenue from the vice and misery of his people.”

The expressions of Lords W. Bentinck and Dalhousie do but ill accord with the intentions of Lord Cornwallis, about the time that the monopoly was instituted. That benevolent, but often much mistaken, nobleman, justified the measure on the grounds of a maximum taxation restricting to a minimum the consumption of the drug. Lord Cornwallis seemed to have been as unconscious as many economists of the present day are, of the fallacy that vice will not bear any amount of taxation, so long as you invest it with the sanction of a legal recognition. Licensed gaming-houses on the Continent of Europe, and many places of public entertainment in England, afford a practical illustration

of what is common to every immorality which finds impunity in the protection that is paid for it in taxes or for license.

The vigilance with which the East India Company and its Government watched over the strictness of their monopoly, is exemplified in the following extract of a despatch from the Governor-General of India to the Court of Directors:—"We had anticipated the suggestion contained in the seventh paragraph of your despatch, having already, on the occasion of the importation of a large quantity of Turkish opium, given directions for inserting in the licenses to trade to China a condition that such license shall be void in case any foreign, or other opium than opium sold by the Company at their public sales in Bengal, be laden on board the ship in any part of the voyage, or imported into China on board of it."

In the licenses granted for thus smuggling opium into China there was this clause:—"The East India Company "do hereby require and command all persons within or belonging to this Government, under our jurisdiction, and we do desire all persons that are subjects, friends, and allies to his Majesty, to suffer the said ship to pass," &c. &c.

In my next letter I will enter upon Anglo-Chinese diplomacy.

Yours, &c.

R. A.

No. III.

SIR,—In the year 1833 a Royal Commission was issued to Lord Napier and others, in which were these words:—"And we do further declare our pleasure to be, that one of you the said Superintendants shall be specially charged with the duty of ascertaining, by all practicable ways and means, and with the utmost attainable precision, the state of the trade carried on between our subjects, or the subjects of any other foreign power, with the inhabitants of China, and especially the number of vessels annually arriving . . . from the territories of the said

Company in India, and the tonnage of such vessels . . . and the amount and nature of the goods from time to time imported in such vessels into China . . . together with all material facts illustrative of the course and nature of such trade, and of the difficulties by which the same may be impeded." Again, in section 19:—"And we do require you constantly to bear in mind and impress, as occasion may offer, upon our subjects resident in or resorting to China, the duty of conforming to the laws and usages of the Chinese empire, so long as such laws shall be administered in justice and good faith, and in the same manner in which the laws are or shall be administered towards the subjects of China," &c. In announcing his arrival to the Governor of Canton, Lord Napier, on the 26th of August, 1834, informed that functionary that, "as bearer of a Royal Commission, he was empowered to promote and protect British trade. . . . The exclusive privileges and trade hitherto enjoyed by the East India Company having ceased and determined by the will and power of his Majesty the King and Parliament of Great Britain." Here let me beg that particular attention may be paid to the above extracts, and that they may be carefully remembered as I proceed with my subject.

The short period of Lord Napier's administration in China may be described as of that professional diplomacy which is only admirable in naval officers in times of war, when civil negotiation having ceased, the simplest alternatives are offered, and shortest periods for deliberation allowed. *Veni, vidi*, and Lord Napier summarily proposed, with the help of some frigates and a few hundred British soldiers, to wage a triumphant war with China, and add the *vici*. The Chinese, however, adhered to their laws and usages, to which Lord Napier was instructed to conform, and the British representative, baffled in his endeavours to enforce a change of Chinese policy, and having caused a suspension of all intercourse, was obliged to succumb, and leave Canton before the Chinese would allow legal trade to be resumed.

On the death of Lord Napier, Sir George Robinson assumed the direction of affairs, and he thus described the conduct of our countrymen, in the following extract from a despatch to Lord Palmerston, dated 13th of April, 1835:—"It now becomes a painful but imperative duty to express unfeigned regret at the

dissensions and violent party spirit that has so fatally prevailed, and even now exists to a fearful extent, amongst the commercial community at Canton. Your Lordship will, I feel certain, acquit me of any other feeling save a sense of duty, when I call your attention to the dangerous state of society, and express my conviction that the untoward reception at, and disastrous removal of his Majesty's commission from Canton, was mainly attributable to the bitter party feeling which, I am sorry to assert, reigned at the very moment when general unanimity and cordial co-operation should have aided and strengthened the efforts of its officers."

Sir George Robinson's despatches show that during the time he held office, between the time of Lord Napier's death and the arrival of his successor, Captain Elliott, opium smuggling was the insuperable disturbing element in all our intercourse with China. In writing to Lord Palmerston, from Lintin, on the 10th of December, 1835, about the embarrassment caused by the lawless conduct of British subjects, of whom Sir George says the Chinese "are ever in dread," and with allusion to "innumerable causes of dispute and altercation," he observes, "to one point alone it is possible that their (the Chinese) attention may be attracted, and that is the circumstance of my being in the neighbourhood of the great and increasing emporium of the outside (*i.e.* the contraband opium) trade. In the event of their remarking on this part of the measure, I conceive it will be easy to remove their objections, simply by changing my position to Chuen-pee, the legal and usual anchorage to which the resort of our men-of-war has usually been sanctioned."

Here we have the British representative marking his own position as illegal. He informs Lord Palmerston that he will still remain there, "should no great opposition occur," and informs him that "he has seen upwards of fifty ships assembled here on one occasion," and that there were "between twenty-five and thirty ships, constantly lying here in full and active employment," smuggling opium, for which Lintin was the grand *dépôt*!

Much as the East India Company and Ministers of the Crown wish to keep the opium traffic out of sight, as the cause of our troubles in China, the truth will intrude. Sir George

Robinson, in another despatch, emphatically points out the bane and antidote of Britain's commerce:—"Whenever his Majesty's Government direct us to prevent British vessels engaging in the traffic, we can enforce any order to that effect; but a more certain method would be to prohibit the growth of the poppy and the manufacture of the opium in British India."—Despatch to Lord Palmerston, dated Lintin, Feb. 5th, 1836.

Sir G. Robinson was succeeded by Captain Elliott, who, on the 2nd of February, 1837, wrote thus to the Governor-General of India regarding the opium and general trade at Canton:—"It must be quite unnecessary to press upon your lordship's attention the many extremely important considerations connected with this subject; and I trust I shall be excused for submitting the most hopeful means which suggest themselves to me to draw to a close so disquieting a state of things." The Captain then suggests means very similar to those which his bellicose predecessor had recommended, and in asking for a man-of-war and some Company's cruisers to be sent to his aid, he informs Lord Auckland that "he had solicited the Commander-in-Chief to send a man-of-war to these seas, with instructions to afford such countenance to the general trade as may be practicable *without inconveniently committing his Majesty's Government upon any delicate question,*" or, in plain, undiplomatic English, the very indelicate question of opium smuggling.

In his letter to the Admiral on this occasion, the representative of the Majesty and people of Great Britain is driven to the humiliating necessity of providing an excuse for the appearance of a naval force; so he trumps up the case of a brig that had been plundered two years before by some pirates, out of sight of the roads to which European vessels resorted, "as a plea that I can have no doubt the provincial Government would *find itself obliged to accept!*"

In the first year of his administration, Captain Elliott informed the Minister of the Crown that there was some hope that the importation of opium to China might be legalized, as formerly, for medical purposes, under strict rules and severe penalties; and, though he could not but think that this would afford his Majesty's Government much satisfaction, yet the "fact that such an article should have grown to be by far the

most important part of our import trade is of itself a source of painful reflection ; and the wide-spreading public mischief which the manner of its pursuit has entailed, so ably and faithfully represented in some of the papers I have had the honour to transmit to your lordship, aggravates the discomfort of the whole subject." The papers alluded to as having been transmitted to the Minister of State, were written by the Chinese authorities ; and, so far as they have been published by order of Parliament, they, by the superiority of their commercial, political, and moral arguments, put to shame and confusion the short-sighted policy, shuffling diplomacy, and eventually suicidal expediency by which our national character is so lowered in comparison with the conduct of the Chinese so-called Barbarians. Take an incident in illustration of this : Fifteen British subjects were landed on the coast of China by some mutineers, and abandoned to what might be their fate ; in despatching a man-of-war to their rescue, Captain Elliott feeling, it is to be presumed, the twitches of political conscience, instructs Captain Quin of the Royal Navy :—" But upon this topic I will presume to say that it would be well to avoid those parts of the coast upon which the opium ships are usually anchored." Here there is an ample, though indirect, confession of the guilt of smuggling, of its possibly evil influence even in the cause of common humanity, and of another of its embarrassing effects in our intercourse with the Chinese. Now, mark the contrast between this caution to the captain of a British man-of-war and the report made to Lord Palmerston of the result of the expedition :—" The fifteen people belonging to the late brig *Fairy* were despatched to Canton by the Governor of Fuh-kein, and they were all safely delivered over to my hands by the authorities of this province. Their generous treatment by the Chinese authorities has been in the highest degree honourable to the humanity of this Government, and I have not failed to convey my respectful sense of such conduct to his Excellency the Governor." — Captain Elliott to Viscount Palmerston, August 29th, 1837. At the very time that the Chinese were thus acting, they were addressing remonstrances against the opium-smuggling on the coast of Fuh-kein, and urging Captain Elliott to apply to his Sovereign to prevent it !

In November, 1837, we find, with shame and sorrow, a palpable falsehood addressed to the Chinese, in these words, sent in reply to an edict dated in September:—"He (Captain Elliott) has already signified to your Excellency, with truth and plainness, that his commission extends only to the regular trade with this empire; and further, that the existence of any other than this trade has never yet been submitted to his gracious Sovereign." This paper was written on the 17th of November, and on the 19th of that month Captain Elliott commences a long despatch to Lord Palmerston on the opium trade, commencing thus:—"I now beg leave to resume the subject of my despatch of yesterday's date." He enters fully into details of the opium trade; and after informing Lord Palmerston that "We have now arrived at a stage in the passage of circumstances when it appears necessary that the subject should *once more* be drawn under your lordship's serious attention," he adds, "Setting aside the interference of the mandarins, it is not to be questioned that the passage of this valuable article in small and insignificantly armed vessels affords an intense temptation to piratical attack by the many desperate smugglers out of employment, and by the needy inhabitants of the neighbouring islands. And another Ladrone war directed against Europeans, as well as Chinése, is a perfectly probable event. That the main body of the inward trade (about three-fifths of the amount) should be carried on in so hazardous a manner to the safety of the whole commerce and intercourse with the empire, is a very disquieting subject of reflection. But I have a strong conviction that it is an evil susceptible of easy removal." Both Sir G. Robinson and Captain Elliott had, as we have seen, already indicated this easy removal to be the abolition of the East India Company's illegal monopoly of opium.

Painful as it is to contemplate the above departure from truth, it is remarkable that, however fully the distant representatives of the British Crown enter into the details and circumstances of the opium trade, our more astute diplomatists in this country do not, in any of their replies that have been published, commit themselves to either knowledge or recognition of the fact. In July, 1836, Captain Elliott had warned Lord Palmer-

ston, "Sooner or later, the feeling of independence which the peculiar mode of conducting this branch of the trade has created upon the part of our countrymen in China, will lead to grave difficulties. A long course of impunity will beget hardihood, and at last some gross insult will be perpetrated that the Chinese authorities will be constrained to resent—they will be terrified and irritated, and will probably commit some act of cruel violence that will make any choice but armed interference impossible to our Government." Outrages by the English are smoothed off under the term "gross insult;" but the legal acts of Chinese self-defence, not so cruel as were the laws of this country less than half a century ago, are described as "acts of cruel violence, necessitating the horrors of vindictive war."

I am, Sir, yours, &c.

R. A.

No. IV.

SIR,—On the 20th April, 1838, Captain Elliott addressed the following Report to our Minister for Foreign Affairs:—"In the course of the last two months the number of English boats employed in the illicit traffic between Lintin and Canton has vastly increased, and the deliveries of opium have frequently been accompanied by conflict of fire-arms between these vessels and the Government preventive craft. It is plain that British subjects and property engaged in these pursuits are within easy grasp of the provincial authorities, whenever it may suit their purpose, or they may be driven by the Court to act with vigour. In the edicts forwarded to your lordship in my despatch of November 18, 1837, the Governor had already charged me with countenancing the outside trade; and in the event of disaster there can be no doubt he would immediately connect the growth of these last irregularities with my own departure from Canton."

Bear in mind that the English are the aggressors, and that

their Government has always had the power of putting an end to the smuggling, as now carried on on such a gigantic scale, by the simple abolition of the opium monopoly by which the trade is supplied.

I will continue Captain Elliott's instructive despatch. For, as he writes, "the purpose of being prepared for such devices," as the above, he turns from the subject of trade and smuggling, and enters upon a long-pending controversy about the Chinese word "pin" being written on the envelopes of official letters. Having informed Lord Palmerston of this stroke of diplomacy, he reverts to his ever-present difficulty, the opium smuggling, and proceeds:—"Should any serious disaster ensue, threatening the lives of her Majesty's subjects engaged in these pursuits (and in my judgment this result is perfectly probable), I shall not fail to found the strongest remonstrances against such extreme measures upon the Governor's rejection of these last proposals;" that is, upon the use of the monosyllable "pin," and other points of red-tapery, about which there had been discussion for many years, in which the Chinese were not inclined to make changes, and regarding which Lord Palmerston at last directed Captain Elliott "to avail himself of any proper opportunity to press for the substitution of a less objectionable character on the superscription of communications which you may have to address to the Viceroy." This, therefore, did not involve a *casus belli*, and we learn from a subsequent report that the mighty events which hung upon a "pin" were satisfactorily disposed of, when the British representative reported "that, in return for a substantial concession, I have agreed to incur the responsibility of communicating with his Excellency under the character 'pin.'" And this grand *coup* winds up with a consignment of it to the department of rites, buttons, peacocks' feathers, and points of etiquette.

Now, will it be believed in Great Britain, that up to the outbreak of the opium war there was no authority granted for the control of British subjects in China? no British tribunal or magistracy to which they were amenable, or by which they could be restrained? nor any jurisdiction recognised, but that which was indicated by the Royal Commission, quoted in my last letter? The consequences of this will be apparent as I carry

on my narrative in the historical language, which I take from Parliamentary Blue Books and Reports.

Again, referring to Captain Elliott's despatches, and passing on from the episodic "pin," our diplomatist, forgetful of an old proverb regarding honour, threatens to *peach* or *split* upon the Governor of Canton, for taking the bribes, which our smugglers had so systematically given that they have actually argued that their receipt by corrupted officers is equivalent to a duty paid to the State—another of the many proofs of Chinese barbarism and British integrity in our intercourse with that people.

Ireland was a trifling difficulty to Sir Robert Peel compared with opium smuggling to our representative to the Chinese. Captain Elliott having to contend with such disheartening anomalies, without legal power to act summarily, or organise either judicial, fiscal, or commercial administration, thus touchingly depicts the embarrassments in which he is involved. He had been warned by the Minister of the Crown against assuming authority in criminal cases, and he well knew the storm of vituperation that was ready to crush him if he should allow the most flagrant crime to be adjudicated upon by the Chinese tribunals. On the 2nd of January, 1839, he writes:—"I would with great deference take the liberty to observe, that when I assumed this office, recent Imperial commands were in existence (specially pointed at the British nation) to the effect that no foreign officers should reside in this empire. That chief obstacle has been removed, and . . . it involves a principle of great and comprehensive importance; namely, a permanent and direct official intercourse between the two countries. I shall offer no further excuse for the moderate manner in which I have been content in the present emergency to accept this concession, because I am sure your lordship will make every allowance for the difficulty of peacefully extracting any formal relaxation from this watchful Government.

"These observations, my Lord, may perhaps serve to excuse the respectful request I have now the honour to prefer. I humbly hope that her Majesty's Government (taking into consideration the novel, responsible, and undefined situation I fill,

and casting a thought upon the many embarrassing circumstances which have beset me) would be pleased to determine whether I have a claim to such an expression of support as I may be permitted to publish to the Queen's subjects in this country.

“There is certainly a spirit in active force among British subjects in this country, which makes it necessary for the safety of momentous concerns that the officer on the spot should be known to stand without blame in the estimation of her Majesty's Government; and it is not less needful that he should be forthwith vested with defined and adequate powers for the reasonable control of men whose rash conduct cannot be left to the operation of Chinese laws, without the utmost inconvenience and risk, and whose impunity is alike injurious to British character, and dangerous to British interests.

“It is my deliberate conviction, that the security of the Chinese trade, and the maintenance of our peaceful intercourse with this empire, depend upon the early attention of her Majesty's Government to this subject; and I take this occasion to repeat, that the assent of the Chinese Government to institutions of this kind is beyond all doubt; indeed, your lordship will perceive from the Governor's answer to my note of the 23rd ultimo, that he supposes they either are actually in existence, or, at all events, that they ought to be.”

Captain Elliott, after remarking that it would be difficult to make the Chinese understand that their permission was necessary for British officers and courts to exercise authority over British subjects, which authority they actually thought to be in existence, informs Lord Palmerston—“Your lordship may be assured that the theory is, even when they demand a homicide, that we have already tried and convicted him by our laws.” He then recounts a conversation with one of the Chinese authorities, How Qua, who “referred me with earnestness to the requests which had been made before the Company's monopoly was abolished, to make provision for the government of her Majesty's subjects; and he asked me what more was wanted, and how it was possible to preserve the peace, if all the English people who came to this country were to be left without control. He fur-

thermore entreated me to remind my nation's great Ministers, that this Government never interposed, except in cases of extreme urgency, upon the principle that they were ignorant of our laws and customs, and that it was unjust to subject us to rules made for people of totally different habits, and brought up under a totally different discipline. I must confess, my Lord, that this reasoning seems to me to be marked by wisdom and great moderation ;" a confession in which most men will agree with Captain Elliott, whatever his superiors may have felt on the question.

But that estimable officer's words in conclusion are very emphatic. "In fact, my Lord, if her Majesty's officer is to be of any use for the purposes of just protection—if the well-founded hope of improving things honourable and established is not to be sacrificed to the chances which may cast up by goading this Government into some sudden and violent assertion of its own authority, there is certainly no time to be lost in providing for the reasonable and defined control of her Majesty's subjects in China. I could not have concealed these opinions without betraying my duty to her Majesty's Government and the British public."

In another despatch on the subject of an important dispute which had arisen between the Chinese and English are the following passages:—"The establishment of some simple but efficacious civil jurisdiction would no doubt be a necessary accompaniment of this change of system, and your lordship may, I think, rely, that the Chinese would refer all contested points with her Majesty's subjects to this tribunal, either placing the disputed sum in deposit, or at least giving security that it should be paid, if the decision were adverse to them. I offer these opinions because I am sure the Chinese have great confidence in the good faith of Europeans, and because, too, I believe they are, in many important respects, the most moderate and reasonable people on the face of the earth." Thirteen days after these words were written, Captain Elliott informs Lord Palmerston, by a "hurried opportunity," that "in the meantime, however, there has been no relaxation in the vigour of the Government, directed not only against the introduction of opium, but in a far more remarkable manner against the consumers. A

corresponding degree of desperate adventure on the part of the smugglers is only a necessary consequence; and in this situation of things serious accidents, and sudden and indefinite interruptions to the regular trade, must always be probable events."

I am, Sir, yours, &c.

R. A.

No. V.

SIR, — Enough has, I think, been written to show the true nature of our conduct and diplomacy towards the Chinese. I must hasten to a catastrophe and to a conclusion. For further information, and for facts not stated in these letters, I must refer your readers to a pamphlet published by Judd and Glass, of Paternoster Row, entitled, "The Rise and Progress of British Opium Smuggling," &c.

On the 22d of March, 1839, Captain Elliott reported to the Secretary of State that he had received edicts from High Commissioner Lin, who had been invested with extraordinary powers by the Emperor, for the especial purpose of putting down the opium contraband traffic, and that he, Captain Elliott, having a man-of-war at Macao, "would take the most prompt measures for meeting the unjust and menacing dispositions of the High Commissioner." He had also forwarded a note to know, "whether it was the purpose of the Chinese Government to wage war on the ships and men of my country."

Commissioner Lin's edicts are to be found from pp. 350 to 355 of the correspondence relating to China, laid before Parliament in a Blue Book of 1840, and ought to be read by every Englishman who takes a patriotic interest in the pending crisis. He commences by reminding of the length of time and extent to which legal trade had been carried on, and of the benefits of reciprocity in commerce. He points out the illegality and evil effects of opium smuggling, and proclaims, that as every other measure had failed, as the laws of China were violated, and

edicts, remonstrances, and requests had all been disregarded, he, by order of the Emperor, had come to demand that the opium actually in the dominions of the Emperor, stored at Lintin and other ports, should be delivered up, in order that it might be destroyed, and that the foreigners should give a bond "that their vessels which shall hereafter resort hither will never again dare to bring opium with them," under penalty of amenability to the law and confiscation of the drug.

"I have heard," writes the Commissioner, "that you foreigners are used to attach great importance to the words '*good faith*,'" and, notwithstanding the object of his mission, he proceeds with us as if it was a reality, and promises "that if the English will deliver up the contraband drug, and relinquish for ever the unlawful traffic, he will implore the Emperor to vouchsafe extraordinary favour, and not alone to remit the punishment due to past errors, but also we will further request to devise some method of bestowing on you his Imperial rewards. After this you will continue to enjoy the advantages of commercial intercourse; and as you will not lose the character of being '*good foreigners*,' and be enabled to acquire profits, and gain wealth by an honest trade, will you not stand in a most honourable position?" Lin informs the foreigners that he has an exact account of all the contraband opium, knows the names of its owners and where it is stored, and that he is prepared to discriminate between the foreigners who deal in it and those who trade lawfully. Such was the conduct of a so-called barbarian, and the evidence before Parliament shows that some of the merchants in Canton inferred from the above proclamation, that it was the Commissioner's intention to have petitioned the Emperor to restore the drug after it had been given up, on condition that it should be taken out of the country, and the trade put an end to for ever.

Captain Elliott, in a despatch dated 30th March, 1839, reports:—"Resolved, in any pressure of emergency actually threatening the continued peaceful intercourse of this empire, to incur most heavy responsibilities regarding the ships engaged in this illicit traffic, I had also determined to resist sudden aggression upon British life and British property at all hazards." Captain Elliott, then, without one iota of authority, called upon the smugglers to give up their opium to him, and pledged his

Government to indemnify their loss. To carry this out he had come up from Macao to Canton, and having placed himself under the embargo placed upon his countrymen for violating the laws of the empire, he addressed to them these words:—"The justification of this immense responsibility will need more full development than it would be desirable, or indeed practicable, to make in my present condition. I am without doubt, however, that a great mass of human life hung upon my determination; for if I had commenced with a denial of my control over the subjects of Great Britain, the High Commissioner would have seized that pretext for reverting to his measures of intimidation against individual merchants, obviously the original intention, but which my sudden appearance had disturbed."

If tenacity to rank and emoluments is considered justificatory of all the degradation through which a member of our diplomatic disservice must struggle, it may seem hard to hold the Captain too strictly responsible for the particular plank to which he might cling amidst such a shipwreck of national honour, commercial interests and honesty, and Christian morality. The representative of our country chose his difficulty, though warned by a friend that he was acting without authority. He stepped between the Chinese and their just dealings with the smugglers, and engaged to indemnify the latter for the loss that Lord Palmerston had before warned them they would have to bear if ever it should occur. *Vide* his lordship's despatch, dated 18th June, 1838.

When the news of these events reached England, so great was the doubt that the Government would recognise Captain Elliott's assumed responsibility, that his bills for payment of the opium fell to a heavy discount, and their holders were driven to great exertions to insure their being honoured. In an ably written anonymous pamphlet, the author, who was evidently a merchant in or connected with China, thus argues with much apparent justice:—"On the other hand, it is not asserted that no moral responsibility attaches to a participation in a traffic of evil consequences to the morals of the people among whom it is carried on. This is a question into which the present claimants have no occasion to enter, great as are the prejudices existing against them on no other grounds. The parties primarily con-

cerned in keeping such a traffic alive are the consumer and the producer, and upon them, if conscious agents in the matter, the higher degree of responsibility may well be supposed to rest." And Mr. Jardine informed the House of Commons, "when the East India Company were growing and selling it, and there was a declaration of the Houses of Parliament, with all the bench of bishops at their back, that it was inexpedient to do it away, I think our moral scruples need not have been very great."

I am, Sir, yours, &c.

R. A.

No. VI.

SIR,—Sir John Bowring is, though more concise, hardly more clear in exposing the injustice of battering down Canton and slaughtering its unwarlike inhabitants, because the police had taken Chinese pirates out of a Chinese vessel, lying in a Chinese river, than is Captain Elliott in his history of our national proceedings, which has been laid before your readers in his own words.

I shall make but one more quotation, which will be a fitting pendant to the instructions to Capt. Quin, R.N.; to the Pin controversy; to the denial of the existence of opium smuggling being known to the sovereign power of England; and to the bullying note demanding to know whether Commissioner Lin, when he, in terms as friendly as could well be used, demanded the contraband drug to be quietly given up, "intended to make war upon the ships and people of his country?" Finding that Lin was not to be frightened, we have the representative of the majesty, honour, and dignity of Great Britain, eating the words of one of his own haughty, overbearing communications in the following very edifying specimen of Ancient Pistol-ism:—

"Elliott, &c. sincerely anxious to fulfil the pleasure of the Great Emperor, as far as it may be in his power, and as soon as may be authentically made known to him, requests that your Excellency will be pleased to depute an officer to visit him this

day, to the end that all matters may be peaceably adjusted. And if Elliott is left at liberty to communicate with the men and ships of his nation at Whampoa, he will solemnly pledge himself, that he will take care that they do not repair to the provincial city, under the apprehension that he and all the people of his nation are prisoners and without food, thus producing conflict and disturbance.

“Elliott, therefore, moves your Excellency to let the native servants return to their occupations, to permit the supply of provisions, and to remove all the barriers from before the factories. By such means, confidence and tranquillity will be restored in the minds of all men, both native and foreign.

“Elliott has, in all respects, since he filled the station of superintendent, manifested his earnest desire to keep the peace, and fulfil the pleasure of your Excellency; and, as an officer of his country, he now asks for reasonable treatment for himself and all the men of his nation, and claims your Excellency’s confidence in his peaceful dispositions on this occasion of perilous jeopardy.

“It may sometimes happen, when Elliott addresses your Excellency concerning affairs, that unsuitable terms find place in his communications; and whenever that be the case, he entreats your Excellency to believe that the circumstance is attributable to the want of perfect familiarity with the native language, and never to any intention to manifest disrespect to the high officers of his Government, which would expose him to the severe displeasure of his own Sovereign.

“And he has now to request that your Excellency will be pleased to return him the address he submitted this morning.

“With highest consideration, &c.

(Signed) “CHARLES ELLIOTT.”

Now, would it be believed if unseen, that by the last paragraph the British representative withdrew a note of the same date, demanding that passports should be given for all English ships and persons to leave Canton, and that if in three days that was not done, this same respectful Elliott, without consideration for the pleasure of the Great Emperor, or for the high officers of his Government, “would be reluctantly driven to the conclusion that the men and ships of his nation are forcibly detained, and would act accordingly?”

I have thus endeavoured to bring before the public facts from our parliamentary records which are of importance at the present crisis, and may assist in the formation of sound opinion regarding our intercourse with China, and the butchery and devastation with which its inhabitants are threatened.

The Chinese have faithfully carried out their part of the treaty, by the cession of Hong-Kong, and by opening four ports fully to legal trade, in every one of which our smugglers are importing opium, contrary to the treaty; there is an imperfect fulfilment of the treaty at Canton, where we have free opportunity to trade, but not access to the city, outside of which our factories and dwellings are conveniently situated. This state of things arises from the hatred which the inhabitants bear to the English, the cause of which is, I think, made evident by Captain Elliott and other diplomatists. For peace sake, and to avoid any interruption to legal commerce, Sir George Bonham had amicably condoned with the Governor of Canton, that that part of the treaty should remain in abeyance; and there most certainly is now no reason why we make a pretext, as frivolous and unjust in itself as it is dreadful in its consequences, to carry by force of arms what is open to friendly negotiation and justifiable pressure. China has its faults, and its exclusive system is far behind European ideas of international intercourse; but on a fair comparison with the passport regulations of the Continent, that empire is hardly more behind Russia, France, Austria, and Italy, than those countries fall short of our free ingress and egress; and yet we do not dream of destroying Cronstadt, Cherbourg, Trieste, or Civita Vecchia, because the policy of their sovereigns is less liberal than our own.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

R. A.