

Kwei-tsing's assurance that they would be down by the 18th of August, was given, I imagine, to prevent the possibility of Lord Elgin's returning to the Peiho.

The Decree he forwarded was dated the 15th of July. The prescribed time for an official journey of the distance is fifty-five days. This would have brought the Commissioners to Shanghai by the 10th of September. I presume Ho chose a middle path, for safety's sake.

I attribute the Commissioners' delay of their departure from Peking, or their loitering by the way, to the one cause—the fears of the Government, that when the Commissioners had declared their errand we might revisit the Peiho. We knew from the Gazette that the forts were being re-built—this of course was in itself no matter of surprise; that timber was purchased to stake the river, at which we could not either be astonished; but, lastly, and this is noteworthy, that these operations were conducted under the special authority of Sung-ko-lin-sin, a Mongolian prince, allied by marriage to the Imperial family, distinguished as the conqueror of the rebels on the occasion of the Tai-ping incursion into Chih-li, in 1853-54, and appointed during our stay at Tien-tsin, High Commissioner of War, and Commander-in-Chief of a force stationed at Tungchow to cover the capital should we advance upon it. It is also important that his labours had proceeded with such rapidity, that by the 21st November he was enabled to report the completion of the works on the Tien-tsin river; for which service, by a decree of the above date, he was awarded a surcoat of honour.

My impression is confirmed, by all that has since occurred, that the arrival of the Commissioners was delayed purposely, until the river defences were in a state of forwardness. For, once more, they were coming not to revise the tariff, but, as the Canton letter states, and their own correspondence presently shows, to discuss modification if not abrogation of three important privileges which distinguished our Treaty from any other, to wit—the residence of a Minister at Peking, circulation of British merchants in the interior, and the navigation of the Great River; also to require the rendition of Canton.

Ho Kwei-tsing, as in duty bound, went to meet the Senior Commissioners as they entered his jurisdiction; and the statement in the Canton letter that it was on the strength of his representations, supported by those of his provincial Treasurer Wang, that they were led to modify materially the course prescribed by their instructions, is borne out not only by the gossip of the period, but by a communication subsequently made by an indisputable authority, which I do not feel at liberty to name, that they had come down charged to make war rather than concede the permanent residence of a Minister. The words stated to have been used by Ho, when remonstrating against such policy, were "that war would be absolute madness." I confess that, with some faith in the narrator, I believed him at the time he stated this, guilty of a simple exaggeration, *à la Chinoise*.

It must not be forgotten that throughout the whole of this period, from June to October, affairs in the south were in a condition that augured ill for peace.

Long after the Treaty was signed, Hwang, and a committee of three Cantonese of high standing in the class we style "the gentry," who held an Imperial Commission for the enlistment and control of Militia, were persisting in acts of war. After the tactics of 1856 and 1857, when Yeh was in power, the native servants were called home from Hong-Kong, and the supplies of that

colony in effect cut off by semi-official Committees, established in the adjacent districts. Soldiers of the Canton garrison were kidnapped and assassinated. A Proclamation, under Hwang's seal, offered a high reward for Mr Parkes' head.

Even so late as the 22d August Hwang had supported the Special Committee in its war-taxation, on the ground that though a Treaty had been concluded at Tien-tsin, he knew not its conditions, and that it was as necessary as ever to be ready for banditti.

I see no reason to doubt, when we read the Emperor's Decree of the 21st October, in which he rejects the Commissioners' censure of Hwang and the Committee, that the Court was encouraging the latter to persevere in their attempt to expel the allies from Canton, where, by Treaty they were to remain till the indemnity agreed to was paid.

The Commissioners arrived at last on the 6th October. They had been duly apprised of the dissatisfaction occasioned by the tardiness of their movements; and having first apologized, in a private note, for not visiting Lord Elgin until the ostensible business of their mission, the tariff revision was *en train*, they dispatched an official letter, in a most conciliatory strain, to beg Lord Elgin to appoint deputies who might meet their own, for the revision of the tariff. The officers they named were Wang, the Commissioner of Finance, chief civilian of the province, and Sieh, for the three years previous Taoutae or Intendant at Shanghai, one of the few Chinese I have met, who, notwithstanding much ignorance and prejudice still remaining, really appreciate the power and probity of the foreigner, or who appear soberly to contemplate, without abatement of pride in their own country, the possibility of utilising barbarian ability to her advantage. He had been named to the Commissioners by Lord Elgin at Tien-tsin.

Lord Elgin met their proposals by demanding first, an acknowledgment of two letters written early in September, complaining of proceedings in the south, and still unnoticed.

Their reply was pacific enough; they excused Hwang's ignorance on the grounds of the distance from Peking; his hostile attitude as not being assured of our intention; and volunteered to proclaim that peace had been negotiated with England, France, America, and Russia.

It does not appear, for all that was promised on the subject, that even this meagre notice, which promulgated none of the conditions of the peace, was ever published elsewhere. At Canton, indeed, the High Committee's Militia continued to annoy the foreign garrison until January, when one of their positions at Shek-tsin was destroyed. The garrison were then made to patrol the neighbourhood, the result of which measure was a speedy restoration of order.

The Commissioners' overtures did not yet satisfy Lord Elgin. He took them to task for having allowed near four months to elapse without making known the existence of a Treaty; and he demanded the removal of Hwang, and the dissolution of the Imperial Committee, before he could consent to go into the tariff at all. This line of action of course greatly perplexed the Commissioners. As Chinese statesmen they would be slow to comprehend why the barbarian should postpone commercial considerations to any other, and they hastened to soothe him accordingly. They had already, they said, denounced Hwang, and would again denounce him, praying the Emperor, at the same time, to withdraw their powers from the Committee. Lord Elgin on this engaged, if they would promise to communicate to him the Imperial rescript to their memorial, to commence the discussion of the tariff, and this