

which would be raised under the new Treaties. Lastly, they prayed for some settlement of the duties owing under the provisional system adopted during the occupation of Shanghai by the rebels in 1853 and 1854.

These letters had been sent in but a day or two before Lord Elgin's departure, and he, consequently, had delayed replying to them until his return. On receipt of the Canton intelligence, he recommenced correspondence by an inquiry whether the promised decree removing Hwang had been obtained. The Commissioners sent him a decree of the 21st October, acknowledging their denunciation of Hwang, "for conduct calculated to produce mischief;" defending him, however, as having acted on the offensive only until the Treaty was concluded; defending the Committee as simply engaged in keeping the peace; and concluding with the observation that it would be for the Emperor himself to deal with Hwang should he have committed himself since the Treaty was signed.

The Commissioners must have received this rebuff before Lord Elgin left Shanghai, but were doubtless in no haste to show how their advice had been relished by their master.

Before their reply had reached him, Lord Elgin had answered their circular of the 7th November. I need notice but two items of his answer. He undertook most readily to guarantee that every precaution would be taken to prevent the abuse of the passport system by British subjects. At the close of his letter, he replied to their remark that their queries had been put by reason of their ignorance of foreign affairs, by observing that the most evident remedy of this defect would be, in sending a Chinese Legation to England.

The Commissioners rejoined at length, but noticeably about passports, which, they observed, the Consuls would have to apply for to the Chinese authorities, to whom they must be, in due time, surrendered to be cancelled.

This was on the 14th. On the same day, Lord Elgin had written to express his serious dissatisfaction at Hwang's continuance in office. He would now call on the Commissioners to settle the indemnity in strict accordance with the provisions of the Separate Article, or, as instructed by Her Majesty's Government, he would eject the Chinese authorities from Canton.

A very crestfallen answer followed from the Commissioners. They had done their best. The Emperor alone could decide. The Canton question they had not had time to settle since Lord Elgin's return.

On the 20th of January, Lord Elgin, having received news of the Shek-ting affair, wrote again. He reviewed his correspondence with the Commissioners since their arrival in October. He was now convinced that Canton was to them a question *ultra vires*; he should, therefore, desire our executive there to act with vigour, and when the ratifications were exchanged, the Emperor should be asked whether things at Canton had been done with or without his authority.

The Commissioners wrote to assure him that Hwang should now certainly be removed and the Special Committee dissolved; but Lord Elgin, inclosing them a copy of the letter forwarded by Mr. Parkes, announced his intention to proceed himself to Canton. On his return to Shanghai in the course of six weeks, should he not find the Commissioners there, he would proceed to Peking.

The Commissioners wrote, roundly abusing Hwang and the Committee. The Emperor's decree must arrive in three weeks. In the interim all pending questions could be discussed. They were quite competent to deal with the Canton question. They prayed him to remain.

Lord Elgin was inexorable. The conditions of

the Canton question, he wrote, 25th of January, were specified in the Treaty. Had the Emperor chosen that the Commissioners should close it, he would have given them the requisite powers. They had not kept faith about Canton. They had promised months before to effect an improvement there. None had been effected. He would himself enforce a better order of things. This done he would return to discuss whatever remained for consideration; peaceably or otherwise, as the Chinese Government might see fit.

Lord Elgin then departed, and on the 14th of February the Commissioners forwarded a decree, not, indeed, removing Hwang from the Governor-Generalship, but still transferring his seal of Imperial Commissioner for the Superintendence of Foreign Trade to Ho Kwei-ting.

This decree was, doubtless, shaped so as to save the Imperial dignity. The Emperor would not disgrace the Governor-General (who has since been transferred to Sze-chuen), under pressure, and his choice of Ho, as Hwang's substitute, he had reason to believe would soothe us.

I have gone thus at length into this section of the correspondence, from October to January, to show with what reluctance the Chinese Government took a minimum of action against an officer notoriously corrupt, and flagrantly tyrannical in his jurisdiction, and denounced by the highest in the land for a course of foreign policy prejudicial to the interests of peace. My conviction is, that the Government, or, to take a hint from the opening clause of the Canton letter, that portion of it which had the credit of establishing the Special Committee, and authorizing its operations, never abandoned the notion of recovering Canton until their defeat at Shek-ting, a village near Canton, and other movements of the allied force broke the spirit of the militia.

It is also my impression, however contradictory the statement may appear, that the strong language held to the Commissioners by Lord Elgin throughout this period, while it deterred them from attempting any of the changes I am persuaded they were sent southward to effect, enabled them at the same time to hold their own with the Emperor by representing the impossibility of retracting what he is assumed to have required from people so violent and determined.

His withdrawal of the seal from Hwang was probably balanced somewhat in the Emperor's mind by the opportunity afforded him of declaring in his Decree, that our accounts from Canton (of kidnapping, assassination, &c.) surprised him much, as, in the "soothing and bridling" of foreign nations, China had never been treacherous.

Lord Elgin acknowledged the receipt of their last letter on the 3rd of March. He therein told the Commissioners of the appointment of his successor, charged with the ratified copy of the Treaty, to be exchanged at Peking, and of his own immediate departure for England. He communicated to them the consent of Her Majesty's Government to make the British Minister's residence at Peking but occasional, on the conditions before recited; and, bidding them farewell, reminded them that peace was only to be kept unbroken by a strict observance of the Treaty—by a mutual recognition of the equality of nations, between whom, he took occasion to remark, there could be no such relation as that implied in the words "soothing and bridling."

The Commissioners received this on the 29th of March. They made no move north, notwithstanding; on the contrary, on learning Mr. Bruce's arrival, they moved from Soo-chow, where they had spent the new year, to Shanghai.

Mr. Bruce's despatch to Kweiliang, of the 16th May, announcing his arrival, and requesting that