

spot, who maintained, as on the former day, that they had closed the passage of the river without the orders of Government, had not, as they had promised, removed, but, on the contrary, had greatly multiplied the obstacles in the way of a free passage, he gave notice to the Intendent of Tien-tsin that his squadron would remain at the mouth of the river while Mr. Bruce was at Pekin; he, therefore, wishes his men to land to purchase supplies. The Intendent only opposes their landing lest they should lose themselves in winding paths, amongst the camps and field-works which, he says, abound along the way between Ta-koo and Tien-tsin. He says nothing of the Government's objection to leave the river open, and he does say that the defences he alludes to are not to our address.

All this while no official, the militia and peasantry on shore affirm, is near the spot. Mr. Ward, the American Minister, is told the same story by the same people on the evening of the 24th; the batteries appear deserted until the following forenoon, when, as the foremost gun boat, according to notice given the previous evening by Admiral Hope, attempts to pass the booms, they pour forth a fire from seventy guns, which for strength and direction is without precedent in our annals of Chinese warfare. Still no official appears at Taku. On the other hand, Hang, the Governor-General of the province, does send a letter to Mr. Bruce, from a point some ten miles up the coast. It is dated the 23rd, but does not reach him till the 25th.

Now Mr. Bruce's letter of the 9th, which had electrified the Commissioners, was to reach Pekin in nine days—say before the 20th. We know, by experience, that communications between Taku and Pekin do not take more than twenty-four hours. The Court, if it were prepared to disavow the hostile act of the Taku garrison, must have forgotten that it could hardly, under the circumstances, plead ignorance of the great danger of a collision between the large force it had placed, months before, at Taku, and a foreign squadron which had now been waiting since the 16th to have the river opened for the British Minister's admission. If it were *bona fide* intent on the preservation of peace, why should no official have presented himself to the Admiral at Taku? or why should the only move of the character of a pacific overture been made at the eleventh hour, by a circuitous route and with a want of alacrity at first sight inexplicable? For the despatch had been the best part of two days coming ten miles.

It invites Mr. Bruce to wait for the arrival of Kweiliang and his colleague, promising him that when he, Hang, shall have moved to the southward the garrison and armament of the position from which he writes, he will come out to welcome him to the place, Peh-tang-Ho by name, a port, if it deserve the designation, which the Americans found in a few days was doubtfully accessible even to a ship's boat.

I feel satisfied that, our object considered, the fulfilment of the Treaty, not in the letter but in the spirit, we should make a mistake in approaching the capital otherwise than by its recognised highway. I do not see that the Americans can refuse to proceed to Pekin by Peh-tang-Ho, or by any less desirable route; Article V of their Treaty imposing on them almost all the restrictions which it is the very aim of our Articles III and IV to withstand. The American Minister may visit Pekin once a year, with 20 people for a suite; he is to give intimation of his approach through the Board of Rites; and is to complete his business without unnecessary delay; he will be held, as I have before hinted, by the Government and people

of China, at precisely the same value as a Lew-chewan or Siamese Envoy. This, some will say, is of little consequence. It is at least of this much, that little attention will be paid to the representations of an officer who takes so low a place, and it is only by insuring the attention which must be yielded when the question of equality is no longer in dispute, that we can hope for a peaceable settlement of misunderstanding with a people whose bigotry, arrogance, and insincerity are kept in check only by their fears.

To close observations which have greatly outrun their intended length, I am persuaded that its aversion to concede, even limited by the three privileges so often alluded to, is what has betrayed the Chinese Government into an act of war, which, with its usual pusillanimity, it was prepared to disavow had its forces suffered defeat. It has never accepted the changes forced upon it—the novelty, in the sense in which Western nations understand it. It was ready, *more suo*, to fend off those without fighting, and the Commissioners were, I make no doubt, to detain us at Shanghai under one pretext or another, until the year was so far spent that we might be induced, in our greed for commercial advantages, to accept an exchange of ratifications at Shanghai. Foreign relations, which in Chinese are simply synonymous with a Superintendence of Trade, would then have been handed over to Ho, whose “soothing and bridling” we are evidently assumed to prefer, and the great gain of the Treaty, the one means of preventing local misunderstandings, viz., the right of appeal to the Central Government against the acts of its subordinates, would, in default of precedent, have been as much in abeyance as though it had never been concluded.

Diplomacy failing, the Government still veiled its readiness for war—possibly from doubt in its powers, perhaps in the hope of taking us more completely unawares.

Mr. Hart's interesting memorandum on Sungko-lin-sin's temper and arrangements, together with Mr. Mongan's information on the same head, are more or less corroborated by the junkmen who lay off the Peiho, lamenting grievously the interruption of their trade.

It must be noted in qualification of Sungko-lin-sin's prowess, and of the Court's resolution, that his victory was not adopted by the Government for some four or five days: at the end of which time the forts first showed the flags of five out of the eight banners under which the Tartar force is enrolled.

Since my return to Shanghai I have learned that many Chinese ascribe the collision altogether to Sungko-lin-sin, and entirely acquit the Emperor. They represent him as unable to restrain the Mongol, who, on learning that the Emperor was decidedly opposed to overt hostility, declared that, at all events, he would not admit the barbarian by way of Tien-tsin. The statement is very possibly the truth; it corresponds, more or less, with the report brought by M. Mouly from Pekin. It would consist perfectly with the timid treachery of the Chinese Government that, having placed its responsibility, as it hoped, *à couvert*, by withdrawing its official presence from the scene, it should bide the issue of a course which, if unsuccessful, it was thus armed to condemn; and with the short-sightedness which, in my opinion, distinguishes its policy, that it should overlook the more terrible consequence of a success such as that it has obtained.

(Signed) THOMAS WADE,
Chinese Secretary.