THE OPIUM QUESTION WITH CHINA IN 1840

We claim attention from the public on the state of our relations present and to come with China. We pretend to no private materials upon the subject; but in this respect we stand upon the same footing as the leaders of our public counsels. All speak from the text furnished to them by Captain Elliot’s correspondence, as published in the newspapers. So far we stand upon the universal level. But it is astonishing how much advantage one man may gain over another, even where all start from the same basis of infor-

1 Appeared in Blackwood’s Magazine for June 1840 under the title of “The Opium and the China Question.” For the authentication of the paper as De Quincey’s, see footnote ante, p. 146. The occasion and circumstances will be sufficiently explained by the following dated notes from Irving’s “Annals of our Time”:—April 15, 1839.—“The Imperial Commissioner Lin issues an edict, addressed to foreigners, prohibiting the importation of opium into Chinese ports under severe penalties.” April 15.—“Captain Elliot and several British merchants imprisoned at Canton by Commissioner Lin.” May 4.—“The opium in the British factories at China having been all delivered up, Captain Elliot, with some difficulty, obtains the release of the merchants and others held in confinement under the orders of Commissioner Lin.” May 24.—“Captain Elliot and the British merchants leave Canton.” Nov. 6.—“H.M. frigates Volage and Hyacinth attacked by a squadron of twenty-eight Chinese junks at Hong Kong. The effects of our shots were soon visible, one junk having blown up,” &c. Dec. 6.—“Edict of Emperor of China putting an end to British trade: last servant of East India Company leaves.” Jan. 5, 1840.—“Edict of Emperor of China termin-
mation, simply by these two differences—1st, by watching the oversights of his competitors, most of whom are apt to seize upon certain features of the case with an entire neglect of others; 2dly, by combining his own past experience, gathered from books or whatever sources, with the existing phenomena of the case, as the best means of deciphering their meaning or of calculating their remote effects.

We do not wish to disguise that our views tend to the policy of war—war conducted with exemplary vigour. It is better to meet openly from the first an impression (current amongst the hasty and undistinguishing) that in such views there is a lurking opposition to the opinions of the Conservatives. Were that true, we should hesitate. It is a matter of great delicacy to differ with one's party; and it is questionable whether, even in extreme cases, it can be right to publish such a difference. Once satisfied that the general policy of our party is clamorously demanded by the welfare of the country,—and in this particular case of the Tory pretensions finding them sustained by the very extraordinary fact that even out of office they are not out of power, but do really impress the Conservative mind upon one-half of the public measures, whilst of the other half a large proportion

"repress the opium trade, he concludes by an abstract of the new law about to be put in force: "Any foreigner bringing opium to the Celestial Land with a design to sell the same, the principals shall most assuredly be decapitated and the accessories strangled, and all property found on board the ship shall be confiscated. The space of a year and a half is granted within which, if any bringing opium by mistake shall voluntarily deliver the same, he shall be absolved from all consequences of the crime." April 24.—"Meeting in the Freemasons' Hall, Earl Stanhope in the chair, to petition Parliament against the continuance of the Opium War." It was at this commencement of that memorable war with China of 1840-42 which led to the re-establishment of British commerce with China on more favourable conditions and on a wider scale than ever before that De Quincey contributed his article to Blackwood. Not only was public opinion divided on the question of the legitimacy of a war originating in the opium-traffic, but the relations of the two Parliamentary parties to each other had been considerably perplexed by the recent events. It was in the Whig Ministry of Lord Melbourne that the British opium had been surrendered and the war had begun: what was to be the attitude of the Conservatives for the moment, and what their policy for the future? De Quincey's article was an exposition of what he thought the proper attitude and the proper policy.—M.
is carried only by their sufferance, by their forbearance, or by their direct co-operation,—under such circumstances an honourable party-man will not think himself justified, for any insulated point of opinion or even of practice, to load his party with the reproach of internal discord. Every party, bound together by principles of public fellowship, and working towards public objects, is entitled to all the strength which can arise from union, or the reputation of union. It is a scandal to have it said "You are disunited—you cannot agree amongst yourselves"; and the man who sends abroad dissentient opinions through any powerful organ of the press is the willing author of such a scandal. No gain upon the solitary truth concerned can balance the loss upon the total reputation of his party for internal harmony.

Meantime, as too constantly is the case in mixed questions, when there is much to distinguish, it is a very great blunder to suppose the Conservative party to set their faces against a Chinese War. That party, with Sir Robert Peel for their leader, have in the House of Commons recorded a strong vote against our recent Chinese Policy: so far is true; but not against a Chinese War. Such a war, unhappily, is all the more necessary in consequence of that late policy,—a policy which provided for nothing, foresaw nothing, and in the most pacific of its acts laid a foundation and a necessity that hostilities should redress them.

There is another mistake current—a most important mistake: viz. about the relation which the Opium Question bears to the total dispute with China. It is supposed by many persons that, if we should grant the Chinese Government to have been in the right upon the opium affair, it will follow of course that we condemn the principle of any war or of any hostile demonstrations against China. Not at all. This would be a complete non sequitur. I. China might be right in her object, and yet wrong, insufferably wrong, in the means by which she pursued it. In the first of the resolutions moved on the 2d of May by the Company of Edinburgh Merchants (Mr. Oliphant chairman) it is assumed that the opium lost by the British was a sacrifice to the "more effectual execution of the Chinese laws"; which is a gross fiction. The opium
was transferred voluntarily by the British; on what understanding is one of the points we are going to consider. II. There is a causa belli quite apart from the opium question; a ground of war which is continually growing more urgent; a ground which would survive all disputes about opium, and would have existed had China been right in those disputes from beginning to end.

Yet it is good to pause for a moment, and to look at this opium dispute so far as the documents give us any light for discussing it. The apologists of China say that the Pekin Government has laboured for some time to put down the national abuse of opium. Why, and under what view of that abuse? As a mode of luxury, it is replied, pressing upon the general health, and, for a second reason, as pressing seriously upon the national energies. This last we put down in candour as a separate consideration; because, though all unwholesome luxuries must be supposed indirectly to operate upon the cheerfulness and industry of those who use them, with respect to opium in particular it must be allowed that this secondary action is often the main one, and takes place in a far larger proportion than simply according to the disturbances of health. There is a specific effect known to follow the habitual use of opium, by which it speedily induces a deadly torpor and disrelish of all exertion, and in most cases long before the health is deranged, and even in those constitutions which are by nature so congenially predisposed to this narcotic as never to be much shaken by its uttermost abuse.

Thus far, and assuming all for truth which the Chinese tell us, we have before us the spectacle of a wise and paternal Government; and it recommends such wisdom powerfully to a moral people like ours that we seem to see it exerting itself unpopularly,—nobly stemming a tide of public hatred, and determined to make its citizens happy in their own despite. Fresh from this contemplation of disinterested virtue, how shocked we all feel on seeing our own scamps of sailors working an immense machinery for thwarting so beneficent a Government! A great conflagration is undermining all the social virtues in China; the Emperor and Commissioner Lin are working vast fire-engines for throwing water upon the flames; and, on the other hand, our people are discharging
columns of sulphur for the avowed purpose of feeding the combustion!

"Scandalous!" we all exclaim; but, as the loveliest romances are not always the truest, let us now hear the other party. Plaintiff has spoken; Defendant must now have his turn.

For the defendant then it is urged:—

That the Chinese Government, having long connived at the opium trade, has now found three purely selfish reasons against it.

1st, As having at length a rival interest of its own.—Lin and others are said to have some thousands of acres laid down as poppy plantations. Now, the English opium, and that of Malwa, as an old concern, is managed much more cheaply. To exclude the foreign growth is essential, therefore, as the first step towards a protection to the infancy of the home growth. On this view of the case we would recommend a sliding duty, such as that of our corn laws, to the Celestial opium-growers.

2dly, That this foreign opium caused a yearly drain of silver.—From the small range of Chinese commerce, it is impossible for China to draw upon foreign states; much of the imports must now be paid for in hard downright silver,—which is the more disgusting as formerly the current of silver ran precisely in the other direction.

3dly, That the English have become objects of intense jealousy at the court of Pekin.—Indeed, it is time for that Cabinet to look about with some alarm, were it only that a great predominating power has arisen in India—a conquering power and a harmonizing power where heretofore there was that sort of balance maintained amongst the many Indian principalities which Milton ascribes to the anarchy of Chaos: one might rise superior for a moment, but the restlessness of change, and the tremulous libration of the equipoise, guaranteed its speedy downfall. Here, therefore, and in this English predominance, is cause enough for alarm; how much more since the war against Nepaul, in virtue of which the English advance has pushed forward the English outposts within musket-range of the Chinese, and against the Burman Empire, in virtue of which great interposing masses
have been seriously weakened? It is become reasonable that China should fear us; and, fearing us, she must allowably seek to increase her own means of annoyance, as well as to blunt or to repel ours. Much of ours must lie in the funds by which we support our vast Indian establishment; and towards those funds it is understood that the opium trade contributes upwards of three millions sterling per annum. In mere prudence, therefore, the Cabinet of Pekin sets itself to reduce our power by reducing our money resources, and to reduce our money resources by refusing our opium.

Such are the three reasons upon which it has been alleged that Lin and his master have been proceeding. And now, if it were so, what has any man to say against these reasons? Have not nations a right to protect their own interests? Is the path of safety not open to them because it happens to lead away from British objects? Why, as to that, measures are not always allowable in a second or third stage of intercourse which might have been so in the first. But for the present we meditate no attack on these measures. Let them be supposed purely within the privilege of a defensive policy. Only let us have things placed on their right footing, and called by their right names; and let us not be summoned to admire, as acts of heroic virtue which put to shame our Christianity, what under this second view appears to be a mere resort of selfish prudence.

But, then, is it certain that this second view of the case is the correct view? Why, we have before acknowledged that documents are wanting for either view: any inference, for or against the Chinese, will be found too large for the premises. The materials do not justify a vote either of acquittal or of impeachment; but, as this is so, let us English have the benefit of this indistinctness in the proofs equally with the Chinese. So much, at the very least, is fair to ask, and something more; for, upon the face of this Chinese solicitude for the national virtue, some things appear suspicious. Nemo repente fuit turpissimus, Nobody mounts in a moment to the excess of profligacy; and it is equally probable that Nemo repente fuit sanctissimus. This sudden leap into the anxieties of
parental care is a suspicious fact against the Chinese Government.

Then, again, is it, or can it be, true that in any country the labouring class should be seriously tainted by opium? Can any indulgence so costly as this have struck root so deeply as to have reached the subsoil of the general national industry? Can we shut our eyes to this gross dilemma? Using much opium, how can the poor labourer support the expense,—using little, how can he suffer in his energies or his animal spirits? In many districts of Hindostan, as well as of the Deccan, it is well known that the consumption of opium is enormous: but amongst what class? Does it ever palpably affect the public industry? The question would be found ludicrous. Our own working class finds a great providential check on its intemperance in the costliness of intoxicating liquors. Cheap as they seem, it is impossible for the working man (burdened with average claims) to use them to excess, unless with such intervals as redress the evil to the constitution. This stern benediction of Providence, this salutary operation of poverty, has made it impossible for one generation to shatter the health of the next. Now, for the opium-eater this counteracting provision presses much more severely. Wages are far lower in the opium countries; and the quantity of opium required in any case where it can have been abused is continually increasing, whereas the dose of alcohol continues pretty stationary for years.

These things incline a neutral spectator to suspect grievously some very earthly motives to be working below the manoeuvres of the Celestial Commissioner, since it really appears to be impossible that the lower Chinese should much abuse the luxury of opium; and, as to the higher, what a chimerical undertaking to make war upon their habits of domestic indulgence! With these classes, and in such a point, no Government would have the folly to measure its strength. And, as to the classes connected with public industry, we repeat and maintain that it is impossible (for the reason explained) to suppose them seriously tainted; so that a delusion seems to lie at the very root of this Chinese representation.

But, apart from all that, we see two pinching dilemmas
even in this opium case—dilemmas that screw like a vice—which tell powerfully in favour of our Tory views: first, as criminating the present Whig administration beyond all hope of apology; secondly, as criminating the Chinese administration. The first clinches the argument moved by Sir James Graham on the criminal want of foresight and provision in our own Cabinet; and we are surprised that it could have been forgotten in the debate. The second goes far to justify our right of war against China.

We will take these dilemmas in the inverse order, putting forward the latter dilemma first.

I. When Lin seized the British opium, and in one day pillaged our British merchants to the extent of more than two millions sterling, by what means was it that Lin got "a hank" over so much alien property? The opium was freighted on board various ships; and these ships were lying at various distances in the waters of the Bocca Tigris. No considerable part of it was on shore or in the Canton factory. What is our inference from this? Why, that the opium was not in Lin's power. Indeed, we are sure of that by another argument; for Lin begs from Captain Elliot the interposition of his authority towards getting the opium transferred to Chinese custody—a thing which most assuredly he would not have done had he seen the slightest hopes of its coming into his possession by violence. Merely the despair of success in any attempt to seize it prevailed with him to proceed by this circuitous course. Captain Elliot, for reasons not fully explained, granted this request. Now, then, what we ask is that all who advocate the Chinese cause would be pleased to state the terms on which this deliberate transfer of British property was made over to Lin—what were the terms understood by the party surrendering, and by the party receiving, viz. Lin? That monosyllabic hero did, or he did not, make terms with Captain Elliot. Now, if you say he did not, you say a thing more severe, by twenty times, against the Whig Superintendent than any of us Tories, in or out of Parliament, has ever hinted at. What! a British agent, sent to protect British interests, giving up British property by wholesale—sacrificing millions of British pounds sterling—without an effort to obtain an equivalent, without a protest, without
a remonstrance! Why, a diplomatist acting for the most petty interests gives up nothing without a consideration,—nothing at all without a struggle at the first, without an equivalent at the last. *Quid pro quo* is the very meaning and essence of diplomacy. And observe that Captain Elliot does far more than *sanction* the surrender. It is not as though Chinese artillery had been ready to enforce a seizure, and Captain Elliot, for peace's sake, interfered to substitute a milder course. Nothing of the sort: but for him the opium would not and could not have passed into Chinese hands. In such circumstances—for of course he insisted for some equivalent—you cannot suppose the first horn of the dilemma—that he did not. That is too incredible. Suppose, therefore, the other horn of the dilemma. You *must* suppose it. Mere decency binds us to suppose that Captain Elliot, in compliance with the most flagrant demands of duty, *did* make terms. What *were* those terms? What *was* the equivalent? This we have a right to know, because hitherto (and, by Lin’s account, the affair is now terminated) no equivalent at all, no terms of *any* kind, have been reported as offered by the Chinese or as accepted by the British. Sundry of the Chinese have, indeed, since that time made an awkward attempt at cutting sundry British throats, and have had their own cut instead,—a result for which we heartily grieve, as the poor victims were no willing parties to this outrage upon our rights. But this could hardly be the equivalent demanded by Elliot. And, as to any other, it is needless to inquire about it, since nothing of *any* kind has been offered to the British except outrages and insults. Here, then, is a short two-edged argument, which it will be difficult to parry:—Lin agreed to a stipulation for equivalents; in which case he must have broken it. Lin did *not* agree; in which case we have a heavier charge against the superintendent,—that is, the representative of our own Government,—than any which has yet been put forward.

II. But worse, far worse, as respects our own Government, is the second dilemma. It is this:—Those who had charge of the opium surrendered it on the most solemn official guarantee of indemnification. Now, in offering that guarantee, was Captain Elliot authorized by his Government?
or was he not authorized? Practically, there is no such indulgent alternative now open to the Government; because the time is now past in which that Government could claim the benefit of a disavowal. *Instantly* to have disavowed Captain Elliot was the sole course by which the Whig Government could retrieve their position and evade the responsibility created for them by their agent. When they first appointed him, they had delegated their responsibility to him; they had notified that delegation to all whom it might concern. It must be an extreme case, indeed, which can warrant a minister in disavowing his own agent, so deliberately selected, and much more when the distance is so vast. In no case can this be done unless where it can be demonstrated that the agent has flagrantly exceeded his powers. But, in cases of money guarantees, or the drawing of bills, it is hardly possible that an agent should do so: such cases are not mixed up with the refinements of politics about which the varieties of opinion are likely to arise. Always, and in all situations, an agent knows what are the limits of his powers as to so definite a subject as money. And, were it otherwise, what would become of the innumerable bills drawn upon the British Treasury by consuls and naval officers in ports of countries the most remote? Nobody would take such bills: no ship in our navy, no shipwrecked crew, could obtain aid under the worst circumstances, if a practice existed of disavowing authorized agents, or resisting bills when presented for payment. The Elliot guarantee, therefore, was hardly within the privilege of disavowal by Lord Melbourne’s Government. They it was who sent the agent—who clothed him with authority—who called upon all men in the East to recognise him as representing themselves—who proclaimed aloud, “Behold the man whom the Queen delighteth to honour: what he does is as if done by ourselves: his words are our words: his seal is our seal!”

The argument, therefore, will stand thus:—Captain Elliot solemnly undertook to the British merchants, in order to gain a favourite point for Lin, that no fraction of the money at which the opium had been valued should finally be lost. On the faith of that undertaking the surrender was made quietly which else, confessedly, would not have been
made at all. Now, in making that perilous engagement—so startling by the amount of property concerned that no man could pretend to have acted inconsiderately—was Captain Elliot exceeding his powers or not? Did the Government disavow his act, even in thought, on first hearing it reported; or did they not? If they did—if privately they were shocked to find the enormity of responsible obligation which Elliot had pledged on their behalf—if they felt that he had created no right in the persons who held his engagements—why did they not instantly publish that fact? Merci honesty, as in a commercial transaction, requires this. If a man draws on you unwarrantably for an immense sum, you never think of replying, "I have not money enough to meet this demand." You say to the holders of the bills, and you say it indignantly, and you say it instantly—without taking time to finesse, or leaving time for the creditor to lose his remedy—"This man has no authority whatever to draw upon me. I neither am myself his debtor, nor do I hold the funds of any third party who is." But what was the answer of the English Government, when summoned to make good the engagements of their agent? Did they say boldly "We disavow this agent: we disown his debt: we desire that these bills may be noted and protested"? No: but, evasively, perfidiously, as speaking to ruined men, they reply:—"Oh, really, we have not funds to meet these bills; and, if we should go to Parliament for funds, we have a notion that there will be the deuce to pay for contracting so large a debt!" Like a riotous heir, they dare not show to their public guardians the wild havoc of funds which they have authorized.

The sole evasion of this argument would be if it could be alleged that the bills were bad bills,—that they were given without a consideration. But that can be maintained only by those who are misinformed as to the facts. Were it the case that Lin could have seized the opium, though in honour the Government would still be answerable for the acts of their agent, and though a contract is a contract, still it might have been said that the British merchants, after all, had been placed in no worse situation by the act of Captain Elliot. But, as the case really stands, the total loss—every shilling
of it—was a pure creation of Elliot's. The ships were not in the situation of an army having to stand the hazard of a battle before they could carry off the contested property; in which case it might have been wise to pay some fine for escaping a struggle, however certain the issue. No: they had but to raise their anchors and spread their sails. A lunar month would have seen the opium safe in the waters of Bengal, from which it would have been landed to await the better market of the following year.

But, say some extravagant people, the Chinese had the right of seizure, though not the power to enforce that right; and the inference which they would wish us to draw from that is that it was the duty of the British merchants to show respect for the laws and maritime rights of China. What! at the cost of two and a half millions sterling? Verily, the respect for China must be somewhat idolatrous which would express itself on this magnificent scale. But, waiving that, mark the reply:—Nobody doubts the right of China to seize contraband goods when they are landed, or in the course of landing; because by that time the final destination of the goods is apparent. And our own Government at home—but having power to sustain their claim—go somewhat further; they make prize at sea of cargoes which are self-demonstrated as contraband. But who in his senses ever held the monstrous doctrine that a smuggler is under some obligation of conscience to sail into an English port, and there deliver up his vessel as a victim to the majesty of the offended revenue laws? The very most that China could in reason have asked was that the opium ships should sail away, and not hover on the coasts. Even this is a great deal more than China had a right to ask—conceding also throughout that China had not herself for years invited this contraband commerce, cherished it, nursed it, honoured it—because it is certain that a maritime kingdom without a revenue fleet has no more right to complain of smugglers in its defensive diplomacy than offensively it has to declare a port or a line of coast under blockade without bona fide efforts and means to enforce that blockade. Certainly not, it will be said; and the English opium ships were acting under no recognised maritime law when they so foolishly surrendered their cargoes.
But it will be alleged in apology for that rash surrender that perhaps it might not be merely the Elliot indemnification which persuaded them to this act: that barely made it a safe act. What made it a politic act was probably the belief that for any less price they could not purchase back the general renewal of Chinese commerce. Ay, now we come to the truth! This was the equivalent, beyond a doubt, understood between Lin and Elliot as the condition upon which the surrender was to take effect. Well understood most assuredly it was; and, if it was not expressed, was not reduced to writing, the blame of that is to be divided (in such proportions as may hereafter be settled) between the confiding folly of our English dupe and the exquisite knavery of the Celestial Lin. Non nostrum tantas componere lites.

We have stated these two dilemmas more diffusely—and yet not diffusely, since nothing has been said twice over, but more, however, in detail than else might have been necessary—because a transaction of this kind, unless kept steadily before the eye for some time, is too easily forgotten, and no proper impression of its nature is retained. But the broad result from the whole is that Lin used Captain Elliot as an engine for cheating Englishmen. The roasting chestnuts could not be extracted from the fire: Lin knew that: he was well aware that he must have burned his own paws in attempting it; and, like the monkey in the fable, he wisely used Elliot as his cat’s-paw. 2dly, That Lin also cheated the English out of that commerce the restoration of which he had in effect sold to them, and again through Elliot. And, 3dly, That the English Government has cheated the English merchants out of two and a half millions of pounds sterling—again, for the third time, through Elliot; and, in fact, were it a case at Bow Street against the swell mob, the English Government would have been found in rank collusion with Lin. Lin picks the left-hand pocket, first of opium, and secondly of trade: the Government then step in whilst the merchants are all gazing at Lin, and pick the other pocket of money: both speaking at first through Elliot, but finally speaking directly in their own persons.

Even this is not all. There is something still worse and more jesuitical in the conduct of our Home Government.
They proceed to decree reprisals against China. But why? Very fit it is that so arrogant a people should be brought to their senses; and notorious it is that in Eastern lands no appeal to the sense of justice will ever be made available which does not speak through their fears. We, therefore, are the last persons to say one word against this ultima ratio, if conducted on motives applying to the case. By all means thump them well: it is your only chance—it is the only logic which penetrates the fog of so conceited a people. But is that the explanation of war given by Government? No, no. They offer it as the only means in their power of keeping faith with the opium-dealers and not breaking with Elliot. "What do you want?" they say at the Treasury,—"Is it money? Well, we have none; but we can take a purse for you on the Queen's highway, and that we will soon do." Observe, therefore, you have them confessing to the debt. They do not pretend to deny that. Why, then, what dishonesty it was to say in the first instance to the billholders "We have no funds"! They had then, it seems, been authorizing engagements, knowing at the time that in respect of those engagements they were not solvent.

This is the first thing that meets us: viz. that, at all events, they had meditated fraud. But, when, after some months' imporverty for payment, a Treasury attorney suggests this new fashion of paying just debts,—which is in effect to go and kick up a spree in the Oriental seas, and to fetch back the missing funds out of all the poor rogues whom they can find abroad,—note this above all things: Letters of marque and reprisals may be fair enough against European nations, because as much commercial shipping as they have afloat so much warlike shipping they have to protect it. The one is in regular proportion to the other; fair warning is given. We say, "Take care of yourselves; your war shipping ought to protect your commercial shipping; and, if it cannot, the result will be a fair expression that we have measured forces against each other, nation against nation; the result will be one of fair open fighting." Now, in the Chinese seas there are none but commercial ships. There are no fighting ships worth speaking of. Consequently no part of the loss will fall on the state. Our losses in opium will be made good by the
ruin of innumerable private traders. That cannot be satisfactory to any party; and quite as little can it satisfy our British notions of justice that the rascally Government, and that "sublime of rascals" Lin, will escape without a wound. Little teasings about the extremities of so great a power, and yet, in a warlike sense, so unmaritime a power, as China, will be mere flea-bites to the central government at Pekin,—not more than the arrows of Liliput in the toes of Gulliver, which he mistook for some tickling or the irritation of chilblains.

Are we then comparing our own naval power, the most awful concentration of power and the most variously applicable power which the earth has witnessed, to the efforts of Liliput? Not so, reader; but of what avail is any power under circumstances which forbid it to act? The power of gravitation is the greatest we know of; yet it is nothing at all if you would apply it to the sending up of rockets. The English navy might as reasonably throw bomb-shells into the crater of Vesuvius, by way of bidding it be quiet, or into the Kingdom of the Birds above us, as seek to make any deep impression upon such a vast callous hulk as the Chinese Empire. It is defended by its essential non-irritability, arising out of the intense non-development of its resources. Were it better developed, China would become an organized state, a power like Britain: at present it is an inorganic mass—something to be kicked, but which cannot kick again—having no commerce worth counting, no vast establishments of maritime industry, no arsenals, no shipbuilding towns, no Ports, Deal, Southwark, Woolwiches, Sunderlands, Newcastles, Liverpools, Bristols, Glasgows,—in short, no vital parts, no organs, no heart, no lungs. As well deliver your broadsides against the impassive air, or, in Prospero's words,

"Stab the still closing waters
With all-bemock'd-at wounds." ¹

Indeed, it is a more hopeful concern to make war upon the winds and the waters; for both are known to suffer great

¹ Quoted from memory, and incorrectly. The words (Tempest, iii. 3) are:—

"May as well
Wound the loud winds, or with bemock'd-at stabs
Kill the still-closing waters."—M.
changes during some time after the continued cannonading of a great sea-fight; whereas China is, like Russia, defensible, without effort of her men, by her own immeasurable extent, combined with the fact of having no vulnerable organs—no local concentrations of the national power in which a mortal wound can be planted. There lay the mistake of Napoleon in his desperate anabasis to Moscow. In the whole area of interminable Muscovy, which centuries could not effectually traverse with armies, there was but one weak or vulnerable place; and that was the heart of the Czar. But it was too deadly a stake to throw upon that single chance the fate of so vast an army, and the future prestige of the French military name. Moscow having perished,—which, after all, was a fleabite even as regarded the annual income of the land, for it contained little more than gilt furniture and boxes of sweetmeats (see Segur),—all had perished that could perish for Russia; after which every loss must be a French loss. Even without the winter, the French army was a condemned body after that. There surely was a deadly miscalculation. And such a miscalculation is ours in meditating the retrieval of our losses by war upon this inert and most lubberly of masses.

But perhaps it will be said we shall not altogether depend on sea-captures. We shall seize the island of Formosa; maybe we shall seize Canton! But even in those places we shall find no such accumulations of government stores as would be found in any of our active and warlike European states. Some old fixtures in the shape of buildings, palaces, halls of justice, &c., will be the most that we can count upon as government property; or perhaps Lin, in his hurry of absconding, may leave his snuff-box behind, his opium-box, or his peacock's feather. But we can hardly hope to bring the Celestial fixtures to a Demerara "vendue." It is true there are the revenues. These we can divert, either in Canton or in Formosa, to our own exchequer. But, unless we adopt the French plan of instant requisitions (which, if at any time fair, would surely be far otherwise in a case where there is no shadow of a quarrel with the people, but only with the Government), we must stay for some years to gather in any considerable harvest; because the great source

VOL. XIV
of Canton wealth will be dried up by the inland embargo upon the tea provinces, and the Formosa prosperity depends much upon coasting commerce with the mainland of China, which will now be subject to all the hazards of a contraband trade. Besides, these two occupations will require a land force; and the very expenses of such occupations may very easily be such that we shall all think it a happy thing if the interrupted local revenues should satisfy them.

But, finally, in dismissing this opium part of the general question, we would wish to press upon the attention of any interested parties that they should not look at the several parts of the affair as insulated cases, but should review the entire series as a whole, in which the last stage is adapted to the first, in which the first movement contemplates the end. This war upon China may be otherwise useful: we ourselves believe it will, and for purposes which we are going to notice. But at present we are dealing with it as a measure adopted by our Government to meet certain difficulties created (with or without reason) by themselves, and defended upon specific grounds. It is those grounds we speak to; we argue ad hominem. The defence put forward for this war is that thus we shall recover the value of the surrendered opium. By whom surrendered? Not, as one might think, by some former thoughtless Tory administration; no, but by themselves, and a very few months ago. Was ever such a Penelope's policy, such weaving and unweaving, adopted by any rational Government? They (for of necessity their undisavowed agent is they) one fine day give up like lambs more than £2,000,000 worth of property; and on another fine day like tigers they say, "Let us fetch it back by war. We did a most drunken act last night: we gave up our watch and purse to a fellow because he had the impudence to ask it. This morning, being sober, let us 'pitch into' him and fetch it back."

Upon every principle of plain dealing, every British merchant who surrendered his opium will have a right to say—indemnified or not indemnified by a war, he will have the right to say—"Captain Elliot, as commissioner of the British Government, as an honourable Englishman, one of a nation that is generous and noble (be its faults otherwise what they
may) and that disdains all trickery, can you lay your hand upon your heart and look me in the face whilst you say that either I ought to have understood, or that you thought I understood, by that solemn guarantee to see me reimbursed, simply this remote, this contingent, this fractional chance from such a war as we can wage with China? Will you say that, for my children’s bread, as a thing understood and recognised between us, I was to exchange a certain property, in absolute possession, for some aerial claims upon some distant fighting excursion against some place or places unknown, in a kingdom almost belonging to another planet?” The thing is too monstrous for evasion: it speaks for itself. No reimbursement can clear the honour of the parties guaranteeing: that is now impossible. But, were it not so, two home considerations remain:—1st, How many mercantile establishments, or their creditors, may have gone down whilst waiting? 2d, If the money principal of the war is to pay the merchants in the first place, and to leave the costs of the expeditions as a charge against the country, why not, by a simpler process, have created the charge, in the first place, as a direct indemnification to the merchants, and then afterwards go a-campaigning for glory and repayment? Unless the proceeds from the expeditions shall be found to cover both debts, what is this but to create a secondary debt for the purpose of covering a primary debt, and with the vast disadvantage of certain intermediate bloodshed, with a prodigious waste of energy, and by a process most absurdly lingering as well as childishly circuitous?

So much for the opium question; which, when probed, does not seem to colour the state of our foreign relations very favourably for the present Administration. But, as it may be thought that the general bearing of this review is unfavourable also to the entertainment of a Chinese War, we will now turn to that side of the question.

War, as a measure of finance, as a mere resource of a delinquent and failing exchequer, is certainly less likely to succeed with an empire like China, so compact, so continental, so remote—and, beyond all other disqualifying circumstances, so inorganic—than with any other in the known world. The French have an expression for a man who is
much mixed up in social relations—that he is *repandu dans le monde*, or, as Lord Bolingbroke once said of Pope, by translating that phrase, *scattered and diffused in society.* Now, this is the very description of our own English condition as a people; and, above all other facts, it proclaims our indomitable energy, and our courageous self-dependence. Of all nations that ever have been heard of, we are the most scattered and exposed. We are to be reached by a thousand wounds in thousands of outlying extremities; the very outposts of civilisation are held by Englishmen, everywhere maintaining a reserve of reliance upon the mighty mother in Europe—everywhere looking to her in the last extremities for aid, or for summary vengeance in the case of her aid coming too late; but all alike, in the ordinary state of things, relying upon themselves against all enemies, and thinking it sufficient matter of gratitude to England that she has sent them out with stout arms, with a reverence for laws, with constitutional energy, and, above all, with a pure religion. Such are we English people—such is the English condition. Now, what we are in the very supreme degree, that is China in the lowest. We are the least defended by massy concentration; she the most so. We have the colonial instinct in the strongest degree; China in the lowest. With us the impulses of expatriation are almost morbid in their activity; in China they are undoubtedly morbid in their torpor. At one time, and it may be so still, the Chinese Government absolutely refused to treat, on the cheapest terms, for the redemption of certain Chinese captives, or even to defray their return home—on the Roman plea that they had abjured their country. But how? Not upon the Roman principle that, having fled in battle, or having yielded to captivity, they had disgraced their sacred mother-country and ceased to be her children: no; but because, having exiled themselves in quest of bread, they had dared to think any other more hopeful than the Celestial soil. With such principles it is not to be supposed that Chinese colonies can ever prosper, or ever become other than a degraded limb of the Chinese state. It is vain to expect much energy in a direction which is habitually frowned upon by the Chinese authorities and institutions. And, accordingly, not now only,
but for a very long futurity, we must expect to see sailors, shipbuilders, colonists, foreign capitalists, merchants, &c., thriving only as those thrive who are a despised class of outcasts. There is not motion enough in the stagnant state of Chinese society to hope for any material change. And to China as it is—not China as it might be—we must adapt our future relations; which are annually becoming more important.

A war for money, a war for indemnities, cannot be a hopeful war against a lazy, torpid body, without colonies, ships, commerce, and consequently without any great maritime depots. A rich seaside, a golden coast,—that is what we need to make a naval war lucrative. But what then? We need war for other purposes than instant gain. And these purposes it is our next duty to press upon the attention.

All our misfortunes or disgraces at Canton have arisen out of one original vice in the foundation of our intercourse. This began under the unhappy baptism of two unequal contracting sponsors,—a great and most arrogant emperor on the one side, a narrow company of mercantile adventurers on the other. In Europe, governments treat with governments, merchants with merchants. All, therefore, goes rightly. But in Asia, until we also became a great Asiatic potente, the case was constantly as between the Roman logician armed with a book and his imperial opponent backed by thirty legions. In China, for local reasons of shyness towards all foreigners, the case was worse than elsewhere. There was a simple counting-house and ledger on the one side; there was a great throne and its satellites on the other. Every cause of dispute and repulsion was called into action between the parties, mutual religious horror being superadded; and for a cement, for a link, for reciprocal attraction, there was but the one mean principle of reciprocal gain.

Here, however, we pause to notice one capital oversight in political economy. It has been said many scores of times, in derision of our English hold upon China, that in so vast a territory our tea demand, large as it seems, must be a 

bagatelle. Must it so? Now mark how three sentences shall put that down.

1. Our demand is not little in any sense: it is great
relatively, it is great absolutely. So poor are the majority of the Chinese that they never taste such a beverage as tea, more than Hungarian peasants drink tokay, or French peasants champagne. And it has been repeatedly computed that our English exportation is one clear moiety of the crop.

2. But, if it were barely a tenth instead of a half, nay a fiftieth, it would operate most powerfully on the Chinese funds, were it only for this reason, that the tea provinces are but a small part of China. Consequently, whatever loss follows any decay of English purchases falls (after allowing for the profits of carriers and the Canton establishments) not upon all China, in which case the vast subdivision might make it a trifle to each individual, but upon a few provinces enjoying a particular soil and climate; and even in those provinces, as much land is unfitted for the culture of tea, it falls exclusively upon one class of proprietors. Now, it is idle to say that an English demand annually for forty millions of pounds suddenly subtracted could be a trifle to any single body of men in any state upon earth. Gathered in its whole thunders upon one limited class of proprietors, so large a loss, and so sudden a loss, would be overwhelming.

3. This last rectification arises by simply substituting for all China the really small class amongst whom the loss must be divided. But there is another and a worse rectification which blows to atoms the notion that our custom is a matter of indifference to China. Very probably Lin thinks so, because Lin is not much read in Ricardo. But a second year's experience will tell another tale even to Lin. It is shameful that men preaching the doctrines of Ricardo should have overlooked their application to China. Suffice it in this place to say that, if, instead of forty million pounds, England called for only a few hundred thousands, even that small addition to the previous demand might force into culture some inferior soil which would necessarily give the regulating price for the whole; immediately after which a rent would take place on the penultimate quality of tea-ground, a double rent upon the ante-penultimate, a triple rent upon the pre-ante-penultimate, and so on through all the gradations upwards. By parity of process, on the withdrawal of this English stimulus, a corresponding retrocession
will take place on every quality of soil; every quality must sink in rent instantly; for the delay by means of written leases will only transfer the loss from proprietor to farmer; and the lower qualities, which have only been called into use because a smaller range could not furnish the total demand, will be entirely withdrawn in so far as that demand is contracted. So far from not feeling the loss of our English custom, myriads will be ruined by it out and out. Jails will be filled, suicides will multiply, taxes will be unpaid, opium-eating will prosper, and the full hailstorm of wrath will descend upon the bare skull of Lin, until his Tartar pigtail rises in affright and streams like a meteor to the troubled air. All the logic in this world will not get over these three rectifications of the notion that, because China is big, therefore an English demand for tea must be insignificant. The truth is, England is not to be valued as to riches upon any scale derived from her extent. If there are a hundred million families in China, of which ninety barely replace their own consumption, there is no wealth except upon the ten millions who do more. Wealth is the surplus arising after consumption is replaced. Now, it is certain that upon every British family, not being paupers, such a surplus arises. But upon the vast body of the Chinese, living on rivers, and eating the garbage rejected by the meanest of the comfortable classes, though not paupers, yet no surplus at all arises. No multiplication of such classes, in a non-military state, is any real increase of strength. Not every twenty-fifth man is a cipher in this respect to England; probably not every tenth man is anything else in China,—that is, if he does not lessen the national funds, he does not increase them.

From this digression upon our purely commercial relations to China, as affected by British custom, we recur to the subject of our social standing amongst the same people. Merchants are also men. Now, in the commercial conduct of the Chinese there is not so much to complain of. The institution of the Hong is, no doubt, tyrannical; certain usages, also, and prescriptions (local or national) of the Canton trade may be unjust, or may need revision as impolitic. But, in general, the Hong merchants are admitted
to be honest. It is in the social (not the commercial) treatment of our countrymen that wrongs and indignities have been offered to the British name. And the initial reason is what we have before stated: viz., that for two centuries our connexion has been maintained by unequal contracting parties. A sovereign who affects to make a footstool of the terraqueous globe, and to view all foreigners as barbarians, could not be approached with advantage by a body of manly Englishmen. In their character of merchants they were already contemptible in Oriental eyes; and the language of respectful homage, when coupled with the tone of self-respect, was viewed with indignation. Such a prince could be propitiated only by the Eastern style of servile prostration; and, were this style even steadily adopted, under the infinite caprice of absolute despots it would but the more certainly court the vilest occasional outrages. Some of our anti-national scribblers at home—as, of course, in vast capitals every variety of human nature will be developed—insisted upon it, that our English ambassador ought to have performed the kotou; that it was a mere form; and that the Pekin court usage was the law for those who had occasion to visit Pekin. Had Lord Amherst submitted to such a degradation, the next thing would have been a requisition from the English Factory of beautiful English women, according to a fixed description, as annual presents to the Emperor. It is painful to add that, according to the degradation which too naturally takes place in Canton councils, there have been times when such a condition would have been favourably received; and the sole demur would have been raised on the possibility of trepanning any fit succession of their fair compatriots. We know what we are saying. We must all hope that our modern merchants are far too lofty in principle and feeling for compliances so abject. But we are speaking of the general tendencies which take place in such eastern mercantile bodies, when so far removed from the salutary control of English opinion. Our object is to state the evil influences which are operating and long have operated at all our Oriental settlements where the British society is not numerous enough to hold a “potential voice” of moral control. It cannot be disguised that the interests and honour of England
sometimes require to be supported against the British merchants as well as against the despotic sovereign of China. The evil, we have already said, began in the unnatural position, perfectly ruinous to the growth of all high-toned honour, between contracting parties so disproportionately assorted, who could not approach each other, and who, differing in religion, in the modes of their civilisation, and in language, not less than they did in rank, had really no one common principle of appeal in their standards of morality. To these original defects of position was added the total neglect of every successive Government at home. Our furious party disputes in England, so unspeakably valuable in sustaining the vigilance and sincerity of our political interests, have yet this one collateral disadvantage—that they leave no leisure or care for remote colonial questions. This very natural indifference was sustained by the enormous distance—virtually double for the last generation. A voyage of fifteen thousand miles and back made it impossible, in the old state of our Oriental navigation, to receive an answer to a letter of inquiry, at the very earliest, in less than twelve calendar months. The old calculation of an Idumean prince, when threatened by a Jewish rival with an allied force from Rome,—viz. that, according to all human chances, before three such enemies could have combined a hostile rencontre, either the Jewish threatener, or his Roman ally, or the object of their hostilities, one or all, must naturally have perished, and the combination fallen through either by failure in the means, or by the extinction of the purpose,—this mode of argument applied with triple force to all schemes for connecting Eastern affairs with Parliamentary politics. And thus it happened that for just 150 years our Eastern settlements were all alike neglected. The distance, the obscurity of the interests, the claims, or the intrigues, together with the local peculiarities of thing, person, name, usage—all united to separate us from these splendid theatres of English enterprise as totally as if they had belonged to the planet Jupiter. At length came Lord Clive's magnificent career; another empire was created for England; this empire expanded rapidly; vast fortunes were brought home from India. Much of this money, nay, even the money of native Indian princes, was
applied to the support of a Parliamentary influence. Charles Fox grew ambitious of legislating for India. A far greater man, but in this instance a petty one, Edmund Burke, grew interested in the Indian Government by his personal hatreds. The light of inquiry began to unveil the importance of these settlements; the English Government would no longer permit such mighty interests to be regulated by merchants; an overruling participation in the power was demanded; a domestic board of control was established; and finally, by many further changes, of which not the least has been the gradual reduction of the Bengal voyage from six months to three, and the organization of overland routes from Bombay in still shorter space of time, the great Indian Colonies have long been placed under the close supervision of English domestic councils.

But that case was a splendid and a natural exception. There it was no longer a commerce, no longer a provincial factory, but a vast empire which was concerned,—an empire that in many parts had resumed the throne and place of the Moguls, the only sovereigns in the Mahometan line who have ever approached to a general sovereignty over India. The great circumstances accounted for the great change. But elsewhere things continued as they had been. At Canton, especially, no symptom of an improved surveillance has been manifested. The greater distance, the lesser value at stake, explain this neglect for the present. But steam, in conjunction with railway, is rapidly annihilating the first; and circumstances which we are now to indicate will so vary the last that a great revolution must now be looked for. We shall be compelled to change our system, or ruin is at hand for English interests in China. The nature of the changes to be expected we shall briefly state.

Up to the year 1785 it is not worth while to trace the little oscillations of our Canton history. It is merely the history of a counting-house, except for the interest attached to national indignities. Little real variation could take place in our relations with the Chinese court when all trembled before a power that by one word could annihilate their prosperity, unless when some lion-hearted sailor, such as Lord (then Commodore) Anson, touched at Macao for the
sake of repairs or refreshments. This gallant race of men, having no alien interests of a money nature to mislead the simplicity of their English feeling, treated the insolence of the Chinese authorities with the disdain it merited; and Lord Anson, in particular, on finding a puny opposition prepared to his passage, smashed their "crockery ware" (as he irreverently styled their forts at the Bocca) in such a summary style with the guns of his old storm-shaken ship the Centurion that all the tails in Canton stood on end with horror. Frightened as the British factory was at this explosion of naval spirit, they could not hide from themselves that it succeeded for the moment, and left a useful impression behind it for a pretty long period. It was, in fact, the results from this demonstration of Anson's that subsequently suggested the two embassies of the Lords Macartney and Amherst. But, previously to the era even of Lord Macartney's mission, an affair of the year 1785 had put into everlasting characters of shame, had inscribed deeply upon a poor murdered victim's gravestone, what is the capacity for evil, how infinite the possible degradation, under a venal spirit of money-making, when not counteracted and overruled by the public opinion of an honourable Christian community. The case, a memorable one for our English instruction, was this:—Either in firing a salute of honour, or on some festal occasion, a ball from one of the great guns on board an English Indiaman unfortunately killed a Chinese. Never in the history of human affairs was there a more absolute accident as respected the man who fired the gun. The man who loaded it was never discovered. But this wicked nation, who are so thoroughly demoralized as to perceive no moral difference between the purest case of misfortune terminating in a man's death and the vilest murder of premeditating malice, demanded (according to their practice) all the men to be given up who had in any way been parties to the loading, the priming, or the firing of the gun. The English factory, whose very cowardice had taken a lesson in the policy of making some resistance to monstrous demands, kicked a little at this summons. But the Chinese, being so thoroughly in the wrong, were of course thoroughly in earnest. The usual circle of remonstrances was run through
by the factory; the usual insolent retorts came from the
Lius of 1785; the usual steps were taken through the Hong
for "closing the trade"; and then — upon that magical
sesame—all scruples of honour, justice, Christian feeling,
gave way at once; wide open flew English doors to the vile
Chinese murderers; and, to the everlasting shame of poor
dishonoured England, the innocent man, who had acted in
obedience to absolute orders from his captain, was given up
to these Canton devils, in order that they, under colour of
avenging an imaginary murder, might perpetrate as real and
foul a murder as human annals record. The man who had
fired the gun was professionally the gunner of the vessel; and
to our feeling it adds to the inhuman baseness of the sur-
render that he was an elderly Portuguese, who had for
many years sought by preference the service of the British
flag. When the wretches came to seek him, he was on board
his ship. The boat being ready, he was called to take his
place in her. Well he knew whither he was going, and what
would be his fate. The officer was present under whose
orders he had acted; yet he uttered not a murmur. He took
his place modestly at a distance from the officers; and, when
called to take a more honourable seat by their side, again he
obeyed the order. One of the captains, pitying the man's
case, and admiring his meekness, humility, and fortitude,
uttered some words of consolation; and other captains,
adding lies to their perfidy and their cowardice, assured him
that not a hair of his head should be touched. But the poor
Portuguese knew better: he understood the case; he knew
the brutal stupidity of the Chinese; and he read his fate in
the obstinacy of their pursuit. Still he murmured not;
only at those delusive assurances, which added mockery to
murder, he shook his head with a mournful significance.
The sequel is soon told. This humble servant of the British
flag was solemnly delivered up to his assassins. Some of the
better Chinese were themselves startled at the approaching
tragedy; for, let it be observed, there was no deviation from
the statement here made, even in credulous Canton. The
Chinese version of the story differed in no iota from the
English. Murmurs began to creep through that timid, ser-
vile city. The man's deportment, so humble and submissive,
conciliated some pity even from the fools who thought him a criminal. It was found expedient to despatch a courier to Pekin for further orders. In due course, the fatal mandate returned for the execution to proceed; and this poor injured man suffered on a Chinese gallows by hanging for having fulfilled his duty on the deck of a British ship. Baseness and faint-heartedness so complicated, we willingly believe, cannot often have been repeated by British authorities even in a factory. We would even hope that the case must be unique. But it is proper that we should know what are the atrocities which, under the spirit of gain, even free-born Britons can commit, and which, under their accursed system of law, the Chinese can exact.

These precedents, it will be said, belong to a past age. Certainly, as regards the British share in the disgrace; but not as regards the Chinese share in the terror. The same scenes are eternally impending. The Chinese laws do not change. It is the very expression of their improgressive state that they cannot. Centuries make no reforms in a land open to no light. That same monstrous principle upon which a poor dependant of England was then given up to an ignominious death—the principle that in a certain event inevitable misfortune and malice aforethought are equally criminal, punishable equally by the death of a dog—this principle will never be abandoned. This principle has, since the year 1785, again and again brought us into terrific embarrassments; and it is idle to suppose that in a seaport, the resort of sailors from the highest-spirited nation upon the earth, and liable to perpetual insults from Chinese vagabonds, any vigilance can ever close or seal up this opening to occasional manslaughters. We do not mention as a separate evil the liability of our people to be confounded with the Americans: from the identity of their naval costume, this must continually happen: but amongst Chinese idolaters we view the Americans as one with ourselves. They are Christians; they have our British blood in their veins; and they have inherited from ourselves, as children of enlightened liberty, the same intolerance of wrong. It would be a petty clannish form of nationality to separate our cause from theirs.
But now mark:—As yet, or at least until the last few years, this horrible Chinese degeneration of moral distinctions has operated only upon a known, distinct and concentrated surface, upon a body of men under the eye, and partially reined up tightly by the hand, of cautious superiors. Had any other been the case, long before this the very stones in England would have mutinied for vengeance—such would have been the judicial atrocities committed by the Chinese. At present all things are changing in the aspect of English colonization and of our Asiatic commerce. The mere expansion of our Indian Empire, and the widening circle of our Asiatic relations, would gradually multiply our shipping, our social necessities, and our points of contact with foreigners in all Eastern seas. But, apart from India, the following important changes have recently begun to open:—

1st, The colonial importance of New South Wales is now annually strengthening, so much as to send off sub-dependencies to other parts of the same great continent. The insular colonies of Van Diemen’s Land will add another nucleus in the same region; which already is connecting itself, by numerous threads, with important settlements in every part of the Eastern Ocean.

2dly, The infant colony of New Zealand will soon, of itself, form another and a separate nucleus in the same region of that ocean. This colony has been treated with contradictory harshness by Lord John Russell,—now drawing back from the most reasonable interposition of Government, now volunteering the most hostile; this day refusing the slightest expression of maternal grace from England, next day placing England towards her own suppliant children in the attitude of a malignant stepmother. But, for all that, New Zealand is destined to a giant’s career. It is a youthful Hercules that will throttle the snakes about its cradle. The climate, not too relaxing, the soil, the waters, the interconnexion between the noblest children of civilisation, and by very much the noblest race of savages in the world—these great advantages, combined with two others—(the first being that a large proportion of capitalists will be concerned in this colonial edifice and the second that convicts will be excluded)—compose a body of inauguration for this enterprise
which wears a promise hardly within the compass of disappointment. The long infancy of all other colonies will be spared to this: 1st, in consequence of the power and light which are now directed upon the general subject of colonization from the centres of European civilisation; 2dly, in consequence of the peculiar local endowments; and, lastly, in consequence of the magical revolution in the arts of locomotion.

3dly, The missionary efforts from Christian England are now annually expanding their means and organizing their forces. Were it merely through the growing knowledge of Eastern languages, this religious interest must go on at a pace liable to sudden accelerations of speed. It is in the nature of such undertakings to kindle as they advance, and as the separate centres of radiation begin to link on to each other, gradually interknitting as a chain of posts in active intercommunication.

All these concurring causes will soon multiply our Oriental shipping by twenty-fold. In fact, fresh emporia, such as Singapore, have been rising of late years. Ceylon has been rising rapidly in importance. Our increasing intercourse with the Red Sea (now strengthened by military stations) will further abbreviate the intercourse between Europe and the Indian Ocean. These causes, taken by themselves, and apart from the fact that the missionaries have been applying themselves with peculiar energy to the vast unguarded seacoast of China, will avail to carry into Chinese jurisdiction a score of British ships for one that has had occasion to face that danger. Occasional shipwrecks, or calls under stress of weather, will increase in the same proportion. And of this we may be assured,—that opportunities for retaliation in a twenty-fold proportion will henceforthwards offer to this ignoble people in every case where their monstrous laws may happen to be infringed.

It is a subject of just alarm that not only will the occasions for revenge be multiplied, but the chances of provoking revenge by offending those unnatural laws will even outrun our increased scale of intercourse. For it must never be forgotten that the opening of the trade to China—were there no other change in operation—has by itself utterly deranged the old local authority of any
superintendents whom the new condition of the commerce will endure. Hitherto the enterprising parties (the final controllers) have been cautious and intelligent capitalists; now they will be desperate adventurers. The trade, as it now stands, has succeeded to an inheritance of some ancient forms; but it has inherited no part of the ancient obedience. The obedience paid to Captain Elliot was, in all its circumstances, as different from that which once corresponded to the demands of China as the new condition of the China seas will be from those of the eighteenth century. This obedience heretofore was compulsory; now it is prudential, and (in the literal sense of that word) precarious, for it depended upon the entreaties of Captain Elliot. Heretofore it was instant; now it followed after long deliberation. Heretofore it was unconditional; now it took the shape of a capitulation. So much obedience was sold for so much indemnification. And most undoubtedly even this form of submission would have been refused, had the quality of the indemnification been known, or its distance suspected. In future, every man will govern himself according to his separate views of Chinese policy, or his own facilities for evading it. But, amongst these facilities, the most tempting will be the unprotected state of the Chinese coast as regards the coercion of smuggling. With the inefficacy of Chinese administration will grow the cruelty of Chinese revenge, in order that vengeance may redress the weakness of foresight, and barbarous punishments make up for defective precautions. This people, who are bestial enough to think the will and the intention no necessary element in the moral quality of an act, are also savage enough to punish vicariously. A smuggler will be caught and impaled within sight of his ship; his comrades, by way of furious revenge, will land, will burn a dozen or two of villages, and massacre the flying inhabitants. These particular criminals will probably escape. But the ship that goes next on shore in China will meet the full storm of Chinese vengeance. And, if some colonial ship freighted with immigrants, or some packet with passengers, should be driven out of her course, and touch at a Chinese port, as sure as we live some horrid record will convulse as all with the intelligence that our brave countrymen, our
gentle countrywomen and their innocent children, have been subjected to the torture by this accursed state.

No: it is vain to dissemble. Even without the irritations of contraband trade, and without the extension of our Eastern intercourse now opening before us, it is too certain that the humiliation and the national crime of 1785 will revolve upon us. Many times we have been on the brink of the same tragedy. And, knowing those facts, it is scarcely to be forgiven that our Government should not long ago have taken steps in a most decided way to place our relations with this immoral state upon a footing of European security. Things have at last taken a turn which, on other grounds, has induced our Government to meditate an armed negotiation with China. Now, therefore, it will be most important to combine this ancient and lasting purpose of security with the accidental purpose of the moment, and, whilst healing a present wound of our own infliction (for the indemnity we are seeking corresponds to a surrender volunteered by ourselves), to obtain a lasting guarantee, once and for ever, against far worse wounds to character, as well as property, which have continually impended over our Canton connexion.

Let us now consider in what way this great object can be compassed, and how it may be possible to extract from an ill-advised rupture not merely a satisfaction for the momentary grievance, but such concessions in regard to our permanent perils as may reconcile us all to the rashness of Captain Elliot, and may turn the opium loss (were that even past retrieval) into a mere pepper-corn rent for the very amnest conditions of commercial privilege.

What we want with Oriental powers like China, incapable of a true civilisation, semi-refined in manners and mechanic arts, but incurably savage in the moral sense, is a full explanation of our meaning under an adequate demonstration of our power. We have never obtained either the one or the other. Our two embassies were faithfully executed, but erroneously planned. To pause at the outset upon what may be thought a trifle,—but it is really no trifle in dealing with Oriental princes,—even the presents in those embassies

1 The Embassies meant are (1) that of Lord Macartney to China in 1792, (2) that of Lord Amherst in 1816. —M.
were not childishly, so much as ruinously, selected. Certain departments of public business have immemorially been conducted as jobs in Great Britain: for instance, the building of palaces, and the regulation of national presents. The first, instead of being confided to a national superintendence, has constantly settled upon the individual caprice of the existing prince; which caprice taking every variety of direction, it has naturally followed that more money has been spent in merely undoing and pulling down walls than availed in France to build the Louvre, the Tuileries, and Versailles, and with this final result,—that, excepting Windsor, we have no palace worthy of the nation. The same hole-and-corner influence has mismanaged the department of presents. For no reason upon earth, beyond an old precedent, thousand-guinea diamond-boxes were at one time given to a variety of people on every occasion of signing a treaty; and, in Mr. Canning's brief administration, when that minister was questioned about them, it actually came out that no person was officially responsible for the boxes being worth anything approaching to the price paid by the nation. In another case, and a very important one—viz. the Algerine presents—we have the evidence of a most respectable consul, Mr. Broughton, who made large personal sacrifices for the British honour, that blunders the most childish were committed—blunders interpreted as insults. Had an old frigate, or even a corvette, of which so many were going to decay "in ordinary," been sent to the Dey, the present would have been received thankfully as a royal one: instead of which an assortment of bijouterie was offered by which the Dey thought himself mocked. The diamond-box concern had interfered as usual. A musical snuff-box, valued to the nation at five hundred guineas, was scornfully tossed by the Dey to his cook; and the only article which he thought worthy of himself was a brace of finely finished pistols, which probably had not cost above fifty guineas. Thus highly does the nation pay to found a lasting sense of injury in the minds of foreign princes.

As respected China the matter was worse. Amongst the presents assorted for the Celestial Emperor was actually a complex apparatus (suited to the bedchamber of an invalid)
which cannot be mentioned with decorum. Oriental princes will not believe that the sovereign who is nominally the presenter of such offerings has not a personal cognisance of the affront. In their own establishments every trifle of this nature is duly reported and discussed, as one means of relieving the dire monotony which besieges the sensual lives of the East. And, besides, not to have had cognisance of what concerned a brother potentate is already an affront.

That preliminary being first of all settled,—which requires great tact in the case of China, from the jealousy with which they regard our superiority in the mechanic arts and their entire incapacity for the liberal arts,—a project is suggested by our present exigencies which has slightly been entertained in former times. It is now certain that we must have some sort of military expedition against China. It is also certain that we can never have full explanations exchanged, or the basis of any treaty laid, without a solemn diplomatic congress between the two nations. What if the two appeals were combined? Embassies have failed in the East partly because, speaking from no apparent station of power, and appealing to no previous knowledge of our European rank, they could not command the requisite attention and respect. On the other hand, a warlike invasion is too openly an expression of coercion to found a settlement that will last. But what if the feelings of an arrogant state were so far consulted as to allow her some colourable varnish for wounded vanity? What if, instead of a negotiating army, we were to send an armed negotiator,—instead of an army with an ambassador in its rear, an ambassador followed by an army for his train? Such retinues are not unknown in many Eastern lands. A column of 14,000 men, with a suitable train of artillery, it is understood to be the opinion of military men, would easily march to Pekin, if landed at the nearest point. One person, indeed, assures us that we underrate the Chinese Tartar troops. An experienced native, it seems, of Nepaul had told him “that the Chinese scimitar cuts deeply.” Now, if this officer confined his remark literally to the swords (and not using the word as a general symbol for martial power), there is no doubt, and it is surprising, that the Oriental weapons of steel are generally much
superior to our own. In the suite of the French General Gardane, sent ambassador by Napoleon to the court of Teheran, there were many military men who reported that the best Damascus blades were better than the very best Toledoos. But, as these could only be purchased from Turkish enemies, the Shah had patronised two native manufactories, at Ispahan and in Chorasen, which were in their turn as much superior to the Syrian arms as those to the Spanish. One officer put the rival qualities to a test which was decisive; and M. Jancoigne (who afterwards published a French report on the Persian armies) says expressly—"The swords they use, much superior to ours in temper, make wide and deep wounds, which are generally mortal." The advantage belongs to all Oriental armies which import Persian sabres. But what of that? It still remains true of all Oriental armies that, even as to weapons, they are badly armed,—badly as respects the class and selection of the arms, whatever may be their quality as manufactures. The Persian armies have been beaten into some useful reforms by the Russians, and trained into others by Sir II. Bethune. The armies of India have been gradually improved by the example of the English. With these exceptions, no Eastern armies can so much as face European troops, where all arms of the service are complete, in almost any disproportion. A few brave mountain clans do not amount to a serious exception. One universal error in the composition of Eastern armies is the vast preponderance of the cavalry. The Persian cavalry, taking the quality of men, horses, and arms conjointly, thirty years ago, was the most splendid in Asia. Yet an agent of Napoleon's reported thus on the question of their serviceableness—"This brilliant cavalry cannot fight in battle array"; and then, after describing their excellent qualities as individual horsemen or acting as partisans "for turning the flanks of an army and as skirmishers," this Frenchman concludes thus:—"But the perfection of European tactics would not permit the élite even of the Persian cavalry to support the impetuosity of heavy dragoons, French or English; they are unequal to the regular shock of our cavalry of the line, and they are unequal to the task of breaking our infantry." Yet this cavalry, we
repeat, was, by unanimous consent, at the head of all Asiatic cavalry. As to the infantry, until recently in Persia and in Hindostan, it is everywhere a rabble of tumultuary levies in Asiatic armies.

Upon many people's minds it will rest as an unpleasant augury, what Sir Robert Peel said of our engaging in a war with three hundred and fifty millions of men. We think Sir Robert must have smiled when he used that argument. One of Shakspere's clowns, hearing of a man having suffered or having threatened a million of stripes, says, "A million of stripes may come to a great matter." And certainly three hundred and fifty millions of cudgelings "would come to a great matter," which would not improve our position, though it might strengthen the demand for opium. But, seriously, of all nations the Chinese is the most sedentary, and the least available for a locomotive war—such as we can always make it. The fourth part of their three hundred and fifty millions,—which in a nation wholly barbarous ought to express the number of males disposable for war,—would be too many for the purpose by a thousandfold, if they could be applied to the service, or, being applied, were of the martial quality required. But the improgressive and imperfect civilisation of this nation is precisely of that kind which most effectually prevents the abstraction of men from their daily industry. Nations cannot starve in order to fight; and the position of China, exposed for some generations to no potent enemy on her frontiers, is precisely such as to prevent her nominal army from being, in a true military sense, seasoned to war, or, in military phrase, "aguerrir". An armed police is the utmost, from mere defect of enemies, that any Chinese army can long have been. And, were it even otherwise,—had the Chinese a large army (like our Indian establishment) continually exercised in field duties and in sharp fighting by a large family of ambitious neighbours,—still the great questions would recur:—1. Have they a good infantry? 2. Presuming all the advantages of experience and seasoning in the field, are the men efficiently armed? 3. Have they the magical—almost the spiritual—power of discipline to bind the individuals into unity? 4.
Have they an engineering establishment? Have they an artillery?

A quarterly journal of eminence in our land absolutely attempts to startle the country, as regards this last question, by pointing attention to the awful fact that the Chinese had thrown a twelve-pound ball into the mast of the Volage or the Hyacinthe! Wonderful! — and the poor mast has to undergo an operation in lithotomy before it can be pronounced out of danger! Why, Persia herself, whose whole field artillery consisted of certain dromedaries with a swivel mounted on the hump (semboureks they were called), — which swivel being once fired, to the imminent hazard of the cannonier and his neighbour, the regular manœuvre was for the dromedary to wheel to the right about, and gallop off for a day’s march to the rear, in order to insure the concern against capture,—even Persia had some capital cannon in her arsenals. And how acquired? They had been left behind by the Portuguese when they evacuated the island of Ormus. And most other Asiatic powers have come into an odd assortment of Christian artillery and other old iron, as derelicts of us Europeans. Why, then, should it astonish us that China, by robbery or purchase, or in the way of jetsam and flotsam, should come into possession of a Christian hulk or so with its heavy guns? This argues nothing for her native skill in engineering. One discharge of a rocket brigade, should our expedition make a hoorah upon any great city, will be a sufficient reply to all such alarmists.

It is in no other way than as an armed body that an English embassy can ever prevail at Pekin. It is in no other character than as an ambassadorial body that an English army can fail to leave behind a very lasting impression of irritation at Pekin. Either form of approach taken separately would thwart our views: the purely martial form would terminate in hostility; the purely diplomatic would terminate in smoke. But, if the two could be dexterously blended, if the one could be so used as to masque the other, from the twofold engine we might expect a great and a permanent result. Eastern princes, when they receive alimony as suppliants from others at a distance, call it before their own
subjects tribute which they have levied. And, when they really pay tribute, they call it alimony which they have granted. To a certain extent we may wink at such evasions in China. But we must not any longer allow our ambassadors to be called *tribute-bearers*, as were Lords Macartney and Amherst. We must not any longer allow ourselves to be called *barbarians*. It is doubtful, indeed, as to this last term, what is the exact value of the Chinese word so rendered. In the use of the Greek word *Barbaroi*, besides the four stages through which it is traced by Gibbon (chap. li. vol. ix., footnote pp. 463-4), it is certain that in each separate stage the word admitted of some modifications, which mitigated the insult, and caused it to be sometimes self-assumed as a mere name of distinction, equivalent to *alien* or *non-Grecian*. Some such misunderstanding may operate here. But misunderstandings, one and all, we must have cleared up. They are perilous with two sorts of nations—with insolent nations, and with dishonest nations. And the very first rule in dealing with such a nation is—*Better to be cheated than to be insulted.*

The first thing is to look out for really skilful, but in any case really honest, interpreters. Want of skill may be remedied. One or two circumlocutions, or varying repetitions, will always make the meaning clear, if any doubt arises upon a separate word: and generally *things*, substantial *things*, are too much interwoven with the points in dispute to allow any large range for mistake. But there is no guarding against the perfidy of a native Chinese whose cowardice suggests to him some evasion of a strong English idea. We must have a letter first of all, full and circumstantial, written to the Emperor; and, because it is said that he feels it a degradation to have been addressed of late by a Viceroy (the Governor-General of India), this letter must speak directly from her Majesty, the Queen that now is, to his Imperial Majesty. This will be also the better course for another important reason. It will justify a frank language; it will prevent the language of kindness and respectful conciliation from seeming adulatory; it will prevent the language of plain-dealing from seeming insolent. A very great aid would be rendered to the cause if a short sketch could be sent with
this letter describing the great leading points in our social polity: showing the value which we also set upon human life (which otherwise the stupid Chinese fancy peculiar to themselves); but showing also that we value other things still more highly, such as equity, human rights and duties as measured by intention, &c., and stating the nature of a representative government,—how far it limits the powers of a sovereign, but in what a high degree it provides for the honour and dignity and usefulness of the sovereign. Such a sketch would prepare the Emperor to understand in future that special requests which he might make of our Queen, as tests of her sincerity, are liable to refusal from the nature of popular rights, without any failure in respect or in sincerity of good-will.

The Chinese understand by this time,—which formerly they did not,—something of the truth in relation to our civil grandeur. This they have learned indirectly, and by a sort of logical sorites. Our Indian Empire, which they see and tremble at, is an exponent to their understandings of that England which they cannot see. To know that this mighty colonial possession is but a remote dependency on England; to know that it is so little essential to the splendour of our English crown as never to have been visited by any of the royal family; to know also that the whole vast line of communication between India and England has always been kept open by our ships, and consequently (let French emissaries traduce us as much as they will) that, by a practical test continually applied, we must always have been “too many” for our European enemies through a long line of thirteen thousand miles: all this must convey a gorgeous impression of British power to the minds of the Pekin counsellors. What we now want is to connect this power with our interests in Canton. Contrasting so enormous a power with the mean submissions and the precarious tenure of our Chinese factory, what else can the Emperor naturally conclude than that we (like himself) throw off from parental care those who, for the sake of gain, have consented to expatriate themselves into corners where they hold no one privilege,—not so much as air, as water, as fire,—but upon insolent sufferance and capricious indulgence?
This must be set to rights. An explanation must be given, difficult to devise, of our long inattention to these Chinese rights. We must also speak plainly on the terms of equality which we mean to hold in negotiating. This is not quite unprecedented in the East. In Ferishta’s *Hindostan*, as abridged by Colonel Dow, will be seen a case where a King of Persia was so offended at the arrogant style of a great Mogul Sovereign that he insisted on explanations; which accordingly were given to this effect:—that, if he used vain-glorious titles, they were meant only for his own subjects, not at all in disparagement of his brother princes. Those are weak people who think such points of titular honour, of rank, of precedence, to be trifles anywhere. Cromwell did not think them such: he most wisely refused to treat in French, though otherwise a trifle, because it would be used as an argument that we British had submitted to take a secondary place and to receive a sort of law from our enemies. The first Cæsars did not think them such, who cashiered magistrates for using the Greek language on the tribunal. But in Asia all external forms are more important by many degrees. In Europe the prevalent good sense, and the diffusion of truth as to all possible relations of power, &c., give a perpetual limitation to the gasonades of French proclamations, French bulletins, &c., which makes nugatory their false pretensions. But in all Asiatic despotisms no truth is current. Ignorance that is total, credulity that is beyond European conception, combine to support all delusions which are not put down with a strong hand by us who are the most certain to suffer from them.

Among the presents (which to all Eastern princes, but especially to such as only play at making war, ought chiefly to be articles of warlike use) none can be so well adapted to dazzle the Chinese as a train of our field artillery, with its entire establishment of horses, &c. This, after doing its appropriate service to the ambassador’s “retinue” to and from the point of debarkation, might be left as a present with the Emperor. As to mere philosophical instruments, how could these dazzle a people incapable of using them? There lay the error of Napoleon, who made Monge exhibit chemical experiments before the Mamelukes and the Arab
Sheiks. Not having the very elements of science so as to comprehend more than that there had been a flash, or an effervescence, or an explosion, the solemn blockheads naturally said—"Ay, this is very well; but can he do what our magicians can do? Can he make us jump into Abyssinia and back again in an hour?"

But, by whatever presents and explanatory letters we court the personal favour of the Emperor, the strength of our impression will rest upon our visible demonstration of power contrasted with our extreme forbearance in using it. That must make a favourable impression. And it is obvious that we are now arrived at a crisis in which some powerful impression is indispensable, in order not only to make the further progress which is challenged by our position in Asia, but to continue our hold on the progress which is made already,—not only for those objects even, but to meet the certain danger to our fellow-subjects from casual collisions with the Chinese laws. It is obvious enough that the Chinese commerce, if it were not ours already, ought to be procured by treaty,—considering the clamorous instincts which propel us in our great Asiatic career. It is obvious that this Chinese commerce, having long been ours, will be pursued now at whatever hazard, and that it is the duty of our Government to make that intercourse secure and honourable which it has long been out of their power to prevent. Lastly, it is obvious that, even if this commerce were extinguished by the violence of the Chinese, we should still need a treaty and a previous demonstration of our power, in order to protect our ships, with their increasing crews and passengers, from casual collisions with a cruel nation.

These arguments for an armed interference apply to any period of that vast system on which our Asiatic interests have been for some years expanding. But they apply at this moment beyond others for a separate reason: viz. on account of two injurious acts on the part of the Commissioner Lin, which have suddenly created a crisis: the first of these acts being the seizure of our opium (since a peaceable surrender under a virtual condition not fulfilled is a seizure); the second of these acts being the violent, summary, and (as Lin says) everlasting exclusion of the British name from
China. There were at any rate, and already, three general arguments for an interposition of our Government, pointing to the future; there is now a fourth argument, pointing to the past,—the reprisals called for against special and recent outrages. This last reason we have treated as itself furnishing strong matter against our own Government; but that does not acquit the Chinese Government. It is only in collusion with the Chinese Commissioner that our own Government has been wrong. To seek indemnities, where we ourselves created the necessity for those indemnities by submitting to the wrong, criminations the Government under whose impulse and misrepresentation we did submit to that wrong; but it does not acquit Lin, under whose breach of faith that submission has turned out to be an illusory act. Lin is guilty, and our own Government in a measure the accomplice of Lin. Yet, self-created as is our present necessity for indemnities, by pursuing that object in connexion with the other great objects indicated by the constant state of our danger from China, the Government will have its only chance of effacing past folly. We may forgive the absurdity and the fraud by which our merchants were decoyed into a supererogatory surrender of two birds in the hand by way of obtaining an uncertain reversion upon one bird in the bush. This and much besides we may forgive, and even rejoice in our own losses, as well as the blunders of our Government, if they should turn out to be the happy occasion of forcing a stream of light upon our Chinese position, and winning something more than a momentary indemnification for the British factory; winning honour for the name of Britain, winning a secure settlement planted in law and self-respect for our establishments in China, for ever taking away from British merchants all temptations to co-operate in legal murder, for ever guaranteeing our own brothers and sisters from liability to torture.

We have taken no notice of one feature in our Chinese relations which threatens us beyond China. We have been alarmed recently on the matter of Khiva. There is a monomania in this country as regards the Emperor of Russia! Because the Poles were conspirators, he must be a tyrant; and every man is suspected of aiming at a snuff-box through
the Russian ambassador who speaks a word of truth on behalf of his Russian Majesty! All that we shall say therefore is that the expedition to Khiva can hardly have any relation to the British movement upon Cabul. It was planned and talked of two good years before we crossed the Indus. The Khan of Khiva is the common nuisance of central Asia,—equally offensive to Russia as a disturber of her commerce in its natural channels, and a common Algerine pirate as regards her peaceful subjects on the Caspian. As regards India, if Russia could venture to assault with mere war an empire founded on both the war and the diplomacy of eighty years, how could she take an effectual departure from the Jaxartes, when she cannot reach it without the sacrifice of despair? not to mention that Russia cannot spare troops for an Indian campaign,—has not a battalion that is acclimatized,—cannot wish for an empire so distant as to demand a new centre of administration. Now, on the other hand, if China could become more warlike, the peril which we vainly look for on the Western Himalaya will seriously reach us from the Eastern.

We have taken no notice of a feature in the domestic circumstances of China which may happen to favour us. A secret and revolutionary society of vast ramifications, sometimes called the Society of the Triad, diffused through every province of maritime China, and having for its object to overthrow the existing Tartar dynasty and government, has been noticed by English travellers of late years. This may happen to co-operate with our purposes. But we rely upon no obscure features, whether for hope or for fear. We rely upon the condition of China—full of insolence, full of error, needing to be enlightened, and open to our attacks on every side. A popular Review has pronounced recently an apotheosis of China,—finding out that she is distinguished for her skill in the arts (but obscure mechanic arts), and that she was so when our ancestors lived in the forests of Germany. True; and no fact could better have measured the difference between us. The Review takes a retrospect of 1500 years. All the world sees how we have used that interval. We British have traversed the whole distance from savage life to the summit of civilisation. China, starting with such advantages,
has yet to learn even the elements of law and justice, without counting on doubtful advantages. We rely upon this known and attested state of Chinese society; which needs a diplomatic interference to make it endurable. We rely upon our past position at Canton; which was always full of temptations to partnership in murder. We rely upon our injuries; which are recent. We rely upon our honour, trampled under foot. We rely upon our interests; which, alike for commerce and for person, are now finally at stake.
POSTSCRIPT

ON THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON'S VIEWS

On the 11th of May this article went to press. And on the 15th day of May, the Lords' debate being then circulated through Edinburgh, it first became known to us that between our views on this remarkable question and those of the Duke of Wellington as now brought forward by party collision, there were some pointed coincidences. Any man in the world may be proud of a coincidence, in a matter so complex, with the illustrious Duke. And the business of this Postscript is accordingly:—

First of all, To establish and claim the benefit of that coincidence: to show that it was such; and that our agreements with the Duke are not consequent upon any communication that we could have had with the noble Duke's opinions. The statement of dates, as given above, shows satisfactorily that our speculations upon this great Oriental crisis—however closely approaching to the Duke's—must have had a separate and independent origin. Indirectly, also, we are proud to establish our claims in this way, as having fairly appreciated the probable course of Tory doctrines upon so elaborate a question, and of Tory policy, at a time when neither one nor the other had been circumstantially developed,—when it was not yet fully known where the Tory blame and praise would settle as to the past, nor in what precise channel the Tory policy would travel as to the future.

Secondly, To explain any case, however subordinate, in which we appear to have differed from the Duke, and in
which, according to the extent of our differences, the presumption is that we must be wrong.

Thirdly, Without reference to any claim or any explanation on our own account, it is a purpose of this Postscript to tell the general reader, who cares not for the person saying, but simply for the thing said, how far we have found reason to modify any opinion previously delivered after the benefit we acknowledge to have received from this discussion before so enlightened a senate as the House of Lords, and, more particularly, whether we have any fresh views to offer after the affair has been brought under the review of the most sagacious and the most experienced amongst modern statesmen.

Amidst the sharp musketry of a Parliamentary debate it is the general feeling that the Duke of Wellington’s opinions or suggestions tell like cannon-shot. Whatsoever falls from him is received by the country as having an oracular value. And in this present instance of the China debate his authority has told so effectually as to have crushed by anticipation a second debate pending contingently in the House of Commons. Notice of a motion on this subject has been expressly withdrawn, upon the ground of the powerful impression made by the Duke of Wellington. It becomes, therefore, the more important that we should draw a glance over the points established by His Grace, as they accord so entirely with our own previous view, and strengthen so greatly the opinions, and the grounds of those opinions, which we had already expressed in print.

The whole field of the questions concerned divides into two great sections—the past, and the future: the past, in relation to the criminality which has brought on the crisis—how that criminality is to be distributed amongst the several parties to the transaction; the future, in relation to the policy which must now be applied to the successful unravelling of this crisis. What is past undoubtedly cannot be recalled: but it is not the less important to understand it thoroughly, both for the purpose of framing measures to prevent its recurrence, and because our whole policy, even where it is and must be of a warlike character, will undoubtedly need to be shaped very differently accordingly as it contemplates a case of mixed aggressions, partly British, partly Chinese, or
a case of horrible outrage (in the way we have maintained, and in the way it now appears that the Duke of Wellington maintains) exclusively Chinese, and utterly unprovoked.

The parties liable to inculpation, as having participated in the proceedings at some stage or other, are three:—the Chinese Government, the British Opium-dealers, and our own Domestic Administration. Let us pass them in rapid review, and weigh the distribution of blame amongst these three parties as awarded by the illustrious Duke:—

I. The Chinese Government.—Here the Duke's statements are not only, as we described them to be generally, like cannon-shot in their effect, but are like such shot in its course and mode of progress as described in Schiller's Wallenstein—"shattering what it reaches, and shattering that it may reach." Not only does he shatter the object of his attack—the immoral government of China; but, in his road to that object, he goes right through the centre of all who have in this country undertaken the apology of that government. Had the Chinese even stood upon any fair ground of right in the first stages of the case, they would have forfeited that advantage in the last: "for," says the Duke, "in all the " fifty years of my own experience as a servant of my country "—no, nor in any part of my reading—have I met with such " another case of outrage as that authorized by the rulers of " China to our accredited agent." And, if some people object —"Oh! but the Chinese would not recognise Captain Elliot as an accredited agent, they would not receive a British official representative."—in that case so much the worse; because then Captain Elliot had the rights of a private individual, and there was no more plea open to the Chinese Government for making him responsible than any obscure sailor taken at random.

So much for the last stages of the Chinese conduct; and here the Duke does but strengthen an impression which is open to us all. But, as to the first stages, by reference to sources of information more special and personal, he cuts the ground from below the feet of the Chinese Government in a way peculiar to himself. We could but suspect; for we had no documents. The Duke proves: he had ample documents. In papers furnished to the Lords he had seen, in a Committee of the Lords he had heard, direct evidence—proof not to be
gainsaid or shaken—that the acting administration of China, those persons, one and all, whom we aliens are required to consider and to treat as the responsible government of the land, had through a series of years encouraged the importation of opium. There flutters to the winds a whole library of polemic pamphlets. After this, is it anything to us whether in such a case, and many another case, the Emperor is or is not kept in the dark by the mandarins? We are bound to know the Emperor's pleasure through those whom he deputes to us as his representatives. We can know it in no other way. The internal abuses of their Government are for their own consciences. To us they are nothing. And there, at one blow from the mace of the iron Duke, lies in splinters upon the floor almost every pro-Chinese pleading which has taken up the ground of morality.

II. The British Opium-Dealers.—Upon this head the Duke is overwhelming. Their acquittal, indeed, is involved in the fact which has been just stated on the Duke's authority with regard to the Chinese Administration. If that body encouraged importation, in respect of them the importers cannot be wrongdoers. There might be room for some wrong in relation to our British Government; because, if they had happened to forbid the opium traffic, wisely or foolishly, then it might have been a fair plea at home—"Look for no British aid if China should injure you in respect to an interest which we have discountenanced." So much room, and no more, there might have been for wrong on the side of the opium merchants. There might have been; but was there? Hear the all-shattering Duke:—

First he declares that, so far from even looking gloomily upon this opium commerce, Parliament had cherished it, suggested its extension, and deliberately examined the means at their disposal for promoting its success, as a favoured resource both of finance and of trade. The Duke reminds the House that he himself, with other patriotic peers, had been parties to a committee of which one main business was to recommend and introduce (by way of substitution for the privileges lost to the East India Company on throwing open their trade) some modified form of a monopoly with regard to opium.
Secondly,—if this should be thought to shift the blame from the merchants to the British Parliament,—in order, to make it any duty of our legislators that they should interfere to stop the opium traffic, first of all we must have such a measure made out to be a possibility. Now, the Duke puts down the notion *ex abundanti.* For, at a time when certain intolerable treaties with native princes had armed us with a machinery towards this result, such as we never *shall* have again and never *ought* to have had, even then we could not succeed in operating upon the trade, except after the following fashion:—Our Indian Government proclaimed restrictions; our merchants, native as well as British, evaded them. Our Government made another move in the game, evading the evasions. Our merchants, wide-awake, countered evaded the evasions of their own evasions. And thus the sport proceeded, the two parties doubling upon each other, and dodging like an old experienced hare against a greyhound, until at last, upon a necessity arising for the Government to abolish the treaties, we were obliged to whip off the dogs, and the *game* party of merchants had it all their own way. Lord Ellenborough, whose former experience at the Board of Control made his evidence irresistible on this point, confirmed all that the Duke had said; with circumstantial illustrations of this vain race with the merchants, and showing that, even for that ineffectual trial of strength, our Indian Government enjoyed some momentary advantages which it must never count upon for the future. We have seen the best of our facilities for such a conflict with private interest. Even then it was a hopeless conflict: *a fortiori* it will be so hereafter. *Impossibilities are no subjects for legislation.* By civil law, "*nemo tenetur facere impossibilia.*" 

Thirdly,—But, possible or not in a practical and executive sense, if it is our *duty* to restrain any given social nuisance, we must not plead our impotence in bar of complaints against us; and, in default of our own restraints, we must not complain if others suffering by the nuisance take that remedy into their own hands which we profess to have found too difficult for ours. Other checks failing, let us not complain of those for redressing the evil who suffer by the annoyance! Certainly not. Nor *do* we complain. Nor is
there anything to that effect involved in any one British act, or in any one argument that has been built upon it. We quarrel with no nation for enforcing her rights of domestic policy, so long as she keeps herself within the methods of international justice. But, with respect to China, we make two demurs. We refuse to hear of any people raising their separate municipal law into a code of international law: it is not merely insolence, but it is contradictory folly, to suppose that, in a dispute between two independent parties, one of the parties is to constitute himself umpire for both. This demur we make in the first place. And, secondly, we say that, apart from her savage modes of redressing civil wrongs, China has, in this instance, forfeited her claim to any redress from her long collusion with the wrongdoers whom now in caprice she accuses; and because not only she participated through every class of her population in the opium traffic,—which with us rested on the support of those only who were naturally, inevitably, without bribes, the agents of such a traffic,—but also because she was the original tempter, inviter, hirer, clamorous suborner, of that intercourse which now she denounces. Roguery, like other tastes, has its fashions. Chinese roguery and court intrigue are now, it seems, blowing from some fresh point of the compass. Be it so. We argue not against any nation's caprices. But we refuse to hear of our merchants and our sailors being made the victims to such caprices, this year inviting the man whom next year they crucify.

That duty, therefore, which so many are urging against us, as binding our faith and tying our hands in the collision with China, the Duke of Wellington disowns as being a pure chimera under the circumstances of the case. But, on the other hand, says the Duke, whilst these men argue for an obligation of conscience which cannot be sustained, observe the real and solemn obligations, some notorious, some implied in treaties, which these disputants are goading us to trample under foot. That duty of superintendence applied to opium, which is merely fanciful as regards China under the circumstances created by herself, we really do owe, and shall for many years owe, to native powers of Hindostan. We came under such obligations by contracts, by cessions in our
favour, by diplomatic acts, long since locked up into the public diplomacy of India. We cannot disturb those arrangements without a sympathetic violence running through the whole tenure, guarantees, compensations of all Indian chanceries. We were long ago pledged to the protection of many vested interests rooted in the poppy-growing districts. If we should co-operate with China in vainly attempting to exclude Indian opium from the vast unprotected coasts of China, we undertake the following series of follies: we lend ourselves to a caprice of a hostile government, to a caprice levelled at our own power; we undertake to do for China what she is laughably impotent to do for herself; we take upon ourselves the expense of an act so purely hostile to ourselves,—which expense would also soon recall China to her senses; and, lastly, as if such a course of follies were not complete without an appendix of spoliation, we purchase the means of this aid to our enemy by the sacrifice of debts, duties, contracts, guarantees to the closest of our neighbours, and, amongst our Indian allies, to some of the oldest and most hopeful. The Duke of Wellington, we must remember, is at home in the affairs of India. And this particular suggestion, as to the rights and interests of provinces likely to be affected by any compromises with China, belongs entirely to his Grace. Until this vein of interests had been exposed, it was supposed that a policy of concession to China would simply pledge us to a maniacal course, whereas the Duke has shown that it would pledge us also to perfidy, to a general infraction of treaties, and to a convulsion of industry and political economy through many channels in which they are now prosperously flowing.

Such is the circuit of the Duke's logic. Travelling round the circle of parties concerned, when he hears it said of the Chinese "They have received an injury amounting to a cause of war," "By no means," he replies: "they courted what they complain of; I have proof that they did." When he hears it said of the merchants "Their trade must be stopped," he replies "I defy you to stop it: the thing has been tried, and was laid aside as impossible." When it is retorted "Well, if it is an inveterate abuse, at least it is an abuse," the Duke rejoins "No abuse at all: Parliament
recognised an old right, created a new one, in the opium-growers.” “But, at least, justice to China requires that the right should be forborne in that instance.” “On the contrary,” the Duke again instructs us, “justice to India requires that in that instance, above all others, the right should be protected and favoured.” Thus pertinaciously does this champion of truth and scourge of false pretensions ride round the ring, and sustain the assault against all comers who would make a breach through the barriers of equity or civil policy.

But, after all these parties are disposed of, there still remains

III. Our Domestic Administration.—Now, in what degree the Duke of Wellington condemns their policy, in its want of foresight, may be gathered from his special complaints, both now and formerly, of the twofold defects at Canton,—defect of naval force, defect of naval judicatures,—and, more generally, from his complaint that far too great an onus was thrown upon the responsibilities of Captain Elliot,—too much, in fact, for any one man unrelieved by a council to support. His objections, indeed, to the Ministry come forward indirectly in the errors which he exposes and the cautions which he suggests. But the reasons why the Duke makes no pointed attack on Lord Melbourne’s government are, first of all, the general principles which govern this great servant of the state in all movements; viz. his anxiety for ever to look round the wide horizon for some national benefit, rather than into a local corner for some party triumph; and, secondly, because upon this particular question of China the present Ministry are not so much opposed to the Tories as to a fantastic party of moral sentimentalists, who, by force of investing the Chinese with feelings unintelligible to Pagans (substituting at the same time a romance for the facts of the case), have terminated in forcing upon the public eye a false position of the whole interest at stake,—a position in which all the relations of person are inverted, in which things are confounded, and our duties (otherwise so clear) are utterly perplexed. It is this anti-national party who, on these questions of Opium and China, form the true antagonist pole to the Ministry. As to us Tories, we are
here opposed to the party in office only in so far as they have conceded to the Chinese. Where they have met this arrogant people with an English resistance, we praise them, honour them, support them. And exactly upon that mixed principle of judgment it has been that the Duke, seeing the strong primary demand that he should support them, has less diligently sought out those secondary cases in which it would have been necessary for him to blame or to condemn them.

Thus far with regard to the past, and the general distribution of blame which that review must prompt. As to the future, and the particular courses of Oriental policy which any speculation pointed in that direction must suggest for comparison, it will be remarked, as a singularity in so great a soldier when facing a question so purely martial, that the Duke of Wellington declines to offer any opinion whatever on the possible varieties of warfare, on the modes of combining the land and sea forces, on the local opportunities for applying them with effect, on the best general chances of success, or the permanent object to be kept in view. But let us not misinterpret this high-principled reserve. Some persons have drawn the inference so as to load the Duke of Wellington with the responsibility of having doubted whether a warlike course were, in our circumstances, an advisable course. Nothing of the sort. Not war, but this war; not a warlike policy as generally indicated by our situation, but that kind of policy as governed by our present disposable means, and moving under some particular plan of which the very outline is yet unknown and the scale is yet unassigned: that it is which the Duke drew back from appreciating. Knowing the immense weight which must follow any opinion from himself upon a matter so professionally falling within his right of judgment, he forbore to prejudge a scheme of war as to which Europe was hanging on his lips. But, as to war generally, that the Duke does not encourage doubts of the necessity to support our pacific relation at all times by showy demonstrations of our readiness for fighting is evident from the constant recurrence in his own Chinese state-papers of warlike suggestions. It is almost comic to observe what stress he lays, in sketching the line of argument to be employed by British negotiators with China, upon "a stout frigate" within hail.
In one point only we are reminded, whilst closing, of a difference between the Duke of Wellington’s views and those which we had previously expressed. As this point respects an individual officer, it is fit that we should do him justice by the whole vast preponderance which belongs to the Duke of Wellington’s praise over any man’s censure. We had blamed Captain Elliot: the Duke praises him, with a fervour that must constitute Captain Elliot’s proudest recollection through life. But the truth is, we speak of different things. We spoke of Captain Elliot as identified with his principals, and as representing their line of policy. The Duke speaks of him as a separate individual, acting, in a moment of danger, according to a true British sense of duty upon sudden emergencies for which he could have received no instructions from England. In his firm refusals to give up Mr. Dent, and afterwards the six sailors demanded by Lin, Captain Elliot’s conduct was worthy of his country. And the Duke of Wellington, who is always right, reminds us, by his fervent commendation, of our own error in having neglected to place those acts in that light of exemplary merit which belongs to them.

And here we cannot help saying a word or two of one of the few men in any period who have lived to see their own consecration in human affections, and have had a foretaste of their own immortality on earth. Let us briefly notice the Duke of Wellington’s present position amongst us,—which is remarkable, and almost unique.

Until within these few years this great man had been adequately appreciated according to the means which the nation then possessed for framing a judgment of his merits. We measured him by his acts. Europe had seen him as a soldier; had seen him as an ambassador—no ceremonial ambassador, but, in a general congress of nations still rocking with the agitations of convulsions without a parallel, as a mediatorial ambassador for adjudicating the rights of the world: finally, Europe had seen him as a prime minister of England. In the first character, as the leader of “the faithful armies” which, under whatever name, did in reality sustain the interests of human nature and the cause of civilisation upon earth, it would be idle
to speak of him. In the two last characters it was the
general feeling of England that the Duke of Wellington had
exemplified "the majesty of plain dealing" upon a scale
never before witnessed, and in functions to which such a
spirit of dealing was hardly supposed applicable. Thus far
we all did him right. But we also did him a great wrong;
and it was inevitable that we should do so. It was a wrong
which he bore cheerfully, and with the submission which he
felt to be one of his duties as a public servant in a free
country. But it must have been bitter and trying to his
secret sense of justice, seeing that subsequent revelations
have exposed to view a peculiar and preternatural strength,
a compass of power absolutely without precedent, in that
very organ of his character to which our popular error ascribed
an elementary weakness.

Nobody can look back for a space of six or eight years
but must remember as a general notion prevailing against
the Duke of Wellington,—a taunt often urged by our politi-
cal opponents, often silently conceded by ourselves,—that,
either from habits of long usage or from original vice of tem-
perament, he was too rigid in his political opinions,—in his
demeanour too peremptory, too uncivic; that with the highest
virtues of the military character he combined some of its
worst disqualifications for political life; that his notions
tended to impress too martial a character of discipline upon
the public service; that even his virtues of a civic order
were alloyed with this spirit,—his directness and plain-
dealing being but another aspect of that peremptory spirit
which finds its proper place in a camp; and that, finally, as
to the substantial merits of national wants or grievances,
apart from the mode and manner of his administration, not
less by temper than by his modes of experience, the Duke
was incapacitated for estimating the spirit of his age, and
stood aloof from all popular sympathies.

Thus stood public opinion when a memorable act of retri-
bution was rendered to the Duke’s merits, and a monument
raised to his reputation such as will co-exist with our language,
in the series of his Despatches &c. published by Colonel Gur-
wood. The effect was profound. The Duke of Wellington had
long been raised as far beyond the benefits as he is beyond
the need of any trivial enthusiasm derived from momentary sources or vulgar arts; and this book was fitted to engage the attention of none but the highly cultivated. The reverence of the land for the Duke's character, the gratitude of the land for the Duke's services, scarcely seemed open to increase. But undoubtedly a depth of tone and a solemnity approaching to awe were impressed henceforth upon the feelings with which all thoughtful men regarded the Duke of Wellington as an intellectual being. Now first it was understood what quality of intellect had been engaged in our service, moving amongst what multiplied embarrassments, thwarted by what conflicts even in friendly quarters, winning its way by what flexibility of address, watching all obstacles by what large compass of talents, and compensating every disadvantage for the public service by what willing sacrifices of selfish feeling. Were it not for the singleness of purpose, for the perfect integrity, for the absolute self-dedication and the sublime simplicity, we should say—Here is a Machiavelian subtlety of understanding! With an apostolical grandeur of purpose there is here combined the address of a finished intriguer; and, for a service of nations upon the grandest scale, we see displayed a restless and a versatile spirit of submission to circumstances and to characters, which, according to all the experience of this world, belongs naturally to modes of selfishness the most intense. The wisdom of long-suffering; the policy of allowance in matters of practice; the spirit of indulgence to errors that were redeemable; the transcendent power to draw into unity of effect elements the most heterogeneous and tempers the most incompatible; in short, that spirit of civic accommodation to the times in which we had supposed him to have been most wanting, and that spirit of regard to the bold national temperament of the armies he led which was held most irreconcilable with martial discipline:—precisely these were the qualities which the Gurwood correspondence has exposed as the foremost of the Duke's endowments,—in any case the very rarest endowments, and in this case, amongst an army so high-spirited, the most operative for the final success. In short, to sum up the truth by the sharpest antithesis, instead of ruling in his civic administration by means of military maxims, the Duke
of Wellington applied to military measures and to the conduct of armies that spirit of civic policy which, in times less critical by far, had not been attempted by generals of nations the most democratic.

Such is the retributory service, late but perfect, rendered to the Duke's character. The shades of evening are now stealing over his life; and for him also that night is coming in which no man can work. But as yet no abatement is visible in his energies of public duty. Tenderness, as towards a ward of the nation, is now beginning to mingle with our veneration. And, in the course of nature, the anxieties of a mighty people will soon be suspended on his health, as they have long been suspended on his majestic wisdom.

Meantime there is a kind of duty—upon every question of politics to which the Duke of Wellington has been constructively a party—of looking towards him as the centre upon which our public counsels revolve. But in Asiatic questions he has a closer interest, and a sort of property by various tenures. Through his elder brother, as a brilliant administrator of our British Empire in India, and through his own memorable share in raising that empire, he has obtained a distinct cognisance of Indian rights which makes him their natural guardian. And of this Opium Dispute he has himself demonstrated that in its rebound it is more truly a question for our Indian friends than for our Chinese antagonists. To the Duke, therefore, at any rate, we look in this emergency, as one which lies originally within his field. And it is with the view of exhibiting the man as matched against the crisis, of equalising the authority with the occasion, that we have digressed into this act of critical justice to the Duke's merits. But, if that course would have been a matter of propriety whilst merely looking with a general political deference to the Duke's authority, much more it is become such after the Duke's comprehensive examination of the case, and after the effect of that examination has been put on record by so public a test as instantly followed: some persons having silently, some avowedly, withdrawn from the further prosecution of a question which, in this stage at least, had been laid to rest by his Grace's exposition of its merits.