

## CHAPTER IX.

WITHDRAWAL OF THE NAVAL FORCE—YAMUN OF THE TARTAR GENERAL—"THE HALL OF STATE"—THE ORNAMENTAL GARDENS—SCENES AT THE LANDING-PLACE—THE HALL OF EXAMINATION—THE "AVENUE OF BENEVOLENCE AND LOVE"—OPEN-AIR COOKERY—STREETS OF CANTON—JOSS-HOUSES OF CANTON—FUTURE PUNISHMENTS ILLUSTRATED—ALLIED POLICE CORPS—PIHKWEI'S PROCLAMATIONS—A LUNCHEON AT HOWQUA'S—PIHKWEI'S DESPATCH ON TRADE—PROPOSAL TO RAISE THE BLOCKADE.

THE city of Canton was now completely in the possession of the allied forces. Almost the whole of the British portion of the naval force was therefore withdrawn,—the marines and 59th forming the army of occupation, together with a few hundred French sailors.

Our Jacks presented a most grotesque appearance, as they returned to their ships, waving Chinese banners, their heads covered with mandarin caps, and their knapsacks filled with spoils of a miscellaneous description ; though, to do them justice, we may fairly conjecture that these were rather ornamental than useful in their character. In this respect our simple tars presented a marked contrast in their looting propensities to their more prudent comrades

among the allies. These latter possessed a wonderful instinct for securing portable articles of value ; and, while honest Jack was flourishing down the street, with a broad grin of triumph on his face, a bowl of gold-fish under one arm, and a cage of canary-birds under the other, honest Jean, with a demure countenance and no external display, was conveying his well-lined pockets to the water-side.

All this time Pihkwei's yamun presented so much more the appearance of a barrack for French and English soldiers than the residence of a Chinese mandarin, that it was considered desirable that they should be removed to the more spacious yamun belonging to the Tartar General, but not at present occupied by him. Though in a dilapidated condition, it was a good specimen of the style of the best class of official residences in China. The first indication to the stranger of the existence of one of these buildings is the large masonry screen, upon which gigantic dragons are delineated, and which is often placed upon the side of the thoroughfare opposite the yamun, so that the street passes through the courtyard, of which it forms one face. Near it are the two lofty red poles, the invariable insignia of office. Walls enclose this square, on the fourth side of which is the entrance. Two carved lions guard a flight of granite steps, which ascend to the principal gateway. Upon the huge folding-doors are depicted gaudily-attired giants, who gaze contemplatively upon the crowd, holding with their left hands the points of their

beards. Passing through this door, we enter a verandah, where once Tartar soldiers mounted guard, but of which all that remains are enormous tridents, spears, and scimitars stacked in a rack. Then down more steps, and across a paved yard, and through another painted gate, called the "Gate of Ceremony," on each side of which are circular slabs of granite, like millstones, carved with figures emblematic of eternity. Then across another grass-grown court, and up another flight of steps, to the "Hall of Audience," in the front of which is a raised paved yard, surrounded by an elaborately-carved granite balustrade.

Altogether there were five successive ranges of buildings, each separated from the other by a courtyard, each dedicated to some particular purpose, each surmounted by a tablet-like escutcheon, on which was inscribed in large characters the name of the General then occupying the *yamun*, to whom it was presented by the Emperor, the date, and the character "Happiness." The fourth range of buildings contained the "Hall of State," where there was a stone screen, upon which were inscribed the merits which should distinguish the soldier, his necessary qualifications, and the position he should occupy with reference to them ; in other words, that he should be "the right man in the right place ;" and in the corner, in gigantic strokes, as appropriate to the profession in China at all events, the character "Longevity." The fifth was the innermost building of all ; it pos-

essed an upper story, and here were the apartments of the women. Each range was seventy or eighty yards long, the private apartments lighted by paper and occasional panes of glass, and ornamented with pictures.

There were detached buildings at the sides; a library with joss figures, but no books; a temple dedicated to the Emperor's handwriting, where a slab was erected like those upon which the commandments are usually inscribed in our own churches, with writing in the Manchourian character in the Emperor's own hand. Surrounding all were gardens, in which were tangled thickets, and shady walks, and little islands in the middle of ponds, approached by rustic bridges, and surrounded by ornamental rock-work; summer-houses and cool grottoes were pleasant retreats from the noonday heat. The grounds altogether were of that quaint character peculiar to Chinese taste, and which is not without a certain charm. The stone of which the caves and arches were composed comes from a district about a hundred miles distant; the fantastic shapes which are common to it render it especially suitable to ornamental purposes.

The whole of this establishment bore the marks of neglect and decay. Some of the rooms were tenanted by bats; the courts, which should have been shaded only by the spreading banyan or graceful bamboo, were overrun with noxious weeds, and the gardens were partly jungle. All this,

however, was ultimately transformed by the allied civil and military officials, and a large body of troops, who entered into possession of these picturesque quarters shortly before we left Canton, and have remained in them ever since.

We had now been a fortnight in occupation of Canton, and found abundant employment, during the rest of our stay, in exploring the hitherto forbidden purlieus of that exclusive city. Lord Elgin seldom allowed a day to pass without visiting it,—partly for the purpose of judging for himself of the temper of the people, partly from the pleasure he took in exploring its most hidden recesses, but principally to check as far as possible, by his personal influence, those excesses on the part of the troops, so detrimental to the policy he was determined to carry out. Nor, in this latter respect, were his efforts unavailing. The General thoroughly entered into the views of the Plenipotentiaries, and, by his stringent orders, effectually restrained the somewhat natural tendencies of the men in the exercise of what they considered their legitimate privileges. It is only fair to state, that, upon the whole, their conduct was in the highest degree creditable to the arm of the service to which they belonged.

A gun-boat, which the Admiral had placed at Lord Elgin's disposition, conveyed us daily from our anchorage, about three miles from the landing-place, to and from the city. This landing-place ever presented a scene of picturesque confusion. At low water, a vast surface of deep mud was exposed to view, over

which we were dragged in sampans by boatwomen, who kilted themselves for the occasion, and shoved and waded with immense energy and perseverance for a few coppers each. The boat population was indeed the first to regain confidence, and each gunboat, as it arrived, was surrounded by a swarm of importunate sampan-owners, whose love of filthy lucre soon overcame any patriotic scruples they might have had. Parties of seamen and sappers were engaged in constructing a pier, stores were being landed for the garrison, and athletic Chinamen, who formed the land-transport corps, were collected in groups round the burdens they were destined to carry to the front. The services which these men had rendered, from the commencement of operations, cannot be too highly estimated; their conduct under fire proved that, properly disciplined and supported, the Chinaman was not deficient in personal courage; while in their endurance and obedience they gave evidence of the most valuable qualities which go to make up the soldier.

The south-east angle of the wall was levelled, and a broad road made to it from the landing-place, so that an admirable line of communication conducted to every point occupied by our troops. Immediately within this angle the Hall of Examination, covering a great extent of ground, was the first striking object which met the eye. It consisted of a series of rows of cells on each side of a broad paved walk, not unlike the interior of a church, on a very large scale.

Each row was separately tiled over, and divided into a quantity of stalls, about the size usually allotted to horses ; each of these was supposed, during the period of the public examinations, to contain a student, the whole being calculated to accommodate 8000 with lodging. Certainly there was not much to distract their attention during the fortnight they were condemned to pass in these cells. A narrow passage separated them from the dead wall which formed the back of the next row, and thick partitions rendered communication with their neighbours on either side impossible. It is necessary to pass through this examination, in order to obtain a master's degree ; the only exception is made in favour of age ; and after a man has passed threescore and ten years, he is considerably allowed to take out the degree of honorary master. At the period of our occupation, the passages were overgrown with weeds, and it bore all the marks of disuse and neglect. The houses in the immediate neighbourhood were wretched in the extreme, and had suffered a good deal from the fire of our ships.

The "Avenue of Benevolence and Love," or the great east and west street, was the principal thoroughfare of the city ; here it was that the shops first began to open, and the population to resume those street habits which are the same in every Chinese town, and which were temporarily suspended by the capture of the city ; one after the other shop-boards came down, and the owners stood smilingly behind their counters,

thankful, doubtless, that the contents, which they had not had time to remove, were there to tempt their barbarian customers. As the taste of these latter for curiosities became known, shops of this character multiplied with marvellous rapidity. "Olo bronzes, and too muchee olo crackly China," were lavishly displayed; and the crowds constantly collected at the doors of the shops, proved that foreign purchasers were making rash investments within. At first, it was not considered prudent to move about unaccompanied by an escort, but this was speedily discontinued, and, with a revolver and a companion, we used to venture into any part of the city or suburbs.

As the "Avenue of Benevolence and Love" was more frequented, it became a less agreeable lounge, and the already narrow streets were still further diminished in breadth by large tubs full of live fish, baskets of greens, sea chestnuts, yams, and bamboo root. Cooking-stoves were erected, and elaborately cooked viands hissed and sputtered on the heated iron, titillating with their savoury odour the nostril of the hungry passenger. Open coppers steamed and bubbled, and delicate morsels danced on the surface; round tables were daintily set out with pastry of divers patterns, and presided over by croupiers, who jerked reeds in a box, or spun a ball something after the fashion of roulette, thus enabling the dinner-seeker to combine the exhilarating excitement of the gambler with the epicurean enjoyment of the gourmand, the consideration that they had cost

him nothing adding an additional zest to his gastronomic pleasures. It might so happen, on the other hand, that one unkind turn of the wheel of fortune sent him supperless to bed.

Notwithstanding the apparent gradual restoration of confidence, people for some time continued to pour out of the West Gate, without, however, making any perceptible diminution in the amount of the population. It was singular to stand here and watch this exodus, to observe the miscellaneous property which was being conveyed by patient coolies, followed by anxious owners. Now a man passed with tables and chairs at one end of his stick, and two babies at the other; coffins balanced pots of manure; and men transported articles which we should consider worthless, as carefully as their wives; nor, considering the general aspect of the female part of the population, was this wonderful, when to their natural ugliness is added the deformity of feet and apparent entire absence of arms—for a Chinese woman seldom makes use of the sleeves of her jacket: anything more unprepossessing than the lady part of the community could not be well conceived. In fact, after the first novelty has worn off, there is nothing to make a promenade in the streets of a Chinese town attractive. The foulest odours assail the olfactories. The most disgusting sights meet the eye—objects of disease, more loathsome than anything to be seen in any other part of the world, jostle against you. Coolies staggering under coffins, or something worse, recklessly dash

their loads against your shins ; you suspect every man that touches you of a contagious disease ; and the streets themselves are wet, slippery, narrow, tortuous, and crowded. The best streets were those in the suburbs, at the back of the site of the foreign factories, and which had formerly been frequented by foreigners. There the shops were gayer and more richly supplied ; and the vertical shop-signs, gorgeously emblazoned in fantastic characters, were more numerous and striking to the stranger's eye.

The factories themselves were a heap of ruins ; the only spot which could vie with their former site, as a scene of desolation, was Yeh's yamun, right in the line of the Cruizer's fire. The guns of that ship had effectually demolished the residence of the Imperial Commissioner. The street of triumphal arches, in a line beyond it, had also unfortunately suffered ; many valuable book-shops had been destroyed, and four of the arches levelled. The same number, however, still remain ; they are massively constructed of carved granite, and covered with inscriptions. Though of elegant design and workmanship, they are not comparable to those which span the streets of Ningpo. The joss-houses at Canton were not remarkable for beauty of architectural design or ornament. The handsomest was near the north-east angle of the wall ; the exterior was elaborately adorned with carved groups in relief over the principal entrance, and under the quaint turned-up eaves the figures were gaudily coloured, and reflected in looking-glasses.

let into the framework which supported them. Many of the larger figures in these joss-houses had been overturned, as a popular notion prevailed among the soldiers, which was not altogether without foundation, that within the portly persons of these deities treasure was often concealed.

Others of the joss-houses were more particularly dedicated to what is vulgarly known as "Sing-sing joss-pigeon." A favourite lounge of the idler part of the population was the spacious court of one of these, situated close to the treasurer's yamun. Here "*mendici, mimæ, balatrones, hoc genus omne,*" collected daily; gambling, fortune-telling, eating, and tom-toming went on perpetually; and public story-tellers kept gaping crowds entranced with the thrilling interest of their narrations, which were delivered with great volubility, accompanied by considerable play of feature, and with a loud, clear intonation. By way of a cheerful subject of contemplation for the public who frequented this haunt of excitement, the tortures of the damned were exhibited in recesses all round the courtyard. Clay figures, about three feet high, like those of terra-cotta to be seen in Italy, were represented in various attitudes inflicting or submitting to the most horrid penalties; men were being sewn up alive in raw bullock skins, women sawn asunder, and whole families were being stirred about as they simmered in huge caldrons. The tormentors invariably wore an expression of countenance indicative of placid enjoyment; while the faces of their victims, distorted

with agony, were vividly portrayed. Altogether the tableaux were worthy of the most lively inquisitorial imagination.

During the first week of the occupation, bodies of men were marched through the different quarters of the city as patrols ; it was found, however, that this served rather to alarm than to reassure the population ; while a lawless rabble, following close in rear, took advantage of the confusion created to shoplift with a dexterity worthy of the swell-mob. An allied police was, therefore, substituted for these patrols, composed partly of Chinese and partly of English or French. Natives and foreigners were alike amused to observe a file of marines walking amicably side-by-side with a file of Chinamen, the one headed by a sergeant, and the other by a petty mandarin, gracefully fanning himself. This scheme proved eminently successful : European offenders were brought up and punished by the tribunal ; while Pihkwei bastinadoed his own countrymen with an unsparing vehemence, to prove his desire of cordial co-operation. The experiment of a naval alliance for the suppression of piracy did not turn out so happily, the Mandarin junks taking the first opportunity, by escaping into the creeks, to dissolve the connection. As, in the course of his explorations, Mr Parkes discovered some proclamations intended to inflame the population against foreigners, which evil-disposed persons were beginning to post up extensively, Pihkwei was ordered to issue notices to the headmen of the dis-

tricts, making them responsible for insulting or incendiary proclamations. The system of responsibility thus introduced is thoroughly in accordance with the Chinese plan of government. It was that pursued in the government of Canton with perfect success ; it served the twofold purpose of keeping Pihkwei constantly in check, and of proving to the inhabitants the absolute supremacy of our power.

Some of these proclamations were characteristic, and to the minds of the Chinese readers sufficiently novel and startling, after the inflammatory notices against foreigners to which they had been accustomed. In one the authorities call the people to account for calling names : "Whereas," they say, "the Canton people have a habit, whenever they see a foreigner, of shouting out 'Fan-kwei,' and otherwise committing themselves, in utter violation of all rules of proper demeanour, and of the conduct that is due from man to man, you forget that there is no distinction between natives and foreigners ; that foreigners are but as the people of other provinces ; and that there should be between you courteous intercourse and mutual concession ; that you should not intentionally show contempt for them, or stand aloof from them:"—then it goes on to notice the practice of posting placards, and concludes by stating that, "This is to signify to all you, the people, that henceforth, when you meet foreigners in the streets, you must behave to them civilly ; you must neither use the term 'fan-kwei,' nor any other opprobrious expres-

sion. You are not either to post placards containing anything offensive to foreigners. We, the authorities above mentioned, spare not to reiterate this caution to you. We, at the same time, command all police and constables to keep strict watch, and to seize those who transgress. If you offend, you will be punished with the utmost severity. Do not, therefore, pursue a course which you will repent when it is too late. Do not disobey. A special notification." Another proclamation, concluding "Let every one tremble and obey," was from Pihkwei, commanding servants who had left the service of Europeans at Hong-Kong in consequence of the pressure applied by the government, to return to their masters.

Amongst those most anxious for the re-establishment of a settled order of things was the celebrated Chinese merchant Howqua, who, in the fulness of his desire for conciliation, invited some of us to luncheon with him one afternoon. His house in the suburbs had remained uninjured during the troubles, and was tastefully but plainly furnished : he explained, however, that he possessed another handsomer residence. We met here a blue-button mandarin and an ex-judge from the province of Sz'chuen. The latter was an enlightened man, and said that Yeh had only received what he deserved. Howqua regaled us with some delicious tea, of course without milk or sugar, and we afterwards sat down to a light repast of preserves and fruits, our host doing the honours with much courtesy and good-breeding.

But the Chinese merchants of Canton were not the only persons desirous of seeing commerce resumed. Most singular to state, Pihkwei wrote to Lord Elgin upon the same subject as follows:—\* “Still it is, without doubt, essential that so far as trade is concerned no time should be lost. By every day that the opening of the port is accelerated, by so much is the restoration of public confidence accelerated, not only in the minds of the Chinese, but in the minds of the merchants in every nation as well. The conditions of trade would probably be in accordance with the old regulations under which imports and exports were entered and inspected, and the duties on them paid. Your Excellency is, of course, thoroughly conversant with these. I would add, that from the ninth moon of last year to the present time, a twelvemonth and more, the mercantile communities of both our nations have been subjected to loss. The eagerness with which merchants will devote themselves to gain, if the trade be now thrown well open, will increase manifold the good understanding between our nations, and the step will thus, at the same time, enhance your Excellency's reputation.”

Those who are familiar with the normal state of our relations with Chinese mandarins at Canton, will appreciate the change which must have been operated upon them, when the governor of the city approaches

\* Blue-Book, 24th January 1858.

a British minister as a suppliant for the re-establishment of that trade, in the prosecution of which it has been the policy of England so often to humiliate itself before China.

The allied Plenipotentiaries were not unwilling to respond to this appeal. It was indeed true that fifteen months had already elapsed since the unfortunate incident occurred, which led to an interruption of our commercial relations with Canton ; the unsatisfactory state in which they had subsequently for some time remained, ultimately resulted in the so-called blockade, which was established during Lord Elgin's absence in India. The Ambassadors were anxious to effect the speedy removal of this restriction, partly because, in the then state of our commercial relations with the other ports of China, its very existence was anomalous, and partly because the resumption of trade was the most effectual way of restoring that confidence to the population of Canton, on the establishment of which their policy in some measure depended.

The naval authorities thoroughly concurred with them in this desire, and were no less anxious to put an end to a blockade which, while it tended to exercise a demoralising influence upon the class of vessels specially employed in enforcing it, had failed in the object it was designed to accomplish. Instead of preventing all trade with Canton, it had simply diverted it to the Broadway and other channels not guarded by our cruisers. Thus it was both ineffec-

tual and illegal ; a circumstance which fortunately it did not occur to any neutral power to complain of.

The accomplishment of so important a measure involved a new set of considerations, and it behoved the Ambassadors to prepare for the contingencies which were likely to arise under the altered conditions of the situation.