

## CHAPTER VIII.

NEW-YEAR'S DAY, 1858—EXPLORATION OF THE CITY BY THE ALLIES  
—CAPTURE OF YEH—YEH'S MEMORIAL TO PEKIN—BEHAVIOUR OF  
YEH IN CAPTIVITY—CONFERENCE RELATIVE TO THE GOVERNMENT  
OF CANTON—PLANS PROPOSED—SCHEME ULTIMATELY ADOPTED—  
INSTALLATION OF PIHKWEI—LORD ELGIN'S ADDRESS TO PIHKWEI  
—PIHKWEI'S REPLY—INSTITUTION OF A CIVIL TRIBUNAL—MORAL  
AND POLITICAL EFFECTS OF THE OCCUPATION OF CANTON.

NEW-YEAR'S DAY, 1858, was celebrated by a formal procession of the Ambassadors to Magazine Hill, for the purpose of taking possession of the city: the ships in the river were all dressed out in flags, rainbow fashion; royal salutes startled the timid inhabitants into a belief that the bombardment was recommending; and indeed the incessant booming of cannon was an appropriate introduction to the regime under which they were now to be governed.

For the next three days, the troops were engaged in hutting themselves on the walls, a proceeding which was rendered the more necessary by the incessant rain to which they were subjected. In the course of certain interesting investigations into the personal property of the inhabitants, which are considered

legitimate in the case of a captured city, some of the streets more immediately adjoining the walls were explored, and in most cases found deserted. Mr Parkes, however, passed through the centre of the town with a strong guard, and met with no incivility from the people. In the mean time a memorial was sent in from the Governor of the city, Pihkwei, and some of the other civic functionaries, stating their readiness to memorialise Peking in any sense we might choose to dictate, protesting against the conduct of Yeh throughout, and assuring the Ministers that they had never been consulted by the Imperial Commissioner upon those subjects which had involved the safety of their city.

On the 5th of January, the seizure of the Imperial Commissioner was determined upon, and at half-past 7 o'clock A.M. the city was entered at different points by three English and one French column: from the plans of the city in our possession, and information already received, the position of the principal yamuns was known. The French, proceeding along the great east and west street, known as the "Avenue of Benevolence and Love," from the westward, reached the large yamun belonging to the Tartar General, in which they captured that high functionary, and were shortly afterwards joined by General Straubensee; whilst Colonel Walsh's battalion of marines had been to the yamun of the Governor, and made prisoner of Pihkwei, and thither the naval and military authorities proceeded. In the mean time Mr Parkes had

received information that Yeh was in a library not far distant, but on arriving there he found the house empty, with the exception of an old man who was reading in the garden. From this venerable student it was discovered that Yeh had been absent for five days ; but the fact was at last extorted from him, that the Imperial Commissioner had sought refuge in the house of the Tartar Lieut.-General. Accompanied by an escort of a hundred blue-jackets under Captain Key, Mr Parkes at once repaired to this yamun, the doors of which they found closed ; upon breaking them open and rushing forward, an old man in a mandarin's coat and cap threw himself before them, stating that he was Yeh. This was the Lieut.-General himself, who was at once thrust aside, as an impostor ; and as people were heard escaping through the back entrances, Captain Key hurried in that direction, and observing a stout man in a narrow passage, resembling a portrait he had seen of the Imperial Commissioner, threw his arms round the neck of the fugitive, and proclaimed him his prisoner.

A large collection of the archives of the Imperial Commissioner was seized here, and proved a most valuable and interesting assortment of papers. Some of the private correspondence which had passed between Canton and Peking, on barbarian affairs, was extremely curious, while it proved that, even after more than a century's trade with China, a long and disastrous war concluded by a commercial treaty, and constant intercourse with the high authorities

of the Empire, the cabinet at Peking were as far from appreciating our character and designs as they had been at the commencement. We found among these papers the English, French, and American Treaties, which it is not certain had ever been sent to the Capital. One of the most interesting specimens of a Chinese despatch I insert in full, as it affords an amusing and curious illustration of the amount of information and intelligence which Yeh could bring to bear upon those barbarian affairs, with the administration of which he was charged. The preliminary remarks are by our able Chinese secretary, Mr Wade, who translated the document :—

*(Memorandum).*—The following is translated from a draft in the same hand as that in which several of Yeh's draft memorials are corrected, and which I have other reasons for believing to be his own MS. It is the most unshapely specimen of Chinese writing I have ever seen, and has given a very competent native scholar considerable trouble to decipher. It was evidently a first draft, with much left to be filled in and corrected, and must have been written but a few days before the receipt of the Plenipotentiaries' ultimatum of the 12th December 1857. We have no proof that it was sent to Peking, though such was probably the case.

*(Translation.)*

(Yeh, &c.,) "presents a Memorial to the effect that the English barbarians, troubled at home and

pressed \* with daily increasing urgency by other nations from without, will hardly attempt anything further ; that they are reported to have had several consultations upon the opening of trade, and earnestly desire the suggestion of some means to that end ; that in consequence of the English chief † not returned to Canton. A respectful memorial (of which particulars) he forwards by courier, at the rate of 600 li a day, and looking upward, solicits the sacred glance thereon.

“ On the 6th of the 9th moon (23d October 1857) your servant had the honour to forward to your Majesty various particulars of his administration of barbarian affairs during the 7th and 8th moons (August and September), as it is recorded.

“ Since the engagement of the 10th of the 5th moon (1st June), a period of more than six months, the English barbarians have made no disturbance up the Canton river. ‡ (It should be known), however, that in the defeat sustained by Elgin at Mang-ga-ta § in

\* He may mean pressed by their solicitations, or for money. His Hong-Kong correspondents, as their seized letters prove, had been representing us deeply indebted to Russia, and in great difficulty as to the means of satisfying her claims.

† The preamble generally epitomises the matter of the Memorial. I take this part of it to be best explained by the last sentence of the Memorial. There is evidently something to be filled up in the text.

‡ The affair of the 1st June is the destruction of Heoang's fleet up Fatschan Creek, doubtless reported to Peking as a victory. The manner in which the next sentence is introduced, shows that Lord Elgin's return had been already announced, but without full particulars.

§ Mang-ga-ta is clearly a compromise between Mang-ga-la, Bengal and Calcutta.

the 7th moon, he was pursued by the Mang-ga-la (Bengal) barbarian force to the sea-shore. A number of French men-of-war, which happened to be passing, fired several guns in succession, and the force of the Bengal barbarians falling back, the Chief, Elgin, made his escape. The Chief, Elgin was very grateful to the French force for saving his life, and on the arrival of the French minister, Lo-so-lun,\* who in the beginning of the 9th moon had also reached Quang-Tung, he the Chief, Elgin, fêted the Chief, Gros, at Hong-Kong (*lit.* merrily feasted and prayed him [to drink] wine), and consulted him upon the present position of affairs in China.

“The Chief, Gros, said: I was not an eye-witness of last year’s affair, but the story current among people of different nations who were by at the time, has made me familiar with the whole question. You see,† when the forts were taken, the Chinese Government made no retaliation; when the houses of the people were burned, it still declined to fight. Now, the uniform suppression, three years ago, of the Quang-Tung insurrection, in which some hundreds of thou-

\* The French Ambassador’s name is elsewhere given as Go-lo-so (Gros); his title of Baron is evidently taken to be his name, and is put in Chinese fashion after his surname—*lun* representing, doubtless, *pa-lun*, for *Baron*.

† The Chinese expression here used, is generally rendered “for instance.” Baron Gros is made to argue that he understands Yeh’s policy; his opinion of which will be found at the end of the paragraph. We should have stated it at the beginning, and then have introduced the illustrations given.

sands were engaged, shows the military power of China to be by no means insignificant. Will she take no notice of her injuries? (No). She is certain to have some deep policy which will enable her so to anticipate us, that before we can take up any ground she will have left us without the means of finding fault with her, while she, on the other hand, will oblige the foreigners to admit themselves completely in the wrong. On the last occasion that your nation opened fire,\* it was but for some days, and people came forward (as mediators), but this time you did your utmost for three months. (You fired) 4000 rounds and more from great guns, as well as 3000 rockets. The high authorities of Canton, it is plain, have all along made their minds up (or have seen their way). They understand the character of all classes, high and low, in our foreign states. This is the reason why they have been so firm and unswerving. When I was leaving home the instructions my own sovereign gave me, with affectionate† earnestness, were these :—

“There is a quarrel with the English in Quang-Tung; when you go thither, confine yourself to the observance of the treaty and pacific communications. You are not to avail yourself of the opportunity to commit acts of aggression or spoliation. Do not make

\* This must be presumed to refer to Sir Hugh Gough's attack on Canton.

† The manner in which the Chinese mandarins address the people.

China hate the French as a band of hostile wretches \* who violate their engagements. The circumstances, too, are so different (from those of the last war of the English with China), that it is essential you should judget for yourself what course to pursue. There is no analogy, I apprehend, between the present case and the opium question of some ten years' since, in which they had some wrong to allege.'

“ It appears that in the country of the five Indies appropriated by the English barbarians, they have established four tribal divisions—three along the coast, and one in the interior. One of the coast divisions is Mang-ga-la (Bengal), the country in the extreme east ; one is Ma-ta-la-sa (Madras), south-west of Bengal ; and one is Mang-mai (Bombay), on the western limit of India. That in the interior is A-ka-la (Agra), lying midway between east and west. About the end of last summer, it is stated, twelve marts (or ports) in Bengal which had revolted, were lost. Since the 8th moon, the marts in Bombay have all been retaken (*sc.* from the English) by (Indian) chiefs ; and since Elgin's return after his defeat, the leaders of the English barbarians have sustained a succession of serious defeats. The Indian chief drove a mine from bank to bank of a river, and by the introduction of infernal machines (*lit.* water-thunder) blew up several large vessels of war, killing above 1000 men. On

\* Base, or low-caste persons.

† That is, you are not to accept the policy of England or any other nation as yours.



shore they enticed (the English) far into the country, and murdered above 7000 of them, killing a distinguished soldier named Pu-ta-wei-ka-lut,\* and many more.

“Elgin passes day after day at Hong-Kong, stamping his foot and sighing; his anxiety is increased by the non-arrival of despatches from his government.”

I reached Magazine Hill shortly after the prisoners arrived there. Yeh, seated in a large room, surrounded by some of his immediate attendants, was answering in a loud harsh voice, questions put to him by Sir Michael Seymour, with reference to Englishmen who had been prisoners in his hands. Though he endeavoured by the assumption of a careless and insolent manner to conceal his alarm, his glance was troubled, and his fingers trembled with suppressed agitation. His heavy sensual features, although relieved by a trembling vivacious eye, were not calculated to betray very keen emotional sensibility.

In another room, and more dignified in their bearing, perhaps because they had less cause for alarm, Pihkwei and the Tartar General philosophically awaited their fate—the former a quiet gentleman-like old man, the latter of gigantic proportions and stolid countenance.

It was at once decided that the Imperial Commissioner should be deprived of all further power for

\* Possibly Brigadier Havelock.

mischief, and kept as a prisoner on board the "Inflexible," whither he was conveyed forthwith. In the mean time, the two Plenipotentiaries arrived at headquarters, and at a conference with the naval and military authorities, discussed, for the remainder of the afternoon, the existing attitude of affairs, and the proper course to be adopted under the circumstances.

In the cause of humanity, the abandonment of the city to the refuse of its population was to be deprecated; while the restoration of confidence to the inhabitants generally was a result which, in a political point of view, was eminently to be desired. The necessity of organising, without delay, a system of government, was therefore apparent. The question for decision was, what that system should be. The naval and military authorities had already confessed their inability to govern the city, and their conviction that the Chinese functionaries were alone competent to preserve order. In this opinion the Plenipotentiaries thoroughly concurred. Indeed, every hour that passed was affording incontestable evidence of its accuracy. The Chinese rabble had already taken advantage of the defenceless condition of the city, and were daily furnishing us with proof of their skill as plunderers. Organised gangs were prowling about the suburbs, and venturing into the city, gaining courage by immunity, and numbers by success.

The temptation to loot was strong upon our own men, and the General professed himself unable, with the small force at his disposal, to patrol efficiently

with police a town containing a million of inhabitants, with whom it was impossible to communicate, and hold six miles of wall at the same time, unless assisted by civil authority of a character which the people had been accustomed to respect. With a population imbued with a traditionary awe for their own authorities, and speaking an unknown tongue, at the same time containing a larger proportion of trained thieves and vagabonds than any in the world, —with an imperfectly disciplined force in occupation, consisting of barely 5000 men, and composed of a heterogeneous assemblage of French and English, blue-jackets and marines, Madras sepoy and British infantry, and, to crown all, with only two gentlemen on the spot whose knowledge of the language enabled them to communicate directly with the people, it was manifestly absurd to think of replacing the local Chinese system of government by one of our own ; any such attempt would assuredly lead to the plunder and destruction of the town, the demoralisation of the troops, and to disappointment and failure on the part of those engaged in carrying out the experiment. Of this fact no persons were more thoroughly convinced than Mr Wade and Mr Parkes, upon whom would devolve the functions of all the mandarins in Canton.

The situation of affairs at this most critical juncture, and the difficulties by which they were surrounded, are very clearly defined in Lord Elgin's despatch of the 9th of January, in which his Excel-

lency states : "Two plans for surmounting the difficulties of the situation in which we found ourselves, were under the consideration of the Commanders-in-chief, when I reached the Magazine Hill. The one proposed that Pihkwei and the Tartar General should be permitted at once to return to their yamuns, on condition of their consenting to publish a proclamation, in which the military occupation of the city by the allied forces should be recognised. I thought it my duty to enter my protest against the adoption of an arrangement of this nature. Neither on the side of the Chinese was there, as it appeared to me, sufficient honesty, nor on our own sufficient means of acquiring information, and, perhaps, I may add, sufficient forbearance, to afford a reasonable prospect of its working successfully. I felt confident that if Pihkwei returned to his yamun on the terms above mentioned, many days would not elapse before some act would be committed by him, or some proclamation issued, which would give rise to suspicions on our part ; that on such suspicions, appeals to the Commanders-in-chief, urging them to adopt measures of precaution or coercion, of increased stringency, would be grounded ; and that in this way the irritation of the soldiery against the Cantonese would be kept up, and all the evils attending the occupation of a city by a hostile army perpetuated. The other plan which had been submitted for the consideration of the Commanders-in-chief, proceeded equally on the assumption that Pihkwei must be

retained as Governor of Canton. By way, however, of providing security for his upright behaviour, and for the maintenance of a good understanding between the parties, it suggested that he should be detained as a prisoner of war, if necessary, on board one of her Majesty's ships of war anchored in the river, and that he should exercise from thence the functions of his office. It is needless that I should here insist on the objections to which this proposition was open."

The course ultimately adopted was a compromise of these two extremes. It was decided that Pihkwei should be reinstated in his own *yamun*, in a manner calculated to increase rather than impair the prestige of that authority upon which the tranquillity, and, indeed, the very existence of the city, at that critical moment, depended; but, at the same time, that it should be impressed upon him, that, inasmuch as the city remained under martial law, he was only administering its affairs subject to the approval of the General, who was the supreme authority; that he would be under a constant surveillance; and that the most serious consequences would result from any treachery on his part. This proposal was laid before Pihkwei, and, after twenty-four hours' deliberation, during which time he remained our prisoner, he accepted the new conditions under which he was to continue the government of Canton.

During his short confinement, the Governor and the Tartar General were occasionally visited by the Treasurer, Howqua, and other of the principal mer-

chants. The magistrate, prefect, and nearly all of the civic authorities, had already fled from the city ; and, indeed, it was some time before they could be induced to return and resume their functions under Pihkwei.

The 9th of January was the day fixed for the installation of Pihkwei ; and at two o'clock in the afternoon the two Plenipotentiaries went in procession through the town, followed by a large body of troops, and preceded by military bands. The " Avenue of Benevolence and Love " was crowded with eager faces, gazing at us as we passed with respectful curiosity. The entry into the yamun of the Governor was sufficiently imposing ; and as the strains of martial music echoed through the several courts, the population outside can have had little doubt that both their city and its authorities were in our power, and that the latter only ruled by sufferance.

But while Lord Elgin was determined that it should be very clearly understood that Pihkwei held office only by the authority and at the will of the Plenipotentiaries and Commander-in-Chief, he was by no means desirous that the prestige of that functionary should be impaired,—this being, in point of fact, the instrument with which we were about to control the subordinate Chinese officials. He had, therefore, a double object in view in this ceremony of investiture ; and at one moment it was apprehended that this double object might be in some degree compromised by certain mistakes which occurred in carrying the

arrangements into effect. In the first place, no orders were given as to the time at which the prisoners, who were to be converted into potentates, were to be released from durance. This omission led to considerable delay, so that, in point of fact, the Tartar General and Pihkwei did not reach the yamun of the latter till long after the hour originally intended ; and, secondly, when they did arrive, a dispute arose between them and the interpreters as to the seats which they ought to occupy. It was finally settled that they should be placed immediately below the Ambassadors ; and Lord Elgin had barely time, while the shades of night were gathering, to address to them the following words, which were cordially seconded by Baron Gros :—" We are assembled here to welcome your Excellency on your return to your yamun, and on your resumption of the functions of your office, which have been momentarily interrupted. It is proper, however, that I should apprise your Excellency, and through your Excellency the inhabitants of Canton, that the Plenipotentiaries of England and France, and the Commanders-in-Chief of the allied forces, are firmly resolved to retain military occupation of the city, until all questions pending between our respective Governments and that of China shall have been finally settled and determined between us—the High Officers appointed by our governments for this service—and a Plenipotentiary of equal rank and powers, whom his Imperial Majesty the Emperor of China may see fit to appoint to treat

with us. Any attempt, therefore, whether by force or fraud, whether by treachery or violence, to disturb us in our possession of the city, will not fail to bring down on its authors and abettors the most severe and signal punishment. I am, however, no less prepared to apprise your Excellency that it is equally our determination, when the questions to which I have referred shall have been so settled, to withdraw from the military occupation of the city, and to restore it to the imperial authorities. Meanwhile, it is our sincere wish that, during the period of our military occupation, the feelings of the people be respected, life and property protected, the good rewarded, and offenders, whether native or foreign, punished. We are desirous to co-operate with your Excellency for these objects ; and, with this view, we have appointed a tribunal, composed of officers of high character and discretion, to act in concert with you. We hope that, through the agency of this tribunal, confidence may be restored to the people, and the foundation laid of a better understanding between foreigner and native, so that hereafter all may pursue their avocations in peace, and traffic together for their mutual advantage."

The substance of Pihkwei's reply to this address is as follows : "He begged his respects to his Lordship. He acknowledged his Lordship's consideration of the people of Canton. A state of tranquillity would be best secured by the exertion of authority on either side, native and foreign, to restrain those severally



subject to it from doing what was offensive to the other. We promised to control our people ; he would control his. This would be to the advantage of Canton. Lastly, he trusted that his Lordship might soon meet an officer qualified to treat with him, and that the result of their negotiations would be the establishment of a good understanding."

The two mandarins were in full official costume, and retained throughout that charmed and delighted manner which a Chinaman always puts on when he is powerless and alarmed. The ceremony over, the Plenipotentiaries returned to their ships, and left Pihkwei in possession of his own yamun : a cheerless residence it must be at the best of times, consisting of a series of buildings, divided by courtyards, and each containing a large central hall, with two or three small rooms on either side, scantily furnished, and lighted by paper windows.

When I visited the yamun on the following day, the outer courts were full of allied troops, and Pihkwei lived in the inner division, so that he could not keep up intercourse with the outer world without passing our sentries. In one compartment of the same yamun was established a commission, composed of Colonel Holloway, Captain Martineau, and Mr Parkes. The object of this commission was ostensibly to adjudicate upon cases brought by the Chinese of robbery or violence committed by our men upon the population ; but its principal function was to exercise a rigid surveillance over Pihkwei—to superintend the issuing

of proclamations—and to collect information from private sources upon all matters affecting the disposition of the inhabitants, and the security of our tenure of the city. At the same time, the institution of a tribunal invested with judicial functions was not without a beneficial effect, as well upon the Chinese as upon our own troops. To the former it proved our desire to protect the private property and lives of the citizens ; and to the latter it manifested the determination which existed on the part of their own authorities to repress those outrages which were unfortunately becoming too common, and which, while they struck at the root of all military discipline, impaired the influence it was desired to acquire over the inhabitants by the exercise of moderation and justice.

The number of complaints which were daily brought by the Chinese before this tribunal fully justified the estimate formed of its value.

Our occupation of Canton gave us an opportunity, which might never again occur, of endeavouring, by intercourse and daily contact, to overcome that antipathy and distrust towards Europeans which had always distinguished its population, and to the manifestation of which they were instigated by their own mandarins. Our former experience at Chusan gave us every reason to hope that a better acquaintance with us would remove their old existing prejudices, and that, in the end, the forcible occupation of their city would lead to a better understanding on both

sides. Under the influence of terror, one step was already gained. The populace had lost their defiant and insulting manner, and substituted for it an air of profound submission and humility, always remaining in a standing position as a European passed, letting down their tails in accordance with their own customs when desirous of showing respect, and uncovering their heads out of deference to our prejudices upon the subject.