

NARRATIVE
OF
THE EARL OF ELGIN'S MISSION
TO
CHINA AND JAPAN

" All sad the scene, a cheerless spot !
 ' Ah ! woe,' I cry, ' an Envoy's lot—
Exiled, forlorn ! How small his fame !'—
 ' Peace !' saith my Muse ; ' I'll aid thee ; bear
Thine honoured toils. Away with care,
Nor murmur at thy country's claim.' "

HIWASHANA'S *Complaint*, vol. i. p. 441.



W. H. H. H. H.

SIGNING OF THE TREATY OF TEINTSIN

h.l.

NARRATIVE
OF
THE EARL OF ELGIN'S MISSION
TO
CHINA AND JAPAN
IN THE YEARS 1857, '58, '59.

BY
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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS FROM ORIGINAL DRAWINGS & PHOTOGRAPHS

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P R E F A C E.

IN the following pages I have endeavoured to give a history of the proceedings of the Special Mission to China and Japan, which extended over a period of two years. It has been thrown into the shape of a personal narrative, in the hope that it would convey, in a more amusing and readable form, the record of our experiences in those Empires.

Events have recently transpired in China which are deeply to be regretted, although they may possibly invest this work with an interest that it might not else have deserved. The untoward character of those events and the serious consequences which they will probably entail, seemed to warrant my entering at greater length than I should otherwise have done into details, more especially connected with the policy which Lord Elgin thought it expedient to adopt, and the difficulties with which he had to contend at the mouth of the Peiho.

The description I have given of Japan may very possibly be found to be somewhat at variance with the accounts

which we may continue to receive from that Empire. It is nevertheless in accordance with the results of our observation, and, I trust, conveys truthfully the impressions we were led to form of that country during our short residence in its capital. The circumstances under which we visited it were, perhaps, calculated to present to us the bright rather than the gloomy side of the picture. Our imaginations had not been excited by the glowing descriptions of former visitors, and our most sanguine anticipations consequently fell far short of the pleasing reality. We met with frankness and courtesy where we expected suspicion and reserve. In a country noted for its jealous distrust of foreigners, we enjoyed an entire immunity from all restrictions upon our personal liberty. We were prepared for a diplomatic contest with a government rigid in its adherence to a traditional policy of exclusiveness. A fortnight sufficed to enable us to conclude a Treaty with it upon a most liberal basis. We had just passed a year in China, and all comparisons made with that Empire were in favour of Japan.

That certain special reasons may have operated to render our reception at Yedo altogether exceptional, and to secure our diplomatic success, is very possible. It was only natural to suppose that, when those reasons had ceased to exist, those who followed us should experience a very different treatment.

In the accounts furnished by strangers of little-known countries, much depends upon the medium through which their observations are made—much also upon their capacity and knowledge of the world. Thus the diplomatist who expects to find the Japanese guided by the moral code of Western nations—desirous of giving effect to the stipulations of a treaty which they only accepted as an inevitable necessity, and anxious to increase their intercourse with a race which has been held for upwards of two centuries in aversion and abhorrence—will probably describe them in a manner calculated to reflect less on their intelligence than his own. So, the merchant who expresses indignation and disgust at the reluctance of the Government to assist him in his commercial enterprises,—at its peculiar notions of political economy, and at the ignorance betrayed by his customers, of all mercantile transactions on a grand scale, is certainly not likely to succeed in establishing a large “connection.” While a gentleman whose previous range of observation has been limited, on arriving in Japan from England, may be surprised at finding that it differs in some respects, in a social point of view, from his own country, and that the same articles of diet are not universally used by the human family, in all quarters of the globe.

It is, however, most desirable that a new country should be presented in all its aspects—and it is only

just to ourselves to state, that the impressions we received during the brief period of our stay in Yedo are thoroughly borne out by the experiences of the Dutch, whose knowledge of the Japanese has extended over a period of two centuries and a half ; as well as confirmed by those Americans who have resided for some years in the country. Meantime, we may hope for the most beneficial results from the Embassy which is about to be despatched by the Japanese Government to the nations of the West.

The very talented and truthful drawings, of which I have been permitted by Lord Elgin to avail myself, were presented to his Lordship by Mr Bedwell, R.N., who accompanied the Mission to Japan in the yacht *Emperor*.

I am indebted to Mr Jocelyn for several admirable photographs of the principal Chinese officials with whom we came in contact. My thanks are also due to Dr Saunders, for the Meteorological Register with which he kindly furnished me.

ATHENÆUM CLUB,
15th Dec. 1859.

C O N T E N T S

CHAPTER I.

	PAGE
The origin of the war—The Arrow case—Policy of Sir John Bowring— Hostilities at Canton—Right of entry into the city—Bombardment of Yeh's yamun—The results—Insult to American flag—Destruction of the factories—Abandonment of the factory position—Position of affairs in February 1857—Effect of the foregoing operations,	1-14

CHAPTER II.

Appointment and departure of special mission—Outbreak of the mutiny in India—Arrival at Singapore—Its Chinese population—Causes of their discontent—Their value as colonists—Trip to the mainland—Residence of the Tumangong—Wild sports of the Malay peninsula—Gambier plantations—Luxuriant forest—The village of Tubrao—Depredations of tigers—Great increase of cultivation—Start on a tiger-hunt—Unsucces- ful result—Arrival at Johore—Malay houses of Johore—Historical associations of Johore—A picturesque repast—Return to Singapore— Its rapid progress—Its future,	15-40
--	-------

CHAPTER III.

Arrival at Hong-Kong—Trip up the Canton river—A complicated inter- national question—Chuenpee—Monster cannon—Apathy of population— Macao Fort—Unhealthiness of the river—Spread of the mutiny—Its influence on Lord Elgin's policy—Return to Singapore—Address of mercantile community—Arrival at Calcutta—Sensation created—Moral effect produced on the natives,	41-56
---	-------

CHAPTER IV.

Condition of India in August 1857—State of Calcutta—Organisation of naval brigade—The Mohurum—Departure from Calcutta—Policy adopted by Lord Elgin—Residence at Hong-Kong—Its absence of attractions—A trip up the river—Macao—A Chinese dinner,	57-68
---	-------

CHAPTER V.

	PAGE
Voyage to the Philippines - Arrival at Manilla - Appearance of the town - A varied population - Their costumes - Tobacco-manufactory - The price of tobacco - A piffa shop - Indolence of the Mestizoes - Industry of the Chinese population - Chinese emigration : its advantages - The Captain- general of the Philippines - Military mass - A trip to Cavité - A religious procession - Excursion to the Lago de Bai - Los Baños - The romance of La Gironière - The island of Socolme - A stormy voyage - The trade of Manilla,	69-92

CHAPTER VI.

Attempt of Count Poutiatine to reach Peking - Lawless proceedings in the Canton river - Singular native proclamation - The "Hall of Peace and Patriotism" - Preparations for war - The ultimatum - Occupation of Honan - Yeh's answer - Report of a conversation between the Emperor Hien Fung and Ki Shuh-Tsan - Embarkation on board the Furious - Disappearance of the floating population - Aspect of the river face of Canton - Expiry of the delay - Anchorage at Dane's Island - Temper of the inhabitants - Delay of the bombardment,	93-118
--	--------

CHAPTER VII.

Landing of the troops - Advance on Lin's Fort - Treacherous mode of warfare - Capture of Lin's Fort - Attack of the Braves - Position for the night - The bombardment is continued - Death of Captain Bate - Skirmish with Braves - Escalade of the walls of Canton - Aspect of the city - Scene from Magazine Hill - Capture of the city - Capture of Fough's Fort - Chinese looting parties - Tartar garrison of Canton - Condition of the public buildings - Explosion of a magazine,	119-138
--	---------

CHAPTER VIII.

New Year's Day, 1858 - Exploration of the city by the Allies - Capture of Yeh - Yeh's memorial to Peking - 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,	139-157
---	---------

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,	158-174
--	---------

CONTENTS.

xi

CHAPTER X.

	PAGE
Diplomacy in China—Policy of the neutral powers—Proposed expedition to the north—Opinion of Count Poutiatine—Proclamation raising blockade—Putinqua's gardens—River scenes—Lord Elgin's visit to the prisons—State of the prisoners—Fate of Yeh—Lord Elgin's letter to Yu—Departure for Shanghai—Aunoy—Arrival at Shanghai—Departure for Soo-chow—Facilities of water-communication—Canal scenes—State of the population—Mr Maclane's visit to Soo-chow—Boat-life on the canals,	175-195

CHAPTER XI.

The Imperial Grand Canal—Arrival at Soo-chow—Entry of the city—Curiosity of the populace—Reception by the governor—A complimentary dialogue—A Chinese official repast—Politeness of our host—Chinese etiquette—Political effect of our visit—Reasons against exploring the city—Exploration of the water suburb—The boat population—Manners and customs of the people—A nocturnal visitation—The Tai-hoo lake—A gale of wind—Residence at Shanghai—A dinner with the Taoutai—After-dinner conversation—Departure for Ningpo—The shops and joss-houses—The Old Pagoda—A "sing-sing joss,"	196-221
--	---------

CHAPTER XII.

An expedition to the Snowy Valley—Mountain scenery—The Temple of the Snowy Crevice—The Maou-kao-tao—The "Thousand-fathom Precipice"—Sewe-kang-ha—Our fellow-lodgers—The Dragon Waterfall—Departure from the Snowy Valley—Mountain men—A voyage on bamboo rafts—Raft navigation—Arrival at Chusan—A Roman Catholic mission—A Chinese country residence—Political advantages of Chusan—A British graveyard—The sacred island of Pootoo—A degraded priesthood—The high priest—Picturesque temples—Pilgrims—Magnificent view—Chapoo,	222-246
--	---------

CHAPTER XIII.

Communication from the Imperial Government—Lord Elgin's reply—Sir John Bowring's visit to the Peiho—Course pursued on that occasion—Lord Elgin's application for gunboats—The Roman Catholic mission of Sicaway—System of education—Barren results of missionary labour—Superstitious practices of converts—A "Feast of Tabernacles"—The cathedral of Tonk-a-doo—Difficulties attending missionary enterprise—Non-arrival of the Admiral—Departure of the Plenipotentiaries for the North—The Miatou Straits—Aground on a sandbank—Arrival in the Gulf of Pecheleo—Dreary weather—An expedition across the bar—Junk-hunting—Arrival of the American minister—Difficulties of the situation—Unnecessary delays—Diplomatic difficulties—Aspect of the forts—Arrival of the Admiral—The despatch-vessels cross the bar—Expiry of the delay—Postponement of attack—Political consequences of the delay,	247-275
---	---------

CHAPTER XIV.

	PAGE
Perilous position of despatch gunboats—Strengthening of the forts—Arrival of Chinese reinforcements—The question of full powers—Anglo-American visit to the Peiho in 1854—Intercourse on that occasion—Interview with Tsung and Tan—Memorial of Commissioners in 1854—Reference to Peking—Contemptuous treatment by the Chinese Government—Anxiety as to future movements—Memorandum of Sir M. Seymour—Communication with Tan—The final summons—Insolence of the garrison,	276-291

CHAPTER XV.

The night before the attack—Delivery of the ultimatum—The signal of attack—Advance of the Cormorant—The Nimrod hotly engaged—Chinese artillery-practice—The batteries stormed—"Sauve qui peut"—Terrific explosion—Aspect of the fortifications—Attack of the northern forts—Capture of the last battery—A visit to Tan's residence—Imperial edict—Fate of Tan—His account of the action—Tan's yamun—A poem "In Memoriam"—Return to the Furious,	292-311
---	---------

CHAPTER XVI.

Ascent of the river—A crowd of junks—Astonishment of population—Their submissive behaviour—Brilliant bonfires—A steppe country—Appearance of the villages—Difficulties of navigation—First view of Tientsin—A deputation of merchants—Appointment of Imperial Commissioners—The Plenipotentiaries ascend the Peiho—Approach to Tientsin—Dense crowds—"The Temple of Supreme Felicity"—View of the River—Making ourselves comfortable—Bedrooms in the Temple—Further exploration of the Peiho—Arrival of Russian and American Ministers—Their abodes—Pean—Arrival of the Imperial Commissioners—Full powers at last—Our official procession—"The Temple of the Oceanic Influences"—Interview with the Commissioners—Exchange of full powers—Abrupt termination of the interview—Arrival of the Kwang-fang—Kweiliang—Hwashana—Success of Lord Elgin's policy—Its bearing on affairs at Canton—Brighter prospects,	312-350
---	---------

CHAPTER XVII.

The chances of a Chinese political career—Arrival of Keying—Interview with him—Adverse policy of Keying—His hostility to the Commissioners—Proofs of his insincerity—Second interview of Messrs Wade and Lay—Keying's memorial—Keying's treatment of barbarians—A disagreeable exposé—Consequences of his offence—A lenient sentence—The Emperor's decree—Keying's suicide,	351-376
---	---------

CHAPTER XVIII.

	PAGE
Insolence of the mob—A forcible entry into Tientsin—Making reprisals— Hostile crowds—Peaceful proclamations—Plan of the city of Tientsin— Aspect of the city—The traffic in the streets—Declining trade of Tien- tsin—Notice concerning the grain supply—Present state of the Grand Canal—Official expenditure of grain—Collection of the grain-tribute— State of the Yellow River—Obstructions in its navigation—Grain trans- port by sea—Report on the Grand Canal—Price of rice at Tientsin— Table showing proceeds of grain-tax—Trade of Tientsin—Squalor of the Inhabitants—Burial-places—Total allied force at Tientsin—Exploration of the surrounding country—The harvest at Tientsin—Kitchen-gardens —Salt-pans—Vetch-fields—Locust-hunting,	377-408

CHAPTER XIX.

Advantages gained by Russia and America—A serious "hitch"—The two important demands—The right of a resident Minister—The Chinese system of Government : mode of influencing it—Principle of direct com- munication—The concession gained—The final procession—Signing of the treaty—An effective illumination—A retrospect—The new ports— The transit-dues—Climate of Tientsin—Absence of surveys—Geography of the country—Abundance of ice—A skittle alley—Curiosity-hunting, 409-430	409-430
--	---------

CHAPTER XX.

Duplicity of the Commissioners—Arrival of the Emperor's assent—Arrival of reinforcements—Abandonment of visit to Peking—Consequences of delay—State of matters in the south—Final visit to Commissioners— Death of the Prime Minister, Yu—Hwashana's poems—"Old" Chang : his poetical effusions—Departure from Tientsin—The Great Wall—State of matters in the south—Appointment of five Commissioners—Military government of Canton—Lord Elgin's despatch to the General—Departure for Japan,	431-450
---	---------

APPENDIX.

I. TREATY OF TIENSIN,	451
II. CORRESPONDENCE RELATIVE TO A RESIDENT MINISTER AT PEKIN, 469	469
III. THERMOMETRICAL REGISTER KEPT BY DR SAUNDERS, R.N., FROM APRIL 1, 1858, TO MARCH 31, 1859,	485

ILLUSTRATIONS IN THE FIRST VOLUME.

COLOURED LITHOGRAPHS.

	PAGE
SIGNING OF THE TREATY OF TIENTSIN— <i>Frontispiece.</i>	
THE STORMING OF CANTON,	128
TEMPLE OF SUPREME FELICITY (RESIDENCE OF THE ALLIED MISSIONS AT TIENTSIN),	236
CAPTURE OF THE PEIHO FORTS,	299
RECEPTION-TENT OF THE IMPERIAL COMMISSIONERS, TAKOO,	301

ENGRAVINGS ON WOOD.

SCENE ON THE TUBRAO RIVER (MALAY PENINSULA),	30
NATIVE HOUSE AT JOHORE (MALAY PENINSULA),	34
MALAY SAMPAN,	40
MACAO FORT (CANTON RIVER),	48
MESTIZOES,	73
FIVE-STORIED PAGODA,	133
THE WOOSUNG RIVER,	188
CANAL SCENE NEAR SOO-CHOW,	210
NINGPO RIVER,	218
TSEEN-CHANG-YEN WATERFALL,	226
SEWE-KANG-HA WATERFALL,	228
OUR BAMBOO RAFTS,	233
THE TEMPLE OF KWANG-YIN, POOTOO,	240
BONZE AT POOTOO,	242
BONZE PRAYING,	244
THE "TEMPLE OF THE SEA-GOD" (RESIDENCE OF TAN AT TAKOO),	309
A BEDROOM AT TIENTSIN,	329
SEDAN CHAIR,	339
KWEILIAN, FIRST IMPERIAL COMMISSIONER (<i>From a Photograph</i>),	345
HWASHANA, SECOND IMPERIAL COMMISSIONER (<i>From a Photograph</i>),	347

MAPS.

THE PEIHO RIVER,	313
MAP OF CHINA,	492