



OPIUM

CHESTER HOLCOMBE

# OPIUM

CHAP. 9 IN

THE REAL CHINESE QUESTION

1

NEW YORK, 1909

[www.taichi-kungfu.fr](http://www.taichi-kungfu.fr)

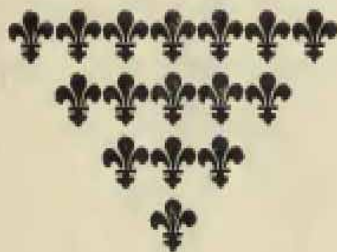
# The Real Chinese Question

*By*

Chester Holcombe

For many years Interpreter, Secretary of Legation, and  
Acting Minister of the United States at Peking.

*Author of* "The Real Chinaman," etc.



**T**he history of modern China properly dates only from the year of Our Lord 1842. In August of that year, the first treaty establishing relations with any nation of the modern world a treaty of amity and commerce with Great Britain was signed at Nanking. It was not signed willingly, but at the point of the bayonet. By its terms, China was mulcted to the amount of twenty-three millions of dollars, and the island of Hong Kong became British territory. Twelve millions of the money indemnity were levied to pay the cost of the war; three millions more represented debts due by certain Chinese to British merchants, and six millions were collected as compensation for opium seized and destroyed by the Chinese authorities at Canton in May, 1839. It was also stipulated in the treaty that five ports in southern Chinese waters should be opened to British trade. Four of these had already been occupied by the British forces.

With nations no less than individuals, the nature of their mutual relations will depend largely upon the circumstances under which their acquaintance began. It may safely be claimed that to knock a man down is not the surest path to his high esteem, and that to kick open his front door will not guarantee an invitation to dinner. It was most unfortunate that the use of force was necessary to the establishment of foreign relations with China. What the Chinese will believe, to the end of time, to have been the real motive for the use of force renders it substantially impossible to hope for any cordiality upon their part, in intercourse or relations with the nations of the Western world. And the facts go far to justify them in their belief. It is difficult to move about in China without inhaling the fumes of opium. And it is impossible to take even a first step in any study of her people, of

their feeling toward and ideas concerning the outside world, without coming into contact with the drug itself. No true picture of modern China, in its attitude toward progress, in the opinions and feelings which dominate the lives and control the conduct of its people, from the palace to the mud hut, toward all men and all things that are foreign, can be correctly painted unless opium is mixed with the colors. Not all Chinese smoke it. But it has played a large and deadly part in distorting the vision, befogging the judgment, and embittering the minds of the entire mass of the nation. The very name of the drug in Chinese proves it not to be indigenous to the country, but of foreign origin. The proper name is « yahpien,» a manifest attempt to pronounce the word « opium.» It is, however, commonly called « foreign poison,» « foreign medicine,» « foreign dirt,» « foreign devil's dirt,» and « foreign devil's medicine.» And the reputation of all foreigners, irrespective of nationality, is, in the minds of the Chinese, hopelessly besmirched and soiled by it.

It is supposed that the first knowledge of this product of the poppy reached China from Western Asia, and probably from Persia. From early times, rigid laws prohibited the cultivation of the poppy and the use of opium throughout the empire, and these laws were as thoroughly enforced as similar legislation in any part of the world. The police were empowered, without special warrant, to enter the homes of those suspected of the vice, search their premises, persons, and even « to smell their breaths.» The punishment for the use of the drug was very severe. And there is no reason to suppose that up to A.D. 1775 any appreciable proportion of the Chinese were addicted to the habit.

The British East India Company had a monopoly of the opium trade in India, and in A.D. 1773 made a small shipment to China as an experiment. The speculation doubtless proved profitable, for, seven years later, two small vessels were anchored off the Chinese coast, not far from Canton, as store-ships, to facilitate the traffic. At this time the total importation did not exceed a thousand chests each year. In 1781 the East India Company sent a vessel direct to Canton loaded with sixteen hundred chests, but it could not be sold to advantage, and was reshipped out of the country. In 1793 the Chinese authorities at Canton made serious complaint of the store-ships mentioned above.

Their cargo of opium was thereupon loaded into a single ship, which proceeded to the mouth of the river below Canton, where she remained for more than a year. The vessel was not molested, but her cargo could not be disposed of. She finally went to sea, where the opium was transferred to another vessel, which brought it directly back to Canton, where it was sold under the disguise of medicine. About this time the smuggling of opium into Southern China was brought to the notice of the authorities at Peking, and in A.D. 1800, the importation was prohibited under heavy penalties, because, as the Emperor declared, « it wasted the time and destroyed the property of the Chinese people.» The practice of importing it disguised as medicine, however, still continued, and in 1809 the consignees of foreign ships at the mouth of the river below Canton were required to give bonds that no ships discharging cargo there had opium on board. The smuggling still went on, and in 1820 the viceroy at Canton and the collector of customs issued an order forbidding any vessel having opium on board to enter the port, and holding pilots and consignees

personally responsible for any violations of the order.

In spite of imperial decrees, prohibitive regulations, and all of the efforts of the higher authorities, the contraband trade prospered, and the illicit importation of opium increased to an alarming extent. The profits of the traffic were so enormous that large sums of money could be spent in bribery, and the cupidity of petty officials afforded easy opportunities for evasion of the law. A regular tariff of blackmail was agreed upon, and paid to local officers at the rate of a fixed sum per chest of opium landed. Fast native boats, heavily armed and manned, received the drug from foreign vessels and landed it, the nature of the seacoast below Canton rendering detection almost impossible. If attacked, the crews of these boats fought desperately, as prompt decapitation was the penalty of capture. The traffic grew to such proportions that again a depot of receiving ships, for the receipt and distribution of opium, was established between Macao and the mouth of the river below Canton, changing anchorage to different quarters during the typhoon season for greater security. The traffic also spread up the Chinese coast to the north of Canton.

In 1831, the *Jamesina*, a small craft, went as far north as Foo Chow and sold opium to the amount of \$330,000. Small, fast-sailing foreign vessels cruised along the entire coast of China, going even to Manchuria, peddling opium. In some cases, owing to the incorruptibility of native officials, these ventures resulted in loss. In the main, however, the business was enormously profitable. Regular lines ^ of swift opium schooners were gradually placed / in the service, and recei-

ving ships established at certain points to furnish a constant supply for the rapidly increasing demand. None of these vessels being Chinese, in the absence of treaty concessions, they had no -right of entry to any Chinese port. The local authorities, timid, and afraid to employ force, first contented themselves with the issue of paper commands and exhortations, until, finding these of no avail, they in turn were debauched by bribes, and winked at a contraband and deadly traffic which they lacked the energy to destroy.

During all this time, that is to say, from 1773 to 1839 a period of sixty-six years not one word is known to have been uttered by the British Government against this nefarious traffic. It had practically succeeded to the rich inheritance of the British East India Company, though the formal assumption of direct control did not come until later. With this inheritance it had acquired the monopoly of opium production in India. It must have known that the importation of opium was in violation of the laws of China, and that determined efforts were being made by the government at Peking to suppress it, efforts so determined that death was the penalty meted out to any native caught in the prosecution of the traffic. It must have known that the large fleet of fast-sailing, opium-smuggling vessels, with few exceptions, flew and disgraced the British flag.

It professed an earnest desire to establish friendly and commercial relations with the Chinese Empire. Yet it had not a word to say. Great Britain only spoke out when the Emperor showed his determination to stop the traffic at all costs, and when his servant, sent to Canton for that special purpose, proved by drastic measures that he had the

courage and determination to do his master's will. Then Great Britain was aroused to utterance. The crash came in 1839.

During the years 1837 and 1838, the struggle all along the Chinese coast, between the authorities upon the one hand and the smugglers upon the other, had increased in intensity. The former, spurred by evidence that the illegal traffic was attracting serious attention at Peking, and by the receipt of more stern commands therefrom, either doubled their efforts or their price for connivance. The smugglers were correspondingly stimulated by the increased demand for opium and the enormous profits derived from the business. The foreign dealers rarely came into conflict with the authorities. They made use of the natives as catspaws, who took the lion's share of the danger, but not his share of the profits. That the British Government was interested in the traffic and the direction which that interest took is shown by a correspondence between Captain Elliot, Superintendent of British Trade at Canton, and Rear-Admiral Capel, commanding the British fleet in Indian waters. In 1837, Captain Elliot wrote to the admiral, requesting him to send a vessel of war to China to visit the points where the store-ships for opium were anchored and the trade carried on, « as one of the movements best calculated, either to carry the provincial government back to the system of connivance which has hitherto prevailed, or to hasten onward the legalization measure from the court » (at Peking).

The British sloop-of-war Raleigh was sent to China in compliance with this request, where she remained many months, and where, among other services to this British trade, she secured the release of



the foreign portion of the crew of the opium brig Fairy, who had been arrested and were held at Foo Chow. But her Britannic Majesty's Government evidently considered that the traffic was of sufficient importance to demand the presence of more than a single vessel of war, for, in the same year, Admiral Capel received orders from Her Majesty's secretary directing him to proceed to China in person. By the end of 1838, the traffic had grown to such proportions that there were more than fifty small vessels, flying the British and American flags, cruising upon the river between Canton and the sea, nearly all of which were engaged in smuggling opium ! Heavily manned and armed, the Chinese revenue cruisers did not dare attack them, and their business was carried on without any pretence of disguise or secrecy. Upon the loth of March, 1839, Commissioner Lin arrived at Canton and entered upon the discharge of his official duties. Because of his known energy and determination, he had been selected by the Emperor, Tao Kwang, and sent to Canton to thoroughly eradicate the opium traffic, and was invested with the most unqualified authority ever conferred upon a Chinese subject. It was reported that the Emperor, while conferring with Lin before the departure of the latter from the capital, burst into tears and exclaimed : « How can I die and go to meet the spirits of my imperial father and ancestors until these direful evils' are removed ?

The Imperial Commissioner was equally prompt and positive in the execution of his mission. Eight days after his arrival, he issued an order requiring Chinese and foreign merchants to deliver, within three days, every particle of opium in the port of Canton to him and to give bonds that they would bring no more. Death was the penalty to be

paid for failure to comply with this demand, and the Chinese merchants were held personally accountable for the compliance of foreigners. At that time there were twenty-two vessels having as cargo, in part, 20,- 291 chests of opium in the harbor of Canton. At an average weight of 125 pounds per chest, it would amount to 2,536,375 pounds of opium, and it was estimated to be worth at the current market price about nine millions of dollars. It had paid a tax of nearly that sum to the British Crown before being sold by it in India for shipment to smugglers upon the Chinese coast. It is unnecessary to give details of the short but acrid correspondence which followed this demand. It must be admitted that much of Lin's language was arrogant and offensive in tone. He had had no previous dealings with foreigners, was ignorant of the official status of Captain Elliot, and regarded him merely as the hired chief of a body of merchants, the lowest class in the social scale. Upon the other hand, he appealed to the foreigners to comply with his demand upon four good grounds: Because they were men and had reason; because the laws of China forbade the use of opium under very severe penalties; because they should have pity for those who suffered from using it ; and because of their present straits, from which compliance with the order could alone release them. It must be explained that Commissioner Lin had placed a cordon of guards about all the ships, and residences of those concerned in the traffic, and forbidden the Chinese to furnish them with food or water. It must be evident that, whatever his methods, Lin was, upon the whole, moderate in his demands. In view of the facts, he would have been entirely justified in the seizure and confiscation of all the ships with their entire cargoes and in the punishment of all persons engaged in the illicit traffic, natives and foreigners alike.

The foreign merchants first attempted to bribe the Imperial Commissioner, and a « contribution » of 1037 chests was subscribed among them for that purpose. This scheme failing, the entire amount of opium was eventually surrendered, and most of the foreign merchants gave a written pledge « not to deal in opium nor to attempt to introduce it into the Chinese Empire.»<sup>1</sup> Many of them, however, broke their pledges and soon after again became actively engaged in the trade. As soon as the opium had reached the hands of Commissioner Lin, he caused the entire quantity to be dumped into trenches prepared for the purpose, where it was mixed with lime and salt water, and then drawn off by creeks into the sea. The operation was watched most closely to prevent any portion of the drug being abstracted, and one Chinese, caught in the attempt to conceal and carry away a small quantity, was beheaded upon the spot. Commissioner Lin was charged with two duties by his imperial master : the suppression of the opium traffic at all hazards, and the restoration of legitimate commerce, which had been practically destroyed. He failed in both. In spite of the written pledge given by the merchants, the sales of opium began again, even before the destruction of the immense quantity surrendered to him, and the business increased rapidly as soon as it was known that so large a quantity had actually been destroyed. Collisions between the Chinese authorities and people upon the one side, and those suspected or known to be engaged in the contraband traffic, increased in frequency and in their serious character, and rendered all honest commerce impossible. In the meantime intelligence of the general conduct of Commissioner Lin at Canton, and especially of the seizure and destruction of opium by him, reached London, and at last the British lion found his voice. It was not used to crush out a traffic which was both morally and politically indefensible, but

to demand « satisfaction and reparation for the late injurious proceedings of certain officers of the Emperor of China against certain of our officers and subjects.» In the debates in Parliament upon the subject, Sir John Hobhouse said that the British Government had done nothing to stop the opium trade because it was profitable. Lord Melbourne said : « We possess immense territories peculiarly fitted for raising opium, and though he could wish that the government were not so directly concerned in the traffic, he was not prepared to pledge himself to relinquish it.» And Lord Ellenborough, with even greater frankness, spoke of the seven and a half millions of dollars revenue then annually derived « from foreigners « by means of the contraband trade which, if the opium monopoly were given up and the cultivation of poppy abandoned, they must seek elsewhere. The British forces ordered to exact reparation for the conduct of Commissioner Lin arrived near Canton in June, 1841, and announced a blockade of that port. Skirmishes interlarded with discussions continued throughout the remainder of the year, and were spread over the entire coast of China. In January, 1842, an agreement was reached between the commissioners appointed by Great Britain and China, by which the latter was to pay an indemnity of six millions of dollars and cede the island and harbor of Hong Kong to the British Crown.

This adjustment of the difficulty was promptly repudiated by the sovereigns of both countries by the Emperor of China because he was unable to see why he should pay an indemnity for an attempt to crush out a contraband traffic, and by the British Queen because the indemnity for interference with her monopoly was deemed insufficient. The opium war was therefore continued until the following

August, when it ended with the capture of Nanking, and the negotiation of a treaty as mentioned at the head of this chapter. It is a curious fact that the active cause of all the trouble opium was not mentioned in the treaty. Sir Henry Pottinger, the British Commissioner, was unable to secure the legalization of the traffic, and would not undertake the responsibility, on behalf of his government, of any attempt to suppress it. The Chinese Commissioners would not even consent to discuss the opium question until assured that it was introduced merely as a topic for private conversation. Then, according to a British official report of the interview, they inquired eagerly : « Why we would not act fairly toward them by prohibiting the growth of the poppy in our dominions, and thus effectually stop a traffic so pernicious to the human race.» Sir Henry Pottinger's answer might have been anticipated. He replied, according to the same authority, that the remedy for the evil « rests entirely with yourselves. If your people are virtuous, they will desist from the evil practice; and if your officers are incorruptible and obey your orders, no opium can enter your country. The discouragement of the growth of the poppy in our territories rests principally with you, for nearly the entire produce cultivated in India travels east to China.» A truly interesting answer, and advice of the highest moral worth, when it came from the lips of an active agent of a war costing thousands of lives, and a representative of a so-called Christian nation which had that very day mulcted China in the sum of twenty-one millions of dollars and the cession of valuable territory, because certain incorruptible Chinese officers had endeavored to discourage the growth of the poppy in India by preventing opium from entering China ! It may be said in passing that this same Sir Henry Pottinger went out of his way some years later to declare « in a public manner,» as he himself states, that « the

great, and perhaps I might say sole, objection to the trade, looking at it morally and abstractly, that I have discovered is that it is at present contraband and prohibited by the laws of China . . . but I have striven to bring about legalization; and were that point once effected, I am of opinion that its most objectionable feature would be altogether removed.» Other Englishmen were not so purblind or venal. Shortly after the conclusion of the treaty at Nanking, a large number of English merchants and manufacturers memorialized Sir Robert Peel, claiming that commerce with China could not be conducted on a safe and satisfactory basis so long as the contraband trade in opium was allowed. They maintained that opium would enervate and impoverish the consumers of it, and thus disable them from purchasing other wares. And the memorialists pointed out that the opium then smuggled into China exceeded in value the total amount of tea and silk exported, as proof of the rapid impoverishment of the empire. This memorial received no attention at the hands of the British Government. None need have been expected, for the British Government itself was the actual trader in opium, and the profits were too large to permit any consideration for the interests of smaller merchants and manufacturers. And perhaps the memorialists deserved no notice. Their motives were purely selfish. They showed no care for the impoverishment and debauchery of the Chinese nation, except so far as those results of the traffic might touch their own pockets. And they were not alone in their selfishness. In all the discussions to which the opium war gave rise in Great Britain, seldom was a word uttered about the morality of the contraband traffic or the deadly effects of the vice upon its victims. The entire subject was argued solely from the standpoint of its effect upon British commerce. One newspaper went so far as to suggest the manufacture of morphine to tempt the

Chinese, so that they might have opium in a more delicate form to suit the taste of the higher classes.

During the years following the negotiation of the treaty of Nanking, the illegal trade was pushed and extended in every direction. Heavily-armed opium schooners made their trips up and down the entire Chinese coast, from Hong Kong to the mouth of the Peiho, with almost the regularity of modern mail steamers. Opium was openly smoked in many of the large cities. The laws forbidding the purchase, sale, or use of the drug under the penalty of death were still in force. But no official dared put them into execution. The Chinese Government had suffered bitter humiliation and punishment for daring to interfere with the trade, for venturing to enforce its laws within its own territory upon its own people and such foreigners as were guilty of crimes against the state and within its jurisdiction. It could do nothing more. It is true that Sir Henry Pottinger issued proclamations, warning British subjects that the importation of opium into Chinese ports was illegal, and that persons engaged in it would be granted no protection from the British authorities. He also forbade British vessels from going north of Shanghai under pain of seizure and confiscation. But when Captain Hope, of the British man-of-war *Thalia*, stopped several opium schooners which were going north of Shanghai, he was promptly removed from his command and ordered to India, where to quote the words of Lord Palmerston's despatch « he could not interfere in such a manner with the undertakings of British subjects.» This incident, and others of a similar nature, proved that the orders and proclamations of the British representative were mere idle words, for which neither respect nor obedience was

desired. Their sole purpose was to throw the responsibility for the traffic upon the Chinese. And the British men-of-war upon the China station were not there to suppress opium smuggling, but to see that it was not interfered with.

This state of affairs continued until 1860, when, at the close of another war with Qufla Great Britain secured, by the treaty of Tientsin, what had been her determined object from the first the legalization of the opium traffic. Though there was much friction between the governments of China and Great Britain, growing out of disputed points in the treaty of Nanking and the general attitude of the Chinese, yet the immediate cause of the second war, like the first, was the opium traffic. The Chinese authorities at Canton had seized a small vessel called the Arrow. She was owned and manned by Chinese, though illegally flying the British flag, and was engaged in the illicit traffic. These facts and they were proved to be facts were set forth by the Chinese in answer to a demand for reparation made by Sir John Bow-r ring, the same gentleman, by the way, who wrote the beautiful hymn, « In the Cross of Christ I Glory.» The only answer made by that Christian poet and British representative was the destruction of the forts below Canton and the bombardment of that city. This second war, begun in 1857 at Canton, was ended at Peking in 1860. As already stated, the terms of peace with which it ended included the legalization of the trade in opium. Since the accomplishment of this result, Great Britain, though she has formulated many serious and genuine grievances against China, has never seen occasion to seek correction of them with the sword. Perhaps a very brief analysis of the financial side of the opium traffic will explain the moderation and



complacency shown by Great Britain toward China during the past forty years. In securing the legal entry of opium into Chinese ports, England dictated the import duty chargeable upon it, and had fixed that duty at about forty cents a pound. The same pound of opium had paid the British Crown a tax of a trifle more than three dollars and one-half before leaving India, or about nine times as much as could be levied upon it at the port of destination. A chest of opium, containing an average of 125 pounds, paid from \$125 to \$130 to the Indian farmer who cultivated the poppy and produced the crude drug; about \$425 to the British Government; and about \$50 to the Chinese revenue. To enlarge the figures again, in the year 1878-9 the total export from India was 91,200 chests, from which England derived an income of \$38,500,000, upon which China was allowed to collect only \$4,560,000. Surely to a government caring only for the money outturn of any business, this division of income would naturally furnish food for satisfaction and complacency.

It required about 1,700,000 acres of land to produce this quantity of opium. To what extent the diversion of that large area from poppies to the cultivation of food products would tend to lessen or prevent the horrible famines so frequent in India, is a question for the philanthropist rather than the financier.

It has already been stated that in 1842 certain British merchants and manufacturers protested against the continuance of the traffic in opium, upon the ground of the impoverishment of the Chinese nation, and their consequent inability to purchase other products. The official returns of Chinese foreign trade for 1871 show that more than

three-fifths of the total imports from a British source consisted of opium. In that year nearly \$64,000,000 worth of the drug was imported, while the total exports of all Chinese commodities, to all parts of the world, was less than \$105,000,000. John Bull's bill against China that year for opium furnished was nearly three times the amount due to China for all merchandise sold to any nation except the English. And it was more than three-fifths of the entire sum due China for all native produce exported to foreign parts. Two-thirds of all tea and silk sent abroad from China was paid for with Indian opium. And if the large quantity of the drug still smuggled into the country could be valued, it would become evident that China received only opium for her enormous export of those two staple articles. Well may Great Britain be moderate and complacent in her treatment of the Chinese Government. She balances the accounts of the world with China with opium. And when a foreigner of any other nationality pays a debt due the Chinese, the money goes, not to the Celestials, but to London.

By nearly all British writers upon the opium question, it is assumed that the Chinese authorities were not in earnest in their efforts to suppress the contraband trade. It is, perhaps, natural that they should raise such a point, in order to justify the course of their government, and to hoodwink the outside world. But they know better. The facts of the entire history speak for themselves. Commissioner Lin went to Canton with specific instructions from his imperial master, Tao Kwang, to suppress the opium traffic and reopen legitimate commerce. It is true that in 1834 and the years succeeding, the Chinese officials had interfered with the legitimate foreign trade at Canton, where it had been carried on for many years.

« But there were reasons for their action. Their chief cause of complaint was the introduction of opium by the merchants, and for years they attempted by every means in their power, by stopping all foreign trade, by demands for the prohibition of the traffic in the drug, and by vigilant preventive measures, to put a stop to its importation. On the 3d April, 20,283 (20,- 291) chests of opium were handed over to the mandarins, and were by them destroyed a sufficient proof that they were in earnest in their endeavors to suppress the traffic.» The authority here quoted is the « Encyclopaedia Britannica,» which surely cannot be held to be anti-British in its sympathies.

It is paying but scant respect to the intelligence and good sense of the average reader to discuss another argument brought forward by apologists for the course of Great Britain. Yet it must be mentioned here. The argument is that the use of opium does the Chinese no harm; that, owing to some peculiarity in their physical construction, it is not only innocuous, but as necessary to them « as his beer to the Englishman.» The letter of Sir Henry Pottinger upon this point has already been quoted. Another apologist speaks of the drug as a « useful soother, a harmless luxury, and a precious medicine, except to those who abuse it,» and he attributes the « persevering economy and never ceasing industry « of the Chinese to its use ! Others have described it as « harmless as milk « to the Oriental !

If the mere thinking about opium can so completely narcotize the judgment, becloud the good sense, and distort the vision of othe-

rwise clear-headed, logical-minded Englishmen, what must the effect of actual and constant use of the drug be upon the Chinese, who perhaps have not the same stamina with which to resist the effects of the habit ! In spite of all this special pleading, and array of imaginary facts, the truth remains that the habitual use of any form of opium by any human being, Occidental or Oriental, constitutes a vice more hopeless and deadly in its results than any other known among men. There are ample proofs of this statement, so far as it refers to the people of Europe or America, and the Chinaman forms no exception to the rule. After all has been said about his peculiarities, he is compounded from the same formula with the Anglo-Saxon or other Western races. Opium is more deadly than alcohol, because it fastens its grip more quickly and firmly upon the victim. No language can exaggerate the evil results of the habit. No honest person who has seen its effects upon the Chinese can describe it as other than an awful curse. To force it upon China was a crime against humanity. One Chinese writer describes it as tenfold more deadly than arsenic, inasmuch as the suicide by arsenic dies at once, while the opium victim suffers untold horrors and dies by inches. He mentions cases in which men have pawned their wives and sold their daughters in order to procure the drug. And such cases are by no means rare. The writer has seen an able-bodied and apparently rugged laboring Chinese tumble all in a heap upon the ground utterly nerveless and unable to stand, because the time for his dose of opium had come, and until the craving was supplied he was no longer a man, but the merest heap of bones and flesh. In the great majority of cases death is the sure result of any determined reform. The poison has rotted the whole system, and no power to resist the simplest disease remains. In many years' residence in China, the writer knew of but four men who finally abando-

ned the habit. Three of them lived but a few months thereafter. The fourth survived his reformation, but was a life-long invalid. Though the Chinese Government was at last, in 1860, whipped into an assent to the importation of opium, its bitter opposition to the traffic was in no degree lessened. It simply dared no longer attempt to enforce its own laws. Efforts to do this, begun thirty and more years before, had resulted in the loss of thousands of lives, in repeated and almost uninterrupted humiliation, in the payment of large indemnities to Great Britain, and, more recently, in the capture of the Taku forts and Tientsin, in the investment of Peking by a foreign army, the seizure of one of the city gates, the plunder and destruction of the Summer Palace, the flight of the Emperor and his death in what was practical exile, and, to I crown all, a coerced consent to the hideous I opium traffic.

From the point of view of the Chinese Government, and that alone is of concern in this chapter, all of these evils, sorrows and losses came as the result of a patriotic determination upon its part to protect its people against impoverishment, debauchery and destruction, by the enforcement of the laws of the empire. Again, from their point of view, the Chinese authorities deserved success. They met with the most humiliating and hopeless failure. They had pledged themselves to sit with folded arms, while their ancient and wholesome laws were violated and their people sucked dry of morality, manhood, and money, by a black vampire from India, let loose upon them by Great Britain, to satisfy its own insatiable greed.

China dared no longer resist. Nothing remained but the poor pri-

vilege to plead, to beg, and remonstrate. «»And this she continued to (To at intervals, until even Chinese persistency was exhausted by refusals, rebuffs, or contemptuous silence. She made offers of concessions to any form of legitimate commerce in any part of the empire, if only the opium trade might be stopped, either at once or by a graded reduction in the annual import. Meeting with no success in this direction, she asked permission to increase the duty upon the drug. Great Britain promptly accepted the concessions offered in return for this poor favor, and then refused to permit the increase of duty.

In the summer of 1873, the writer had occasion to discuss certain outstanding matters between the United States and China with Wen Hsiang, then prime minister, and one of the most able statesmen of the empire. Official business having been concluded, the prime minister said: « Now let us forget that we represent two different governments and only remember that we are friends, as I have two perplexing questions about which I am most anxious to obtain your advice.» This having been agreed to, Wen Hsiang made the following statement, of one of the two questions upon which he sought friendly counsel : As a result of long-continued and anxious discussions over the opium traffic, and the alarming spread of the vice of opium-smoking throughout the empire discussions in which the Empress Dowager, the Empress Mother, the Imperial Family Council, the Cabinet, and all the viceroys throughout the empire had taken part it had been decided to prepare a personal appeal in the name of the young Emperor, then under age, to the Queen of Great Britain, setting forth the evils being wrought upon the Chinese nation in consequence of the importation of opium, and begging her, in the name of a com-

mon humanity, to agree with him upon measures by which the traffic might be at once, or gradually, brought to an end. Such a letter was prepared. It showed the dreadful harm already wrought in China by opium and increasing with frightful rapidity. It pointed out that the traffic was the foe to all rightful\_ commerce, and if allowed to continue would put an end to the latter, by leaving the Chinese neither money nor commodities to exchange for foreign products. It offered anything that might be desired in the way of concession to British trade, anywhere in the empire, agreeing in advance to yield to any demand, if only this / one curse against which China had fought in vain for years might be removed. And it begged Her Majesty, both as a queen and as a woman, to heed the appeal, and to concert measures for the suppression of the hideous opium curse. The letter was phrased with the utmost care to avoid wounding the pride of, or giving any offence to, the British nation. It was despatched in 1868 through the British Legation at Peking, the minister being requested to take special measures to ensure that it reached the hands of the ‘ Queen.

Some six months having passed and no reply coming to hand, a member of the Cabinet inquired casually of the British Minister at Peking whether any answer had been received to the letter of His Majesty to the Queen. He was told that none had come. This was repeated several times, at intervals of months, with always the same result. Then an unofficial communication was sent to Her Majesty’s representative requesting him to inform the Chinese Cabinet whether the Emperor’s letter had reached the Queen, and, if so, when a response to it might be expected. After the interval necessary for transmission

of inquiry and answer, they were told that the Emperor's letter had reached Her Majesty, but no intimation was given concerning an answer from her. Again, after waiting some months, the Chinese Cabinet addressed a formal despatch to the British Minister, requesting to know when they might be favored with a reply to His Imperial Majesty's letter. To this despatch they received a prompt answer, saying that no reply had been received, and adding curtly that none need be expected. And Wen Hsiang desired the advice of the writer as to what had best be done in view of these facts. Many months after this conversation and after the death of the Chinese prime minister, who was a party to it, the writer came upon an article in the International Review a London publication written by a distinguished British advocate and Queen's Counsel, entitled, « Great Britain, India, China and the Opium Question.» In it the writer mentioned this appeal of the Emperor Tung Chih to Queen Victoria, and said : « To the everlasting shame and disgrace of the British nation, no answer was ever made to this appeal. The reason is obvious, no answer was possible.»

In January, 1875, the Chinese Government prepared and submitted to all governments, then represented at Peking, a lengthy and detailed complaint of the opium traffic, and requested the action of all friendly nations in bringing it to an end. The British Government answered with a series of counter charges, but promised nothing with regard to opium.

In the summer of 1876 serious diplomatic negotiations occurred at Chefoo between Sir Thomas Wade, then British Minister, and His



Excellency, Li Hung Chang. The murder of a British consular officer upon the border line between China and Burmah, and various other matters, had made these negotiations necessary. As a result, and while denying that the murder was done by Chinese, the Chinese Government made reparation for the crime, and agreed, among other things, to open several additional ports upon the coast to British commerce, only asking in return the privilege of increasing the import duty upon opium from forty cents a pound to about fifty-five. Her Britannic Majesty's Government promptly accepted the various concessions made by China, sent consular officers to each of the new ports and opened trade in them, and then repudiated the Chefoo convention, or rather that part of it which allowed China to increase the opium duty fifteen cents a pound. In November, 1880, a commission, appointed by the President, concluded at Peking two treaties between the United States and China.

The second treaty contained a stringent article forbidding American citizens from taking any part in the opium trade in China. They could neither buy nor sell the drug, nor transport it upon their ships. A couple of days after these treaties were signed, the writer had an informal interview with His Excellency, Li Hung Chang, then viceroy at Tientsin. The viceroy, after expressing his deep satisfaction that the United States had withdrawn from all complicity with the traffic in opium, said : « I have watched and have had to do with the foreign relations of China for many years. I have read the Bible, in which you foreigners believe, and have seen in it the same golden rule which Confucius teaches. And this action of the United States in forbidding its people to deal with opium in China is the first and only appli-

cation gulden rule to be found in all the conduct of foreign governments toward China.»

The Chinese statesman did not speak without some warrant in making this sweeping declaration. If the entire correspondence upon the opium question, from beginning to end, had between the Emperor of China and the Queen of Great Britain between a heathen emperor and a Christian queen, as each is commonly called could be submitted to an honest outsider, who knew nothing of the religious pretensions of either, there is every reason to fear that he would conclude that, by some error of type-setting or proof-reading, the adjectives « heathen » and « Christian » had been interchanged.

Utterly discouraged and disheartened at the failure of all efforts, whether by force or remonstrance, to check the importation of opium, the Chinese Government abandoned the attempt. And it also ceased to restrain the cultivation of the poppy in China. The ancient laws forbidding the use of the soil for such purpose were not repealed. For the Emperor, the author of all law, being, like the Pope, held infallible, never directly rescinds any action taken by his imperial ancestors. But the laws were not enforced, and large areas of the country gradually blossomed outwith poppies. A member of the Chinese Cabinet frankly admitted that this policy had been adopted after full consideration. They dared not attempt to restrict the importation of Indian opium nor the punishment of natives for smoking it. The only recourse left them was to fight fire with fire, to cut off the demand for the foreign drug with an abundant native supply.

He cynically claimed two advantages for this line of action the native drug being produced in a cooler climate, was less injurious than the Indian, and the money spent upon it would be retained in China, and would not pass into the pockets of foreigners.

No extended argument can be needed to make plain the inevitable results of the opium traffic upon every phase of development and progress in China. It has been a triple bar against both, since it has impoverished the empire in purse, muscle and brain. The forced introduction of opium to China constituted a greater crime against humanity than the African slave trade. And Great Britain herself has been the most serious foe to the increase of foreign commerce with China and the development of her enormous natural resources. She has been the enemy to the honest trade of every nation with that empire. For foreign commerce must depend mainly upon internal prosperity. And the question how much increase in foreign traffic may be expected with any nation, whose people are from year to year more hopelessly stupefied, besotted and impoverished by opium is a question which answers itself. No growing demand for foreign cotton goods or woollens may be expected from men mere wretched bundles of bones who, because of opium, are unable to buy enough of the meanest native rags to cover their nakedness. The conveniences and luxuries of Western civilization furnish no attraction to the man whose only convenience is an opium lamp and whose only idea of luxury is the opium pipe.

There is a peculiar fitness in the fact that Great Britain is herself the

greatest sufferer from her vicious policy. She is the only European nation which sells any appreciable amount of commodities to the Chinese. Russia is not an exporting country. Germany has become such only in recent years. The silks of France naturally find no market in China, the mother land of all silk industries; the Chinese fortunately have acquired no appetite for her wines or brandies, and the infinite variety of French fancy articles appeal neither to their taste nor their pockets.

In 1871 the entire imports into China from the whole of Continental Europe amounted to barely \$300,000. During the same period British imports, excluding opium, amounted to more than \$63,000,000. And the hundreds of millions of dollars which she has drawn from China, during the past sixty years, for opium represent a small sum when compared with what might have been gained, to the advantage of both countries, if she had suppressed the sale of the drug, and confined herself to lines of honest commerce.

Another serious and widespread result of the opium traffic is the intense hatred of all things and all men foreign. It is quite unnecessary to vilify the missionary body, in order to discover the cause of this bitter anti-foreign feeling so universal in China. While other causes have co-operated to generate and sustain it, the largest single cause, the most important factor, is the source, history and results of opium. And that man must be blind indeed to the ordinary operations of human nature who could expect any other result. Let any intelligent, fair-minded reader put himself into the place of the Chinese, run

over in his mind the history of the use of this narcotic poison in that great Oriental empire, and then decide what the resultant and inevitable feeling must be toward the authors of such a scourge.

Probably no people upon earth ever possessed so much national vanity and conceit as the Chinese. It had been bred in them for hundreds of years, and was justified in their minds by the fact that the only races with which they had come into contact for many centuries were greatly inferior to them in every respect. From their point of view, they have been attacked and overcome by an unknown and necessarily inferior race, for the sake of the money which was to be made by forcing a deadly poison upon them. Is any other explanation of the anti-foreign feeling in the Chinese Empire necessary? It covers foreigners of all nationalities, because the mass of the people are able to make no discrimination among them. Opium is a foreign drug forced upon them by foreigners that covers the whole question. Every victim of the drug, and he is everywhere to be found, is a walking advertisement and argument to the evil of everything foreign. And in the case of the slave to the vice, his brain is narcotized, and every moral and manly quality deadened by the fumes of the Indian drug, but the hatred of the foreigner who has furnished and forced this deadly comfort upon him is cultivated and intensified by the sense of his own degradation.

The writer listened for some time one afternoon to a missionary, addressing a large gathering of natives upon the street of an interior city of China. Near by and upon the outskirts of the crowd stood a middle-aged Chinese, evidently of the literary class and having a

countenance of much intelligence. Physically he was a mere walking skeleton. The tiny opium jar in his hand, the expression of his eyes, and the brown stain upon one of his fingers, all marked him as a slave to the narcotic poison. After listening a few minutes to the preacher, he turned away with an indescribable scowl of hatred upon his face, and snarled out as he left : « You foreigners exhort us to virtue ! First take away your opium, and then talk to us about your Ya Su « (Jesus).

China is permitted to establish no national protective tariff, but she has a national protective sentiment of inveterate hostility to every product, be it a man, a thing, or an idea, coming from the Western world. It hinders and hurts every line of progress, at every point. And the main source and feeder of this sentiment is to be found in the opium traffic. The modern great Chinese Wall is mainly constructed of chests of opium.