

## BRITISH TRADE WITH CHINA.

ON THE IMPORTANT BENEFITS THAT MUST EVENTUALLY ACCRUE TO THE BRITISH INTERESTS CONNECTED WITH CHINA FROM THE FORMATION OF COMMERCIAL SETTLEMENTS UPON THE NORTH-WEST COAST OF NEW HOLLAND.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE MORNING CHRONICLE.

SIR—The late oppressive duties imposed by the Dutch upon British manufactures imported into the Indian islands, and the encouraging prospect which the free-trade to China holds out, imperatively call for the establishment of commercial settlements upon the west coast of New Holland to serve, not only as emporia whence British manufactures could be disseminated over all the Eastern islands, but as central stations for securing the benefits of the trepang fishery, carried on by the Malays upon that coast, to British enterprise, whereby a valuable export to China would be obtained for the purpose of purchasing tea cargoes there. The trepang is a gelatinous sea-animal of great value and demand in China, for the making of a rich and much-prized soup, only inferior in their epicurean estimation to the famous bird's-nest; and which being found only upon the coast of New Holland, the Malay fishermen resort yearly to the latter for the purpose of procuring it, with the view of disposing of their cargoes to the Dutch on return to their homes for export to China. The Malays frequent only a very limited portion of this coast, where the seas being less sheltered, the trepang are consequently obliged to keep in the deep water, and are therefore procured at considerable expense and labour; but as the whole of the Australian coast, from the eastern to the western extremity of Torres Straits, as well as all the sheltered islands and shoals throughout the latter, abound with this highly-prized animal, in shallow as well as in deep water, the fishery might therefore be extended in an almost unlimited degree, and a new source of wealth thereby opened up of unappreciable value to British commerce. By a reference to the map, you will perceive that the western coast of New Holland is in the direct route to China, consequently British vessels trading to the latter would suffer no serious delay from calling there, in order to exchange British manufactures for trepang and other commodities furnished by the seas and coasts adjoining, from which greater profits would be realised in the China market than if the above manufactures were carried direct. The seas in that vicinity also abound not only with various kinds of good table fish, but with the sea-turtle, furnishing the tortoiseshell, whales in their season, and sharks, the fins of the latter being considered a great luxury by the Chinese, and consequently much sought after by traders among the islands, who purchase them of the natives for the supply of the China market. It is well known that, about ten years ago, a settlement was made upon the western coast of New Holland, for the commercial purposes above specified, but which was abandoned at the very time it was beginning to answer, in consequence of reports of its unhealthiness, which Dr. Wilson, R. N., in his late interesting work,

"A Voyage round the World," proves to have been wholly unfounded; the disease originating this alarm being no other than the scurvy, a complaint produced not by bad climate but by bad food—the tropical latitudes there being in fact shown by him to be free from all those malignant maladies which render similar latitudes so generally fatal to European constitutions. At the very time of the evacuation, Dr. Wilson states that the Malay fishermen were beginning to frequent the settlement in considerable numbers, with a view of curing their treading under a British safeguard; and had a mercantile establishment then existed at that place, a traffic would have sprung up which must eventually have proved most beneficial to all concerned. So pleased, indeed, were the Malays and Chinese of the adjoining islands with the prospects which the settlement afforded, that numbers of them were upon the point of taking up their residence there, on the assurance of protection, at the very time the fatal order for deserting it arrived. It appears, from Dr. Wilson, that neither of the settlements formerly made on this coast were in the situations best adapted for trading with the Malays, Port Essington, the place of their greatest resort, being passed over, in consequence of not finding at the time a stream of fresh water there (a discovery, however, since made); but the erroneousness of not making the settlement there, for the above reason, Dr. Wilson clearly shows, as abundance of that element might have been readily secured, as he points out, by means of tanks, during the six months' rainy season existing there; and when it is known that the Bermudas, Bahamas, and many of the healthiest West-India islands, have no other resource than rain water thus procured, the practicability of the thing cannot be questioned. But it is not solely for commercial reasons that the coast there ought to be colonised: the safety of the British shipping property, and of the valuable lives of our seamen, equally demand it—three-fourths of the ships bound from the eastern Australian settlements to England, passing through Torres Straits, and not a year elapsing without several wrecks, with loss of lives, taking place on the coral reefs there, shipwrecks that would in a great measure be prevented by the better knowledge of these dangers which the settlements would necessarily lead to, while, at the same time, they would form a safe protective haven for the shipwrecked mariners, whose sufferings have, in all instances, been dreadful, even when their lives have been preserved. Port Essington would, in fact, under British protection, eventually be to that side of the Indian ocean, what Singapore is to the opposite—a safe and healthy port for anchorage and refreshments, and an important central depot for British manufactures for the supplying of the numerous adjacent islands, and of whose valuable position, no doubt, some of our quick-sighted commercial rivals will soon avail themselves, if we longer delay taking possession.

I cannot close this communication without observing that an intelligent person, who was employed several years in the Bermuda fisheries, informed me of a sea animal exactly corresponding to the description of the trepang, existing in vast numbers among the coral shoals there, and which, if proving to be the real trepang, will necessarily increase the value of property in those islands, by the beneficial employment which the fishery will give to the industrious inhabitants; for, if existing at Bermuda, it will no doubt be found equally abundant among the Bahama shoals, the coral formation being its favourite place of resort.

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