

THE CHINESE WAR AND THE PALMERSTONIAN POLICY.

*To the Editor of the North Wales Chronicle.*

Sir,—There are three lights in which the question now before the country presents itself, and in each of these it appears of the utmost consequence. While the Palmerstonites are using every art to beguile the public, and every section of politicians into which the mass of the electors is split up is fighting for its own favourite movement, the great interests of the country are in extreme danger of being entirely overlooked, and (perhaps) irretrievably periled.

One would have thought that the responsibility of adopting or repudiating the bombardment of a populous city, and the slaughter by shot and shell and conflagration of tens of thousands of innocent and unarmed men, women, and children, was sufficiently great to prevent its being treated as a mere secondary consideration, even if it escaped being altogether ignored. I would fain beg of your readers to remember that this is the real question before them. It is not a party question, nor a personal one. It is a national one, it is an individual one. It is for each man to say, "I shall by my vote either give my assent to the continuance of the war, and accept as mine all the atrocities that have already been committed, or I shall wash my hands of those foul proceedings, and shall denounce the continuance of the war as a cruel, impolitic and wicked course of action." Surely such a question as this is of a most serious nature. To all party obligations ought to yield: to it even life long devotion to a cause, however cherished, ought to yield: each of us is bound, like Sir Thomas Baring or Lord John Russell, to vote as in a jury box.

But, sir, this is not all that is involved. Momentous as the simple direct question is, it draws with it other most important questions. With this the whole of our Eastern Policy is bound up, and with it too is bound up the right of the House of Commons to take cognizance of our relations with Foreign nations, to make its voice heard in the declaring of wars, and the making of Treaties. With regard to the first—our Eastern Policy—this is but a single instance of its working. For many years the whole of that policy has been one long unscrupulous aggression. This is the second Chinese war Lord Palmerston has given us; can any one remember the first without blushing for his country? He gave us too that terrible and disastrous Afghan war, on the same pretext as he has given us now the war with Persia. Year after year we have been adding Kingdom after Kingdom in Hindostan, till now our territory there is twenty times as large as England and Wales. We have despoiled the Burmese Empire too of several provinces; have extended our borders till they touch Siam; have occupied many places in the Malay Peninsula. These and many other things point plainly to the ulterior object in view—the conquest of the whole of Southern Asia. But this is a ruinous policy. It is totally opposed to that policy which has made England what it is; and it will sooner or later cause us to decline and fall like the Roman, and all the other extensive empires. Now is the time for the country to protest against this absurd and wicked policy: now is the time for you to seek from its statesmen explicit declarations on this head, and to say, with a distinct and firm voice, what policy it will in future sanction. And thus too it will vindicate its right to be heard in matters of foreign policy, a right the exercise of which is at present a mere farce, and which Lord Palmerston pours contempt on with impunity. This he has not only done in the recent cases of Naples and of America, and the very grave case of Persia where war has been made and ended without the least reference to Parliament, but he is now also doing by rejecting the decision of the House of Commons and appealing to the country, and at the same time burking the very question touching which he professes to appeal. He is thus putting the greatest insult upon the country one can well imagine.

These three great duties are now before the country, and it ought not to suffer itself to be led aside from them by any tricks, or by any false appeals to its generosity or gratitude. It is its duty emphatically to denounce and repudiate the deeds of horror that have been enacted in its name. It is its duty to vindicate its right to be heard in foreign matters of importance, the expense and responsibility of which it has to bear; and it is its duty to investigate fully ministerial policy in the East, and to give its sanction to that policy only which is righteous, safe, and honourable.

Before I conclude, I cannot but express my great surprise that no step has been taken (as far as I know) in any part of this district, to give utterance to any opinions on these momentous questions. No public meetings appear to have been called. Even where candidates have met their constituents, scarcely anything has been said. Much might be done even where a Palmerston candidate is unopposed, and much ought to be done everywhere. The writer of this letter is not in a position to take the initiative in such movements, but others should, and it is to be hoped will still do so, although events are hastening on.

I must beg you, Mr. Editor, kindly to forgive the length of this letter, and with an earnest prayer that our country may now, and ever, give her voice for justice, wisdom, and truth,

I remain, Sir, yours very faithfully,

CANTABRIGIENSIS.