

THE ENGLISH IN CHINA.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE DAILY NEWS.

SIR,—The subject of China and everything connected with it having of late prominently engaged the attention of the British people and their rulers, I desire to offer some remarks on a matter of the deepest importance to the future welfare of that people, as well as deeply involving the credit and character of this nation in particular. Having been a resident at one of the five ports of China for foreign commerce during the last seven years, and holding a very familiar intercourse with the people during that period, I desire to give, through the medium of your journal, some of the results of my experience, the sentiments they hold towards foreigners, and the state and condition of foreign commerce with that nation as it is, and has been carried on of late years. The facts which I intend to furnish are founded upon personal knowledge and observation. It cannot be denied that the Chinese are, and have been, of late years especially, greatly alienated from foreigners in sentiment and feeling, more particularly the literary and mandarin part of them; and it must be admitted that they are, and must be, the better judges of whatever is obnoxious and prejudicial to them morally and physically, and that we are bound, in all uprightness, to accept their testimony thereon. It is a well established fact, that a very large, profitable, and illicit traffic in opium has been carried on with that empire by the English merchants for the last half century; that it has year by year been increasing, until it at the present time amounts to the enormous quantity of 87 thousand chests annually; that the East India Company have appropriated a large portion of its richest lands for the special purpose of growing opium for the supplying the Chinese with that drug for smoking; and that that company are deriving a revenue of two or three millions sterling annually by an imposed duty on it in India. The opium so raised and manufactured realises about or above five millions sterling in China; it is paid for in hard cash by the Chinese, with whom a system of smuggling is carried on by the English merchants in China, and this amount of specie is drained out of China annually, and goes to India to raise fresh supplies. The profits of this trade, which are very considerable, are deducted by the firms in China, nearly all of which are deeply engaged in the traffic. One, two, or more Parsee houses under the English flag deal exclusively in it. The system of its introduction into China is as follows. Eighteen heavily armed ships, called receiving vessels, of from 200 to 500 tons burden, are stationed along the coast of China, outside the limits of the five ports chiefly, and these receiving ships are kept well supplied with the drug, in order to get it smuggled into China, by fast sailing schooners, or clippers and steamers, which ply regularly along the coast, all fully equipped and efficiently armed and manned by English officers, Lascar and Malay crews chiefly—well trained in the use of arms for defensive operations. These receiving ships have stout netting, which they cover over them in times of danger and threatened attack from mandarin or private junks. The opium is conveyed away from these receiving ships to the merchants' hong within the ports, chiefly by night or in the dusk of evening, in fast sailing and row boats well armed. Sometimes Chinese boats go off to these receiving ships, and purchase the drug for themselves and convey it away to the interior at their own risk. I have seen large supplies landed by the boats of these receiving ships in the dusk of evening at an English hong, and have known the steamer of the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company carry large

quantities of opium to an English firm direct into port, and land it just like any other merchandise; and this with the full cognizance of the English Consul. It is a fact that the Chinese rulers, the late Emperor Tou Kwang, in particular, exerted every means and used all his power and influence to exclude this pernicious drug from his dominions. Knowing it to be highly detrimental and injurious to his subjects, he put forth repeated edicts for stopping its ingress, and enacted severe penalties against its introduction and encouragement. At length, finding its evils appalling, he despatched the late official Lin, of Canton notoriety, to that port, effectually to stop the contraband traffic. The measures which he took were such as led to the war with China about the year 1843, the particulars and results of which are matters of history. Suffice it to say that although that war was overruled to the opening up of the present five ports of China to foreign commerce, and our merchants and manufacturers exulted at the prospects of an increasing commerce with three or four hundred millions of Chinese customers, yet how grievously disappointed do they seem to have been, for, from the accounts and statistics which have been published, the legitimate commerce with China, in the consumption of British manufactures, would appear to have retrograded rather than progressed during the last ten years, while the illegitimate commerce in opium has, during this period, gone on increasing year by year to its present large amount of five or six millions sterling annually.

The British people will be led doubtless to inquire the reason of this. The solution is obvious; for this evil traffic carries with it, like all and every other wrong and vicious course of conduct, its own punishment, disgrace, and consequences, which, in this instance, reflect upon the nation at large. The Chinese are and must be the best judges of what is noxious and injurious to themselves, and if they declare, or their rulers for them, that anything or course of procedure is injurious to them and their interests, we are bound to accept their testimony, and as Englishmen and Christians, should not endeavour to act counter to them, in forcing or tempting them to receive a prohibited drug. Opium, it is well known, is a prohibited article in their tariff; that it is a powerful narcotic poison none can deny, and, except as medicine, deeply prejudicial to the human constitution. Can, then, the introduction of so large a quantity as 87,000 chests annually (of from 150 to 160 lbs. each) prove otherwise than most prejudicial, especially considering that the traffic is on the increase, and is carried on in direct violation of Chinese law? Interested parties may, and will, attempt to palliate its evils, but such attempts will be duly estimated when the truth is fully known, by the good sense of the British public. I can, from a long and personal experience of the practice of opium smoking in China, amply testify to the Protean evils of this wretched system upon the Chinese generally. I have much and often witnessed the effects of opium smoking in China, both in the incipient stages of this practice as well as in the more advanced; and I do not think that in expatiating upon it I can well exaggerate its evils, physically and morally. Its effects, when first used in small quantities, are most fascinating, exhilarating, and exciting to the nervous system, but its repetition very soon begins to tell upon the moral energies and powers, and a renewal of it is absolutely required, after the use of it a few times, in order to keep off a state of nervous depression. Its physical effects by continued indulgence soon become apparent by a peculiar swarthy countenance, manifest dulness and obtuseness of habit, with a progressive loss of flesh. In those long accustomed to its use, enforced abstinence from it produces feelings of nervous depression, and a state of wretchedness closely allied to delirium tremens; hence there is a craving for its continued use, which perpetuates the habit until the victim of it becomes lost to and incapable of the discharge of the moral, social, and physical duties of life. Often the victim of the habit, after pawning the last remnant of his property, falls into the hands of merciless creditors and obdurate mandarins. Chinese artists well and faithfully depict the evil consequences of the practice in their pictorial illustrations.

The Chinese exist in clans, or large families, and there is a common home or centre for the numerous relatives and members of them. The patriarchal system, as related in the Bible, seems in many respects to have been closely analogous to the state of society throughout China; the obligations of kindred are deeply inculcated and binding upon the Chinese mind; the sympathy and claims of one member of a family upon another are great, and each member thereof is bound by solemn obligations to aid in the support of the rest, and thus there is a mutual dependence. The elders of the clan are the rulers of it, and are held responsible for the conduct and welfare of every member thereof. This supplies the place of a poor law for China, and in this way that vast empire is more easily governed by the authorities.

It is a fact that opium smoking is very generally confined to the male population—the sinews, strength, labour, and capital of the empire, on whom the rest of the community depend for support: hence we must perceive, if the moral and physical energies of the males be impaired and destroyed, how much misery must be entailed on their dependents, and how much the moral and social welfare of the rest of the community must be involved in the consequences.

I have myself had to discharge an excellent Chinese servant simply because he was addicted to the habit, and I have known several other residents discharge theirs under similar circumstances, and this because they could no longer be trusted in nor depended on. An agent of one of the principal firms in China told me that he had discharged his old Chinese servant, and was compelled to do this, as he was addicted to opium smoking, remarking to me that when once the habit is formed a servant becomes useless. It is well known to medical men in China how great an evil is this practice: the faculty at home are well aware that the habitual use of this narcotic destroys the procreative powers of the male. The Chinese manifest their abhorrence of the drug by calling it "black dirt," "black poison," "foreign dirt," and other opprobrious terms. In order still further to show the detestation with which the Chinese hold this contraband traffic, high imperial honours and distinctions were lavished by the late Emperor upon Lin, the Imperial Commissioner at Canton, who, by his stringent measures to suppress the traffic, caused the opium war about ten years ago, and on a recent occasion the highest funeral honours were awarded to him in the Fokien province, as a testimony of a country's gratitude for faithful services to the state.

The victims of this vile habit often apply for foreign medical aid at the different ports in China, in order to be enabled to relinquish the habit and be rid of its consequences, and Chinese charlatans and quacks are ever ready to take advantage of this. I have seen numerous placards pasted on prominent parts of the public highways, professing to supply means for removing the habit, in imitation of foreign remedies. Thus they profess to supply "The English remedy;" the American, Russian, &c.

All missionaries in China are unanimous upon the evils of this traffic, and represent it as the greatest obstacle to the reception of Christianity at their hands, and the greatest barrier to more friendly intercourse and commerce. When Christianity is offered to the Chinese, they retort upon the missionary thus: "How is it that you profess to offer us a good and better religion, while your countrymen force a noxious drug on us?" A Chinese literary man, upon being lately asked what was the average number of opium smokers among the males in China, replied that he believed 8-10ths did so. The East India Company, British merchants, and the British government are responsible for having formed this habit among the Chinese, and for still perpetuating it more and more year by year. Several conscientious and right-minded members of the firms in China have long felt the opium traffic to be a sad blot and disgrace to their character as Christians and as British subjects, and one or more have professedly relinquished their firms in consequence. A pamphlet has just been put forth on the evils of this traffic by Donald Matheson, Esq., formerly connected with the highly respectable firm of Jardine, Matheson, and Co., in China. Several firms in China have scrupulously abstained from mixing up the sale of opium with their legitimate traffic. The more this traffic is investigated the greater are the evils presented politically, socially, morally, and religiously.—I am, &c.,

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PHILO-SINENSIS.