

THE CHINESE—BY ONE OF THEMSELVES.

(From the Times.)

Certainly knowledge is increased in our days. We shall probably in the next year or two learn more of the Celestial Empire and its inhabitants than has been told by all the travellers of Europe from the first timid adventurers who brought home tales of distant Cathay to the missionaries and consuls of our own time. A very pretty sketch of modern Chinese civilisation is given in the "Further papers relating to the Proceedings of Her Majesty's Naval Forces at Canton." From these it will be seen what is the nature of the instruction by which men attain to office in that classic land of examinations and promotion by merit, and also how far they are endowed with that peaceable spirit and that calm discriminating justice with which the imagination of a party at home has invested them. On the 4th of April Commodore the Hon. C. J. Elliot captured some junks on the San-on coast, opposite Hong Kong. In one of these was discovered a correspondence, which has been faithfully translated, and is now laid before the British public. It is the correspondence of Chan-tze-tin, the younger brother of Chan-kwei-tsh, President or Chief of the Committee of Hostility in San-on. The latter, we are told, is a graduate of the degree of Doctor; while Chan-tze-tin is "a graduate and the pupil of Su-ting-kwei, a member of the Han Lin College, one of the most important of the Canton gentry, and apparently the channel of communication between these brothers and the Governor-General Yeh." It would appear that to Chan-tze-tin, the younger of these brothers, was committed the prosecution of an irregular war against us, and, indeed, against all Europeans whatever. The graduate posted his men with some skill. He distributed his pickets so as to prevent any communication between Cooloon, a town on the peninsula, opposite Hong Kong, and San-on, which is situate on the Canton river, near the mouth. But the Committee of Hostility did not confine itself to defensive measures. "The correspondence establishes beyond doubt that the San-on Committee, under authority and, in some cases, at the dictation of the Canton Central Committee, have been parties to almost every atrocity" by which the English have been attacked or threatened. To this Committee, acting under the sanction and, perhaps, under the order of Governor Yeh, may be traced, if not the great junk attack which was in preparation, at least plots for more than one minor expedition, and for the destruction of Victoria by fire and its inhabitants by poison. But their great achievement has been their patronage of individual assassination. Most of the correspondence of Chan-tze-tin refers to the various schemes for cutting off English stragglers, or of rewarding the successful "braves" who might have obtained the head of a "foreign devil."

Evidently, the long inaction of the British forces has inspired Yeh and his subordinates with the highest confidence in themselves. Of late the Committees have ceased their active operations against us, and this is supposed to result from an expectation that, being perfectly exhausted, we are about to treat for peace. But at the beginning of the present year the San-on gentry were in full activity. On the 21st of January the younger brother writes to the elder, that "the barbarians are in very great perplexity, that a proclamation is issued every day, and three sets of regulations came out in two days. . . . A flour bakery had poisoned several English devils, and been closed; upwards of forty people imprisoned in consequence." Encouraged by these signs of calamity, Chan-tze-tin urged on his preparations, which he details in the next letter. "The ten braves from Kin-ton have arrived," he writes to the President of the Committee of Hostility, "and the English barbarians fire guns at intervals during the night to keep up their spirits. . . . In every devil hong is stationed a guard of devil soldiers; at sunset they make ready their cannon with great care. . . . The police devils (or green-coated devils) in bands of 18 patrol, and when they come to a dangerous place they form up into large bodies and fire before they venture to proceed." He then, after some other matters, relates how the "braves" had seized a man named Wong-tai-musk, dressed in devil clothes and boots, with a devil fowling-piece in his hand, and speaking the devil language fluently. This person on protesting he was not a "traitorous Chinese," was held to bail. In a few days the committee is quite ready to act. Chan-tze-tin reports not only that the English are frightened, but that the American devils, seeing how things stand, had gone off. The system of this Celestial guerilla was to seize any Englishmen or Anglo-Chinese he could find, and make each party believe they had been betrayed and murdered by the other. "I have this day enlisted ten braves," he writes, "without the knowledge of any man, and to-morrow shall get a boat for the undertaking." What follows is of particular importance:—"The other body of men who are to be put on rations when the attempt shall have succeeded, are people of the place (Hong Kong or Cooloon). . . . "Yesterday," he continues, "our braves seized eleven rebellious barbarians, and have handed them up to the committee. I was delighted to hear this; it is really a fine thing. If we manage thus the English rebels and the local vagabonds will not be able to bear one another, and each party will get to suspect the other to the advantage of the main issue." After these communications we have a most interesting letter from Chan-kwei-tsh in answer. It is somewhat mysterious, both from its allusions to matters of which we know nothing, and from the defects of the translation. But the first sentence states that a certain Chan-tsik had been directed by the head committee at Canton to go to Cooloon, and that he had got a number of men together to fire Victoria. "I fear, however," says the Doctor, "that he was not up to the task." Then follows an allusion to the head-money payable to "braves" who should slaughter an Englishman. "Tse-tung-shan came in from Canton to the committee this morning, after breakfast, with 30 gilt mandarin buttons and 1000 dollars, weighing 690 taels; that is to pay the 300 dollars for the lorch, and the 30 taels for every devil's head." The President seems to expect that his brother will find this tariff too low, for he adds, in the style of Mark Lane, "Postscript.—The price of devils' heads has been reduced this year."

Chan-tze-tin continues his letters, in which he predicts, with great glee, the submission of the English. We are, he thinks, in a state of extremity. Devil soldiers are obliged to act as watchmen. The seamen devils act as devil soldiers. In the streets there is little business doing. Then comes a passage showing that even in the San-on district they form shrewd guesses as to what party spirit in England is capable of doing. "It is said that the barbarian merchants of all nations have deputed some one to England to denounce the English devil Governor." In his next letter he declares that our Malay soldiers are miserable wretches, unfit for service, and relates that the police say the English will have one fight more, and, if worsted, will then sue for peace. By February 21 we see the head-money system in full operation. We may say at once that these "braves" either murdered Portuguese, or else dug up corpses and cut off the heads, for no member of the English or American communities was missed. But Man-hing gives an explicit account of the number of heads received and paid for. Now, Man-hing must be believed, for he behaved very well to us in revealing the nefarious schemes of his uncle Mantapshin, "a gentleman, the author of an unsuccessful project to burn or blow up the city of Victoria." Man-hing writes to the committee with which he was at first connected, that they "are only giving 30 taels for devils taken, whether dead or alive; for a devil's head they will probably give 30 dollars, but I am not sure. The San-on Committee (consequently) do not now much prize devil's heads. . . . If you, my uncle, wish the braves of your camp to set about this service of taking devils' heads, it would be well that you told them plainly what they will get; or you need not expect to have any if it will not pay. My uncle, Chan-kwei-tsh and Tsefung are much pleased with the proposition to destroy houses." Whether the nephew did not find that getting devils' heads would pay, or whether his courage failed him, certain it is that he revealed the plot on which he had corresponded with his uncle, and thus saved Victoria from destruction.