

IV.

RECENT TROUBLES IN CHINA.

(To the Editor of the "Times.")

SIR,—In your leading articles on the Yang-chow troubles, published in December last, there are many serious errors, both as to principles and facts, fitted to do much injury to the cause of missions. Will you kindly allow me to point out these mistakes, and to indicate the correct principles of the question?

We are told to amalgamate Christian truth with the worship of ancestors and the whole body of Confucian doctrine, the advice being supported by such sentences as the following:—"In the sacred record we find that the first preachers of our faith . . . appealed to every belief and every feeling, not as false and hateful, to be condemned and destroyed, but as the foundation on which their own better teaching was to be raised, and with which it did in fact fuse itself." Now, as far as the beliefs and practices of the Chinese agree with those which are Christian, we heartily accept them, as, for instance, the greater part of the Confucian ethics. Wherever they present a half truth or an aspiration towards the truth (like the *Athenian altar* to the Unknown God), we gladly embrace the opportunity to develop the fulness of Christian doctrine, *e.g.* the ancient classical allusions to Shang-ti, the supreme lord of all. And where, in things *indifferent*, their customs vary from those recorded in Holy Scripture or customary among ourselves, we make no attempt to produce uniformity.

But when we meet with doctrines and customs distinctly opposed to the instructions and commands of God's most holy word, we can make no compromise. And the worship of *ancestors* is just one of those institutions with which compromise is impossible. The early Jesuit missionaries indeed permitted it to their converts, but as soon as the facts of the case were understood at Rome, it was solemnly condemned by the authority of the pope, at the risk of destroying that flourishing mission, supported by the favour of the great emperor Kang-hi, who warmly espoused the cause of the Jesuits. And if any church on earth could have accepted ancestral worship, it would have been the Church of Rome, with her prayers *for* the dead, and prayers *to* the dead. Surely it cannot be supposed that Protestant churches and Protestant missionaries have blindly followed the decision of the pope; and yet with the most perfect unanimity they have all agreed with the view taken by the Church of Rome. For the worship of ancestors is in fact as thoroughly idolatrous as any idolatry, ancient or modern, classical or barbarian. It equally falls under the sweeping denunciation of that fundamental command given at first by God through Moses, and repeated by Christ himself:—"Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." With idolatry of any kind the apostles never permitted their better teaching to fuse itself. Paul, as he stood among the idols of *Greece*, on the hill of Mars, having plainly and solemnly rebuked all idolatry, added these words: "The times of this ignorance God winked at, but now he commandeth *all men everywhere* to repent." So also at Lystra, he rent his clothes and ran in among the people saying, "Sirs, why do ye these things? We preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God."

It is a mere caricature to represent us as teaching the Chinese “that their ancestors, if they exist at all, are not worth worshipping, and had best be forgotten;” for of course we throw no doubt on the continued existence of the spirits of their ancestors, but simply teach that, by the command of God, their worship is prohibited. And instead of saying that they had best be forgotten, we tell them that it is right to keep their tables of genealogy, and to preserve the memory of their ancestors, recompensing the benefits received from them by showing kindness to those who are descended from the same common stock, and reflecting honour upon them by the lustre of good and noble actions.

In religion also, so far is ancestral worship from being the “foundation,” that it is only one of several independent systems which are strangely blended together in the present eclectic religion of the Chinese; and one of these other systems (the Buddhist) teaches that the very highest excellence and holiness consists in perpetual celibacy and the entire abnegation, both of all ancestral worship and of all the relationships of life—and this system of Buddhism is as widespread as Confucianism itself. It should also be remembered that the vast Mahomedan population, amounting to *many* millions scattered over the northern, central, and western provinces, is entirely free from ancestral worship—the precepts of the Koran condemning such idolatrous rites as strongly as do the teachings of the Bible. And yet very many Mahomedans rise to high rank and office in the empire.

But the proof that the Chinese have no such fanatical hatred against those who oppose ancestral worship—a proof most clear and conclusive—is to be found in the very history of these Yang-chow troubles. If the conspirators among the Chinese literati had merely charged the missionaries with disputing the infallibility of Confucius, and arguing against ancestral worship, they might have issued placards for centuries without being able to excite the people to violence: it was necessary to invent horrible stories of scooping out eyes, and bewitching people, poisoning men and boiling babies, &c., in order to produce the desired excitement. Precisely the same took place in the case of Formosa. The ill-affected among the literati found it quite impossible to incite the people to violence by charging us with heretical tendencies against Confucius and the ancestors; it was necessary to invent stories even more horrible than those circulated at Yang-chow; as, for instance, that the medical missionary rifled the graves of the bodies of the dead, and that he had poisoned a hundred persons, and hung up their dead bodies to be preserved on the walls of his hospital. About eight years ago my own life was in imminent danger at a town some thirty miles from this; but in order to raise a mob against me, it was necessary to invent the story that I had beaten a boy to death! And some years ago, when violent riots took place in Fuh-chow, the means of rousing the people was the circulation of reports (similar to those circulated against the early Christians of the Roman empire), that lascivious orgies took place in the chapels at the meetings of the converts.

Without such calumnious reports there could be no danger of riots on account of our arguments against ancestral worship and the other errors of the Confucian system. But we and our converts are entitled to protection, not only from the violence caused by such reports, but from the very circulation of these vile calumnies themselves.

Protection against brutal violence is what we ask, and all that we wish. It is most unfair to write as if any one desired “to carry on a crusade of fire and sword

against superstition and false philosophy, to preach the gospel from the cannon's mouth, and force conviction down with the point of the bayonet;" what we ask is only protection in the exercise of our treaty rights, which, antecedently to treaty, are such as ought to be enjoyed by every missionary and every British subject.

But it seems as if even this protection is to be denied us, for two reasons: (1) as detrimental to the interests of British policy, and (2) as inconsistent with the character of missionary enterprise.

Is it then true that missionary work is calculated to involve our government in war, or in something like war? It only appears to be so, while in reality the attacks on missionaries are merely the symptoms of the dislike to foreign intercourse in general. Even in Consul Medhurst's negotiations with Tseng-Kwo-fan, there were several matters relating to trade (especially the illegal transit dues on foreign goods), which were discussed and adjusted at the same time with the Yang-chow troubles. And in the case of Formosa, so much did the non-missionary part of the grievance outweigh the missionary part, that it is out of the question to call the collision a "missionary trouble;" for it is notorious that, but for the mercantile and consular grievances, the assistance of a naval force would never have been called in at all; it being supposed that, when those matters had been satisfactorily adjusted, the mandarins would be easily led to do justice in the missionary case.

The fact is, that the presence of numerous missionaries in China is an influence on the side of peace and harmony. They are extensively known to be labouring for the good of the people; they submit patiently to petty annoyances and insults, which in the case of other foreigners would lead to quarrels and riots: they are generally acquainted with the language and customs of the people; and, as I myself in the course of the fourteen years I have spent in this country, have often experienced, can go and come safely where there would be much danger to other foreigners. There is no place in China where a better spirit prevails between Chinese and foreigners than at Peking itself, where, besides official personages and those connected with them, the foreign community may be said to consist of missionaries. I speak, of course, only of Protestant missionaries; for the intolerable pretensions and overbearing manner of the Roman Catholics have led both the government and the people to feel very differently towards them, and to distinguish them very sharply from Protestants. It must be the R. C. missionaries to whom you refer, when you say, "Both in China and Japan the missionaries of our faith have always contributed largely to their own failure, by their imprudent conduct and extravagant pretensions." For the only Protestant missionaries who are, or have been in Japan, are Americans, who have most carefully avoided all occasion of collision with the Japanese; and, with the exception of the case of Mr. Taylor's party, now under discussion, no opponent of missions (and there are many such in the foreign communities in this country) has ever found anything which could give even a plausible pretext for charging the Protestant missionaries with imprudent conduct and extravagant pretensions towards the Chinese.

Last year a copy was obtained of a most important state paper, written by the great Tseng-Kwo-fan, who is supposed to be the most powerful of all the *Chinese* mandarins, namely, a secret memorial to the emperor, giving his advice on the approaching revision of the treaty. In that document, while he advised that the making of railways, and several other foreign proposals with regard to trade,

should be resisted to the very utmost, he counselled the toleration of missionaries, even in the interior of the empire.

Manifestly it is not missionary enterprise of which the Chinese are afraid, except so far as they confound it with other operations of foreigners. The real causes of dislike, suspicion, fear, and hatred, so far as such feelings exist, spring from a strange compound of bad political economy, and ignorant prejudice against foreign institutions, mingled with the rankling feeling of some real wrongs, and with singular superstitious terrors excited, not by the teaching of missionaries, but by the existing circumstances and avowed plans of commercial enterprise.

The people of the sea-board are offended at the extensive use of foreign ships and steamers, and the consequent decay of the junk trade. The provincial mandarins and their satellites are sorely annoyed at the foreign inspectorate of customs, because it makes it impossible for them to absorb (as they used to do) almost the whole of the duties, before they could find their way to the imperial treasury, the very cause which makes the central government highly pleased with that excellent institution; and they are excited by rumours of some extension of the inspectorate, whether by the opening of new ports, or by its application to other departments of revenue.

A general feeling of irritation is caused by the *opium trade*, graphically described as ruinous to the health, the morals, and the material prosperity of the people; by the coolie traffic, which, though now duly regulated by British and American law, has left bitter memories, and is still more or less carried on under some other flags; by report that foreigners mean to possess themselves of the empire; by the supercilious treatment of the Chinese by many foreigners (but not by the missionaries), treating them as an inferior race, often to the extent of hard blows; by the drunkenness and licentiousness of sailors, and not a few others; by the introduction of foreign teachers, artificers, and machines into several government schools and arsenals; and, perhaps, worst of all, by the disturbance, actual and possible, present and future, of the all-important Fung-shuy, or geomantic principle of good fortune throughout the empire.

This last principle I despair of making intelligible to your readers in anything like its due proportions; suffice it to say, that the good fortune of all the living (including their health, wealth, prosperity, and their very life) depends on the auspicious position of their houses, and of the graves which are scattered over the whole surface of their country—their position, I say, in reference to eminences, such as other houses, rocks, trees, and mountains, and especially in reference to the continuity of mountains, ridges, and declivities, by which the auspicious influences are conducted from the summits to the happily situated houses and graves. This good fortune is grievously disturbed and deteriorated by the building of large warehouses, or dwelling-houses of more than one story, and by the construction of roads, and, it is firmly believed, will be utterly destroyed, if the projected mines, railways, and telegraphs should ever be actually realized.

In relation to such matter not only are the labours of missionaries *perfectly harmless*, but the dissemination of truth by their means is the most effectual mode of dispelling error, superstition, and prejudice, and of opening the way to true civilization.

But it is objected that the protection of missionaries is inconsistent with the character of their work, and with the example of the apostles. Of course no exact

parallel can be found in the New Testament, for the simple reason, that neither then, nor for more than two centuries later, was there any Christian state to protect missionaries, or to extend its influence against persecution. But there is clear apostolic authority for this principle, that it is right to ask legal protection in the preaching of the gospel against unlawful violence. Witness the answers sent by Paul to the magistrates of Philippi—"They have beaten us openly, uncondemned, being Romans, and now do they thrust us out privately? Nay, verily, but let them come themselves and fetch us out;" and before he would leave the city he waited till the magistrates came and *besought* him, and even then he first entered into the house of Lydia, and comforted the disciples; thus obtaining a certain degree of reparation for the injury done, and also (through the fears of the magistrates) some measure of security for the converts from future molestation.

Witness also his repeated claims addressed to the chief captain and to the governor of Judea, on the ground of his Roman citizenship, for protection against the fanatical violence of the Jews. And if it be unseemly for missionaries to be protected against murderous violence by British power, it must at least have been as unseemly for Paul to preach to the crowd in the temple court, from those stairs where he stood sheltered by the broad bucklers and bristling spears of the Roman soldiery.

If a mob make a riot in a church or chapel in England they are rightly punished. And if a ruffian beat a clergyman severely in his house, or on the road, the righteous punishment is not in the least mitigated because the sufferer is a minister of the gospel. And as the Chinese government has distinctly agreed to *protect* both those who *teach* Christianity and those who profess or practise it, it is equally proper to insist on their carrying out this article, which is both a natural duty and a treaty right.

It is, indeed, very beautiful to write about missionaries taking joyfully the spoiling of their goods, and laying down their lives (as other newspapers have said), and there are circumstances in which it is a duty to do so; but, *according to apostolic example*, the first duty is to use every lawful means for restraining the violence of wicked men. And I should like to hear from those who, in their snug parlours or comfortable offices, write these kind advices, in what respect that duty lies on missionaries abroad more than on clergymen or private Christians at home.

Mr. Dilke's letter, published in your issue of 26th December, is at first sight a most formidable document, crowded as it is with quotations from official papers and principles of international law. But though a high authority on literary questions he has failed to inform himself of the real state of matters in China; and so it happens that his facts, when correct, are in general irrelevant, while those statements and principles which seem to be relevant, are for the most part vitiated by some fatal inaccuracy. For instance, he actually relies on the order in council of 1843, which has been abrogated and annulled by the order in council of 1865; and not only so, but the clause he quotes from the said abrogated order is directly contradicted by the well-known clause in the present treaty, which permits merchants furnished with passports to travel anywhere for the purposes of trade, carrying their goods along with them.

In another paragraph Mr. Dilke coolly makes the statement—"On the side of China there is no reluctance to carry out the treaties." If such an assertion had

been made by Mr. Burlinghame some sort of apology might have been offered for it, on the principle that the holder of a brief need not be very particular about the truth of what he says on behalf of his client. Of course I cannot for a moment suppose that the writer meant to say what he knew to be incorrect; but the only other explanation I can make of a statement so notoriously and ludicrously erroneous is, that his knowledge of Chinese matters is very inadequate, with the exception of some one-sided information supplied probably (as I should conjecture from the internal evidence of the letter) by someone connected with the "Chinese Embassy."

As regards residence in the interior it is quite irrelevant to discuss the authenticity of the clause in the French convention, for that clause treats, not of residence, but of the *purchase of property* in the interior, a question not raised at all in the Yang-chow case.

The right of some measure of residence in the interior as claimed by Protestant missionaries rests mainly, (1) on the fact admitted even by Mr. Dilke:—"It is indeed clear from the words of several of the treaties that the right of travelling and preaching throughout China is granted to Protestant missionaries having passports;" and (2) on the notorious fact that missionaries of the Church of Rome (especially Frenchmen) are permitted to reside in the most distant parts of the interior. Of what use is a right on paper to travel and preach in the interior if it be impossible to rent a dwelling, or hire a lodging, or take chambers at an inn? And if riots such as these at Yang-chow and Formosa be permitted to go unpunished, ill-affected mandarins, literati, and gentry can easily find means of making disturbances whenever a foreigner stirs beyond the precincts of the treaty ports. Nor would the treaty ports themselves be safe, as appears from such examples as Chin-kiang, Kew-kiang, and Tai-wan-foo.

Again, the legality of missionary residence in the interior is a matter fully admitted by the Chinese officials themselves, who surely cannot be supposed to be too favourable to our cause. And even in the Yang-chow case the viceroy has all along admitted it, and promised to secure it by indemnity and proclamation, for the points disputed with the consul (not with the missionaries) were the manner of proclamation, the *amount* of indemnity, and the *measure* of punishment which would give *security for the future*.

The Chinese party in England themselves admit that it is right for our naval authorities to protect the persons of British subjects actually in danger. This admission is amply sufficient for our purpose; for the report of the Yang-chow outrage was rapidly and assiduously spread through the empire; the people were everywhere exhorted to copy the glorious example of the brave men of Yang-chow, and it became manifest by many quickly accumulating proofs that, in *self-defence*, for the purposes of protecting the foreigners in other parts from similar violence, and the Chinese from the reprisals which would have necessarily followed, the only effectual plan was that of insisting on the speedy and condign punishment of the Yang-chow criminals. The houses near a fire must be pulled down or blown up to prevent the spread of a conflagration; and if the owners will not consent, the most sacred rights of property must be sacrificed to the common weal.

If the matter were not so serious it would be really amusing to hear learned editors and honourable members of parliament talking about simply applying the

principles of the rights of nations to our relations with China. Why, the *first principle* of the “rights of nations” is broken by the right conceded to all the treaty powers, that their subjects or citizens in China, with their property and households, are exempted from the operation of Chinese law: and *that* because the courts of Chinese mandarins are so full of bribery, deceit, cruelty, torture, and all manner of injustice, that no civilized country will trust the life or property of its people in their hands. The Chinese government has not only shown no repentance for the abominable treachery of Soo-chow, but loads with honours the monster who butchered in cold blood the chiefs and troops who had surrendered on the plighted faith of a British colonel that their lives should be spared. All honour to Colonel Gordon for the righteous indignation he showed when he learned the terrible truth. All honour to the British government which in remembrance of that tragedy prohibits its subjects, under heavy penalties, from taking service in the Chinese army.

Are those persons who would subject us to the action of Chinese courts not aware that torture is used in the examination, not only of parties accused, but even of witnesses, and that persons whose conviction is desirable but difficult, are easily put out of the way by beating them to death (of course by mistake), under examination, or by starving them in prison? The foreign members even of the Chinese customs service are all under foreign protection, and not under Chinese law.

It also must be remembered that the viceroys of Chinese provinces are very slightly controlled by the supreme government. In the secret memorial of Tseng-Kwo-fan referred to above, he openly tells the emperor that if certain proposed concessions were granted to foreigners by the government, the viceroys would refuse to carry them out. So loose is the connection between the capital and the several provinces, that while we were at war with Governor Yeh at Canton, British ships of war were protecting Amoy from pirates; and at the very time when our troops were scattering the imperial forces, and marching towards Peking, we were guarding Shanghai and its neighbourhood for the emperor against the Taipings. It is this state of matters which makes it necessary at times to settle affairs even by the use of force with the local officials.

It is a pity that Mr. Dilke has dragged from the silence of the tomb the memory of the late Sir Frederick Bruce; for it is the opinion (with very few, if any exceptions) of those who really understand the condition of China, and the character of its government, that the policy inaugurated by him (the records of which Mr. Dilke quotes as the essence of wisdom and the pattern for all future diplomacy) has been the bitter source of most of our troubles and dangers. How different would have been the course of events if Lord Elgin himself had been our first resident minister at Peking! The Chinese government has, of course, “repeatedly acknowledged the binding nature of treaties, and has declared itself willing to make amends in all cases where treaty stipulations have been violated.” But they are thorough adepts in the arts of duplicity, deception, and evasion, and they have succeeded by a policy of passive resistance, masterly inactivity, and interminable delays, in rendering null and void some of the plainest stipulations of the treaty.

Sir Rutherford Alcock was at first fettered by the trammels of his predecessors’ policy, but recent events seem to have given him the fitting opportunity for striking out a new policy, and of substituting vigorous and effective measures for the unworkable delays of the past.

The fear of a collision through such measures with America or some other foreign power is as chimerical as the suspicion that they may lead to a war with China. The real way of bringing about another Chinese war is to revert to the old system of permitting the Chinese to commit with impunity every sort of violence and injustice, and then, under the pressure of such difficulties, allowing our treaty rights to fall into abeyance, or even to be abrogated. No matter what motives we may have, no matter what motives we may state, the Chinese, both government and people (while, perhaps, politely praising our justice or forbearance), will INFALLIBLY ascribe such conduct to weakness and fear, and will be encouraged to advance further in the same direction till some intolerable claim, or some tragedy of surpassing horror, becomes the occasion of a general war.

But it seems a cause of complaint that we may be liable to have “to avenge the quarrels of missionaries upon whose character, selection, operations, and discipline the British government had no check whatever.” Would the writer prefer that the British government should set up a sort of missionary establishment in China, “selecting” the men, and superintending their “character, operations, and discipline?”—or can he tell us what “check” our government has on the “character, selection, operations, and discipline” of the mercantile community, of the customs’ service, or of travellers for business, science, or pleasure? They have precisely the same check upon the one as upon the other. If doubtful whether a man be fit to be trusted in the interior, the consul can delay issuing his passport till he has made full inquiries; and if convinced that he is utterly unfit, he can refuse to give a passport, subject, of course, to an appeal to his superiors. And if the holder of a passport should act in a decidedly improper way, the consul can deprive him of the passport, or punish him by fine or imprisonment. It *may be* that undesirable results may sometimes follow from the actions “of unknown men” among missionaries, but much more probably from those of men, equally unknown, belonging to other sections of the foreign community. But far more serious evils are *certain* to follow when men, known or unknown, who are sadly ignorant both of the circumstances of China, of the nature of missions, and of the teachings of the Bible, venture under the shield of anonymous journalism to make heavy charges, and heavier insinuations, against the whole body of Chinese missionaries, and to deliver *ex cathedrâ* decisions on the right mode of evangelizing this empire and the world. I do not refer merely to the influence, greater or less, which such articles may have at home; but copied into the local papers in China, and very probably translated into Chinese, they may encourage misguided men to commit fresh outrages, and render necessary more severe measures than before.—I remain, your obedient servant,

(Signed) CARSTAIRS DOUGLAS, M.A.,

A Missionary of the English Presbyterian Church in China. AMOY, 23d February, 1869.