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INTRODUCTION.

INTERCOURSE WITH CHINA.

The system of excluding foreigners from all intercourse with China, has often been extolled as the greatest proof of wisdom in her rulers; but, upon a nearer investigation, it will be found that nothing is more at variance with sound policy than this unnatural law of restriction.

All mankind are created and upheld by the same God, descended from the same parents, subject to the same changes, are living under the same canopy of heaven, upon the same planet, and therefore have a natural right to claim fellowship.* The refusal of it is a transgression of the divine law of benevolence, which is equally binding upon all the nations of the earth. Savages might better be excused for excluding themselves from other nations, since the loss must be chiefly their own; but a people, like the Chinese, acquainted with letters, endowed with intelligence, and boasting of a civilization superior to that of any other nation, cannot do the same without injury to others, as well as themselves.

* An emperor of China, in 1300, before the Tartar Conquest, sent an embassy to Japan for the sake of cultivating an amicable intercourse. In his letter he said, "The sages considered the whole world as one family; but if all the members have not a friendly intercourse, how can it be said, that the principle of one family is maintained?"
The most deplorable consequence of this unsocial system is, that the worship of the only living and true God has been thereby excluded from this vast empire. Whilst all nature proclaims an Almighty Creator and Preserver, the sons of China worship the work of their own hands. Peace is proclaimed between God and men, through the mediation of Jesus Christ, the Saviour, not of any favoured nation, but "of the world;" but China has not welcomed these "glad tidings." Although she once despatched ambassadors to India to inquire into the doctrines of Buddhism, she has never been equally anxious to possess the divine revelation, or to examine it when brought to her doors. It may perhaps be said in excuse for the Chinese, that the true gospel was formerly purposely withheld from them, whilst they were offered, in its stead, only the frivolous legends of a spurious Christianity. Protestant Christians are indeed chargeable with guilt in having so long neglected to send the Gospel to them; but we confidently hope, that, when an opportunity is offered to introduce it, and they are found willing to receive it, Christians will no longer be slow to give them the word of life.

Perhaps it will be said, that all attempts to remove the barriers to intercourse with China have hitherto proved abortive, and will be so in future. The former is partly true, the latter remains to be proved. It may be interesting to inquire, what causes have operated so powerfully as to defeat all past attempts to establish mutual intercourse?

It is remarkable that all the nations which use the Chinese written character, harbour the same prejudices against foreigners. By means of this written language they have been united for ages under similar laws, institutions, and religion. Hence they have formed one great family, quite distinct from other nations, in all points of national peculiarity. The civilization at an early period of time increased through the thought of the centuries that passed; but with the feeling that their country was the great seat of the world, and that their civilization was superior, and that savage intruders were to be treated as inferiors, and that their culture was to be diffused through all the world. This feeling, more or less, was shared by the nations of the East, and was fostered by the dabbling of the missionaries, who were often encouraged and settled in China by the great and wealthy merchants of the country. They were treated with the utmost condescension, and the viceroy, also, regarded them with respect. When the viceroy visited them, he considered his visit as a great event, and he occasionally condescended to speak to them. Though the modern nations have made great strides in the science of the age, they have not been able to overcome these prejudices. They have partially removed them from the minds of their people, yet they are too proud of their ignorance; to this may be added the fact that they are not allowed to learn the new languages, and are therefore cut off from all intercourse with the rest of the world. The Chinese humble themselves and are content to learn from the rest of the world, and thus they have been able to keep pace with the rest of the world.
national peculiarity. As they enjoyed the privileges of civilization at an early period, while the adjoining nations were living in barbarism, they learned to look down upon them with contempt, and in all collisions with them, to treat them, if inferior, as vanquished enemies, or if superior, as savage intruders. By sedulously shunning any intercourse with the "barbarians," the opinion of their ferocity and depravity, which the Chinese had first imbibed, continued to be cherished through ignorance of its objects and settled prejudice. This general contempt was increased also by the consciousness that they were the most numerous of the nations of the world. The fact is certainly true, but not so the conclusion which they derive from it, that their country was the most extensive of all. fancying the earth to be a square, they assumed to themselves the main land in the centre, and allowed to the other nations the small and remote clusters of islands, in various directions around themselves. How could they look upon the poor inhabitants of those scattered lands otherwise than with the utmost contempt! The sovereign of so great a nation, also, regarding himself as the sole potentate of earth and the vicegerent of heaven, claimed the universal dominion over all the lands and the four seas. Their princes, he considered his vassals and tributaries. He slighted them when he pleased, viewing them merely as the petty chiefs of barbarous tribes; yet, with much compassion, he occasionally condescended to receive their embassies. Though the modern improvements in navigation, the progress in the science of geography and in general information, have partially rectified their opinions on this subject, yet they are too proud to confess the fact of their national ignorance; to this moment they claim the title of "the flowery middle kingdom," and would have all the princes of the earth humbly do them homage. We still hear the same old stories about the "four seas" repeated, and
maps of the world may be met with, which so represent it still. So long as the public opinion is swayed by such notions, we cannot expect foreigners to be held in any just estimation among them. Those petty nations which use the Chinese written character, and acknowledge their vassalage to the Celestial Empire, imitate them also in all the arrogance of national vanity.

Another cause operating to favour the same system of restriction, exists in their literature. The Chinese are much attached to their own literature, and are therefore prepared highly to value any degree of eminence in this department. But foreigners are not often acquainted with their literary productions, and having scarcely anything else which, in the estimation of a Chinese, entitles them to rank among the "literati," they are together regarded as ignorant barbarians. Proud of their own observance of the rules of propriety and justice, the Chinese are also taught by their classical authors to look down upon these barbarians as rude and fraudulent, and to esteem any friendly intercourse contaminating. "These barbarians," they are told, "have never felt the transforming influence of the Celestial Empire, and though they may therefore be pitied, yet must more do they call for our contempt. Drive them away, banish them from the empire." This is true Chinese policy.

To increase and perpetuate this contempt of foreigners, various methods have been adopted by the government, and with various degrees of success. They know, though reluctant to admit it, that some barbarians are more warlike than themselves, that they have made extensive conquests in their vicinity, and that in the event of a war with them, they themselves would be an unequal match for them. This has led them to regard these nations with constant suspicion. But to conceal from the people their fear of the superiority of Europeans, they are accustomed to stigmatize their claims to intercourse with them, as originating in principle and spirit of war, and that government would resist foreign interference by Chinese residents and visitors, without which the Dutch endured.

It must, however, be owned that the Chinese have frequently, by design and otherwise, made frequent efforts to carry their policy into execution.

As in the instances of the two disputed claims, the Chinese have become desperate and engaged in a conflict of physical strength. Instead of listening to reason, they spill ink, and have proved themselves invincible in a paper war. But in the cases of 1822, 1828, 1841, and 1842, the Chinese have been defeated, and have been himself in their conflict against intruders, which has been in general very specious and groundless. The Chinese have shown a spirit equal to that of their intruders and their commands alike in this field, and they have in preparing for the intruder either with as much or more spirit than skill. But, however the Chinese have been defeated in the field, the Chinese has not been the same. The Chinese has been a warlike people, and has been equal to the occasion. The continual collisions of the British and Chinese governments at Canton, and the war which occurred as a result of these collisions, occasioned great surprise among the Chinese, who were not prepared for the conflict. They had been accustomed to look upon the Chinese as the superior nation, and they were not prepared for the defeat which they underwent. The Chinese were surprised, and they were not prepared for the conflict. The Chinese were not prepared for the conflict, and they were not prepared to meet the British.
to stigmatize their characters as infamous, and in their intercourse with them, to substitute violence and cunning for principle and candour. I am firmly persuaded that government would, were it possible, reduce all European residents and visitants to the same state of humiliation which the Dutch endure at Japan.

It must, however, be acknowledged, that Europeans have frequently, by petty aggressions, provoked the Chinese to carry their laws of exclusion into the most rigorous execution. We have cause to regret that they have never been so successful in re-establishing friendly intercourse, as unfortunate in giving occasion for stopping it.

As in the instances where actual force was used to decide disputed claims, the Chinese have generally proved inferior, they have become desirous to avoid any recourse to physical strength. Instead of spilling blood, they prefer to spill ink, and have proved to the world that China is invincible in a paper war. Like the anathemas of the Papal See, fulminating edicts have been invariably issued on such occasions against intruding foreigners. These edicts are in general very specious, and would persuade a European unacquainted with the case, to believe that the Chinese have justice on their side. Their threats are intimidating, and their commands almost irresistible, but here they stop: for the intruder either yields and retraces his steps, or if not, the Chinese is too wise to let matters come to the extremity of force, where he is as sure of defeat, as he is certain of victory, in a pitched battle of words.

The continual collision of the foreign mercantile establishments at Canton, with the Chinese authorities, has occasioned great surprise to persons but slightly acquainted with the native character. The most severe animadversions also have been called forth from capitalists who have suffered loss, and who have not been on the ground to judge of the case. But so long as the prejudice against foreigners
is cherished, there must be contests; on the one part, to maintain old privileges, ameliorate their present condition, and extend the trade, and on the other, to retrench the liberties and enforce the exclusion of strangers. The experience of centuries has taught Europeans that the Chinese authorities will heap insult on insult upon them, when it can be done with impunity to themselves and their interests. But when an opponent supports his argument with physical force, or their interest demands it, they can be crouching, gentle, and even kind. This peculiarity of national character, so very unlike our own, has been prolific in mutual evils.

It has exhibited the measures taken by the European residents to redress their grievances, in a light the most unfavourable by contrast with their own plausible and forbearing deportment. While we do not forget the long catalogue of petty annoyances from the Chinese authorities, which the Europeans have suffered from the first arrival of the Portuguese to this day; we regret that the possession of the gospel has not taught Europeans more forbearance and long-suffering. Had these been oftener practised on suitable occasions, we should have had fewer causes of complaint against the Chinese. But it is not strange that Europeans, destitute of the spirit of christian meekness, on coming to this country, and finding themselves treated as barbarians by a nation so evidently below them in civilization, should feel their indignation roused, and should retaliate insolence for insolence, and dislike for hatred. Thus the line of separation became broader and broader. Governmental proclamations, detailing the infamous conduct of barbarians, have been repeatedly posted up at Canton. Foreigners have wisely taken no notice of them, but the minds of the people have been thus embued with strong antipathy against such worthless barbarians. Thus the authorities gained their point, for the aversion to foreigners is the best precaution against them. The writer has had these accusations with some superiority.

Thus every event has been between foreign nations and embassies been tried to check have been withheld, no about a friendly intercourse failures will be found in the spirit of the nation, and Portuguese, who were the lead the way to China, to solicit the imprison and slain.

To Kang-he, the reigning power the reign of Yung-Ching and vassals, but enjoyed more their residence at Peking, attempted negotiation with in its neighbourhood effect. To establish it on a permanent to Kang-he, in 1655. This by the young sovereign to European superiority; torrent of opposing projects, therefore only grant a few, by no means effected a real

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the aversion to foreigners, thus excited and cherished, was the best precaution against forming too close a friendship with them. The writer has often heard the natives rehearse these accusations with self-gratulation at their own superiority.

Thus every event has contributed to widen the breach between foreign nations and the Chinese. In vain have embassies been tried to conciliate their favour; no presents have been withheld, no trouble spared, in order to bring about a friendly intercourse. An explanation of these failures will be found in the above remarks on the general spirit of the nation, and the policy of its rulers. The Portuguese, who were the first of the European nations to lead the way to China, had frequent opportunities and causes to solicit the imperial favour. In 1520, a Portuguese ambassador to the court of Peking was sent back without having gained any advantage, and eventually, on account of the jealousy caused by their conquests in India, imprisoned and slain.* In 1667 they sent an ambassador to Kang-he, the reigning emperor; this was repeated during the reign of Yung-Ching. They were treated as Chinese vassals, but enjoyed more liberty than any natives during their residence at Peking. The Dutch, from the first, had attempted negotiation with China; but only their conquests in its neighbourhood effected the opening of their trade. To establish it on a permanent basis they sent an embassy to Kang-he, in 1655. This was very graciously received by the young sovereign, who had a clear conviction of European superiority; yet he was unable to stem the torrent of opposing prejudice against foreigners, and could therefore only grant a few inconsiderable privileges, which by no means effected a reciprocal intercourse.

The present relations of the British with China make a definite treaty of trade highly desirable. Much might

* Chinese Repository.
have been accomplished by a well-conducted embassy to Peking, near the close of the last century, and with a sovereign like Keen-lung, had not the old custom of national exclusion operated too strongly against them. The Dutch, supposing the failure of this English embassy in 1793 chiefly ascribable to the unyielding spirit of the ambassador, enjoined upon the deputation, which they soon afterwards sent, implicit submission to every prescribed ceremony, however humiliating. The consequence was, that while the former had been dismissed honourably, the latter were despised; for it is a Chinese maxim to trample on the voluntary submissive and abject, while they respect firmness and decision. A second ambassador from his British Majesty, in 1816, encountered still greater difficulties, and had less success than the first. These fruitless embassies will teach the sovereigns either to attempt no negotiations at all, or to propose them in a different state of affairs; for there are two grand obstacles—the pretension of China to supremacy over all the nations of the world, and her dread of every superior power. Add to this the want of veracity prevalent in all the departments of her government, the ignorance on subjects of general knowledge, and their bigoted adherence to unfounded opinions; and we shall the less blame the ambassadors for the failure of missions, in which there was scarcely a possibility of success.

That class of persons who form their opinions from the Chinese writings, and regard the nation with that obsolete admiration which was once so fashionable, will rejoice that the government has persevered in the exclusion of strangers, or has so circumscribed their intercourse as to render it harmless. "This wise policy," they say, "has preserved from ruin and change the excellent laws and customs of this ancient empire: the patriarchal institutions which have the sanction of ages are still existing there; and while the

other countries of the earth have experienced the enviable blessings of unwarrentable attempts, we have justly repelled. To our forefathers, for the privileges granted to other nations; to our posterity, for the happiness of more populous people. All attempts to repel; otherwise China would have returned to the servile condition of Hindostan. For the future, foreign influence, would be seen in the industrious inhabitants.

These reasonings are merely on national prosperity; we wish they were verified.

Notwithstanding these obstacles, we have repeatedly fallen into the belligerent spirit; at the present time, the Tartar horde. Had England, and had they succeeded, the power of China would not have been as it is at present. Look at the case of Hindostan, the rapid progress of the knowledge of divine revelation, and of its progressive illumination.

We fully accord to merit the claim of the "Celestial Empire" to the theory, and of practical principles of sound policy,
other countries of the world are agitated by war, China enjoys the enviable blessings of peace and plenty. The unwarrantable attempts of foreigners first to gain an intercourse, and then to subvert the existing laws, the Chinese have justly repelled. These strangers should be thankful for the privileges granted them merely by Chinese humanity; they should praise and obey those laws which secure the happiness of more than three hundred millions of people. All attempts at changes should be promptly repelled; otherwise China would soon be in the present servile condition of Hindostan: internal wars, fermented by foreign influence, would desolate the country, and destroy the industrious inhabitants, or reduce them to starvation."

These reasonings are as specious as the Chinese writings on national prosperity: for the sake of suffering humanity, we wish they were verified by facts.

Notwithstanding their utmost precautions, the Chinese have repeatedly fallen under a foreign power. And even at the present time, they are subject to the chief of a Tartar horde. Had Europeans designed their conquest, and had they succeeded in their design, still the condition of China would not have been so abject a slavery as at present. Look at the civil and religious rights enjoyed in Hindostan, the rapid progress there made in science, and the knowledge of divine truth, and then see China; China! never in advance, but always in retrograde movement, groaning under arbitrary rule, doomed to perpetual seclusion from the world, from its interests, its sympathies, and its progressive illumination.

We fully accord to many political institutions and laws of the "Celestial Empire," the praise of high excellence in theory, and of practical utility during ages of trial. We grant that the government which has kept so many millions of subjects comparatively quiet, cannot be devoid of some principles of sound policy. At the same time, many of
their laws are far from being praiseworthy; some impracticable, because not adapted to the actual state of human nature: so numerous also and strict, that it is impossible to be a subject and not a transgressor. Hence the relaxation of punishment, hence the introduction of bribery, with all its concomitant evils.

The patriarchal institutions exist only on paper, and the paternal exhortations are similar to the addresses of the inquisitors to the temporal judges, when delivering them a victim. Happily there are a few exceptions to this mode of administering "justice;" but they are very rare. To talk of the constant peace of an empire where rebellion is frequently breaking forth, is denying facts to establish a theory. Of the "plenty" said to abound in China, we will only say that no where else have we seen so much want as here, though we do not charge upon the government the entire amount of the prevailing misery. Those persons who form their opinion from Du Halde alone, will be ready to consider the Chinese a most virtuous nation. Surely there are amiable qualities in the Chinese character, but their vices are also very repulsive. Without enumerating them, we may confidently aver, that their manners cannot be very much deteriorated by foreign intercourse. In their morals, there is, unhappily, not too much good theory, and very little practice of it. Every point of etiquette is rigorously observed, while the claims of mercy and justice are forgotten.

Extortion seems universally prevalent; where it cannot be effected directly, it is done indirectly. To escape these numerous impositions there is one mode, often recommended and even enforced by the Chinese authorities; namely, to leave the country.

No class of strangers have submitted to so great indignities as the Catholic missionaries. Their zeal to enter China was stronger than any travellers to reach Timbuctoo.
Francis Xavier died in sight of this beloved land, and prayed with his expiring breath for its conversion. Alexander Valignano, general of the India Missions, who resided at Macao, often turned his face towards the coast of China and exclaimed, "O rock! O rock! when wilt thou open!" Difficulties abated not their zeal; they overcame them all by perseverance, and Matthew Ricci actually entered the Celestial Empire in 1582. Had they then spread the pure gospel instead of the doctrines of the Romish church, China would have been numbered among the social nations, for true Christianity seeks to unite all the inhabitants of the world together. Many of them were men of superior talents, of insinuating address, and matchless patience. Amongst so great a variety of character, some must have been men of true piety, whose anxiety to advance the Redeemer's kingdom would free their religion from much of human invention. We admire the uprightness and intrepidity which many showed in defence of the gospel; while we detest the servility by which a great number conciliated the favour of the Chinese autocrat. Men like Schaal, Verbiest, Gerbillon, Bremarre, and Bouvet, would have shone in Europe by the lustre of their genius. In China they inspired the emperor with a very high opinion of European science, but failed to gain his sincere love of the gospel. Their successors could never gain the same ascendancy over his mind, and though willing to endure, as they actually did, all the hardships of their predecessors, they never rose so high into favour. After the abolition of the order of Jesuits, the missions of the various orders of monks sank down to comparative insignificance. Yet their professed converts are numerous even to this day. The most severe prohibitions have not prevented their entering the forbidden ground. Ridicule and contempt, persecution and martyrdom, have been directed against their religion and its votaries, yet they
still continue their attachment to it, and their efforts to promote it.*

When love to our Saviour shall transcend all minor and selfish passions, and, fully possessing the heart, shall prompt to the utmost exertions to glorify his name, we humbly believe that all the barriers of Chinese misanthropy will fall. There is something irresistible in that holy ardour which counts all things nothing for Christ, and which is prepared for any sacrifices to exalt his glorious name. The prince of darkness, with all his infernal array, can never prevail against the men who rely upon their Redeemer's strength, who walk in his spirit, and who live and die in his service. As he is the ruler of the universe, and the sole potentate, upholding the world by his almighty hand, the removal of obstacles insurmountable to man is to him an easy work. A simple, steady faith in him, exalts its possessor above impediments and repeated disappointments; he knows that his Saviour will triumph over all his enemies, and under all difficulties in the path of duty will uphold him. In the divine promise, surer than any human covenant, that all the nations of the earth shall be given to his Lord, he reads the certain conversion of China. Armed with this faith, he is confident that the day, though remote, is yet sure, and that small efforts, in the day of small things, will subsist the cause of God. The translation and circulation of the Holy Scriptures, the composition and distribution of tracts, with occasional oral addresses to the people, are the means he would employ to promulgate the Gospel of Christ. Many thousands may read, and hear, and not understand; yet, if a few among these thousands embrace the word of eternal life, the salvation of that few is an abundant reward: for to save one soul is far more valuable than to conquer a thousand.

When we express our confidence in the Invisible One, it is with the assurance that the spreading of the gospel is the result is foreseen through the countenance of a rebellious tendency to persecution more severe than that the Roman Catholics. But even if the ultimate result will be the overthrow of our efforts, the ultimate result will be the overthrow of the chosen people.

While representing the countless means of establishing such a work, and the efforts of commerce with the maritime powers, as the probable means of introducing the Christian religion to which the only acceptable
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valuable than to conquer the world. While quoting this divine truth, I am convinced that individual Christians, thoroughly penetrated with such sentiments, could accomplish more for the benefit of China, than the greatest statesmen as mere politicians. Of the former there have been few to consecrate their lives to this great object, and still fewer who have been successful in their attempts; but more will arise so soon as the enterprise shall cease to be regarded as hopeless.

After the total or partial failure of so many endeavours to open an intercourse, a very general doubt of the success of any future attempt seems to exist. Yet exertions, prompted solely by a desire for the glory of God and the good of men, and executed with a single eye to the Almighty for guidance and strength, can never be wholly useless. The divine promise, the experience of past ages, and the present dispensations of Providence, are in our favour.

When we express our confident hope of success through the Invisible One, it is not meant to deny the difficulties of spreading the gospel in China, but only that the successful result is foreseen through them all by the believer. The outcry against the gospel will doubtless be very great. It must subvert a system of atheism, superstition, and self-righteous morality. The gospel of peace will be accused of a rebellious tendency, and its preachers will undergo a persecution more severe than did their predecessors, the Roman Catholics. But whatever may befall its champions, the final overthrow of the kingdom of darkness is sure, and the ultimate result will be glorious.

While representing Christianity as the only effectual means of establishing a friendly intercourse, I would not reject the efforts of commercial enterprise to open a trade with the maritime provinces, but rather regard them as the probable means of introducing that gospel into a country to which the only access is by sea.