IN THE CHINESE CUSTOMS SERVICE

PAUL KING

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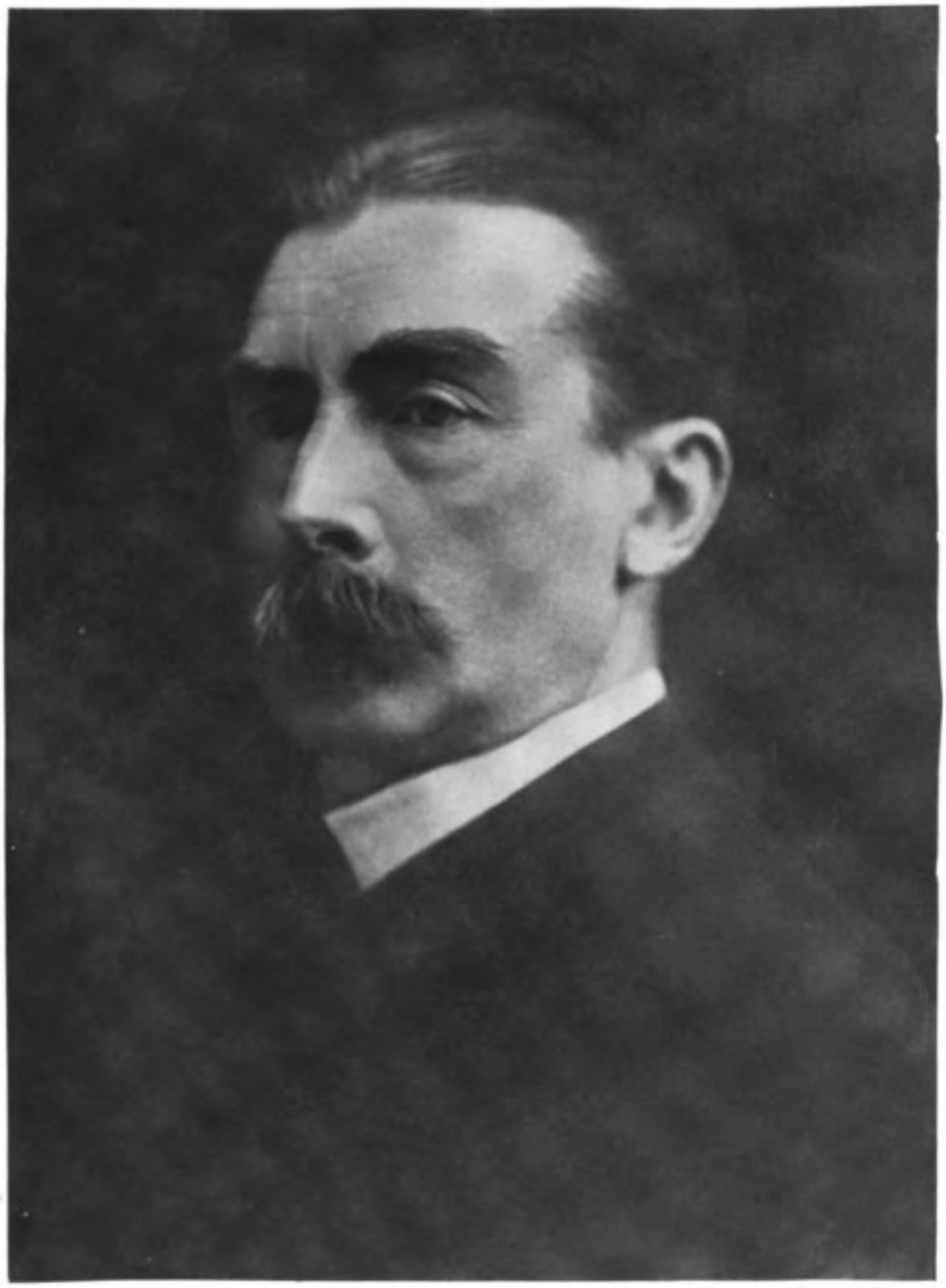

THE AUTHOR.

Frontispiece.

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IN THE CHINESE CUSTOMS SERVICE

A PERSONAL RECORD OF FORTY-SEVEN YEARS · *By* PAUL KING

SOMETIME COMMISSIONER OF CUSTOMS IN CHINA

WITH TWO PORTRAITS

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CONTENTS

PAGE

FOREWORD 9

CHAPTER I

Early years in London—Taken to see Mr. Hart in 1866—Haileybury—Dresden—Hong-Kong in 1874 11

CHAPTER II

My first port, Swatow, 1874–78—Sketches of small-port life—Learning Chinese under difficulties—I see the great I.G. for the second time 16

CHAPTER III

South China life and habits in the early 'Seventies—The old *Glengyle* and opium at Hong-Kong—An eccentric British Consul and other local celebrities—Captain Palmer, Thomas Marsh Brown, and the "Peng-chow-hoi"—The Grand Amalgamated Jambarree Company prospectus 28

CHAPTER IV

My second port, Kiukiang, 1878–79—The Lushan and its wondrous surroundings—A Yangtsze flood—An uncongenial Chief—Confidential Reports on Staff—Amenities of buying chinaware—Some celebrities in the Tea Trade—Archibald Little and others—I am transferred to Chefoo, 1879–81—Meet Chinese Gordon—His opinion of Robert Hart's little ways—Marriage—Apply for home leave and am appointed to the London Office, 1881 . . . 45

CHAPTER V

Life at the London Office—Warships for the Chinese Navy—The Chinese Admiral Ting at Newcastle—Social Democratic Federation in London sees danger in the Chinese crews—A disagreeable Service incident—Transferred to Shanghai, 1883–85—A Senior Commissioner's opinion on Robert Hart's justice—Transferred to Kiukiang, 1885–87—The "Hulks" and how one of them was destroyed by fire—A Chinese gun-boat and its old-time Commander—Our local "Gym"—The I.G.'s visit—His "likes" and "dislikes" 55

CHAPTER VI

Local "Sports" at Shanghai in 1883–85—The "Gym" and Boxing Ring at the Main Guard—Local champions in the fistic art—The Shanghai Rowing Club—The Light Horse—Transferred to Tientsin, 1887–89—Become Senior Assistant to Commissioner Detring 65

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CHAPTER VII

PAGE

Gustav Detring and Li Hung-chang—Simultaneous evacuation of Korea by Chinese and Japanese troops—Hunan troops cause trouble to foreign transports—Life in Tienstin—Chiarini's circus—Club entertainments, ice-yachting, etc., etc.—I get smallpox and nearly succumb to an overdose of antipyrin—A club fracas—Alexander Michie and *The Chinese Times*—Baron Von Möllendorff, the ex-King of Korea—Lo Feng-luh and the Peiyang Fleet 73

CHAPTER VIII

Life in Chefoo in 1889-90—The Colin Jamieson disappearance—Home leave suggested by the Inspector-General—Reappointed to London Office—Anxiety regarding children left behind in China—Cruel uncertainty of London Office appointment—Transferred to Shanghai as "Acting" Deputy Commissioner—Postal matters in Shanghai—Commissioner Louis Rocher's brilliant administration—The Shanghai Sample Room and what it did for the Revenue—The seizure of Kiaochow Bay by the Germans in 1897—I am instructed by the Shanghai Taotai to "drive them out"—The Customs Club and Gym—An interrupted assault-at-arms at the Theatre 91

CHAPTER IX

I study Japanese sword-play at Shanghai—"Secret Service" work—My activities cut short by transfer to Hangchow in charge—Houseboat trip up the Grand Canal—Hangchow Foreign Settlement a malarious swamp—My wife's serious illness—The I.G. assumes charge of the Likin Collection—The beauty of Pao Shu T'a and the Western Lake—The explosion of the Powder Magazine—City miraculously saved from destruction—Visit Peking on short leave—Results in transfer to Kowloon . . . 106

CHAPTER X

Visit Peking and obtain a transfer to Kowloon—Visit of Prince and Princess Heinrich of Prussia to Hangchow—Bishop Moule of Mid-China—Sad end of our Hangchow pals, "Weetie Monk" and a black kitten—Leave Hangchow—Hong-Kong—Visit Viceroy T'an at Canton—How we settled the boundary question on the extension of British territory in Kowloon—My wife's health breakdown necessitates a voyage home 120

CHAPTER XI

In London on short leave, 1899-1900—Transferred to Canton as Commissioner on reduced pay, and why 137

CHAPTER XII

Appointed Commissioner of Customs, Canton, April 1900—Li Hung-chang and the Boxer crisis—He appoints me Superintending Commissioner of the "Two Kwang" Custom Houses—I accompany him to Shanghai—His reception there and serene composure—"Your Inspector General is alive"—I resume duty at Canton . 140

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CHAPTER XIII

PAGE

Li Hung-chang after death—At W. T. Stead's "Julia" séances . . 160

CHAPTER XIV

Effect of Boxer incident on my Service career—Transfer to Pakhoi—Charge preferred against me by British Consul—I.G.'s unsatisfactory attitude towards it—I fall ill with Sprue and reach England in a dying condition 167

CHAPTER XV

Life at Smedley's, Matlock, and partial recovery from Sprue—I return to China against all medical advice—Visit Inspector General in Peking in June 1904—Sent to Wuhu—Return of Sprue threatened—Make personal appeal to I.G. in September 1906 and obtain transfer to Ichang 176

CHAPTER XVI

Life at Ichang in 1906—I play golf in the bed of the Yangtsze River—Trip through the Ichang Gorges—Interesting Postal Work—Transferred to Canton 187

CHAPTER XVII

My second term as Canton Commissioner—Viceroy Chou-fu; recollections of him and Detring—Viceroy Chang Jên-chun and the *Tatsu Maru II*—Japanese arrogance and I.G.'s extraordinary acquiescence 191

CHAPTER XVIII

A strike of the Canton Steam Launch Guild—My experiences in the British Consular Court as prosecutor—Sunday trading and plague patients—Death of Emperor and Empress Dowager, 1908—Am present at last rites in Canton—The Canton Self-Government Society and the Vernacular Press—The holocaust at the Flower Boats—Laying the foundation-stone of Canton Terminal of Canton-Kowloon Railway 211

CHAPTER XIX

Sir Robert Hart in his London home—Farewell visit to the great I.G.—I am appointed Statistical Secretary in Shanghai—Early pension schemes and what became of them—Revolutionaries at Shanghai—A railway incident—Shanghai International Boy Scouts—Death of Sir Robert Hart—Mr. (now Sir Francis) Aglen appointed to succeed—Memorial statue to Sir Robert Hart—The makers of the Revolution—Wu Ting-fang, Tang Shao-yi, and Wên Tsung-yao—The Abdication Edict—Dr. G. E. Morrison and the Revolution—Sun Yat-sen's failure—Chao-chu Wu and the Plea for the recognition of the Chinese Republic—I am transferred to Amoy 226

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CHAPTER XX

PAGE

A pen portrait of Sir Robert Hart—the "great I.G." 237

CHAPTER XXI

I take charge at Amoy—Recollections of Sir Robert Bredon—Revisit Swatow—Clan fights at Amoy—Visit of Admiral von Spee—We entertain the *Emden* at a garden party—I protest against iconoclasm in the name of progress—Sir Charles Eliot visits Amoy—Salt and soldiers—An awkward situation—Japanese Fleet always in evidence—Opium suppression—I am transferred to Foochow 248

CHAPTER XXII

Life at Foochow—The new officials in the old surroundings—Local declaration of independence—Attempt to set aside the Commissioner of Customs—Hunan troops threaten disorder—My Deputy Commissioner and the British Consul—A club dinner and its consequences—Accept offer of London Office—Presentiment of coming disaster—Farewell visit to Hong-Kong and voyage home by a German liner 258

CHAPTER XXIII

I take charge of the London Office in July 1914—The outbreak of War—Complicated situation owing to China's neutrality—The exodus of British Customs employees from China to join the War—London Office work—Uniforms for Indoor Staff and how we provided them—Some reflections on official dress in Imperial and Republican times in China—The War Trade Department and Chinese Post Office ink 270

CHAPTER XXIV

Inspector General's financial responsibilities enlarged in 1917—Replacing the British *personnel* in Customs Service—A storm in a tea-cup in London Anglo-Chinese circles—We display the Five-Nation flag of China at the London Office—Chinese musical instruments for the Labour Corps in France—The Inspector General becomes Sir Francis Aglen, K.B.E.—His tactful elimination of the Teutonic element in the Chinese Customs—British propaganda in China—War trade difficulties—How we shipped a lighthouse—The Armistice rejoicings 282

CHAPTER XXV

Demobilization of the Chinese Customs employees in the Great War—Alas, not all! The Roll of Honour and War services of the survivors—The new Customs Pension Scheme and all it meant to employees, old and young—The London Office share in the preliminaries—A hard case in International Law—I weed out the L.O. archives—Recollections of James Duncan Campbell, its original Chief—My retirement after forty-seven years' service . 294

INDEX 305

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FOREWORD

I CANNOT CLAIM that somebody asked me to write what follows, but I felt an urge towards it and did it.

Whether anybody, now or in the future, will be glad of something outside the bare bones of History about the Chinese Customs Service and its Creator, Sir Robert Hart, is for others to decide.

"The camel driver has his opinions—and the camel also has his!"—*Arabian saying*.

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IN THE CHINESE CUSTOMS SERVICE

CHAPTER I

Early years in London—Taken to see Mr. Hart in 1866—Haileybury—Dresden—Hong-Kong in 1874.

I WAS BORN IN LONDON, the second son of Paul John King, sometime Senior Registrar in Chancery, whose uncle on the maternal side was Sir Nicholas Tindal, the well-known Chief Justice of England.

My first schooling was at Burnside's in South Hampstead, and I learnt to play cricket at the old Eton and Middlesex ground on the lower slopes of Primrose Hill. It was there that my first "setback" in life occurred, the forerunner of many others, as this record will show. I had just begun to fancy myself as a slow bowler in imitation of a very fat man of local fame named Walker, when a summons in person by our family maid covered me with confusion: "Master Jol" (my pet name), "your ma says it's time for you to come home to tea!"

My first introduction to boxing and fencing—continued later on at Haileybury—also dates from that period. From Haileybury I passed on to Dresden, and recall a very happy year in that beautiful city with Professor Heinrich and his charming family. He was a good old "Haus Vater," rare now in later-day Germany. We lived in strictly German style, and our amusements were all of a piece—Gargantuan club

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dinners, followed by dancing for the younger people; and skating on the Grosser Garten lake in winter, round which we also drank "bier" and listened to the band in summer. Under these conditions I learnt German rapidly on the Joey Ladle principle, and added considerably to my knowledge of the French language by swapping lessons with a young Turk whose education had been begun and finished in Paris. Being a nice-looking youth of a lively complexion, he had made good use of his time in both halves of the Paris world. He added much to my insight in French and still more in other departments of worldly experience which need not here be dilated upon, but I fear he did not get much benefit from my English tuition in exchange.

The Franco-Prussian War of 1870 drove all the English home, but I had seen Vienna and Prague, the Austrian Tyrol and the Saxon Switzerland, and came back to my family in London in a German-built suit, with a veneration for Goethe and Schiller, an enthusiasm for Heine and Hauff, and some exact (Teutonic) notions as to Gott and the Universe not usually taught at English public schools. I have always been a voracious reader and have enjoyed to the full all my life the "wider view" which a working knowledge of French and German gives to an English boy.

Once more at home and one of three brothers none of whom had yet commenced to earn his own living, it became a question as to what was to be done with me. I tried commerce, and ran about Mincing Lane very happily for a year and a half, chiefly because I had a reputation from the German Gym as a light-weight boxer. This gave me favour with the sporting element in the Commercial Sales Rooms. Incidentally I learnt a lot about indigo and colonial produce at the St. Katharine Docks, and was occasionally trusted to make purchases on the firm's account.

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Then came a sudden reverse. (N.B.—Nothing to do with my activities in the Lane.) One morning three solemn-looking men came into our office and informed us that the firm of Blankety Blank & Co. was in liquidation, and the only person who was required of the eight young clerks was the book-keeper. So I went home with the *mens conscia recti*, but nothing much else on me.

In the family crisis which followed my father bethought himself of his old friendship with Sir Robert (then Mr.) Hart, the world-known Inspector General of the Chinese Customs Service. The reply was prompt and to the point: If your son can pass an ordinary Civil Service examination he can be given an appointment as a Fourth Assistant at the (then) silver equivalent of £400 a year.

Ye Gods! Four hundred quid! Could I pass? Well, I did, after a few months' cramming up forgotten school knowledge of the competitive "exam" kind. I might have got ploughed, but luckily there was a paper designed to test general knowledge and intelligence, as well as one in French and German. I had not been in the Lane for nothing, so what with business knowledge, old Professor Heinrich's views of Moses and the Bible, and the Parisian experiences of my little Turkish friend, I knew quite a lot "about things," and was duly "passed"—"educationally and medically"—and given an appointment as a Fourth Assistant, A in the Chinese Imperial Maritime Customs Service. I was also given a cheque for £200 to provide passage and outfit.

As I have said, my father had known the Inspector General for quite a long time, and I accompanied my father when he went to see Mr. Hart at the Berkeley Hotel in St. James's Street in 1866. I remember how he came forward from a dark corner of the room and shook hands with us in a curious shy manner. I was struck by that, but cannot recall anything else about the visit.

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A few weeks after appointment found me on board a Messageries Maritimes liner *en route* for Hong-Kong. The voyage was uneventful, save for one incident in the Mediterranean. One fine afternoon, as the good ship was bowling along at some fourteen knots under sail and steam, a sudden shock sent all on deck sprawling on hands and knees. A scene of considerable excitement followed. Our white-whiskered skipper tore up on the bridge and the whole ship's company rushed about the decks. "Filez," "filez" was the "mot" for any unlucky passenger who came in their way. We were apparently hard and fast on a sandbank somewhere about twenty-five miles from Alexandria. Luckily amongst the passengers was no less a person than Ferdinand de Lesseps, then in the zenith of his Canal fame.

He proposed to our captain to send away the chief officer in the ship's lifeboat to Port Said, and gave him a mandate to bring back as many steam tugs as might be required. By this time it was getting dusk and the wind was freshening every minute. The whole ship was a mass of ropes and cables, hauling this way and that. Suddenly we began to move, and in a few minutes were afloat again. Monsieur de Lesseps and our skipper beamed on one another. Madame de Lesseps and all her little boys and girls were "calmed," and the whole ship became once more normal. The British on board, who up to that moment had been somewhat distant with one another, thawed and agreed that in an emergency they would rather be on one of their own ships, and on this basis many friendships were struck up. I got to know Mr. William Keswick, head of Jardine, Matheson & Co., and his very charming wife, but it was not until we arrived at Hong-Kong that I realized how big a position the "Ewo Taipan" had in that colony. Both he and his wife showed me much kindness, and their lovely house and grounds at East Point were at once a delight and a revelation.

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I had a letter of introduction—tickets for soup they were called in those days—to Sir Arthur Kennedy, the Governor of Hong-Kong, and spent a very pleasant afternoon at Government House playing croquet with his daughter and a young curate, like myself not long out from home.

Hong-Kong in 1874 was a very different-looking place to the present city. One landed from a six-oared gig at steps just below the Clock Tower. The old Club and the old Hong-Kong Hotel were close by, both very comfortable places if not quite so much up-to-date as the present buildings. But deep verandahs and large rooms are valuable adjuncts in the almost perpetual heat of Southern China, and with majestic slow-moving punkahs had much in them to invite comparison, not altogether to their disadvantage, with the blaze of electric lamps and the whirl of mechanical fans which often fail either to soothe or to cool. However, one must not be *Laudator temporis acti*, only in the bustle and hustle of daily life as now obtaining in the Far East one sometimes looks back affectionately at the calm dignity of old-time "Raffles" at Singapore, and the quiet and spacious "interiors" of a bygone age in Hong-Kong. The Peak Railway was still a dream. I scaled the Rock on foot—with chair following, and came down the same way. A few very hardy pioneers had bungalows on the mountain-side. I noticed one bungalow with roof securely moored to the soil with stout cables. This was to prevent forcible removal by a passing typhoon.

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CHAPTER II

My first port, Swatow, 1874–78—Sketches of small-port life—Learning Chinese under difficulties—I see the great I.G. for the second time.

DUTY, HOWEVER, CALLED. My orders were for Swatow—a small coast port about eighteen hours' steam from Hong-Kong.

The voyage was made in the Douglass Lapraik steamer *Kwangtung*, a staunch little boat under the command of Captain Pitman—one of the foremost of the famous coast skippers of those days. We arrived at Swatow in the early morning and I was fortunate enough to fall into the hospitable hands of Captain Cocker of the Chinese Revenue steamer *Ling Fêng*. His kindness to me on that occasion ripened into a lifelong friendship only ended by his death, regretted by all, after long service with the Chinese Customs. The *Ling Fêng* was known as the I.G.'s yacht. She was a trim little craft kept with all the cleanly beauty and cheerful discipline of a British warship.

Cocker—himself an ex-naval man—had attracted other ex-naval officers, one especially outstanding in my boyish eyes was Lieutenant Ring, a man of huge muscles and bearing the marks on his person of terrible wounds inflicted by a jealous samurai in a street adventure in Tokio. His life was saved by a Japanese woman stuffing his gaping wounds with soft paper pending the arrival of the Legation doctor some hours later.

After a hearty breakfast, Captain Cocker took me ashore to be introduced to my official Chief, the local Commissioner of Customs. We waited for him in a handsome drawing-room for some time, and at length

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he came—a tall, scraggy Yankee of a most pronounced type. I did not know then that manners maketh *not* man in the new world, so was rather "put off" by the abruptness of his reception. It was still more unfortunate that on the way to the Custom House at Swatow in the Commissioner's gig, a gorgeous six-oared galley, I asked him in all innocence, my own mind being full of the subject, if he knew Chinese. He evidently took umbrage at the question, and it was not until a few hours later that I learnt the extent of my *faux pas*. He was one of the early Customs Chiefs whose knowledge of the Chinese language had begun and ended with Wade's preface. I could not know that, but of course his view was that the "darned Britisher" was trying to pull his leg. Once on shore and in the Custom House, I was duly introduced to the rest of the staff: The Senior Assistant, a red-headed middle-aged Irishman, an ex-ensign in the British Army and a relation of the I.G.; a Frenchman, also with red hair and a big red beard, and a German of the burly bourgeois type. I was given a miserable back room with no bathroom, but as I was young and eager such things were a trifle, and I soon shook down to local conditions. Being of a somewhat rare type in the Customs Service at that period, namely, an Englishman with French and German at his command, I naturally made both friends and enemies; but mutual perspiration is a great solvent, and on hot nights on the verandah petty jealousies are apt to melt. The event of the evening of my arrival was a dinner on board the American steamship *Kiushu*, a most extraordinary-looking old tub under the command of one Deville, a Franco-American. He proved a most genial host, and the ensign steered us all safely back to bed in the early hours of the morning. This was my first introduction to a "Jambarree," an entertainment peculiar to Swatow, of which more anon.

Swatow suffered then, as it does now, from divided interests. The foreign settlement is on each side of

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the harbour and separated by a mile or so of not always easily navigated tidal water. Consequently, social barriers had grown up. It was more "tony" to live on one side than on the other. We of the Customs were also divided. Our Chief, the Commissioner, lived on the "tony" side, while his four assistants dwelt over the Custom House amidst Chinese and business conditions.

Another social disability for dwellers on the Swatow side lay in the fact that the married people—mostly seniors—all dwelt on the opposite side at Kahchio.

Every now and then we were invited over to rather solemn dinner parties followed by whist, but as a rule the Swatowites had to shift for themselves in matters of social intercourse on a bachelor basis, with the inevitable result that the "Jambarree" spirit was ever present. Sometimes wearisomely so, card-playing—chiefly poker—was also much in vogue, while the night side of Chinese life was to be had for the asking all round us. It was a strange enough environment for white youths fresh from home. An enervating, thirsty climate, a very few visible moral restraints *plus* a great deal of good comradeship of an international nature, for in those days all white men on the coast held together and sank their separatist tendencies. Chinese and foreigners were the two broad racial distinctions. Taken as a whole there was very little animosity between the two.

The native merchants were mostly Canton men and imported, while the sons of the soil were the descendants of the stubborn race of hill-men who refused to shave their heads at the dictate of the Manchu conqueror and at that time wore a turban to conceal the disgrace they were at last compelled to submit to. The foreign community was made up by a preponderance of British, some Germans and Scandinavians, a few French and one or two Americans. It was lucky for us who came after that in the early pre-treaty days a man of light and leading had settled

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himself in Swatow. Of all the men I have known in China the name and remarkable personality of Thomas Wills Richardson will always hold first place. A British merchant of the best Mercator type, well read and large visioned, he saw to it that the foundations of foreign trade in Swatow were well and truly laid.

The early Treaty Power Consuls—British and American—were also men who loved books, and their first and most lasting achievement was the little Club at Kahchio with its fine library of well-selected standard works.

Personally I owe a deep debt of gratitude to them. During the five years of my residence in Swatow many happy hours were spent amongst their books, which otherwise might have been hopelessly wasted.

I soon settled down to the work in the office, my business experiences in London making many things easy to me. I knew all about such "fearful fowl" (to an English schoolboy) as Bills of Lading, Invoices, Customs rules and regulations, and had besides a fair knowledge of commercial book-keeping; so I soon succeeded to the proud posts of port accountant and secretary to the Commissioner, functions which gave me a small den as a private office where I could have my Chinese books in a corner without fear of interruption. Truth to tell, the learning of the Mandarin dialect—obligatory on all Indoor Assistants in the Chinese Customs Service—was a matter of considerable difficulty in those days at Swatow. No Northern men of the teacher class existed in the port, and had it not been for the kindness of Professor H. A. Giles—then British Vice-Consul at Swatow—in allowing me to have the services of the Consulate writer, a native of Foochow, I should have had a still harder fight to acquire the four tones and the correct accent of the Court dialect. To this day I can recall the painful efforts to write with a Chinese pen, and how the perspiration poured off my hands in the long hot

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days and nights I sat manufacturing Chinese characters selected by the teacher and transcribed by him on thin paper neatly divided into half-inch squares. The pupil had to place tracing-paper over the sheet of characters within the squares and reproduce them by tracing. What made the matter more bitter for me was the knowledge that in most cases Customs beginners were either sent to Peking to study Chinese without the complication of six hours daily at office work, or sent to some Mandarin-speaking port where the language could be taken in " through the pores."

My local chiefs were continually changing—the American gave way to a Frenchman, who, in his turn, was succeeded by a Belfast Irishman, only to yield up office in a few months to the most revered of them all, the late Mr. Charles Hannen.

He was a Chief who endeared himself to juniors and seniors alike, and he did much to brighten our lives in and out of the office. My struggles with the language did not escape attention, and the Chief in Peking was approached several times to give " young King " a chance in a Mandarin-speaking port. But for five weary years there was no response, and it was not until my health broke down in 1878, after five summers in Swatow, that a transfer came. I was sent up to Kiukiang—an ancient city on the Yangtsze, of which more anon. Up to that period I had very little personal experience of the Inspector General's " complex " and curious character. On my arrival in Swatow I had written him a letter of thanks for my appointment, and got in due course a reply full of useful advice as to what to do and what to avoid. Summing up, he wrote: " Take this advice not because it comes from the Inspector General, but because it is from a man who has spent twenty years in China. Reject it and in your diary of twenty years later you will write, ' What a fool I was not to take the Inspector General's advice.' "

A short digression is here necessary in order to

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convey an adequate impression of the mentality of the great Inspector General. In the early 'Sixties my maternal uncle—the late Colonel Man Stuart, C.B., C.M.G.—had accepted service in China as Private Secretary to the first Inspector General of Customs—the late Mr. Horatio Nelson Lay—and on Mr. Lay's supersession, passed on to his successor, Mr. Hart, in a similar capacity, and eventually became a Commissioner of Chinese Customs. My uncle was a man brought up in the traditions of the British public service—both civil and military—and it was not long before he came up against the arbitrary methods of his new Chief. It has been a common conceit in the Service to describe Mr. Hart as a benevolent despot. Despot he certainly was, but his victims were rarely the objects of his benevolence.

So he and my uncle were at daggers drawn—unfortunately for me just at the time of my appearance in China. My first personal experience of my great Chief was in 1878 at Swatow, when he was touring the ports in one of the Revenue cruisers. We all went on board to pay our respects, I as the junior was the last to be presented. He inquired my name in an aside to the introducing secretary, shook hands and recalled the fact that he had known my father and some of my other relatives. The sea was rather rough, and as we were going over the side he inquired with a sarcastic smile, "Can you swim?" I replied off-hand, "Oh yes, all my life." It was an ill-advised reply, but I did not know that Robert Hart hated all men of athletic tendencies and accomplishments, a peculiarity carried to such extent as to forbid all games to his son at Harrow. Thus my start was inauspicious. It was reported that after the interview the great man remarked "Young King is very like Man," referring to my uncle, his late secretary.

From his long sojourn in China and his intimate relations with all phases of Chinese life it was known that the Inspector General, consciously or uncon-

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sciously, had a tendency to employ Chinese methods. One way is to make the sins of the father felt by the children. My case was in no way exceptional, but unfortunately for me the great I.G. viewed me for years through the film of his irritation with my uncle "Jack" Man (Stuart).

Another of the great man's characteristics was his habit of only taking active steps against people he disliked when quite sure they could not retaliate. With his British employees he always had a free hand, and could treat them well or badly just as he pleased.

It was not so with the American and European members of the Customs Service. Watchful Consuls at the ports and jealous Plenipotentiaries at Peking saw to it that their nationals got their due in the matter of promotion—and even sometimes rather more. But British representatives—Ministers and Consuls alike—exercised from the very first days a "self-denying ordinance" in regard to interference with the internal concerns of the Customs Service, which, whatever its ethical beauty, in practice too often resulted in unredressed wrongs to the British employees.

At this point I rise as it were to make a personal explanation, since I should not wish it to be thought for a moment I am that unhappy mortal, a man with a grievance. Far be that from me, but it is wellnigh impossible to deal at all adequately with the subject unless some references to individual experiences be permitted. This must be my excuse for sometimes calling myself as a witness to a record which is an attempt to psycho-analyse a "complex" that, for all its great qualities, was sadly marred by temperamental defects. Robert Hart did not always remember Emerson's grim advice: "If you would not be known to do anything, never do it."

Though many British had to suffer for it, there is a touch of humour in the fact that when other nationals surveyed Robert Hart's want of favour towards his own people they were deeply impressed by his "impar-

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tiality," and no doubt his attitude—cruelly hard on some British victims—actually adorned and consolidated the British Headship !

Having relieved my conscience and, I hope, made my intentions clear by this brief explanation, let me take up the threads of the early days at Swatow. I have enumerated the better elements there. They shone out by their rarity as well as by their virtue. Others were equally conspicuous in an opposite sense. There was the leading German merchant, Mr. Diercks. He had struggled along for a score of years and more on the Swatow side of the harbour with a Chinese wife and numerous progeny. Suddenly, owing to the failure of the beet crop in Europe, Swatow sugar came into huge demand. Our German friend took Fortune at the flood, and dollars came rolling in. The man changed with his fortunes. From a bitter recluse, living in semi-Chinese style, he blossomed into a Merchant Prince of the Hong-Kong (Teutonic) variety. He built a fine house and was lavish in his hospitality to the few people in the place who had not in his previous state of existence incurred his undying hatred.

Personally I was not a favourite, as I was never a hard drinker or a willing gambler. He distrusted me too as an Englander who spoke German and knew more about the Vaterland than he did.

The sequel was a sad one. He conceived the ambition of "going home," a not unusual manifestation under similar circumstances. As a matter of fact, owing to the lapse of time, he had no home except in Swatow, but I recall our farewell conversation. "I shall go to Paris, and what dinners I shall have there with ten thousand golden sovereigns in the Hong-Kong and Shanghai Bank to back me up." Alas ! for the futility of human visions. He died of heart failure on the voyage to the home that was never to be his.

It was a curious feature of Swatow life at that

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time that the foreign community was sharply divided between very young and middle-aged men. I remember good Mrs. Richardson—bless her kind heart for all she did for us unregenerate youngsters—once saying pathetically, " Why do you call Mr. Richardson old ? He is only forty years of age." She was American born and did not know that " old Richardson " was a term of endearment from the British youths, who hate to wear their hearts upon their sleeves. For all that, the cleavage between young and middle-aged was very marked—one reason being, I suppose, that we were all in some way or other dependent on our seniors. It is true we went our own way and did plenty of foolish and foolhardy things without their co-operation, although perhaps with more sneaking admiration than they cared to admit, but in the end any young man not in society was perilously near becoming a pariah. Of such " pariahs " there were not a few, and not all young.

One extraordinary individual, about whose origin I often marvelled, came suddenly from Hong-Kong. Rumour was that he had found a British colony no longer suitable, and yearned for the more untrammelled life of a Chinese port where the Ten Commandments were in as little evidence as a uniformed policeman.

Be that as it may, he came and established himself in a Chinese house in the native town. He was a man of varied parts and quite a brilliant conversationalist. One night, when deeper than usual in his cups, he gave us extracts from R.C. Divine Service in a voice and fidelity to detail which suggested either a renegade priest or a Stonyhurst failure. Needless to say, his money soon gave out and he disappeared before evil communications had much chance to corrupt what was left of our good (moral) manners. Another type was maritime, a noted runner-down of Chinese smugglers and pirates. A little swarthy man, whose foreign-type gunboat under the Chinese flag

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had brought many shekels into the Treasury at Canton. When he came to us his course was nearly run, but I remember him as the possessor (not unshared by others, as is sometimes the case elsewhere than in China) of one of the handsomest Chinese damsels I had seen before or since.

She was a woman of character and daring too, for he was a dangerous man in his cups—any discovery of infidelity might have meant disfigurement if not death.

In those days the only "social" intercourse between Chinese and foreigners was conducted by women of the "Mui-tsai" class. In justice it must be recalled that the Chinese housekeeper often did a good deal to keep her temporary lord and master straight, especially in matters of drink, or tendency to stray off to less supervised and possibly dangerous-to-health pastures. Happily, all this is changed and gone for ever. The number of marriageable girls of his own race all over China gives no excuse to a white man seeking a helpmeet to risk entangling alliances with native blood; but as a temporary measure in the old dark days—well, perhaps better not to hazard an opinion.

Our chief outdoor sport in both summer and winter—latter only noticeable for one, or at the most two months in the year—was cricket, and our gala days the not infrequent arrival of a British gunboat. Then jollity and good-fellowship reigned and a thermometer of 98° in the shade did not prevent good cricket and lots of beer going together. It was open house with all the married seniors, and their dames came to look on in all the glory of Chinese reproductions of the latest Paris fashions.

Later in the night the Messes held high revel, and if a tin kettle did occasionally get hoisted on a Consular flagstaff or a chapel bell had to be retrieved from the bed of the harbour, no questions were asked, and no one was a penny the worse.

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In the brief cold-weather months the mud flats of the Han river—the continuation of the harbour—swarmed with wild-fowl, geese, ducks, and teal, the first-named, very difficult to get, were the principal quarry, but snipe and plover—gold and grey—were also to be had. One convention amongst ourselves deserves record. We bound ourselves not to use any gun of larger calibre than a 12 bore. Buck shot in a wire cartridge could dispose of the larger birds and the duck and teal were best dealt with by No. 4 shot. Of course, we had only black powder and no "choke-bores," but bags were plentiful, and there was no needless and indiscriminate slaughter. Good pheasant-shooting was also to be had in the not-far-distant hill country. The commodious "paper boats," so called because their downward freight was the coarse Chinese paper for which Swatow was famous, made most roomy houseboats, taking a camp bedstead and tables and chairs in their freight space. The Chinese crew under a Lowdah—a very Napoleon—propelled the craft with long poles on a narrow plank gangway on each side. They talked and cooked, worked and sang, cheerily and continuously, with the hope of a whiff of the opium pipe to induce sleep and pleasant dreams when once snugly at rest beneath the deck in a two-foot deep space between it and the keel. Good sporting dogs were rare, as "worms-in-the-heart" in his favourite dog often goes far to break the heart of his owner. One curly-coated brown Irish retriever lives in my memory, and I warrant does too in the recollection of his owner, my lifelong friend "Bob" Hill. Old "Trusty" was an extraordinary "all-round" dog. He must have had something of the setter in his composition, as he could put up and, of course, retrieve a pheasant, if occasion required.

But what was one dog among so many sportsmen! The rest of us had to be content with human substitutes. For finding and retrieving a wounded

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bird the coxswain of our Customs Mess gig had a port-wide reputation.

He and his crew were as staunch as steel, and many a time when storms were threatening brought us safe home by dint of sheer pluck and sticking to it. It was an ill day when cholera struck him down. As we stood by his poor livid clay the words of the old song, "His virtues were most rare," found an echo in all our hearts.

I can say from my heart that, in a wide experience in all parts of China over a long period, I have come across few cases of bad faith in a properly treated Chinese servant. On the contrary, my wife and I and five of our seven children have much to be grateful for in the unswerving loyalty of our Chinese servant friends. May each and all of them prosper as they have deserved, have long life, enough money, and filial children.

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CHAPTER III

South China life and habits in the early 'Seventies—The old **Glengyle** ***and opium at Hong-Kong—An eccentric British Consul and other local celebrities—Captain Palmer, Thomas Marsh Brown, and the "Peng-chow-hoi"—The Grand Amalgamated Jambarree Company prospectus.***

SOUTH CHINA LIFE was then all of a pattern. Breakfast, tea, or coffee, and an egg—each man on the verandah or in his bedroom.

Tiffin at noon in the mess-room, preceded by the inevitable and noxious cold drink in cocktail shape. Tiffin was quite a substantial meal, the feature being "spatch-cock" chicken. We had no ice. Any meat had to be quickly cooked and eaten, and could only be got from the good-natured skippers of visiting steamers.

Office hours in the Customs were ten to four. A cup of tea also served on the verandah to the consumer lying in a long cane chair helped to tone up the system for the evening exercises. Sometimes, when credit was more plentiful than reason, a "hsiao-ping-tzu" anglice, a small bottle of champagne, from the cool depths of the Club well, was substituted for the tea and generally tossed for. The chit system was in full swing and the "end of the month" troubled only a few.

Dinner was late—eight to half-past as a rule. White linen mess jackets and duck trousers—the dandies with red sashes—were mostly worn. Sherry, claret and soda, and bottled beer were generally drunk at table, with whisky and soda afterwards—sometimes, when card-playing was in vogue, deep into the night. Dinner was necessarily largely "metallic."

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Tinned soup, tinned fish, tinned meat, tinned vegetables, and Christmas tinned plum pudding.

A local poet in Singapore once wrote a melancholy little ditty entitled "Metallic Meals." The vivid sidelight thus shed on the white man's burden in matters comestible was true of all places in the East until the advent of cold storage. Tinned sausages were the great stand-by in those days, served with green peas (also from a tin). No wonder the white man's digestion not seldom failed him after years of exclusive feeding on chicken and tins, so much so that to offer such a diet to a returned Eastern in London would be like a red rag to a bull.

"Tiffin"—no one spoke of luncheon in those days—at 12 noon was also a great institution, and on Sunday lasted very often until late in the afternoon.

It was followed—especially on Sundays—by country walks and rides. On the Kahchio side the hills of decomposed granite afforded rough but exhilarating walking, with fine views over the surrounding country.

On the Swatow side was a fine sandy beach, and various devious little bridle-paths leading to the villages and eventually to the foothills of the Chao-Chow-foo district.

But the great week-end place in summer was Double Island, at the entrance to the harbour, or rather the branch of the sea on which Swatow is situated.

The centre of social life there was the Masu Retreat Club, a commodious bungalow on a shoulder of the hill above the bathing beach. There was no particular furniture in the rooms. Camp beds were pitched anywhere—inside or on the spacious verandahs. Fish was the principal fare, brought up in great variety fresh from the ocean. A particularly toothsome morsel was rock cod served as only a Chinese cook knows how. Some of us essayed to fish with a line off the rocks—an amusement generally barren of

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any tangible results. Drinks were kept cool in a deep well and much enjoyed between and at all meals.

Double Island at that time was the home of the Swatow pilots—a community unique in its way. Limited in number, and very tenacious of its supposed rights to keep out all outsiders, the pilot body consisted of six ancient navigators of various nationalities. The most outstanding—because of superior education—was one Frewen, the Harbour Pilot. He claimed to be a vegetarian, although report said that in emergencies, and such times most often have come his way, he would eat "most anything." But from whatever reason he was a man of most extraordinary physical endurance—one who could walk for miles exposed to a blazing sun calculated to lay an ordinary white man low at short notice.

At one time he was in opposition to the pilot body on Double Island and would frequently walk to lonely points on the coast to intercept incoming vessels before their arrival at the pilot cruising-ground.

As a Free-thinker, a total abstainer and a vegetarian he did not fit in with any section of Swatow thought, and I often wondered what sort of a man he really was.

Outwardly he was stand-offish and unapproachable, and apparently he had no use for anybody in the community. I was young then, but since have often wondered what he found to think about in his long walks by day and night over those lonely hills. The other six were also curious. One—a haggard, wild-looking man probably of Platt-Deutsch origin—was reputed to live on "Hollands" only; but he was a lightning pilot, knew every ocean current in his neighbourhood, and never handled a ship better than when in a condition that, had he been a modern taxi-driver, would have landed him in gaol.

In the good old days, i.e. from the opening of the port in 1861 to the early 'Seventies, the coast trade was largely served by "wind-jammers"—handy little

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British, German, and Scandinavian barques of about 600 tons capacity.

They brought peas and bean cake in bulk from Chefoo and Newchwang, and took back full cargoes of Swatow raw sugar. It was a trade that suited all parties in the conditions then obtaining.

The Chinese charterer liked a ship all his own with practically unlimited "lay days" at both ends of the line, and a long stay in port was never disagreeable to the skipper. Many were family ships with women and girls on board who could take a hand at the helm should occasion require.

The ship chandlers also liked the trade which the ships brought them, and many are the stories told of private bargains in which a suit of sails camouflaged suits of another sort, never unwelcome to a skipper on twenty-five thalers a month aus Hamburg.

In the 'Sixties quite a fleet of sailing vessels under foreign flags were regular coasters at Swatow, but gradually their number diminished year by year until the whole trade fell to the cheap steamers with which the great British firm of Butterfield and Swire made their first bid for the coast trade.

But steamers were not all of the cheap sort. The paddle-wheeler *Glengyle*, skippered by the well-known Captain Martin, will long remain in the memory of anybody who ever trod her magnificent decks, and it was a sad day for all of us in Swatow when she failed to appear one morning at her scheduled time. There was no S.O.S. then, but the appearance of her boats in the early evening told the sad tale.

By an error in navigation on the part of a man who had temporarily replaced Captain Martin for the round trip—Shanghai, Swatow—the good ship struck on Three Chimney Bluff in broad daylight, and sank shortly afterwards in deep water. The unhappy temporary captain locked himself into his state-room and perished with the ship, and there was a considerable loss of life amongst the native passengers.

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The Chief Engineer, Mr. Law, a fine old Scot, much beloved by all who knew him, was saved by one of his Chinese firemen, who lugged him into a boat by the long beard for which he was famous in addition to his other virtues. A pleasant tribute to his popularity as "Chief," and also illustrative of the fact that deep-sea Chinese sailors are free from the prejudice against saving a drowning man commonly attributed to their long-shore and riverine brethren.

The *Glengyle* was a vessel with a history. In the old opium days at Hong-Kong she left Calcutta a day *after* the Indian Mail and arrived outside Hong-Kong a day or so before her and remained in hiding near the Lye-Moon Pass. Her first mate—disguised as a Chinese—landed alone, and delivered Mail advices to the firm that owned her. When the Indian Mail had arrived and the letters were distributed in the usual way, the *Glengyle* also came into port and duly registered her arrival. Meanwhile the "Beati-possidentes" of the latest news had been enabled to anticipate, "intelligently anticipate," market conditions, very much to their own benefit. She was a beautifully built ship and her "yacht-like" lines gave her what in those days was very great speed—of course she carried no heavy cargo. But the installation of telegraphic communication spoilt her little game, and she sank to the level of the ordinary coast boat. Regrets at her loss were more sentimental than real, as she was an expensive boat to run and for her size a small carrier. Still her anchor chains and deck fittings were a sight fit for the gods, and no wonder her loss nearly broke Captain Martin's heart. Peace be to her bones 'neath the China Sea!

We were happy in our old-time Consuls: R. J. Forrest and his charming wife; the learned, but always ready for a lark, "Tommy Watters"; last, but not least, that extraordinary individual, the late William Gregory.

My first introduction to him was in the garden of

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the British Consulate. His usual garb, so report said, was pyjamas, in the good old Formosan style, but he was evidently expecting a Chinese official call, so had hurriedly dressed for the occasion.

I remember how quaint he looked, in a strange mixture of bed-clothes and uniform. He was a fat "tubby" little man and abhorred tight clothes, so his unfastened tunic displaced a sleeping-shirt hanging out at the waist over a black leather belt that somewhat vaguely kept in position a pair of rather tumbly white duck trousers.

But he was quite *maître-de-lui* and shed on me the benevolent smile with which he always greeted the younger generation. He had a fascinating falsetto note in his voice, and some curious mannerisms and phrases. But he was a man of wide reading and one learnt to beware of being squashed flat when, apropos of some unwary statement, he would say in his funny squeaky voice: "Ah, let me see now. Would it be strictly correct to say," etc., etc., etc. "Old Richardson," who also dearly loved to "argy," used to take cover at once.

"Damn you, Gregory, when you start like that I always know I'm wrong."

In China, under extra-territoriality, Consuls act also as District Judges. I was once an Assessor—with another British youth—in Consul Gregory's Court. The case was of the usual "mixed" order, Chinese Plaintiff and British Defendant. All evidence had thus to be taken in both languages.

At the start there was an initial difficulty. The Court's official Chinese was the Mandarin dialect with which the Chinese Plaintiff was totally unacquainted, while the British Defendant knew no Chinese at all except perhaps a few swear words unsuitable for Court use.

Gregory's Chinese was as peculiar as the rest of him, and was only understandable by one person besides himself, namely his Chinese private teacher,

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a wonderful derelict old Chinese "Hsien-Shêng," who always sat with him. So the Court on this occasion spoke a Chinese only understood by itself, and its *alter ego*, the old Hsien-Shêng. A witness said something in Swatow Chinese—but in order to penetrate to the ear of the Court, it had to pass through several processes. First into English for the benefit of the British Defendant, then from English into ordinary Mandarin which the derelict understood well enough, and finally, in order to reach the ear of the Presiding Judge, into the archaic dialect of Chinese of that officer, which he defended as the one true and unadulterated form of Chinese speech. His witty assistant, Playfair, always held that "Gregory's Chinese" was a "compound," the result of trying to pronounce a word from *Williams' Chinese Dictionary* by the light of all the "alternatives" given in that miscellany of exasperating explanation.

Be that as it may, in the result on a hot afternoon something very different from the original deposition reached the ear of the Court. The Court naturally criticized, and the whole process had to be gone through again, but backwards.

Then the cicadas were very troublesome and disturbed the "Court" by their ceaseless chatter in the garden. The Consular boatmen with long bamboos had to be sent for to compel their withdrawal from the neighbourhood of the Court. With all these conflicting circumstances it is needless to say we did not get much "forradder" with the case, and the Court eventually adjourned for the day and a much needed cup of tea. On one occasion the Assessors, in reply to the Judge's invitation, ventured to make a suggestion. I remember it was a very good one and Playfair, from his seat below the Bench, secretly applauded it. But it had no prosperity in the ear of justice. Gregory listened for a moment and then said, "Um, ha, I don't agree with you." Luckily, a particularly vigorous cicada note covered our con-

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fusion and directed the wrath of the Judge into another channel.

Many are the yarns told of old Gregory. He was the despair of all who had business to transact, but much loved by those who only knew him as a friend. He retired in due course and was a very happy and contented figure in the Reading Room of the British Museum for many years after.

Consul Forrest was a man of a different stamp altogether. In his youth he had ridden alone into the "T'ai-p'ing" camp outside Canton and so saved a situation pregnant with danger to foreign lives. Long service and the climate were beginning to tell on him when he came to Swatow. His hands often trembled nervously, but all the same he was a marvellously steady shot and rarely missed a wild pigeon —no mean test.

He was an easy-going man and his one *bête noire* was a possible visit from Hong-Kong of an Admiral, or a Governor, which would necessitate going on board in a cocked hat and brass-bound clothes.

The unregenerate youth determined to play on this idiosyncrasy, and towards the end of March spread rumours of an impending visit of the British Admiral. It worried Forrest not a little—he never left the Club without fervently consigning all such visitants to a place even hotter than the Club Bar. Every morning he would turn out on his verandah and anxiously scan the Customs Flag Staff to see if the three black cones—denoting a man-of-war outside—were hanging from its southern yard arm. One day, in the early morning, the fatal sign was there right enough. Loud were the lamentations of the Consul when discussing in the Club the possibility that after all it might not be a British man-of-war. The conspirators combated this by pointing out that anything but a ship of war with the White Ensign was an extremely unlikely event.

Still there was no flag, only the three black balls. What could have happened? Someone suggested

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that the ship might have grounded somewhere outside, and in that case would be expecting relief in person from the British Consul. Just as he was leaving the Club to take extreme measures, up went the British flag with the man-of-war pennant. No hope now, it must be the Admiral. The unhappy man ordered away his gig and was proceeding along the jetty in full rig when a note from Mrs. Forrest, who was in the plot, reached him. "You dear old goose, don't you know to-day is the 1st of April?" Forrest went home, and forgave the joke in the happy relief that it was not an Admiral after all.

At the Club Bar later on, it was decided to drown the lie *nem. con.*, Consul assisting.

The outstanding American Consuls of my day were Wingate and another whose name need not be recorded.

The former, a scholarly man of deep religious convictions, who contributed largely to a wise selection of books for the Club Library. The latter was a typical political selection. He lives in my recollection as a very entertaining man after dinner, and his rendering of a supposed oration by Daniel Webster—also after dinner—belonged to the type of stories that cannot be told to ladies.

Beyond the hero of "the few remaining bricks" story there were comparatively few American missionaries in Swatow in the 'Seventies; but one outstanding figure, Miss Field—a large woman both in mind and body, and whose literary fame has lasted—must here be chronicled. Consul Gregory worshipped at her shrine and we were all looking forward to and speculating upon the time, place and manner of his proposal. Several moonlight picnics seem to promise well, but nothing transpired. The pity of it. She would have appreciated the old scholar, and cleaned him up as well. Amongst the English missionaries Dr. Gibson, a Scot, stands pre-eminent. He was just a beginner in those days, but soon made his mark

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both as a Chinese scholar and earnest worker. It is a pity his creed was uncompromising and narrow, but "wide views," including cinemas in churches, "were not" in his day.

Most people kept "cold missionary" on the sideboard for consumption when other topics failed, and there was little sympathy or understanding on either side. As far as I was personally concerned, my "high-church" upbringing had suffered somewhat by the rationalism of good Dr. Heinrich of Dresden, but neither the one nor the other inclined me much to the fierce denunciations of all and sundry —including the vast majority of the Chinese amongst whom we lived—then in vogue in Protestant missionary circles. How different were the French Missionary Fathers—living celibate and alone—in the Chinese villages of the district. For them to die was truly gain—paradise in exchange for the sordid surroundings of their daily lives amongst the common people!

The foreign community in Swatow had little to do with the local Chinese of good standing, and, as a matter of fact, there were not very many Chinese of good standing resident in the place. The Hoppo, or head of the Customs at Canton, was represented in Swatow by a deputy of low rank, and the Tao-tai, or Intendant of Circuit, resided in the prefectural city of Chao-chow-fu, a considerable distance inland. Swatow had a bad name amongst Chinese officials. The people were in clans and very impatient of central control. Brigandage was rife and "hold-ups" of cargo boats only avoided by payment of ransom to the local usurper.

The Peking Government acted at last, and the Viceroy at Canton deputed one General Fang to pacify the district. Fang soon "made good." He knew the district well, and having an ample force of non-local soldiers at his command, was able to put in action the drastic methods of Chinese conquerors. His plans

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were simple and effective, and he had evidently thoroughly digested the Chinese maxim that "to attain what is far you must start from what is near."

He started from the nearest village, surrounded it at night and slaughtered all the inhabitants, and so on to the next until the people were "pacified." The lesson was severe but served, and the Emperor's writ soon began to run again. I remember the little man well, with his cruel ferret eyes and "off with his head" expression.

One heard many tales of the pirates both on sea and land, and the China Sea, especially round Hong-Kong, Canton, and Macao, had a sufficiently evil reputation as the hunting-ground of sea-robbers. Quite apart from the Customs Staff under the Inspector General, both the "Hoppo" and the Viceroy at Canton maintained gunboats of foreign type, with foreign captains and officers to aid in their suppression. The most famous of them was the *Pêng-chow-hoi*, Captain Palmer, a fine specimen of the old-type British sailor. He came into Swatow one night and we were all invited on board. From stem to stern a fighting ship, her 'tween decks fairly bristled with small-arms of modern type, which her Chinese crew knew well how to use. On that occasion the late Thomas Marsh Brown was on board, at that time the terror of all Chinese smugglers and pirates. He was a slenderly built man with hawk-like eyes and a general bird-of-prey expression. He must have possessed an extraordinary, and at that time most unusual (for a non-Chinese), mastery of the Cantonese dialect, especially of the expletives with which the natives of the City of Rams so plentifully garnish their conversation.

His dark complexion was also no doubt an aid, and he was wont to visit the opium divans, disguised as a Chinese at Canton, especially those establishments patronized by the smugglers and pirates, and where

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most of their enterprises were discussed and planned, and was so enabled to plan his own counter-measures.

He was bold in action as well—and after chasing in a gunboat heavily armed pirate craft, he would pursue in shoal water in a gig, something in the style of gallant old Admiral Keppel at Canton in 1857. On one of these occasions he was severely wounded in the back—due, he said, to a failure in nerve on the part of his coxswain. Brown's invariable custom when boarding was to keep the bow on against the enemy for two reasons—first, that it presented a narrower target and, secondly, that it destroyed the *moral* of the attacked. Invariably their fire slackened as the foreign boat drew nearer, until the last act of abandoning ship by leaping overboard, leaving all their loot behind. Later in life Thomas Marsh Brown joined up with the Imperial Maritime Customs, and in due course retired to enjoy the rest of his life on a Californian fruit ranch. On his arrival there the local Chinese flocked to him, and assured him that, with or without return, his land should never lack labour. So great was his reputation, and so high did he stand in the regard of the Cantonese, that their fellow provincials in California were proud to do him honour without reward.

Unfortunately life and leisure were not to be his lot. Broken down both in mind and body, Thomas Marsh Brown did not long survive to enjoy the fruits of his labours, and, equally unfortunately for those who came after, left behind, as far as I know, no record of his adventurous life in the Canton Delta, which might well have inspired a Conrad or a Stevenson.

But my time at Swatow was running short and on a very hot afternoon at the end of 1878 I found myself on one of the new Butterfield and Swire coast boats, ***en route***, ***via*** Amoy and Shanghai, for my new port of Kiukiang on the Yangtsze River. I was glad enough to leave—although friendships made there

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have lasted good and true until this present year of grace.

Of Hong-Kong and Amoy I had also grateful memories of kindness shown, especially at the latter place—both from my Customs colleagues and Drs. Rennie and Patrick Manson.

On the occasion of one visit I came up sick from Swatow with a terribly inflamed eye. The case had been misunderstood locally, but Manson divined in a moment the *causa causans* of my misery. After careful examination through a magnifying glass he held the offending eye open while Rennie swept over it with a camel's hair. Out came a tiny iron filing that had been sticking in the iris !

I have cherished their memories ever since, and years afterwards in London was again indebted to "Pat Manson," who descended for the sake of an old friend from his five-guineas-a-visit eminence and got me through an abscess in the jaw with complications, thus saving me once more.

Truly a great man as well as a great doctor. Like most doctors he did not always practise what he preached, and I remember on one occasion, after an eloquent exhortation against iced drinks on an empty stomach, seeing him empty almost at a draught a long glass, and they were long, of icy-cold beer just before sitting down to tiffin. He beamed on us all and said, "You young fellows mustn't do that." But he could, thanks to his tough Aberdonian ancestry, and thirst was allowable enough in a man who had probably been hunting the *filaria sanguinis hominis* since early dawn.

But not all could do what he did with impunity. Years after my Swatow days were only a memory, I was being shaved in Polite's establishment at Shanghai and caught sight of a face in the glass opposite. It came nearer and leant over me, and a voice said : "Why, it's King," and added, "Ah, you never drank as much as the rest of us." It was

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Deville, the "slaver captain" of the old *Kiushu*, but a strangely altered Deville, and one not far from his end. The voice so full of vain regret, but still with a touch of pride in the prowess of the past, and the changed appearance of the man, made a deep impression on me and gave me "furiously to think" as well. Before leaving the subject of Swatow mention should be made of one of the most characteristic of its social features in the days that have gone by.

This was the Jambarree Club, and by a lucky chance I am able to produce for the instruction of old and young alike a copy of its original prospectus. Its author, the late Mr. Charles Hannen, has only recently "passed over" at the ripe age of ninety years.

He was, of course, never an "active" member of the Club, but was sympathetic, as was his nature to be, with the harmless vagaries of the younger generation.

His gentle satire did, I think, more to show us the unwisdom of our ways than was ever effected by the "drawing away" of skirts and general reprobation indulged in by the missionaries. The names of the "office-bearers" are but thinly disguised, and at this length of time, although most of them I am pleased to note are still with us, it may be permissible to reveal their real selves in this faithful record. For the chairman, R. H. Mountain read, R. H. Hill, formerly a director of the Hong-Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation. The Secretary, who was returning home "as much for the repair of his own as the Company's plant," is Comte d'Arnoux—at that time a member of our Customs Mess, but who has since played a big part in Franco-Turkish finance. My recollections of him are "a fine rider and a staunch friend." His Gallic verve was never at fault, and at a Chinese dinner he could generally see his hosts "under the table," or carried helpless home.

"Eagle-eyed" Shott, the Medical Officer, was the

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Grand Amalgamated Jambarree Co. (un) Limited.

DIRECTOR

R. H. MOUNTAIN, Esq.

SECRETARY

GOLIATH P. SAUL, Esq.

PROSPECTUS.

The object of this company is to supply the public with pure and unadulterated Jambarree, in greater quantity, and at their own doors. Hitherto the supply has been limited, and confined to those living in the immediate neighbourhood of the factory. For the future, care will be taken that all shall be enabled to enjoy the luxury of the far-famed Jambarree, no matter at what distance their residence may be situated.

For the present, and during the repairs of the company's premises, the business will be carried on at the residence of the Director who has kindly placed his house, furniture, crockery, glass and garden railings at the disposal of the company.

One of the Committee of the Direction has just returned from visiting a neighbouring port where he has secured several valuable additions to the company's plant. Amongst others, a new specimen of the "Cod-liver-Oil" plant.

Later, Monsieur NOUDAR is *repairing* to Paris, as well for the purpose of having some of his own and the company's Jambarree machinery put in thorough repair, much needed, after the strain upon it consequent on the extraordinary demand for the supply of our surveying ships and the navy generally, as to acquaint himself with the latest improvements in Jambarree—such as are likely to be seen on the occasion of the Exhibition to be held in that city.

For further particulars, apply on the premises, between 11 P.M. and 2 A.M. After that at H. B. M. Gaol.

ANALYSIS OF JAMBARREE

BY

Professor Eagle I. Shott.

I have analysed a sample of Jambarree furnished me on the night of the———instant and found it to contain

75	parts	Alcohol
24	"	Vox Humana.
1	"	Water.
100		

EAGLE I. SHOTT,
Professor.

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OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

"We consider Jambarree to be a certain cure for deafness. The singing in the ears in the morning is a sign the dose is excessive; it should then be discontinued."

"*LANCET.*"

TESTIMONIALS.

To the Director *No.* 7184

JAMBARRFE Co. (UN) LIMITED,

DEAR SIR,

I beg to state that whereas my wife and I have suffered for a considerable time from a disease the chief indications of which were a drooping of the eyelids, attacking us nightly at about 11 o'clock, and a general lassitude and indisposition to move about—on trying one dose of your Jambarree mixture, the eyelids were at once raised, and remained so during the whole night—the hair of the head, even, gathered enough vigour to stand on end—whilst, in place of the indisposition to move, we both rushed out at our back door, and up the hill to the Doctor's house. We found one dose quite enough.

It may not be altogether irrelevant to mention that we are leaving the neighbourhood—but, before doing so think it right to record our opinions as above.

I am, Dear Sir,

Your's wakefully,

R. J. WOODS,

Consul.

To the Director *No.* 8960

JAMBARREE Co. (UN) LIMITED,

SIR,

Having suffered for some time from nervous fears, fancies and hallucinations; amongst others that I had seen the devil, I was induced to try your Jambaaree;—after one dose taken on the night of Saint Andrew's day, last, these fancies, &c., were dispelled, and in their place came the calm, composing and settled conviction that I had both seen and heard him (the Deville). You are at liberty to make what use you like of this.

I am, Sir,

Your's sincerely,

J. R. GOODBOY,

Tea-totaller

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late Dr. E. I. Scott, who with his elder brother ran the Medical work at Swatow. He was a genial, clever Irishman, who on his retirement had no difficulty in building up a fine practice in the western suburb of Brighton, where he died greatly regretted some years ago. His widow, a charming woman, survives him and will long live in our memories of Swatow as a gracious lady who did much " to soften our manners " if not our hearts. Looking back on it all now, after a vista of more than forty-five years, the things that have survived—at least in memory—are the good-fellowship of the juniors and the kindly tolerance of the seniors in those days of " Wein, Weib und Gesang."

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CHAPTER IV

My second port, Kiukiang, 1878–79—The Lushan and its wondrous surroundings—A Yangtsze flood—An uncongenial Chief—Confidential Reports on Staff—Amenities of buying chinaware—Some celebrities in the Tea Trade—Archibald Little and others—I am transferred to Chefoo, 1879–81—Meet Chinese Gordon—His opinion of Robert Hart's little ways—Marriage—Apply for home leave and am appointed to the London Office, 1881.

AFTER A BRIEF STAY in Shanghai—my first visit to the Emporium of the East—I found myself on board a river steamer bound for Kiukiang, whither I had been transferred on account of "the exigencies of the Service necessitating"—the euphemism under which the great I.G. veiled his official mandates.

This was in December 1878. In those days there was no Wuhu, so the only way port was Chinkiang. The lower Yangtsze is not particularly beautiful and one cannot enthuse much on the scenery of the Lang Shan crossing, but higher up in the Lushan country "every prospect pleases." The city of Kiukiang is marvellously situated in the Lushan foothills, with a grand panorama of mountains, plain and river. I was only destined to spend some eight months there, but for me they were eventful enough. While at Swatow I had received three promotions, rather a "record," as the phenomenal advancement which obtained in the first years of the Inspectorate General had long ceased for the rank and file. My new Chief was an American—a man of parts but too fond of power. This latter quality was his eventual ruin. Still young himself and ranking only as "Assistant-in-charge,"

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he had little sympathy with his staff and never commanded either their respect or love. His one idea was self-assertion, and to this end he was hostile to the men under him and ever strove to belittle them. This was an unpleasing quality in any case, but in the Customs with a Chief such as Robert Hart, who "never forgot a bad report" although he might overlook a good one, it was a positive danger. I was the first to suffer, as I was Senior Assistant and nearest to the Chief. Men junior to me in the Service began to be placed above me, and it was not until years afterwards that the "snake in the grass" lay revealed. The *Confidential Report on Staff*, sent in those days every six months to Peking by the local Commissioners, was a terrific engine of destruction to the budding reputations of many a youngster, though, of course, Robert Hart only acted on them if he wanted to.

However, there were compensations. My one messmate—a charming little Frenchman of noble birth—was a most sympathetic companion. Together on horseback we explored the city and its surroundings, our special fun being found in the china-ware shops and on the parade ground where the old-time "Brave" practised "horse" and "foot" archery amidst most picturesque scenery. Saturday-to-Monday excursions to the Customs Bungalow a little way up the Lushan range were a great resource. Lovely views, cool nights, and a natural bathing pool of crystal water were the outstanding features of those days of delight. The Bund at Kiukiang on a summer's night was a fearsome experience. The whole community—some fourteen persons or so in the Club—would lie breathless in long chairs on the tennis lawn, waiting for the arrival of the "up-steamer" from Shanghai that brought us mails and provisions. When the faint beat of the engines could first be distinguished far down the Kiukiang Reach we were once more alive to the outside world that in the intervals seemed so

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far off and remote. Travellers—but not many—came to Kiukiang, and I remember one delightful man, a botanical collector from Veitch of Chelsea. I accompanied him in a trip in the Lushan. It was a case of "Eyes and no eyes," with me as the no-eye hero of that immortal tale. No blade of grass or wayside herb escaped the eagle glance of my companion. His speciality was ferns, of which he found many rare (and in one case previously unknown) specimens. He was a charming companion to boot, and when the steamer took him away he left a blank indeed behind. Why are not English boys trained to know and love Nature? At Haileybury our botanical knowledge was confined to a Sunday display of "Tea-roses" from Hertford Heath in our button-holes!

The summer of 1879 was marked by a Yangtsze flood. The water lapped over the Kiukiang Bund, and soon we had to do our visiting over planks or in sampans. Incidentally it, too, had compensations, for the whole plain was flooded to a depth of a few feet and provided a wide expanse of safe water for sailing and rowing. It was grand to crowd on all sail and scud over the plains in an imported Thames-side wherry, or paddle one's own canoe over the inundated wastes. I can remember to this day the lights and shades on the Lushan hills as the sun faded gradually from rocky crests to the dark foliage of the undulating foothills.

One fine day towards the end of September 1879, "service exigencies" once more necessitated my transfer, this time to Chefoo—a seaside port some five hundred miles north of Shanghai. All things considered I was not sorry. Kiukiang itself was interesting enough, and my love for Chinese porcelain—from the famous near-by city of King-tê-ch'eng—dates from my buyings in the main-street shops of Kiukiang. Incidentally I had learnt plenty of colloquial Chinese in these same shops, as of course one did not go in and say—"Hi, I want that," plank

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down the price asked and clear out. Oh dear no! We don't do that in polite Chinese bargaining. We stroll in, greet the man behind the counter and discuss —well, anything except the price of a little vase in the back shop, which he knows, and we know, will be the piece " we shall eventually buy."

A few days later we happen in again and talk this time about " tribute ware," Kuan-yao, and its many excellencies. We also volunteer information about ourselves. How poor we are, but how much we admire his wares. A little later we make our " first " offer. He recoils in astonished sorrow, and mutters as it were *sotto voce* " Pu kou pen," meaning thereby that the miserable sum we have the ignorance to offer will not compensate him for the expenditure of capital necessitated by its acquisition. More regrets at our poverty—in which he shares—and at long last signs of relenting. We leave it at that, pretend to think that the lowered price is really the " shao-pu-mai " or limit of his wish to please us, and go our ways, albeit slowly and sorrowfully home. Next day we come to real business and the vase is ours—although no doubt at a price a Chinese client would have had a fit over.

Still, think of the practice in Chinese " colloquial " and native etiquette! We began with phrases from the *T'zŭ-êrh-ch'i*, but soon got beyond that excellent but wearisome textbook, then in the cardboard-bound edition before the Hillier combination put life and soul into it.

Kiukiang in the late 'Seventies was still a tea-port in the sense that it was visited each year by foreign tea-tasters. Amongst them was Archibald Little—not then known to Upper Yangtsze fame. He was never very successful in business, but " found himself " in Ichang in the uphill work of establishing as a fact that the " rapids " in the upper reaches could be negotiated by steam craft if only properly engined and built. " His praise is sung by loftier harps than mine."

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But one can thank God that he turned from being a "mai-mai-jên" to the higher callings of exploration and writing. He died before the era of K.B.E. given to all and sundry, but one marvels at the want of recognition at the hands of the British Government which was his lot. His wife, too, nobly aided him and did a splendid service to humanity in her anti-footbinding crusade. Possibly, like another great explorer, "his merits were too great to be acknowledged." I wonder! But their names and their works will live after them.

H. T. Wade, not unaptly called the Father of Shanghai cricket, was also a tea-buyer at Kiukiang in those days. He was ever a pessimist as to the world in general, but hopeful as any optimist when tea improved a halfpenny. He would rail at life in general, and tea in particular, all through a summer's night, and yet the next morning would be quite sure he had chanced on a plum "chop."

Another very genial member of the small Kiukiang circle was Alexander Campbell—a brawny Scot—afterwards a very successful Shanghai "tai-pan." Patrick McGregor Grant—teaman of Anderson & Co.—as an ex-Shanghai "Simma" gave us the necessary tone. His neckties and store clothes were always the *dernier cri*. Altogether a not uninteresting set round the "pool table" at the Club.

The journey down-river on transfer involved another visit to Shanghai—that "sink of iniquity," as someone once called it. "Give a dog a bad name." In this instance the name has stuck, but Shanghai has survived. The Yang King Pang was long ago culverted and made respectable with stately houses on either side, but in those days it was different. "Devonshire House," the headquarters of the most ancient of professions, was still an institution. It was not much patronized by local people, but to the seaman off a voyage it ever held attractions. Many an old captain grins in silence when it is mentioned,

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but the yarn is generally of the nature of the thirty-nine stories "not told to ladies." This one, however, is a tale of the open air. A well-known Agent of the Messageries Maritimes was on the river front one summer afternoon and observed a French bluejacket obviously already a little the worse for shore "leaf," but evidently in search of something. The man staggered up to him and in reply to a good-natured query as to what he was looking for laid a brawny paw on his shoulder and said plaintively: "M'sieur, m'sieur, pouvez-vous me dire où sont les b—d—lles."

Astonished and indignant the Agent turned away, but the sailor unabashed and still plaintive continued —"Pardon, pardon, m'sieur," and after a short pause, "mettez-vous à ma place, trois mois à bord sans—" The appeal was not in vain. A shrug of the shoulders and a deprecatory smile. "Ce n'est pas exactement mon métier, mais"—with a nod towards the desired quarter—"si vous passerez par là—" A truly Gallic way of getting gracefully out of a difficulty.

Forty-eight hours of rather rough sea travel lands one in Chefoo—a place that is sometimes called the Brighton of China. The man who perpetrated that could have known nothing of the South-Coast towns of England. Chefoo looks west and only the Catholics have had the sense to turn their buildings to the south. I remember the dictum of the old French Father—"L'exposition du sud, tout autre est impossible!"—and often think of it as I sit here in California on the opposite side of the Pacific. We too look west, and the beach residences suffer in consequence, as well as the bathers.

It was in 1880 at Chefoo that I met Chinese Gordon. He was homeward bound after his visit to Li Hung-chang in Tientsin. The Chefoo Commissioner was an old friend from Tai-ping days and Gordon was staying with him for a few days awaiting a steamer. One night we all met at dinner, and sat

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a long time afterwards listening to a most wonderful monologue from the hero of so many adventures. He talked much of King John of Abyssinia and the narrow escapes he had had at his hands. One remark about Li remains in my memory. He said in a curious, dreamy, reminiscent sort of voice—"Li is a very different sort of fellow now than when I first knew him. Then if he did not do what I wanted I would take the masts out of his boats until he gave in. But," he added, somewhat regretfully it sounded, "you can't do that with Li now." In my own subsequent dealings with the great Viceroy, this remark often came home to me. As a matter of fact, very few people cared to take Li on, either in arguments or in action, at any period of his career, and in spite of past disagreements it was evident that Gordon still cherished the old man and appreciated his undoubted courage. He told us of the advice he had given Li at his recent meeting. The "bogy" then was Russia. Gordon's views of how a Chinese army could best be used against an enemy on land are well known, but his advice (to Li) apropos of meeting a naval attack has, as far as I know, not yet been recorded. It was characteristic and grimly humorous. "I told Li the best way of getting rid of a hostile fleet at Taku would be to hire an American"—(He added *en parenthèse*, "I could get half a dozen men to-morrow for the job!")—"to go out in a row boat at night and put a keg of powder under each vessel. You should make a contract with them," i.e. the hypothetical Yankees, "to deliver the enemy's fleet at the bottom of the sea, and they would do it right enough."

Truly a short and easy way out! Li was not taking any, neither was he much inclined to Gordon's further suggestion that as head of the only really effective Chinese military force in China he should lead an army to Peking and assume supreme power. Li is reported to have replied: "All very well, but, you see, I've never been a traitor to the Throne," and to

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have added, "Besides, it wouldn't succeed, and I should get my head taken off."

The scene came up graphically before one as Gordon described it in the same dreamy voice he had spoken in about King John. Amongst the guests at the Commissioner's house that night was a young American naval officer about my own age. Walking down the hill to the jetty he said, almost in tears: "King, Gordon was one of my heroes, but did you notice—?" I had, of course, but as Gordon was one of my heroes too, we agreed that we had both been mistaken. Next morning General Gordon was down in the office, and while there a letter was delivered to him. He looked at it and then handed it to me. I saw at a glance the well-known I.G. stationery, buff square envelope, etc., and his unmistakable hand-writing. Gordon asked me for an envelope, slowly put the unopened letter in it, closed it and addressed it to the I.G. To my look of stupefaction he replied: "I always do that with Robert's letters. Send them back unopened. Robert is inclined to be cheeky." At the time, his action appeared quite inexplicable to me, but by the light of later knowledge I think there is no doubt that he deeply resented the I.G.'s first telegram in which there was a query as to on what terms Gordon would return to China. His answer was: "As to terms, Gordon indifferent," and it explains in a certain measure his subsequent action in keeping aloof from all foreign intermediaries in a matter which he considered was strictly between him and Li. He was not alone in this opinion. Giquel, Admiral Lang, and later on Sir Richard Dane all preferred to serve China direct rather than through the Chinese Customs!

There was at that time a German military instructor in the service of the Chefoo Intendant of Circuit, who had drilled three hundred men to a degree of high soldierly perfection. He met General Gordon and told him that he desired to drill more

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and more men until China had a nucleus at least of a modern army, and complained that his employer always limited him to the same three hundred men. Gordon was quite sympathetic, and said : " Ah, you are the sort of man who gets his heart broken in China, but, no doubt, the Tao-tai thinks that too large an army would be a danger to him as well as to China." A reflex, no doubt, of his advice to Li to take the power and reign.

I was glad to have seen General Gordon in the flesh and heard him talk. He was undoubtedly too intractable a character for the material age in which he lived, and Cecil Rhodes was probably right when he said : " Gordon, your schemes will not do. There is no money in them." But only right because of the hardness of our hearts !

I was destined only to be in Chefoo a very short time, as my first seven years of service had expired and I had applied for home leave. The I.G. in reply transferred me to the London Office with the usual short notice to report there " forthwith." Meanwhile, I had become engaged to be married, and under the ægis of her mother, the late Mrs. Alexander Williamson of Chefoo, my fiancée flitted off to Shanghai. I joined them a little later, and we were married in the Shanghai Cathedral by the late Bishop Moule of Mid-China. Our honeymoon was spent on board the good ship *Khiva*, of the P. and O., homeward bound. Thus the first phase of my life in China came happily to a close, and we were soon back in London and the late Victorian atmosphere still reigning there.

My father's old friend, Mr. James Duncan Campbell, C.M.G., was then head of the London Office of the Inspectorate General of the Imperial Chinese Maritime Customs, to give it its full name. The office was at No. 8, Storey's Gate, Westminster—one of an interesting little block of houses long since swept away to make room for the improvements which have transformed and are still transforming the picturesque

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streets of old Westminster. The houses were on each side of a court, and were all at least one hundred years old. There were mounting-stones for sedans in front of the street doors, and wonderful old lamp frames over them. Our house was at the St. James's Park end of the court. It had three bow windows overlooking Birdcage Walk, and though sanitary conditions were awful—until put right after two attempts—the "Sec." (short for Mr. Campbell's official title of Non-Resident Secretary, I.G. nomenclature of a truly Hartian type) and his staff, three assistants, office-keeper and wife and office-boy, all held the place in affectionate regard.

The "Secretary's room," a *sanctum sanctorum*, was full of holy mysteries, confidential dealings on many subjects of world-wide interest and importance between him and his great Chief in Peking. Mr. Campbell held the post of Non-Resident Secretary continuously for thirty-five years, from 1874 to his lamented death in 1907. In many ways he was a most remarkable man, of whom much more anon. I had the good luck to serve two terms with him as my Chief, and eventually "sat in his chair"—I hope not altogether unworthily—for over six years, 1914–20, when my own retirement became due.

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CHAPTER V

Life at the London Office—Warships for the Chinese Navy—The Chinese Admiral Ting at Newcastle—Social Democratic Federation in London sees danger in the Chinese crews—A disagreeable Service incident—Transferred to Shanghai, 1883–85—A Senior Commissioner's opinion on Robert Hart's justice—Transferred to Kiukiang, 1885–87—The "Hulks" and how one of them was destroyed by fire—A Chinese Gunboat and its old-time Commander—Our local "Gym"—The I.G.'s visit—His "likes" and "dislikes."

THE PERIOD of my first service at the London Office was two years, and at the expiration of that period I was granted an unasked-for and unwanted leave of absence for one year. The two years at the London Office had been full of interest and served to introduce me to a side of the Inspector General's activities of which I, in common with most members of the Service, had been in profound ignorance. And no wonder. Every newly appointed man to the L.O. was required to sign a written order from the Inspector General to the effect that the transactions of the London Office, "from the spending of a penny to the purchase of a battleship," were absolutely confidential. The penalty of breaking this rule was dire enough. Dismissal and loss of all "bonus" benefits.

And this leads up to an interesting phase in the office transactions. Soon after my arrival, Mr. Campbell was actively engaged with the firm of Sir William Armstrong & Co., of Newcastle-on-Tyne, in sending off to China the little fleet of "mosquito gunboats," as they were promptly named on reaching China, and two fast cruisers of a new type. This

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was practically the beginning of China's aspirations for a national fleet. The gunboats—designed by the late George Rendel—were small vessels of great beam and shallow draught. They carried a big Armstrong gun in the bow, and were in fact nothing but floating gun-carriages. The idea was to attack larger vessels at long range. The two cruisers—*Chao-yang* and *Yang-wei*—were, in those days, very modern indeed, and after all Board of Trade questions were settled, they travelled to China with British skippers and engineers, but manned by Chinese sailors specially sent from China for the purpose, and arrived safely at their ports of destination in North China—Chefoo and Tientsin.

These ships were, as before stated, all contracted for and built by the Armstrong firm, but strikes and other delays arose until it so happened that the ships were not ready for some months after the arrival of the crews—some three hundred Chinese bluejackets under the command of the ill-fated Admiral Ting of Wei-hai-wei fame. It immediately became a problem as to what was to be done with regard to these men, only partially solved by their practical "internment" on board the steamer of the China Merchants (Chinese flag) which brought them over, in a private anchorage provided by the contractors at their Tyneside works. It was necessary to restrict their liberty a good deal, as the Tyneside "chappies," stirred up by labour leaders, were at first very hostile in the belief that the Chinese were "dock labourers" and the forerunners of much more "Chinese labour" to follow. This delusion was much fostered by the action of the newly formed Social Democratic Federation in London, under the leadership of the late Mr. H. M. Hyndman. The meeting-place of the Federation was then in an upper room in Palace Chambers, Westminster, just opposite Big Ben and the Houses of Parliament. Westminster was placarded with "posters" denouncing the latest trick

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of employers of labour and declaring that the Chinese imported at Newcastle were a grave menace to the British working-man. Meetings were held and the usual propaganda initiated. By Mr. Campbell's instructions I waited on Mr. Hyndman and told him I had been sent to explain to him the real purpose of the presence of the Chinese sailors in Newcastle in order that he might be in possession of the facts when he presided at a "protest" meeting advertised for the next night. Hyndman was at that time a very "red hot" agitator, and he would have none of my explanations. For him the matter was a deep dark plot and he was going to show it up. I argued a bit and then told him I was coming to his meeting, and if he did not tell the audience the truth I would. He told me I could do as I liked, and seeing he did not want to hear anything to lessen the force of his latest "scoop" I took leave of him—"Au revoir." Next night I duly attended the meeting, and to my surprise, although the Chinese subject was billed, no mention of it was made. The meeting from the commencement was out of hand and Hyndman, evidently, was an advocate for "Go as you please." My neighbour, a machinist to whom I confided my "mission," laughed a good deal and said: "You wait a bit," and soon a big, unwieldly sort of màn with a strong German accent "got the floor" and from one thing to another at length arrived at the nationalization of the land. My machinist friend remarked: "That's all right. It's 'is 'obby. You won't 'ear much more about the Chinese to-night." And so it turned out, but the end was dramatic. A raucous voice shouted: "What about them chairs?" (We were sitting on Austrian bent-wood cane chairs.) "Where were they made?" The interrupter swung the chair round his head with small regard to his neighbours. He went on in language more forcible than polite to denounce a danger nearer home than China, and I remember we all talked at once until the meeting broke up,

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as the newspapers say, "in confusion." I think Hyndman was well content at the turn affairs had taken, and no more was heard of the matter. Meanwhile at Newcastle experiments were being made, and small bodies of Chinese bluejackets in neat uniforms were "let out" on the streets of Newcastle. Far from any hostility, they were enthusiastically received by every man, woman and child in the crowd, *Magna comitante catervâ*. Their début was an enormous success—the tall figure of Admiral Ting, in his picturesque Mandarin robes, had long since become a familiar feature in the town, and his wholesale buyings in the shops of highly priced articles—such as ornamental clocks and musical boxes—had made him very popular. Consequently in lower strata of society "down town" every Chinese sailor was dubbed an admiral and so addressed. They were asked into humble houses and made much of at tea and walks afterwards. Race-prejudice, if it ever existed, vanished before propinquity, and propinquity in its turn produced the usual results. If slant-eyed babies were a feature later on, what of it? Did not the Armada sailors make a similar impression in days gone by on the coasts of Norfolk and elsewhere in the British Isles?

Admiral Ting was much beloved by the small children of the river-side "chappies." They would run after him to shake hands, much to his distress. "Pu kan ching" (not clean), he would murmur, and put the grubby little paw aside with a pleasant smile.

I was happy enough in the L.O., save for an ugly "jolt" to my joy and pride in the Customs Service. The I.G. was great on telegraphing in cipher, and had himself evolved a "three-letter code," which a high authority in the Eastern Telegraph Company once told me was the worst he had ever known. It was the despair of operators, but presented no sort of difficulties to its creator. Both he and Mr. Campbell —from long use and wont—could read a message

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