MEMORIALS

TO HIS MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT,

SOLICITING PROTECTION TO THE BRITISH TRADE
IN CHINA.

FROM THE MERCHANTS OF

MANCHESTER, LIVERPOOL, GLASGOW, AND CANTON.

To the Right Honourable The Lord Viscount Melbourne,
First Commissioner of His Majesty's Treasury, &c.
and

The Right Honourable The Lord Viscount Palmerston, M.P.
Viz: Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs,
&c. &c.

The Memorial of the President, Vice President, and Directors
of the Chamber of Commerce and Manufactures at
Manchester,

SHEWETH,

That your memorialists beg to draw your Lordships
attention to the great importance of the trade to China, to
the mercantile, manufacturing, and shipping interests of
Great Britain, and to the unprotected situation of our com-
merce in that country, and of our fellow-subjects resident in China, through whose medium the trade is conducted.

That the trade appears to your memorialists, to be capable of great extension and of increased advantages to this country. Its present importance may be briefly brought to your Lordships notice.

It affords employment for nearly one hundred thousand tons of British shipping.

It affords a market for the manufactures of this country to a large and rapidly increasing amount, and for the productions of our Indian possessions, to the extent, it is believed, of upwards of three millions sterling per annum, which enables our Indian subjects to consume our manufactures on a largely increased scale.

That no country presents to us the basis of a more legitimate and mutually advantageous trade than China; for the productions of that country, are as admirably suited to our wants and necessaries, as ours are to theirs. The returns which China present to us, for these large imports from Great Britain and India, are principally teas and raw silk. That the value of raw silk imported from China, exceeds one million of pounds sterling per annum, the want of which would greatly paralyze a most important and rapidly growing manufacture.

That your memorialists cannot contemplate without the most serious alarm, the uncertain and unprotected state, in which this most important trade is placed, more particularly since the failure of the late Lord Napier's mission.

That this large and valuable trade, is at the present moment without any adequate protection, and subjected to the arbitrary exactions of the Hong merchants, (a body of men through whom alone our transactions are permitted to be conducted, nearly all of them in embarrassed circumstances, and many of them insolvent,) and of the corrupt local officers at Canton, whose exactions, it is believed, are contrary
to the law of the Empire, and to the wishes of the government.

That the trade is liable at any moment to be stopped by the caprice of the Hong merchants and local government, whose exactions, beyond what the law authorizes, are frequent.

That British property is daily in jeopardy; our countrymen daily subjected to insult; our Sovereign, in the person of His Representative, the late Lord Napier, has been subjected to indignity; our industry is liable to be paralyzed; our revenue exposed to the loss of from four to five millions sterling a-year. This accumulation of evils your memorialists beg most respectfully, but most earnestly to submit, calls for the protecting influence of the British Government, which, it is believed, will prove more effective, if directed to the supreme Government, than through the corrupt and distant medium of the inferior officers at Canton.

Your memorialists, therefore, humbly pray that your Lordships will take into your early and serious consideration, the nature of our political relations with China, and that your Lordships will adopt such measures, as, in your wisdom may be considered most effectual, for the protection of British subjects resident in China, and the property entrusted to their care.

And as in duty bound they will ever pray.

Manchester, February, 1836.
TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

THE LORD VISCONT MELBOURNE,
FIRST LORD OF HIS MAJESTY'S TREASURY:

THE MEMORIAL OF THE LIVERPOOL EAST INDIA ASSOCIATION,

Respectfully Sheweth,

That your memorialists view, with serious uneasiness, the unprotected state in which the extensive trade between this country and China is placed, especially since the failure of the mission of the late Lord Napier.

This trade labours under two great evils, from which arise most of the other grievances by which it is oppressed:—First, the imposition, by the Canton local officers, of unauthorised and arbitrary duties, greatly exceeding the established tariff. And secondly, the restriction of the trade to ten or twelve Chinese, under the name of Hong merchants, most of whom are in embarrassed circumstances. To these Hong merchants all imports must be passed for sale, wholly out of the owner's custody and control, and while they thus monopolize the trade of British subjects, they are invested with the inconsistent power of governing them, under the plea that Europeans are a barbarous and degraded race, unfit to be placed within the pale of Chinese law, and therefore not to be allowed to approach the tribunals and established authorities
of the country. Hence results a systematic denial of justice, accompanied by an endless train of wrongs and disabilities, which greatly hinder the natural progress of the trade, which they assume the right to suspend entirely at any moment, whenever they may be desirous of enforcing the submission of foreigners to their irregular proceedings. This power they recently exercised, as your Lordship is aware, by putting a stop to commercial dealings, on their own authority, without even the form of a government order, in the course of their discussions with the late Lord Napier, on the mere ground of his Lordship's residing in Canton; a proceeding which it is important to distinguish from the more serious events which followed on His Majesty's ships returning the fire of the Chinese forts when on their progress to join the merchant shipping, at Whampoa.

Should the indignities offered to His Majesty's representative, terminating in his Lordship's death, and the severe losses occasioned to British merchants and ship owners, from the stoppage of trade which then occurred, be allowed to pass without effectual remonstrance on the part of His Majesty's government, your memorialists apprehend not only a material aggravation of existing evils, but the strongest probability of constant collisions and interruptions of trade, equally prejudicial to British merchants, as to the immense revenue derivable from that source to His Majesty's Exchequer.

From the professions of good will towards foreigners, uniformly expressed in Imperial edicts, and the redress afforded in the rare instances in which an appeal to the supreme government was formerly practicable, your memorialists are impressed with the conviction that the grievances under which the trade is suffering, are attributable, rather to the corrupt administration of the Canton local officers, than to any adverse feeling on the part of the Imperial cabinet.

Your memorialists will only add, that the trade for which they thus solicit protection, employs about six millions sterling of British capital, and ninety thousand tons of ship-
ping, besides yielding an annual revenue of four to five millions sterling, on the single commodity of tea; while it supplies to a great extent the article of raw silk, now become indispensable to a rising and important branch of British manufactures.

Your memorialists, therefore, earnestly pray, that your Lordship will adopt such measures as may secure for British commerce and British subjects in China, the same degree of protection, which His Majesty's government extends to them in other foreign countries.

Liverpool, February, 1836.

(COPY.)

UNTO THE

RIGHT HON. LORD VISCONT MELBOURNE,

FIRST LORD OF HIS MAJESTY'S TREASURY, &c. &c. &c.

THE MEMORIAL OF THE GLASGOW EAST INDIA
ASSOCIATION,

Respectfully Sheweth,

That while your memorialists feel deeply sensible of the value of that great measure of parliament, by which the China seas were opened to the enterprise of the British nation, they feel themselves called upon to represent to your Lordship the
importance of having the trade with China placed on a more secure footing than it at present enjoys.

Your memorialists lament the unfortunate result of the late Lord Napier's mission to China, by which the position of Great Britain with that country has not been improved. Now, as formerly, personal liberty is quite insecure, and the British merchant possesses no kind of control over the sale or realization of his own property. The goods of British traders must be passed for sale wholly out of the hands of the owner into those of the Hong merchants, upon whom the owner possesses no check whatever. The trade is subjected to numerous duties and heavy exactions, the rate and the mode of charging which are arbitrary, and for the payment of a large proportion of which the Hong merchants are held responsible by the Chinese government, thus placing in jeopardy the whole property of British subjects and others, for debts due to government by these Hong merchants, the majority of whom it is notorious are in arrears for years past, and are in an insolvent state.

These and other grievances will prevent the free trade of Great Britain and China from expanding itself with the rapidity and to the extent which the immense scope afforded by the latter country, and the liberty lately granted by the British legislature, would otherwise not fail to induce.

Your memorialists therefore submit to your Lordship, that it would be of incalculable benefit to this country and our Indian possessions, were it practicable to devise means for establishing such a treaty of amity and commerce as would remove the disadvantages under which the trade at present labours; including also, if possible, a restoration of the privilege formerly possessed of trading to Amoy and other ports on the east coast of China.

While your memorialists forbear recommending any particular method of attaining this end, surrounded as the question is with much difficulty, they cannot omit stating to your Lordship, that in their opinion the object intended is much
more likely to be accomplished by a direct application to the court at Pekin, than by negotiation through inferior officers of the Chinese government.

Your memorialists presume further to suggest to your Lordship, that failing a satisfactory arrangement with the Chinese government, it would be of the greatest advantage to British trade in that part of the world, were his Majesty's government to obtain one or more of the islands near to China, as an emporium for carrying on commerce free from the exactions, control, or annoyance of the Chinese government. In the conviction that this important subject will receive due consideration from your Lordship, the memorialists, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

Signed on behalf of the East India Association of the City of Glasgow,

(Signed) KIRKMAN FINLAY, CHAIRMAN.

2nd June, 1835.
TO THE

KING'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY

IN COUNCIL:

THE PETITION OF THE FOREMENTIONED BRITISH SUBJECTS AT CANTON,

 Humbly Sheweth,

That we are induced, by the extraordinary position in which we feel ourselves placed in relation to the Chinese government, to petition your Majesty in council to take such measures as may be adapted alike to maintain the honour of our country, and the advantages which a safe and uninterrupted commerce with China is calculated to yield to the revenues of Great Britain, and to the important classes interested in its arts and manufactures.

We beg humbly to represent, that at the present moment, the commissioners appointed by your Majesty to superintend the affairs of British subjects trading at Canton, are not acknowledged by the constituted authorities of this country, and that they are not permitted to reside within the limits to which their jurisdiction is, by their commission, strictly confined; while they are forbidden by their instructions to appeal to the imperial government at Peking, and are perfectly powerless to resent the indignities offered to the late chief superintendent, or to compel reparation for the injuries done.
to your Majesty’s subjects by the late unprovoked stoppage of their trade.

Your petitioners are well persuaded that the powers vested in your Majesty’s commissioners were thus restricted with the express object of avoiding, as far as possible, all occasion of collision with the Chinese authorities; while it was hoped that, by maintaining a direct intercourse with the principal officers of government, instead of indirectly communicating through the Hong merchants, a sure way would be opened for the improvement of the present very objectionable footing on which foreign merchants stand in this country, and for security against the many wrongs and inconveniences which they have had to suffer in the present state of their commercial avocations.

Your petitioners, however, beg leave most earnestly to submit to your Majesty in council, their thorough conviction, founded on the invariable tenor of the whole history of foreign intercourse with China, as well as of its policy on occasions of internal commotion, down to the present moment, that the most unsafe of all courses that can be followed in treating with the Chinese government, or any of its functionaries, is that of quiet submission to insult, or such unresisting endurance of contemptuous or wrongful treatment, as may compromise the honour, or bring into question the power of our country. We cannot, therefore, but deeply deplore that such authority to negotiate, and such force to protect from insult, as the occasion demands, were not entrusted to your Majesty’s commissioners, confident as we are, without a shadow of doubt, that, had the requisite powers, properly sustained by an armed force, been possessed by your Majesty’s late first commissioner, the lamented Lord Napier, we should not now have to deplore the degraded and insecure position in which we are placed, in consequence of the representative of our Sovereign having been compelled to retire from Canton, without having authority to offer any remonstrance to the supreme government, or to make a dema,
petitioners, therefore, humbly pray that your Majesty will be pleased to grant powers plenipotentiary to such person of suitable rank, discretion, and diplomatic experience, as your Majesty, in your wisdom may think fit and proper to be entrusted with such authority; and your petitioners would suggest that he be directed to proceed to a convenient station on the east coast of China, as near to the capital of the country as may be found most expedient, in one of your Majesty's ships of the line, attended by a sufficient maritime force, which we are of opinion need not consist of more than two frigates, and three or four armed vessels of light draft, together with a steam vessel, all fully manned; that he may, previously to landing, require, in the first instance, in the name of your Majesty, ample reparation for the insults offered by the governor of Kwangtung and Kwangtze in his edicts published on the occasion of Lord Napier's arrival at Canton, and the subsequent humiliating conduct pursued towards his Lordship, to which the aggravation of his illness and death may be attributed; as well as for the arrogant and degrading language used towards your Majesty and our country in the edicts emanating from the local authorities, wherein your Majesty was represented as the "reverently submissive" tributary of the Emperor of China, and your Majesty's subjects as profligate barbarians, and that they be retracted, and never again employed by Chinese functionaries; that he may also demand reparation for the insult offered to your Majesty's flag by firing on your Majesty's ships of war from the forts at the Bogue, and that remuneration shall be made to your Majesty's subjects for the losses they have sustained by the detention of their ships during the stoppage of their trade. After these preliminaries shall have been conceded, (as your petitioners have no doubt they will be,) and not till then, your petitioners humbly suggest that it will be expedient for your Majesty's plenipotentiary to propose the appointment of com-
missioners on the part of the Chinese government, to adjust with him, on shore, such measures as may be deemed most effectual to the prevention of future occasion of complaint and misunderstanding, and for the promotion and extension of the trade generally, to the mutual advantage of both countries. Your petitioners believe, that if these matters shall be fairly represented, so as to do away with all reasonable objection and the favourable inclination of the Chinese commissioners be gained, there will be found little disposition on the part of the supreme government to withhold its assent, and every desirable object will thus have been attained.

Your petitioners would humbly entreat your Majesty’s favourable view of these suggestions, in the confidence that they may be acted upon, not only with every prospect of success, but without the slightest danger to the existing commercial intercourse, inasmuch, as even with a force not exceeding that which we have proposed should be placed at the disposal of your Majesty’s plenipotentiary, there would be no difficulty, should proceedings of a compulsory nature be required, in putting a stop to the greater part of the external and internal commerce of the Chinese empire;—in intercepting its revenues in their progress to the capital, and in taking possession of all the armed vessels of the country. Such measures would not only be sufficient to evince both the power and spirit of Great Britain to resent insult, but would enable your Majesty’s plenipotentiary to secure indemnity for any injury that might, in the first instance, be offered to the persons or property of your Majesty’s subjects; and would speedily induce the Chinese government to submit to just and reasonable terms. We are, at the same time, confident, that resort even to such measures as these, so far from being likely to lead to more serious warfare, an issue which both our interests and inclinations alike prompt us to��uate, would be the surest course for avoiding the danger of such a collision.

Your petitioners beg to submit that the mere restoration of the liberty once possessed of trading to Amoy, Ningpo, and
Chusan, would be followed by the most beneficial consequences, not merely in the more extended field thereby opened for commercial enterprise, but in the rivalry which would be excited as formerly, in the officers of government at these several ports, to attract the resort of foreign merchants, and thus extend their own opportunities of acquiring emoluments from the trade.

With respect, however, to this point, or any other of commercial interest that it would be expedient to make the subject of negotiation, your petitioners would humbly suggest that your Majesty's minister in China should be instructed to put himself in communication with the merchants of Canton, qualified as they must be in a certain degree by their experience and observation to point out, in what respect the benefits that might be reaped under a well regulated system of commercial intercourse, are curtailed or lost in consequence of the restrictions to which the trade is at present subjected, and the arbitrary and irregular exactions to which it is exposed either directly, or not less severely because indirectly, through the medium of the very limited number of merchants licensed to deal with foreigners. As an instance of the latter, your petitioners may state the fact, that the whole expense of the immense preparations lately made by the local government to oppose the expected advance towards Canton of your Majesty's frigates after they had passed the Bogue, has been extorted from the Hong merchants; and as but a few of them are in a really solvent state, they have no other means of meeting this demand, but by combining to tax both the import and export trade.

We would further humbly, but urgently, submit, that as we cannot but trace the disabilities and restrictions under which our commerce now labours, to a long acquiescence in the arrogant assumption of supremacy over the monarchs and people of other countries, claimed by the Emperor of China for himself and his subjects, we are forced to conclude that no essentially beneficial result can be expected to arise out of
negotiations, in which such pretensions are not decidedly repelled. We most seriously apprehend, indeed, that the least concession or waving of this point under present circumstances, could not fail to leave us as much as ever subject to a repetition of the injuries of which we have now to complain.

We would, therefore, humbly beseech your Majesty not to be induced by a paternal regard for your subjects trading to this remote empire, to leave it to the discretion of any future representative of your Majesty, as was permitted in the case of the embassy of Lord Amherst, to swerve in the smallest degree from a direct course of calm and dispassionate, but determined maintenance of the true rank of your Majesty’s empire in the scale of nations, well assured as we feel, that any descent from such just position, would be attended with worse consequences than if past events were to remain unnoticed, and we were to be left for the future to conduct our concerns with the Chinese functionaries, each as he best may.

It would ill become your Majesty’s petitioners to point to any individual as more competent than another to undertake the office of placing on a secure and advantageous footing our commercial relations with this country. We may, however, perhaps be permitted to suggest the inexpediency of assigning such a task to any person previously known in China as connected with commerce conducted under the trammels and degradations to which it has hitherto been subjected, or to any one, in short, who has had the misfortune either in a public or private capacity, to endure insult or injury from Chinese authorities.

Equally inexpedient would it be, as appears to your petitioners, to treat with any functionary not specially nominated by the Imperial cabinet, and not on any account with those of Canton, whose constant course of corrupt and oppressive conduct forms a prominent ground of complaint; or to permit any future commissioner to set his foot on the shores of
China, until ample assurance is afforded of a reception and treatment suitable to the dignity of a minister of your Majesty, and the honour of an empire that acknowledges no superior on earth.

And your petitioners shall ever pray, &c.

_Canton, 9th December, 1834._

[ Signed by thirty-five of about forty-five individuals, composing the resident British trading community, by all the commanders of the East India Company's ships who revisited Canton after the opening of the trade, and by several other commanders and traders,—making in all eighty-eight signatures.]