SOME INSTANCES OF SUCCESSFUL NEGOTIATION WITH THE CHINESE.

Allusion was made at page 13 to the spirited exertions of the East India Company’s supercargoes, on several occasions, by way both of remonstrance and resistance, when encountering Chinese oppression. It was also stated generally, that, notwithstanding all the embarrassments which fettered and restricted such operations, they were attended with a degree of success which affords conclusive evidence that only a moderate degree of firmness will suffice to procure the most important concessions from the Chinese. In justice to these supercargoes, and also for the information of those desirous of obtaining a clearer insight into the practical details of this question, the following instances have been selected.

The most remarkable was that which occurred in the year 1829, when the embarrassed state of trade, from increasing exactions, and the bankrupt condition of a majority of the ten or twelve Hong merchants, to whom foreign dealings are restricted, induced the supercargoes to suspend the Company’s trade for several months. The result was a reduction, by Imperial sanction, of about 170%, in the port charges of every ship trading at Canton; while the exactions on the
appointment of new Hong merchants, which had previously deterred applicants for the office, were ordered to be discontinued, and several accessions to their number accordingly took place,—thus relieving the trade from the paralyzing effects of a monopoly by two or three individuals. The compulsory separation of the sexes was discontinued, foreigners being permitted to enjoy the society of their wives and families at Canton, and other minor advantages were in course of acquisition.

Towards the end of 1830 some opposition was again attempted to the residence of foreign ladies at Canton. The Viceroy tried the effect of intimidation, and instructed the Hong merchants to threaten that Mrs. Baynes, the wife of the senior supercargo, would be seized and carried off, if she did not quietly quit Canton. The supercargoes on this, with great promptitude and resolution, ordered up 150 armed seamen, with two great guns, to protect their factory,—a guard which remained in Canton for about ten days, till the Hong merchants gave a written assurance that the ladies should not be molested,—the trade all this time going on with as much quiet and regularity as if there were nothing in dispute. Most unfortunately, orders arrived, a few days afterwards, from the Court of Directors, suspending from their situations, the spirited supercargoes, Messrs. Baynes,
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Millett, and Bannerman, who had carried these reforms. The Chinese took their cue accordingly: in the course of the season the ladies were obliged to quit Canton! Affairs indeed generally took a retrograde turn; but fortunately the important abatement of about 170% in the port charges still continues.

Previously to 1825 foreigners had no legitimate mode of passing between Canton and Macao without paying irregular fees, to the amount of about 50% on each trip, which was found so serious a grievance, that it was determined to make a vigorous effort to obtain its discontinuance. Accordingly, after various petitions were presented, without effect, through the usual channel of the Hong merchants, thirty-seven foreigners (of whom the author was one), of different nations, resolved to rush into the city, to obtain an audience of the Viceroy. Not knowing his Excellency’s residence, however, they entered the first official dwelling which came in their way, and which chanced to be that of the Kwang-Hee, an officer in charge of the police. Here, after a time, they were met by the Hong merchants, who used every persuasion and artifice to induce them to retire, while the Mandarins were collecting troops to surround and intimidate them. All, however, in vain! At last, as the dusk of the evening approached, the Chinese, seeing no
other mode of dislodging the intruders, gave a pledge (which has ever since been rigidly kept), that the objectionable fees should be discon- tinued; and the invaders of Canton walked quietly home! Next day an edict was published, alleging that each of these foreigners had been tied to a soldier's back, and so carried out of the city, to be placed in custody of the Hong merchants, there to await the punishment due to so heinous an offence. On this occasion the presiding Mandarin passed his hand round the author's neck, to intimate that he would lose his head if he should ever venture on a repetition of so audacious a proceeding.

In 1807 and 1821 serious discussions and interruptions of trade occurred, in consequence of the Chinese demanding the surrender of Englishmen, to suffer death in retaliation for the loss of the lives of natives in affrays with English sailors. On both occasions the firmness of the supercargoes induced the Chinese to desist from their demands, contrary to the fatal precedent afforded by the sacrifice of the gunner of the Lady Hughes, who was unceremoniously strangled in 1784. Sir James Urmston, chief of the factory in 1821, received the honour of knighthood for the judiciousness of his negotia-

But, a more remarkable instance than either
(already recorded in these pages*) occurred in 1833, when the Chinese, being unable to obtain the surrender of a British victim, actually hired a foreigner to personate the alleged guilty individual, and undergo the farce of a trial, under a pledge of his life being spared!