REMARKABLE IMPERIAL EDICT,

Reprehending the extortions of the Hong Merchants, issued at the close of the discussions with Lord Napier.

"At Canton there are merchants who have of late been in the habit of levying private duties, and incurring debts to barbarians; and it is requested that regulations be established to eradicate utterly such misdemeanors. The commercial intercourse of outside barbarians with the inner land is owing indeed, to the compassion of the celestial empire. If all the duties which are required to be paid can, indeed, be levied according to the fixed tariff, the said barbarian merchants must certainly pay them gladly, and must continually remain tranquil. But if, as is now reported, the Hong merchants

* See note, p. 64.
have of late been in a feeble and deficient state, and have, in addition to the government duties, added also private duties; while fraudulent individuals have further taken advantage of this to make gain out of the Custom-house duties, peeling off (from the barbarians) layer after layer, and having gone also to the extreme degree of the government merchants, incurring debts to the barbarians, heaping thousands upon ten thousands; whereby are stirred up sanguinary quarrels; if the merchants thus falsely, and under the name of tariff duties, extort each according to his own wishes, going even to the extreme degree of incurring debts, amount upon amount, it is not matter of surprise if the said barbarian merchants, unable to bear their grasping, stir up disturbance. Thus, with regard to the affair this year of the English Lord Napier, and others, disobeying the national laws and bringing forces into the inner river, the barbarians being naturally crafty and artful, and gain being their only object, we have no assurance that it was not owing to the numerous extortions of the Canton native merchants, that they, their minds being discontented, thereupon craftily thought to carry themselves with a high hand. If regulations be not plainly established, strictly prohibiting these things, how can the barbarous multitude be kept in subjection, and misdemeanors be eradicated?
“Let Loo (the Governor) and his colleagues examine with sincerity and earnestness; and if offences of the above description exist, let them immediately inflict severe punishment; therefore let there not be the least connivance or screening. Let them also, with their whole hearts, consult and deliberate; and report fully and with fidelity as to the measures they, on investigation, propose for the secure establishment of regulations; so as to create confident hopes that the barbarians will be disposed to submit gladly, and that fraudulent merchants will not dare to indulge in peeling and scraping them. Then will they (Loo and his colleagues) not fail of fulfilling the duties of their offices. Make known this edict. Respect this.”