

THE SHANGHAI EVENING COURIER

CHINKIANG.

12th August, 1874.

The plebeian air that usually marks this port—devoted to the utilitarian details of despised commerce—has for a time been exchanged for something of "the pomp and circumstance of glorious war." That is to say,—for I find it hard to do more than take a single leap on Pegasus at a time, even though upheld by a whole dictionary of quotations at my elbow—that is to say, there are now anchored abreast of Chinkiang no less than five steamers bearing the Dragon pennant of the Imperial Navy of China. They are said to have been sent up here under instructions, to await the arrival of troops to be conveyed by them to Formosa. Three of them have been here for more than a week, and during that time their movements have seemed most erratic and even grotesque to the "uninitiated vulgar," of whom I am one.

At one time an unearthly shouting from mid-river assails your ear: you look and see the decks of one or other of the vessels of war alive with activity; the wreaths of smoke show you that steam is getting up; and ere long the vessel gets under weigh and solemnly sails up three or four miles to abreast of Kwai-jow, near the entrance of the Grand Canal, where she anchors. Next day she comes quietly back again to her former moorings, or perhaps goes on as far as Nanking and returns again in the evening, reminding one of the great general who so dauntlessly

"Marched his soldiers up the hill,
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But as yet no sign nor rumour of the approach of the expected troops has reached us, though it is known that somewhere in Kiangpoh or in the neighbouring part of northern Ngunghai, there is a camp where an European officer, a protégé of Dr. Macartney, imparts drill-instruction to the raw material of the Chinese soldier. But there are sarcastic unbelievers among us here who look upon the whole display abreast of us as nothing more than a warlike masquerade, of a piece with the wooden cannon on their crazy ramparts; or with their soldiers on those same ramparts yelling, and clashing their swords in and out of their metallic scabbards, to make a noise to frighten the enemy. These point to the 60 or 70 men in garrison at our fort here, and say these form the only army they know of. But even if the men should be forthcoming, their superficial top-dressing of foreign drill will stand them in little stead, if they are not led by foreign officers. Then there is their utter incompetency in the essential matters of land transport and commissariat. Altogether, the re-organisation of the Chinese army after a foreign model has not gone much further than what is appropriately termed the "goose step."

The celebrated general Peng-yu-ling, the reputed author of that notorious book "The Death-blow to Corrupt Doctrine," and one of the most influential "leaders of men" in China, is now with his retinue enjoying the hospitalities of Silver Island. He not only seems to be in authority as to naval matters and movements, but the military tag-rag and bobtail also turn out to salute him. In truth it would seem that, just as two hundred years ago in Europe, a Court favourite would sometimes be appointed to the command-in-chief of a military or naval expedition indifferently, or of both, so in China now the distinction between a General and an Admiral has not been by any means clearly defined; and on the supposition that an expeditionary force for Formosa is really to be despatched from Chinkiang, the likelihood is that Admiral Peng will command-in-chief both the military and the marine. Meanwhile his amphibious myrtilons are such a nuisance by their presence that their withdrawal when it comes will be a great relief. They infest our Bund with such an insolent strut and stare that one finds his toe continually itching to take them "in reverse"; they jostle against and all but overset law-abiding British subjects who conscientiously carry filled in their pocket-books documentary evidence that they have paid the \$5 Registration Fee, and they obstruct our water frontage, with an encampment for the reception of their officers, in defiance of all Municipal Protests, all Consular representations, kowtowings, &c., &c. In fact, *vis-à-vis* the Chinese authorities, the helplessness of our condition in the present state of things at this port is truly pitiful. Without bringing any railing accusation against the officer who at present represents British interests and authority here, let it suffice to say that it is absurd to expect that a junior assistant can treat with an officer of the dignity and experience of the Taotai with the firmness that can be derived only from equality of status, or with any prospect of success, except such as the good nature or contemptuous indifference of that official may dispose him to concede. Thus it comes that at present, we have not only to submit to the nuisance of having our precincts swarming with insolent "braves," but when we have occasion to make any representation to the authorities, we are liable to any quantity of contemptuous snubbing in the person of our representative. Our only prospect of deliverance from this wretched state of things lies in Chinkiang being restored to the dignity of a full Consulship—a position it appears to have lost though the sheer imbecility of the last Consular incumbent.

It is, however, only due to the Chinese officers here at present, to mention that one of them recently had one of his men flogged on the complaint of a foreigner whom he had assaulted; but it is feared that this will only entail further trouble. The Chinese soldier, accustomed to live at five quarters among his own countrymen, appears to think he has a perfect right to enter any portion of a foreign house without the owner's permission, and if he finds himself put, in consequence, on an unpleasant *footing*, seeks the assistance of his comrades and vouches his opportunity for revenge. Everything we see here makes us doubtful of any serious intention to despatch troops to Formosa; and the more closely we watch proceedings, the general system of corruption and rottenness under which things are managed comes out into stronger relief. It may be interesting to your readers to know that one of the *Japanese daimi* of China, Earl Tseng-kee-tsch, eldest son of Tseng-kwo-fan, the late Viceroy, was here a few days ago on his way to Shanghai, where, it is said, some members of his family reside. He is considered to be a very able man; and it is an interesting and let us hope a promising fact, that he appears to have availed himself of the opportunities he has had of learning English.

You are, no doubt, aware that our present Commissioner of Customs here is M. Novion, one of the gentlemen selected to accompany Chung-how on his celebrated mission to Paris. From the exciting scenes he must have witnessed during his stay in Europe, the change to the stagnation of existence in Chinkiang is something which those who have had no analogous experience must find it difficult to imagine. But an active mind will create a healthful agitation under the most unfavourable able external conditions. M. Novion has latterly been interesting himself with the Taotai with the object of securing a new road 50 feet wide, leading out of the Foreign Settlement to the hills beyond our central road. This, if he succeeds, will be a very great boon to the residents, there being at present no outlet of any kind except the network of footpaths that find in "Stronach's Bab" their *terminus ad*

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20 Aug
TIENTSIN. 1874

Latest news from Tientsin show that the residents there, both foreign and native, are much interested in the mission of the Japanese Envoy to Peking, with reference to the Formosa expedition. At the time of the departure of the *Appin* and the *Chihli*, the general impression, based upon rumours filtered through official sources, was that the result would be a compromise, and that Japan would not press for payment of the expenses incurred by her in chastising the savages. Among the higher classes of Chinese, a feeling of disappointment is experienced that war is not likely to ensue, and it is asserted that the Viceroy, Li, has openly expressed his regret that negotiations were ever commenced.—The 8th of August, the day rumour had assigned for another rising against foreigners, passed off quietly ; and although at the departure of the steamers named there was only the Russian gunboat *Sobol* in port, no uneasiness was felt. The absence of English, French, and American men-of-war was freely commented on, however, and condemned.

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977 22 Aug 1874

It is characteristic of the Chinese that, after all the money they have spent in the various Arsenals, and after all the parade of warlike material they have displayed, they should at the last moment have been found utterly unprepared to cope with so small a Power as Japan. The want of system and of ability to found one is nowhere more conspicuous than in the military preparations of the last few years. The war material in the possession of the Chinese Government must be something enormous, yet, as it has been collected together on no settled system, it is far more likely to prove an incumbrance than to turn out of any practical use. Armstrong guns, Whitworth guns, Woolwich guns, have all been purchased and made the plaything of an hour, and now enormous sums are being spent on Krupp's, to go through the same process. Again, one official gets his troops drilled in French style, another in English, though indeed it seemed for a time as if the English drill were really making some progress amongst the Chinese troops. Germany, however, conquered France in the actual conflict, and as the Chinese had always hitherto looked up to France as *par excellence* a military nation, it followed according to their minds that the Germans must be the most military nation on the earth. Accordingly, troops half drilled in French or English style have now to undergo a transformation to the Prussian drill, and it will be a wonder if, between all, any remains of discipline will eventually be left. Much the same may be said of the ships, the officers and men of which seem to have been chosen on some occult system. Men of war commanded by old pilots and manned by sailors who have earned the title by services on board foreign house-boats, or equally favourable schools, are not likely to turn out very efficient in action. Again, of the officers, they are either of the men themselves, and therefore exercise no influence, or they are of the body of officials of the country, and therefore too proud to learn such mean things as drill or military science. The system of military instruction was admirably adapted to produce an army warranted to break up in the first brush. The men were sent regularly to drill, and many of them took an interest in it. They were able to perceive how superior it was to their original style of manœuvring, and altogether would have made a body of admirable troops. The foreign instructor was, and is, merely a dummy. Native officers of low class, and without command, are employed to teach the rudiments of drill, nominally under the direction of the instructor. In command of the men are the regular officers—men brought up to despise everything foreign. They stand by and see their men drilled, but themselves take neither part nor interest in it. If requested to attend drill, they refuse; perhaps the instructors complain to the higher officials, but the reply is that these are officers, and are not to be ordered about like common men. So officers lose all knowledge of their men, and the latter thoroughly despise their officers. The attempts made recently to get rid of foreigners at the various Arsenals have, in most cases, resulted in a similar state of affairs. The Chinese are doubtless able to keep these running, and to turn out the work to which they have been accustomed. But there always exists a tendency to resort to old ways, and apart from foreign supervision it is sure to assert itself. So, day by day, the work degenerates; one machine is thrown out of work after another, and a few months or years is sufficient to convert the best managed machine shop into an ordinary Chinese forge. These things are inherent in Chinese character. Able individuals have occasionally succeeded for a time in impressing their own energy of character on their subordinates, but with their fall or decease, matters have rapidly relapsed into their old ways. There is no succession of **genius in the empire. A step in advance** is not made the groundwork for further progress. By great good fortune it may become a permanent footing, but the fact of the advance contributes no *vis inertia* for further movement. It has all been dissipated in friction, and the same obstacles and difficulties have to be met and overcome before another step is possible.

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pilation.

25 August 1915

Both the Chinese newspapers of yesterday contained a statement, coming from a Chinese official source we understand, that the negotiations at Peking in regard to the Formosa difficulty had resulted in an arrangement which would not compromise the dignity of either nation. Upon enquiry at the Japanese Consulate, however, we were obligingly informed that Peking despatches received on Sunday make no mention of such a result, and that the statement referred to is believed to be a mistake.

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OPINIONS are very freely expressed and pretty generally believed by the Chinese to the effect that Li Hung-chang will not take any active measures in the present difficulty until he is aware that war with Japan is an accomplished fact. In this event he will organise his own force (supposed rebels) and make the government of China the price of his conquering the Japanese. It is further believed amongst them, that he is absorbing all the specie in the interior, thus causing discontent among the Imperial soldiery. If this be true, it is indeed a very subtle move on his part, as when the proper time arrives he will pay the discontented and moneyless soldiers, and so strengthen the belief that he is all powerful. There are foreigners who still believe in him and in his power, though they cannot possibly have any regard for the man if they remember his treachery and duplicity to Colonel Gordon, when, having promised not to behead the rebel Wangs at Soochow, he immediately put them to death on their surrender, and that, too, after finding an excuse to remove Colonel Gordon from the spot during the massacre.—*Ibid.*

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