THE BOMBARDMENT OF PAKHOI.

AN UNRECORDED EPISODE OF 1882.

PART I.

The odd thing is that the stirring events I am about to chronicle should have begun to take place the day after my birthday, the 22nd of August. When this date came round in 1882, I gave a dinner as a matter of course, and besides the three other members of our small community, I had the advantage of the company of Captains S. . . . and C. . . . then commanding two of H. I. C. M. ships. There was an unusual store of good cheer, for I had beef and mutton from Hongkong and my tinned comestibles were not spared.

'There was lobster and whitebaits
And other swatemates,'

—as the Bard of Ingoldsby says, and the champagne flowed freely for such as liked it. I myself did more execution with the lobster salad than with the wine. We had a merry evening and ended up with a supper where more lobster tins were in requisition.

As I look back on it now, what a contrast between that peaceful if uproarious scene, and the events which followed! I went to bed and remember that sleep was a long time coming, but at last I fell off into a heavy slumber. It was just daybreak when I was awakened by the sound of firing. One-two-three; then again, one-two-three. I recognised the usual salute of Chinese warships and therefore was not surprised on looking out to find that two more gunvessels had arrived to join the squadron of seven which had already been lying for about a month in the harbour. By and bye there were signs of unwonted activity among the vessels of the fleet; the Admiral's flagship commenced flying signals at short intervals and small boats were running to and fro. Something was evidently happening of an unusual kind. Then communication began between the ships and the shore and thus there was a possibility for me to find out the cause of excitement.

I perhaps ought to intimate that my position at Pakhoi was that of H. B. M.'s Acting Consul; though not the first time I had occupied that position in China, it was the first occasion on which I had been in charge of a port for any length of time, and this will account for my anxiety to acquit myself well in the events which followed.

When the chance presented itself of learning what was the cause of commotion, I sent out to the most intelligent of my official servants—he was a Roman Catholic convert—and on his return I was astonished to see his face pale with alarm and consternation; he dropped on his knees, knocking his head on the floor—*kotowing* in fact as the Chinese do when they earnestly entreat. He was so incoherent that I could not understand his words, for in his intense agitation he lapsed from his usual Pekinese dialect into his own provincial patois. At last he recovered his senses somewhat and I

made out that news had been brought to the fleet of warlike operations on the part of France against China, in consequence of some menace proceeding from Peking apropos of the invasion of Annam. The Chinese forces by land and sea were ordered to seize all French subjects they could lay hands on, and the Admiral was about to send a party on shore to arrest Perè D. . . . the R. C. priest resident in Pakhoi. The agitation of my messenger was thus explained, for of course he looked upon the missionary as his spiritual father and guide.

Being the only Consul here, I have general instructions to offer my services to subjects of any friendly nation who may require them, and I had already had occasion at various times to be of use to the Rev. Father. In such a contingency as the present, the duty became doubly imperative. I lost no time therefore in apprising Père D. . . . of the fate which threatened him, and I advised his taking refuge in the Consulate. At the same time I hoisted my most imposing flag, though the canonical hour for shewing colours, eight o'clock, had not yet struck, conjecturing that even the semi-barbarous celestial would think twice before outraging the Union Jack. I also deemed it right to warn my fellow Europeans of the state of affairs and recommended a general rendezvous at my residence where there was a supply of rifles and ammunition for use should the worst come to the worst. By 7 o'clock Père D. . . . and the others—who numbered six, not including my constable,—had arrived, bringing with them such weapons as they possessed. The Consular armory supplied six rifles and as many cutlasses; three more rifles and a couple of shot guns came from outside, and we each had a revolver, so with firearms we were well provided. The ammunition was unfortunately short; only a dozen rounds to each man, but there was loose powder and shot in addition and a supply of empty cartridge cases all ready capped. But as will be seen we never utilised all our resources. By a most happy chance a junk owned by the French missionaries (employed to carry provisions from this place to the island of Wei-chow where they have a station) was in Pakhoi; it flies as a rule a distinctive flag bearing a red cross on a white field. This vessel was directed to leave at once for Haiphong—the wind luckily was favourable—to carry a letter from me to the French authorities there telling them of our plight. Strict orders were given to avoid displaying the missionary banner, and it gave us all a gleam of hope when we saw it successfully thread the unsuspecting fleet and spread its sails on its eventful errand. An overland carrier was also despatched to Hoihow in the hope that a British man-of-war might be there or that our cry for help forwarded to Hongkong by steamer might bring us ultimate relief. We knew very well that the speediest succour must be three days on the road, but we could only hope for the best and trust that circumstances would enable us to stave off a crisis for a sufficiently long period.

As romancers say, 'all these things were done in a much shorter time than it takes to write them down.' In the meanwhile the Consulate was put into a state of defence, the windows shuttered and the doors barred except towards the sea where one door was left open giving access to the verandah which was our observatory. The wall of this verandah was about three feet high, the bricks arranged in an open work pattern like Geneva crosses, so that, by crouching down, it would be possible to observe anything that was going on in front without being oneself exposed to view. We improved on this, however, later.

Up to this point Père D. . . . had been the only person of the community actually menaced. Our defensive precautions had been taken merely in anticipation of what would probably happen. I foresaid that in a short time the missionary's 'city of refuge' would be discovered and his surrender

insisted on. I need hardly say I had no intention of yielding to such a summons and my companions were as resolute as myself. Our forebodings were soon realised. By 9 o'clock it became evident that the soldiers sent to arrest Père D. . . had discovered his flight and his place of retreat. They returned to the fleet, doubtless to report the result of their search, and about half-an-hour later came back, accompanied by a petty officer of the Admiral's suite bearing his card with a message to me.

PART II.

My object was of course to gain time, so I directed that the messenger should be kept in parley at the gate as long as possible. At last, however, he had to be admitted and I received him by myself so that he might not become aware of the presence of the rest of the community. When he was introduced, I remained seated and enquired coldly what his business was. He replied insolently, handing me the Admiral's card, that it was understood a French 'devil,' whose company was desired by the fleet, had taken refuge in my house, and that I must send him off at once. I answered that a Frenchman, a friend of mine, was certainly residing with me at that moment, but that I did not recognise the term 'devil' as applicable to *him* and that no other person of that nationality to whom the word could refer was on the premises or, to my knowledge, in Pakhoi. The officer then intimated that in his opinion I was prevaricating (but he used a shorter word); that my French friend was the person wanted and that I had better give him up to the Admiral at once. I said that such a request required discussion. 'And I am here to discuss it,' was his retort. I declined decisively to argue with him on the score that an official of *my* rank did not enter into discussions with petty officers of his standing. 'But,' I added, 'if the Admiral sends me a person of adequate rank, I shall be happy to consider any arguments he may have to bring forward.'

On this our friend 'flounced' out of the place (the term is not inappropriate, as of course he was attired in the usual Chinese petticoats), and we were assured another short respite. To the Chinese official mind my objection to the status of the negotiator was perfectly valid and reasonable. There is nowhere greater punctilio in the intercourse of officials of different standing than in China. Regulations for the guidance of such intercourse are laid down by law and studiously observed throughout the Empire. Therefore the Admiral could make no possible objection to my demand for a negotiator of suitable grade and would be the first to recognise that he had made a blunder at the outset. It is not unlikely that, after the fashion of many among his countrymen, he fancied a foreigner would probably be ignorant of the niceties of the national etiquette.

In any case it was nearly half-past twelve before another envoy appeared; this time it was the Chinese commander of one of the gunvessels, probably the highest subordinate official at the Admiral's disposal. I might still have persisted in my scruples, for even this captain was technically my inferior, but I decided not to pursue these tactics any further for fear of driving my adversary to extremity and so provoking a *coup de main*. I therefore changed my manœuvres and temporised (my only hope) in another direction. As it happened, the new envoy arrived just as I was sitting down to luncheon with my guests—we were luckily well provisioned—so I requested Captain Chang to wait in my office till I was at leisure. As may be guessed, this particular tiffin was prolonged to a length unknown to tiffins before. But all things have an end, and at last I was reluctantly obliged to receive my visitor, apologising profusely of course for the unavoidable delay. His message was to the same effect as that of his predecessor, but I met it in a different way. I allowed that the missionary was under my protection, but reminded Captain Chang that he ought to be aware—and the Admiral also—that Great

Britain was not in the habit of lightly surrendering those who sought shelter under her flag. (Here I made an oration of about half an hour, dilating on this British custom of protecting the persecuted, instancing cases of refugees who had found an asylum under the Union Jack, touching on the Slave Trade, the Huguenots and everything else of a kindred nature I could call to mind). Finally I said it was possible the Admiral might have reasons for his demand cogent enough to induce me to comply with it, but it was a matter so nearly affecting the honour of my Sovereign, while my own responsibility would be so great, that I must have these reasons in writing in due official form. I added, when dismissing my visitor, that I closed my office every day at 4 o'clock and that no communication could be received after that hour until 10 next morning. It was now past three and I knew perfectly well that the despatch could not be written and sent in within the delay specified.

This was rather a bold move an my part to gain time and I somewhat anticipated that the Admiral would insist on sending in his despatch whether office hours were ended or not. However he did not do so; either he was impressed by my dictatorial tone, or what is more likely, was anxious to gain his point by fair means if possible before resorting to foul. He may have remembered likewise that an outrage on England was (in the good old times at least, before there was a Grand Old Man) generally dearly paid for. After a certain lapse of time, then, it became evident that we were safe for at least fifteen hours, and these we utilised in improving our means of defence. I have already alluded to the three-feet wall of the verandah. This faced the sea, and it was thence an attack was to be expected. The wall being so low, it was necessary to assume an awkward position, either crouching or prostrate, in order to take advantage of its shelter; but this could be remedied. I caused my four book cases, each four feet high by three wide and one deep, to be emptied of their books and filled with sand. These were firmly lashed to the top of the wall, narrow interstices being left between them, so that we were provided with a screen tolerably shot proof, and accommodating three rifles. The openwork of the wall below the book cases was now of no advantage, but rather a possible source of danger, so mattresses were arranged along the inside and our little fort was complete.

Next morning there was no delay in delivering the Admiral's despatch; it reached me punctually at ten o'clock. I desired the bearer to wait while I glanced through it, and then sent by him a letter stating that the demand conveyed in the document was so serious that it would be necessary for me to exercise great circumspection in the composition of my reply; that moreover it would be requisite to search all the archives for a precedent to follow, and that in short I could not return a definite answer at once, but would do so at the earliest possible opportunity.

The despatch to which I had promised a reply was short and came to the point with brutal directness: 'France and China were at war; Imperial orders had been received that all French subjects were to be arrested; a Frenchman was known to be on my premises; I must be so good as to give him up at once.' Little more than that; and quite enough too. I need scarcely say that the framing of my reply did not take me ten minutes; it was ready and might have been sent before eleven o'clock, but I had no intention of showing my hand a moment sooner than necessary. My reply was naturally that Père D. . . was under the shadow of the British flag, and that, if the Admiral wanted him, he must come and take him.

By one o'clock the enemy became impatient; a boat put off with a message saying the Admiral would like to know how much longer I was going to be. I replied that my archives were voluminous and that I was still hunting for precedents. At three an-

other messenger came; he learnt that I had failed to find any precedent and had begun to compose my definite reply. Of course it was not ready by five when the Admiral next shewed signs of life and wished to be informed whether I always spent as much time over Chinese despatches. I answered that in *ordinary* cases I was more expeditious, but that in addressing an official of his exalted rank, I was anxious to have my communication couched in the very choicest classical language. Eventually the old heathen got his desire about nine o'clock.

I have no doubt the Admiral exhausted his vocabulary of strong language after hearing the contents of my despatch. I say 'hearing,' for being an utterly illiterate man he could not read it himself, and I fear my flowers of classical rhetoric were lost on him. He sent back his ultimatum at once and I received it then and there, judging that it would only aggravate matters to plead 'office hours' at that stage of the proceedings. He informed me that if the Frenchman were not in his hands by ten o'clock next morning, ('you see I observe your office hours' he added grimly in parenthesis) he would adopt whatever means he deemed necessary to take him, and the consequences would be upon my own head.

G. M. PLAYFAIR.

(To be continued).

CANTON PLANTS.

TABLE I.

The following list of a few Canton plants, including such vegetables and flowers as are daily made use of by the natives, and such exotic ones as have become domesticated or received regular names, is republished (from the *China Mail* of 1878) in the hope that it may form a nucleus for the ultimate identification of many plants, flowers and vegetables, which are known in many cases by different names in other parts of China. No printed authority has been in any case accepted for the application of any one Cantonese name to any single botanical name. The plan pursued has been as follows. The plant itself has in each case been produced before a competent botanical authority; it has then been shewn to at least three natives, entirely unconnected with and widely separated from each other. No plant has been inserted in this list unless at least three such natives agreed without hesitation in applying to it the name adopted. The sounds, having been thus secured, have been in each case submitted to a Chinese literate, and, where possible, compared also with the characters used by European lexicographers. It will be noticed that vulgar and unauthorised characters have occasionally to be used. In other cases a name is locally applied which strictly belongs to another plant. In some few cases the colloquial sound has to be imitated as best it can. The spelling of Dr. Williams' Tonic Dictionary is used; not on account of any intrinsic merits of its own, but because it is now well established, and because a new scheme of spelling, however perfect, might lead to confusion. The tones of the words are only given in a very few instances; e.g. Nos. 21, 22, 27, 35, 39, 41, 64, and 98; and for one of the three following reasons. Either because a new character has been invented to represent a vulgar sound; or because the word is altered from its proper tone in this