

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS

ON

A VOYAGE

TO THE

NORTHERN PORTS OF CHINA,

IN THE SHIP

LORD AMHERST.

EXTRACTED FROM PAPERS, PRINTED BY ORDER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.  
RELATING TO THE TRADE WITH CHINA.

LONDON:  
B. FELLOWES, LUDGATE STREET.  
1833.

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LONDON :

R. CLAY, PRINTER, BREAD-STREET-HILL.

589250

farewell. At the eve of our departure they offered to us 600 dollars as demurrage for the delay they had occasioned ; this we refused, however. We were always assured that those military preparations were by no means intended for us ; this was rather hard to believe, for when we came we saw no camps, nor war-boats in the river, and when we left all the forces dispersed.

The attachment of the people to our cause was here even greater than at Fuh Chow. During our stay at Ning-po a great number of merchants made repeated inquiries about our cargo. They entered upon the most minute circumstances, and discoursed the probability of re-establishing a trade which had contributed so much towards the wealth of their city. Those who were sent on board to make the bargain always inculcated that we ought firmly to demand such terms from the mandarins as would bring the trade upon a firm footing.

We parted from both the people and the mandarins with a promise to do our utmost in order to have the matters properly arranged. They told us, "arrange the matters with our Sovereign, and we will receive you next year with open arms."

The little trade we carried on at Kin Tang, a romantic island in the neighbourhood of Ning-po, showed the readiness of the people to commence commerce whenever they are freed from the vigilance of the mandarins.

Not far from Ning-po to the north Cha-poo,

the Chinese emporium for Japan, is situated. We did not visit this place, but we were afterwards recommended to go from Ning-po thither. According to all accounts, it is a wealthy place, with a tolerable harbour and much produce, principally raw silk for exportation.

### *Keang-Soo Province.*

We had heard so much of the celebrated Shang-hae, that we were very desirous to see the place. The city is excellently situated for trade, in one of the most fertile districts of the Chinese empire, not far from Nan King, in the neighbourhood of the mouth of the Yang-tsye-Keang, the largest river in Asia, and on the banks of a navigable river.

European vessels seem never to have traded to this place ; perhaps the extensive sand-banks at the mouth of the Yang-tsye-Keang have greatly deterred ships from entering the river which leads to Shang-hae. If the whole was properly surveyed, few dangers could be apprehended from shoals, which stretch out to a great distance, but have regular soundings. The trade to a place which stands in connexion with a great port of Central Asia, whither scarcely ever an European has penetrated, claims the attention of enlightened statesmen who are anxious to open new channels for British industry and mercantile enterprise. We found here, to our great mortification, the mandarins very narrow-minded and ignorant.

We argued the point of granting us liberty to trade very warmly. The unalterable laws of the Celestial Empire permitted foreigners to trade to all ports, when their commercial relations with China were in their infancy; can these unalterable laws change when our commerce has arrived to such a degree of importance? The merchants of this place come to our ports; we grant them full liberty to carry on their commerce; can the Celestial Empire refuse an equal right when they ask for such a privilege? Do you not permit Cochin-Chinese and Siamese vessels upon the same grounds to come to your ports? You tell us that his Imperial Majesty highly compassionates foreigners; can his great compassion refuse the grant of so just a claim? After a great many debates, they came to the same conclusion as the mandarins at Ning-po, viz. that his British Majesty might send a person deputed on purpose to settle these matters with the Emperor.

The mandarins here were very much afraid of us; it was very difficult to come with them to an understanding; whilst the various camps were quartered under tents on both sides of the river, and had to endure all the hardships of the rainy season, they took no decisive measures to settle our affairs; though they had proclaimed in their public edicts that these martial preparations were made in order to repel the barbarians, they always asserted, when we asked them, that all this had been merely done that his Excellency the Te-tuh of the district might hold a military review. His

Excellency professed himself to be our friend, but gave us never any proof of his friendship. Two mandarins, who were sent on purpose from Soo Chow in order to have a conference with us, admitted that our demands were just, but repugnant to the laws of the Celestial Empire; nevertheless, they were willing to report the matter to the deputy governor, who would report it farther. When we at first presented our petition to the taou-tae he refused to receive it, and after having received it he rejected it, whilst he sent a very surly edict to intimidate us. Both his plans proved abortive, and he was reduced to the necessity of taking back our petition and of issuing a more reasonable edict, after he had apologized for his rudeness.

We insisted here upon being permitted to buy provisions and silks; both were granted; indeed it appeared that everything was practicable when we firmly demanded it, and that even the least thing was refused when we humbly asked for it.

They seemed greatly to dread our staying too long and our proceeding up the river. We do not know the result, if the latter had taken place. They tried every expedient in order to get us away, and were neither sparing in tears, imprecations, and the greatest humiliations in order to gain their ends.

The numerous merchants at Shang-hae would gladly have entered with us upon commercial transactions, if the mandarins had in the least degree relaxed in their vigilance. In order to

strike terror amongst all the merchants, they seized upon a very rich gentleman, who was accused of having called our ship hither. Nothing could be so unfounded as this accusation, for we even did not know the name of the hong. Nevertheless, the people gave to their conversation a full flow, and never failed to discuss the justice or injustice of our cause.

I regret that we did not visit Soo Chow, one of the richest districts of the empire in the neighbourhood of Shang-hae ; nor did we see Tung Chow, at the entrance of the Yang-tsye-Keang, neither any place about the Yellow River ; but we visited Tsung-ming, an alluvial island at the north, at the mouth of the Great River. Whilst small unimportant islands in the Pacific Ocean have claimed the attention of the most able navigators, those extensive flourishing regions about the Yang-tsye-Keang and the Yellow River never attracted any notice, and until this moment they are never visited by Europeans, because they are unknown, and the coast has never been surveyed.

We had no time to visit Teen-tsin, the third emporium in the empire ; nor could we go to Kin Chow, Kae Chow, or Nankin, the principal emporiums of Manchow Tartary, whither hundreds of Chinese junks annually repair and carry on a most advantageous trade. Since the Shan-tung people have been permitted to colonize this country it has begun to increase in wealth and strength, and is now the most productive country amongst all the regions about Peking.

### *Shang-tung Province.*

We passed Kaon Chow, the most important emporium of this province, and the rendezvous of a great many junks. We touched at the Shan-tung promontory at Wei-hae-wei, where we found the mandarins very unfriendly. Shan-tung can give very little in exchange of imports. The people are strong and industrious, but very clumsy, and little qualified for merchants.

### *Remarks.*

Our sudden appearance on the coast transfused general terror. We endeavoured to silence their fears by the most positive declarations that we merely came to trade. Nothing could equal the cringing servility which most of the mandarins showed whenever we came in contact with them. If they were men of probity, it would have been very painful to our feelings to see them degraded on our account ; but the same men would be humble and arrogant, just as it suited their purposes.

The mandarins were everywhere anxious to get us away, and to send us to other districts which were not under their jurisdiction. From Fuh Chow, they recommended us to go to Ning-po ; from Ning-po they directed us to go to Chapo or Shang-hae ; from Shang-hae they tried to send us back to Cha-poo Ning-po, or Soo Chow, or advised us to go to Kaon Chow ; from Shan-tung they entreated us to go to Manchow Tartary. This their friendly advice was