

REALITIES OF CHINESE LIFE

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THE average Canadian, when he thinks of China and events there, does his thinking with a background of Canadian experience. Propagandists have played upon this fact. When they speak of the Chinese people, for example, many a Canadian thinks of a literate, self-governing population, not realizing that the vast majority in China are neither literate nor self-governing. When people speak of "Unequal Treaties", he easily thinks of treaties that are unfair, because he does not know that the "inequality" was and it quite as much a matter of choice with the Chinese as with the Westerners. For example, take the matter of buying land. The Chinese do not want foreigners to buy their land; so nobody but missionaries can own land in the interior of the country. But if the treaties were made *equal*, it would mean that the British, American, Japanese, etc., could purchase land in the interior of China, just as Chinese do in other countries. Again, when the matter of "extraterritoriality" is mentioned to your average Canadian, he thinks of China as anything but what she really is, and does not realize the state of lawlessness and maladministration of justice there.

There are hundreds of interesting events occurring in China these days, which are never reported in the daily press of this country. It is the purpose of the present article to relate one or two of them, not only interesting, but informing as to the state of affairs on the coasts. This will perhaps help to answer the question which may have arisen in the minds of some readers; "What business have the Western Powers with warships in Chinese waters?"

On Tuesday, the sixth day of November last, the steamer *Hsinchi*, owned by the China Merchants Company, was due to leave Shanghai for Foochow. In addition to some nine hundred Chinese passengers, there were five saloon passengers; Rev. Wade Crawford-Barclay of the Methodist Mission, Mr. H. A. Powell of the American-Foreign Insurance Association, Mrs. Hubbard, widow of the former Harbour Master at Foochow, Miss A. M. Todd of the Methodist Mission, and Dr. Shu, a medical officer of the Chinese Navy, who of course had western training.

The vessel could not proceed that morning on account of the fog, but later proceeded on her way. The fog settled down so

thick that she again had to anchor. At 9 o'clock on Thursday morning she was still lying-to, and the fog was even more dense. The passengers became restless. You who are accustomed to the Anglo-Saxon respect for those in authority, try to imagine, if you can, the situation. The nine hundred Chinese passengers became so threatening in their attitude that, to avoid trouble, Captain Tollefsen felt it necessary to proceed slowly and cautiously on his course. At about 2.40 on Thursday afternoon they passed Straw Rock, and a short time later the *Hsinchi* struck a submerged rock with a grinding crash, tearing out some of her bottom plates. You can imagine what would happen among the horde who a little before were so easily influenced by mob psychology as to threaten the captain for not proceeding in the dangerous fog. Of course a panic started. It included most of the crew as well as the Chinese passengers. The captain realized that it was impossible to calm their fears, so ran his ship towards Tae Island, which he knew to be in the vicinity.

The ship was anchored within about 400 yards of the island, in less than 15 fathoms of water. Mob fears were calmed somewhat for a time, only to break out afresh when reports were spread that the hold was leaking badly. The passengers and all the crew except five completely lost their heads. European passengers state that it was really the stewards who caused the worst panic, for at this time they started a dash for the boats. With no leadership, about one hundred people tried to lower the first boat. The captain had no firearms, so could not interfere. After about half an hour the boat was swung out, only to have the bottom fall completely out of her. The second lifeboat was swung out. No. 2 com-pradore with three relatives and three of the crew scrambled into it, and promptly pushed off before anyone else could get aboard. That is typical of course of the Chinese, to feel some responsibility for one's relatives, but not for anyone else. In this case they paid dearly for their heartless attitude, for the boat had neither oars nor supplies, and was later picked up empty.

No. 4 lifeboat was launched, and filled with people. Probably the Chinese overloaded it, just as they overload automobiles, electric light plants, and other western innovations. At any rate the boat was no sooner away from the ship's side than it went to the bottom, leaving the shrieking passengers in the water. Nobody knows how many did not reach the shore.

Ultimately a boat with about fifty persons in it got away safely, and ran for the desolate island. A little later another boat left, and with the aid of these two boats, and rafts, about two or three

hundred passengers and members of the crew arrived at the island. Some were almost naked, having had their clothing torn from them in the mad rush. The only shelter on the island was a little joss-house, intended to hold perhaps half a dozen people. Into this crowded about 35 Chinese, who trampled down the weaker ones, including women and children. It was by this time pouring rain, which came down in icy torrents. If such an event had happened anywhere else in the world, it would have appeared in the press of the world; but because it was in China, where hundreds of thousands of unfortunates die of starvation, or are killed by their brutal fellow-citizens of the Chinese Republic, it received notice only in papers published in China. The death of thousands of Chinese does not make as good news for our American and Canadian editors to publish as the murder of some individual by a Chicago gunman.

In the meantime, what had become of the four foreign passengers, and Dr. Shu, with his foreign training? These had remained calm, realized that even if the ship did sink, the top bridge would not be submerged, and removed themselves and belongings to that vantage point. The night was dreadful enough for them;—what was it for the Chinese on the island?

The ship's pumps had failed to act. At 10 o'clock the next morning there was over ten feet of water in the front hold, and as a last resort the captain with his loyal five members of the crew threw overboard everything they could move, including cases of fruit and other deck cargo. There were still Chinese passengers on the ship, and they were calmed down a little by the awful night they had spent, but were of no use to help with this work. Seeing that his efforts would not sufficiently lighten the ship, Captain Tolleffsen decided to run her full speed ahead and pile her up on the rocky coast. There was a meagre crew, only the captain, 2nd mate, chief engineer, and five men. The chief engineer and one deck hand went below to raise steam. Water was beginning to pour into the engine room, where bulkheads were giving way. Suddenly a fresh panic started among the crazed Chinese passengers. The cry of "Pirates" was raised. Many plunged into the sea to swim for shore, although a goodly number could not swim, and were thus drowned. A couple of Chinese boats came alongside, and several hundred Chinese passengers tried to crowd into them, upsetting the boats and throwing all into the icy water. Some were able to right these boats, and got ashore. A good many never reached shore.

Later in the day other Chinese boats appeared, and some of the remaining passengers went ashore in those. When enough of

these innocent "fishermen" had arrived, they descended upon the ship like a flock of vultures, and looted her thoroughly. They were armed with weapons of various sorts, and were a wild looking set. The captain of the *Hsinchi*, with foreign passengers and his small but loyal crew, remained on the bridge. They were unarmed, but the pirates did not harm them. Everything moveable was carried off, and useful things that could not be removed the pirates wantonly destroyed. They left the ship in a short time little but an empty hulk, except that the forehold was full of cargo and water. By that time the one fireman and engineer below had got up steam, and the captain drove his vessel full speed ahead, until with a rending crash she piled up on the shore. Again the pirates came to take what their boats would not hold the first time, but again they did not attack the foreigners.

That evening the foreign passengers and Dr. Shu went on shore. They spent a most miserable night there in a cold torrent of rain. Seeing that the *Hsinchi* was intact next morning, they made their way aboard again. They found the captain had been busy during the night and secured a steel hawser to a rock in front of the ship, and others to both port and starboard. They also discovered that the pirates had been busy through the night robbing all the poor, half-frozen, half-naked Chinese passengers whom they could find. Many of these Chinese later returned to the ship when they saw the foreigners going to leave the island.

When a big junk came alongside, Mr. Powell bribed the owner to take him to Encog lighthouse, which is about 13 miles from the place where the *Hsinchi* lay. Dr. Shu also bribed another junk to take him to a fishing village where he knew there was a police launch. As soon as they left, the looting began again. This time they tried to take things from the flooded hold, as well as things they had previously broken. Mr. Powell and Dr. Shu had left on Friday morning about 10 o'clock. About the same hour next morning the police launch appeared with two large junks. In spite of the police, the passengers rushed these junks, loading them to capacity. The police had wired for the assistance of a Chinese gunboat. A little later Mr. Powell appeared. He had arranged for the lighthouse to fly distress signals and direct any passing steamer to the scene of the wreck. Saturday night passed rather quietly, as compared with the preceding three.

On Sunday morning the Dutch steamer *Tijitaroem*, of the Java-China-Japan Line, discovered an empty lifeboat from the *Hsinchi* at a point some 50 miles south of Encog lighthouse. Reasoning that there had been a wreck, the captain made for the

lighthouse, thinking it might be flying distress signals. Although the weather was very thick, he was able to pick up the signal, and so discovered the *Hsinchi*. When the Dutch steamer was sighted, some members of the crew who were still on the island returned to their ship. At Captain Tolleffsen's request the Dutch steamer wirelessly for the assistance of gunboats to clear the ship of pirates who were still trying to get a little more. These signals were picked up by the British destroyer *Serapis*, which quickly proceeded to the scene, and captured nineteen pirates and two junks loaded with cargo from the *Hsinchi*. The *Serapis* stood by until the arrival of officials of the China Merchants' Steam Navigation Company, on Tuesday.

Before the last pirates left, they had set the *Hsinchi* on fire, and their work together with the wrecking left her in a hopeless condition, so all the crew were taken off, excepting the seven men who had gone adrift in a lifeboat. The ship was valued at about \$100,000 in Canadian money, and the cargo at about half that amount.

This story is indeed only one of a goodly number that could be told of the events that have happened during the last two years, where piracy occupied the centre of the stage. The Chinese authorities, such as there are, cannot spare their hundreds of thousands of soldiers for such work as preventing lawlessness, because they have to use them in their civil wars, so it is a good thing there are warships of civilized nations cruising through those waters. When such events as those just narrated can occur even under present conditions, one wonders what would happen if the nations were depending on Chinese for the suppression of piracy in the Far East.

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Another of China's Sorrows.

The Yellow River which occasionally causes such death and destruction, with subsequent famine, that it is called "China's Sorrow", is not by any means the only pressing domestic problem which faces the Nationalist Government. As a matter of fact, this Government has not yet begun to tackle these internal problems, having hitherto been content to try to turn the attention of the oppressed people to the foreigner as the great cause of their troubles. Indeed the Nanking authorities, who are considered to be the Government, and who so loudly demand new treaties in the name of all China, are at present receiving revenue from only *five* of the eighteen provinces which formerly constituted China. The Province of Kansu is a problem by itself.

Kansu is far removed from civilization, because the railway does not penetrate into that province, and cart travel is slow. Therefore, we have heard little or nothing on this side of the world about the recent wars, massacres, and famine there. It is stated that more than 200,000 people have been killed in Kansu during 1928. Great numbers were wandering about without homes or food to face the onset of winter. What their lot has been we can only imagine, until perhaps some missionary sends word months after the event. One resident in that province spoke of it as a "doomed province". Kansu has been subjected, as have many of the other parts of China, to the burden of military operations and exactions, crushing taxation, and compulsory growing of opium instead of food crops. But the great cause of the mortality in recent months has been a fresh outbreak of Moslem atrocities and Chinese counter-atrocities.

The present Moslem rebellion is a case of history repeating itself, for the province has had two others within the memory of persons living. Kansu is the strongest centre of Mohanmedanism in China. There are estimated to be about three million adherents of Islam there. These are of various groups. There are the descendants of Moslems who long ago came overland from Arabia and Persia, and their Chinese proselytes; Mongolian Moslems who probably came in with Kublai Khan; the Salars, who came more recently from Samarkand and speak Turki. These all are called Hui-hui, and hold themselves apart from the Chinese among whom they live. Sometimes there are quarrels among the various sects of Mohammedans.

In 1862 the Tungan Rebellion broke out, and it lasted for 12 years. It was estimated that ten million lives were lost during that time. This was not a religious war, but grew out of the resentment of the Moslems against the Chinese in political matters. Massacre, famine, and even cannibalism became common, before the uprising was put down by General Tso Tsung-t'ang, who became viceroy of the province and administered so well that his name is still remembered.

In 1895-96 there was another rebellion. It seems a dispute arose between two sects of Moslems as to whether a Moslem under 40 years of age should or should not wear a beard! The Chinese official in trying to settle the quarrel seized the leader of the Salars and had him crucified. Thereupon all Moslems united against the Chinese. Massacres and counter-massacres again became prevalent. The outburst was finally put down by General Tung Fu-hsiang. A few years later this man became better known to

the Western world through his attack upon the Legations in Peking in 1900. He himself was a Moslem, but in 1896 sided against the rebels. Since that time the Mohammedans have been recognized as part of the Chinese nation. In the flag of the republic, which consisted of stripes of the colours red, yellow, blue, white, black, the white bar was supposed to represent the Moslems.

The present revolt was doubtless due mostly to the ambition of one Moslem chief, who thought to oust the provincial Government as set up by the Nationalist Party, and substitute himself and fellow Moslems. He took advantage of the withdrawal of troops to fight against the Manchurian war-lord, Chang Tso-lin. The usual fanaticism of Kansu soon followed. Trouble began in April of last year. A Mr. W. W. Simpson was authority for the statement that near Hochow alone nearly 10,000 Chinese civilians were massacred, and even more have died of famine and pestilence. No quarter was given on either side, and non-combatants were not considered. He stated at the time of writing that more than half a million people have been destroyed by war, famine, and pestilence in Kansu during a few months in 1928. Of course many turned to banditry, to prey on their fellow-unfortunates. Hundreds of children wandered about uncared for. That was reported late in the fall. One can imagine the horrors of winter.

The Nanking Government claims a place in the League of Nations, and declares it is now ruling over a united China. It should therefore accept responsibility for these conditions in Kansu, and if and when it does so, it will surely have the sympathy and practical support of the civilized world. But when the world knows about such matters, it cannot have so much sympathy for a Government of talkers, who shirk such responsibility whilst talking loudly about the imaginary oppression of China by Western nations. It is perhaps unfortunate for the real PEOPLE of China that the world has heard much of late about this oppression, and little or nothing about such events as the Moslem uprising in Kansu.