

MEMORIES OF TIENTSIN

BY

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(McHeish)

[The following lecture was delivered at a meeting of the Tientsin Union Church Literary and Social Guild on the 31st ult.] *March 31 1914.*

Before leaving England in July 1886, I read every book available on North China in general, and Tientsin in particular. An old friend, Dr. George Thin, who was also a veteran China-hand, lent me a book by the P.M.O. of the British Expeditionary Force of 1860. I forget his name, but the book was a mass of well digested information of the statistical type, and ended with a sentence something like this:—

“This will ever be a red-letter day in my life, for on this day I left for good a city and neighbourhood which I shall ever regard as the abomination of desolation and the *no plus ultra* of discomfort and mental and bodily misery.”

This sentence, though verbally inexact, conveys with fair accuracy the Army-doctor's verdict. A judgment like this by a competent scientific observer carried much weight, and I had a somewhat depressing time on my way out. This culminated as I approached the Settlement in a steam-launch on September 3rd, 1886; and when Mrs. Detring and her three charming little girls, who had been my fellow-passengers from Port Arthur, pointed out the Bund from the lower end of the Harbour reach, I was all agog to know if my fears were about to be realised.

Happily things were nothing like as black as they had been painted: the Doctor had described affairs as he knew them in Tientsin Native City two or three years before the Concession began to take shape, and 23 or 24 years before my time. He knew nothing of Foreign Tientsin, for the simple reason that it was non-existent in his day.

What then did I see? Well, the Bund was not unlike the view it presents in these days. Cargo hid its beauties just as

it does now: the trees were a little more verdant, and the Compounds less packed with big go-downs than at present. Victoria Road on the other hand was quite different: it had infinitely less traffic, no side-paths, poor drains, only three stores and those all of the one-storey type: there was no Town Hall, and the lordly B.M.C. was content with exiguous buildings: Victoria Park was unenclosed and more or less of a waste bit, sanctified now and then by a game of cricket, as Consul-General Fulford has good cause to remember; but as often profaned by being the receptacle of shot-rubbish. Dignified bank buildings, teeming caravansaries, noble Clubs and fine 'hong' premises were wholly absent; and the then German Consulate and the house now occupied by Mr. Tipper were the only two-storied buildings along the entire thoroughfare. The bungalow building of the well-known compra-Doric 'Order' reigned supreme, and there were not ten buildings in the place which could boast of two stories. Mr. W. W. Dickinson and Mr. Startseff caused a mild sensation that year by building eight two-storied houses of which five are still extant, Mr. Carter's office being one of them, and we thought them quite handsome structures. Taku Road was all but the Western limit of civilization: the houses at present occupied by Mr. Argent, Mr. Gipperich, and Mr. Clarke were the only exception. For the greater part the West side of the Taku Road was open space, diversified by evil smelling ponds and countless graves. There were the beginnings of two roads, one leading to the Cemetery, and the other the first section of Meadows Road, which was then part and parcel of the newly constructed Race Course Road. The site of the Kai Lan offices was a somewhat feeble attempt at a public-garden, which was given up next year when the Council decided to celebrate the Jubilee of the great Queen by inaugurating Victoria Park.

Two very mediocre—worst of all the ochres—hotels were located on the Bund, of which the Globe, now known as the Queen's, was by far the finer sample of the architect's art. The Astor House of those days, though fairly comfortable within, seemed a poor decrepit old ramshackle in the last stages of outward dissolution.

The French Concession was far in the wake of its British sister, and was just beginning to feel the pulsation of a new life. The Rue de France existed, but was a very poor affair: it was flanked on the West by a Chinese quarter as unsavoury as it was disreputable. This in turn was flanked by the Mission quarter, which in more than one sense redeemed the Taku Road. The present Rue de Paris was a Chinese Market where suttlers sold and squeezed *ad lib.* Beyond Rue Dillon one got lost in the labyrinths of a purely Chinese town with appalling smells: in the words of Moore slightly modified:—

“Take all the smells of all the spheres,

“Multiply each through endless years,

“One whif-full of this out-smelled them all.”

This then roughly was the setting of that social entity yclept Foreign Tientsin. There was no place where one could get a bird's eye view of the suburbs, but when Gordon Hall towers were finished in 1889, Foreigners and Chinese eager to enlarge their horizon, flocked up so numerously as to become a nuisance to the B.M.C. staff. The impression that the view gave me was that there was more water than land, but this was probably because water stares so. My own property in Meadows Road, Mr. von Hanneken's compound, Major Nathan's new garden, the site of All Saints' were nearly all water. I remember a man, woman, horse-and-trap being rescued with the greatest difficulty from the deep pond on which All Saints, or shall I say All We Saints, are now dryly enthroned. From this environment our only escape was to hilarious Taku, a place which looked as if forsaken of the Lord. We got up and down by steamers and tow-boats at all times, and as the folk were then, as now, exceedingly kind and hospitable, we often went. Our young 'bloods' sometimes rode

down, greatly daring the wonks and rag-tag-and-bob-tail of the Villages. I remember Capt. Maturin of the gun-boat actually walking it; but for weeks afterwards he could hardly speak for inflated pride. Chefoo was our next stopping place after Taku: there was practically no Tong Ku till the Railway got to it in 1888; and though Tong Shan existed, it was practically inaccessible except by a tedious journey by pony, cart or boat. Peking was anything from two to four days distant by house-boat to Tung Chow; and the I.G. (Sir Robert Hart) was blessed by two communities when he located a well appointed house-boat at Ho Hsi Wu to act the part of a dak-bungalow.

Such was Foreign Tientsin when I first saw it in 1886. Few places in the world had a more depressing physical environment or a more exhilarating and glorious sky. A wise baby-girl (possibly here tonight) spoke very truth of very truth when she said that Tientsin was HAO T'EN WU TI while England was HAO TI WU T'EN (The one 'Beautiful Heaven but no earth,' the other 'Beautiful earth but no Heaven.) Lest I shock any Chinese scholar present, let me cover my retreat by saying that the baby-talk is quoted for its fine epigrammatic truth, and not for its accuracy as good Chinese. To illustrate the glories of our sky I may quote facts which will doubtless be regarded as a traveller's tale:—I myself, after posing as a doubting Thomas, have seen from the Mud Wall both the Western hills of Peking and Tong Shan, and *quite clearly* too, though not at the same time. Phenomenal refraction of course played a great part in this extraordinary vision: *I had not been having anything.* What did we do with ourselves in these halcyon days? Well, we followed our daily business and the pursuit of pleasure with equal strenuousness. The nature of our trade and the lack of communication with the outside world severely conditioned our lives. When there was work to be done, we did it; but for three months each year when blustering Boreas held us in his grip, we turned ourselves out to play with a zeal which would have delighted Charles Kingsley.

Tientsin in those days indulged in the cult of the horse with even more ardour than it does now, and the pig-skin had its giants. I have seen that fine old heart of Scottish oak, Mr. James Stewart, in the saddle; and Mr. J. Dickinson played the role of one of our leading 'jocks' for many years after my arrival. I remember a Russian who could not ride even a little bit win the 'Champions' in the easiest manner possible. He came in with one hand drenched in blood from being chafed by the saddle to which he clung for dear life: he simply sat quite still, and allowed his very fine 'mount' *Gerold* to win just as he liked. It may interest some of you to know that I hold a record in the annals of the local Race Club. I have been nearly twenty-eight year a member, and have *never once* been to the morning training. I once had a mafoo who was a bit of a character: he insisted that the pony which he, as my faithful Sancho, rode was 'fast,' and should be tried: it was done, but I might as well have tried a dray-horse for the Derby. This would-be champion was anthropophagus, and took a strong fancy for a bit of my upper thigh, of which I have always been inordinately proud: being a patient man, I said nothing; but when he tore a piece as big as a doiley from the breast of a new coat, I remonstrated with the Mafoo and said 'Che pi ma yao jen' This horse bites' he replied 'What can master expect for ten dollars?' The subject became so painful and personal that I dropped it. My chief connexion with the Race Club was that I kept their records for many years and tried to make an unholy alliance between literature and arithmetic in my journalistic songs of triumph.

The social queen of those days was a lady who by her beauty, wit and personal charm justly gained, and rightly kept her throne—as she is still happily with us, wild horses will not drag her name from me. The social king was a grand old American gentleman: in 'Frisco he was hailed as the prince of wits, and called 'Uncle George': in Tientsin our affection and esteem cohered round him as 'Mr. Bromley.' He had a positive genius for all the amenities of social life: was equally

at home at an afternoon Prayer Meeting, or at a midnight supper with the 'boys' in the Bowling Alley. Witty and eloquent were no just epithets for him: he was wit and eloquence embodied in urbanity and human kindness. Every-body and every animal and bird loved him; and it was the prettiest sight to see him feeding his flocks of impudent sparrows at the Consulate door—a droll little bungalow on the site of the present Russo-Asiatic Bank. Brilliant and able as he was, he could not play billiards, and he conceived a strong affection for my unworthy self because my advent to the Port brought him a man bad enough to play with, and to *beat*. When he was recalled, Viceroy Li joined with the whole foreign Community in memorialising Washington that he should be allowed to stay, but the Department was obdurate. We feted him on his seventieth birthday and prayed for his health and happiness; and our prayers were answered, for he lived till he was ninety as the supreme wit of the Bohemian Club in San Francisco. Shortly before his death I had a most charming letter from him full of the milk of human kindness: it accompanied his photograph which I shall now circulate, and I dare any truthful man or woman present to say that they have ever seen a handsomer old man. His sallies of wit were wonderful; he was never at a loss and never found wanting. Certainly the wittiest remark it was ever my good fortune to hear came from him as a mere *obiter dicta*:—Our Harbour Master of those days was a kindly soul who sang a rollicking song in a big bass voice of great compass: he had but one failing, he was as 'H'-less as a vowel, though his life was otherwise consonant with every virtue. Mr. Bromley introduced him at a Smoking Concert by saying "his vocal range was equal to his professional, and extended from the low C "at the Bar to the 'igh G in Peking." America in those days contributed much to the gaiety of the Nations here assembled. In Mr. R. M. Brown, the Agent of Messrs. Russel and Co., we had a wag of quite a different water: when he took to playing the goat or acting the part of the circus clown, he used to paralyse the

servants with laughter, and prevent them doing their duty. There was however one exception: he had a specially selected 'boy' known as 'Dismal Daniel,' because he was impervious to fun or any human enjoyment except that originating in squeeze. Then too the next American Consul but one to Mr. Bromley was a Yorrick from Kentucky, a fellow of infinite jest and most excellent fancy. He asked a lady friend of ours if "she clawed ivories and screamed," by which he meant "do you play and sing"? He could also extinguish a candle at eight feet; and he once remarked before christening a new carpet with his buccal juice, "Marm, that's an elegant cloth." I need not tell this audience that the reputation of this quaint 'eccentric' has since then been obliterated by a series of American Consuls who, by their culture and high character have adequately represented the dignity of their country.

Smoking Concerts played a great part in our amusements of those days and the mantle of the inimitable Bromley fell on another fine specimen of manhood in Mr. H. W. Walker. He was a quiet unassuming man of great ability with a fine aptitude for versification. On one occasion Mr. Bromley hoped to take a nice 'rise' out of the modest man, and called on him for a song, thinking that he was asking for the impossible; but for once he caught a Tartar; to his and to everybody else's amazement and delight, Mr. Walker rose and gave his first and best version of the "Two Obadiahs," taking off in impromptu verse the various incidents and comicalities of the evening. He leaped into fame in one bound, and ever afterwards no social function was complete without a topical song from Walker. I would give a very inadequate idea of a fine fellow if I limited myself to his versification; he was good all round, and unapproachable for quiet pawky repartee: his shafts were always feathered with truth, went straight to the bull's-eye, but never rankled there.

Another distinguished T'sinner of those days was the late Alexander Michie who was an accomplished man of letters and a born journalist. He was author of the

"Englishman in China" (a life of Sir Rutherford Alcock) one of the most brilliant books on China since the days of the Abbé Huc. In 1886 he started the *Chinese Times*, and continued it for over four years. This brilliant 'weekly' is a perfect mine of information on things Chinese; and a mine from which one can dig and prig without the smallest danger of ever being found out: it is like 'Hazzlitt' in this respect. The amount of budding talent which Mr. Michie gathered around him was amazing: old friends like Dr. Arthur Smith, Dr. George Candlin, Rev. Jonathan Lees, Rev. J. Innocent, Mr. Crosset—the St. Francis of China—Gilmour of Mongolia, Ross and MacIntyre of Manchuria, Sir Charles Addis and Mr. J. O. P. Bland all took strong flight in this paper. Fine sinologues like Professor Bullock, the late Rev. Geo. Owen and the venerable and venerated Dr. Martin, were as plentiful as autumnal leaves in Valombrossa; while poets and critics were as cheap as 'two a penny.' Tientsin was justly proud of its paper, which exercised a big influence and created no small amount of envy up and down the China Coast. Whenever my memory fails me on the details of Auld Lang Syne, I have only to look at the pages of the *Chinese Times* to open the flood-gates, and to get streams far more copious than I can deal with.

One of its earliest numbers strongly advocated a Town Band, and sure enough within a short time a Band was enlisted and trained. It was composed of the coolie class, and was later on sustained by the apprenticeship system. For thirteen years it served our musical needs, and, when all the handicaps are considered, did so wonderfully well. Our best amateur musicians co-operated with Mons. Bigel, the conductor, and supplemented his efforts; and especially did Messrs. Martinoff, Guy Hillier, Watts Doney and latterly Mr. E. L. Cockell give yeoman service in this way. It attended all our balls and dances, and gave *al fresco* music in the Park, playing as often as four and even five times a week. It must have had a repertory of over one hundred pieces, many of them fairly ambitious like Verdi's '*Il Trovatore*.' The pro-

grammes were printed a week in advance, and we used to scan them with all the eagerness of astronomers on the look out for a new planet. The Band divided the honours of Victoria Park with our bonnie rosy-faced bairns, the Ladies' Tennis Club and the B.M.C. 'Zoo'; and I well remember Dr. and Mrs. Navins from Chefoo standing thunderstruck (in a double sense) in its presence, and saying it was the most astounding sight and sound they had known during a thirty years' residence in China. It was a great source of discord as well as of harmony, for we fought like cats over its management. It had at last to follow the example of other institutions and myself and become a purely Municipal detail. Later on, it became increasingly difficult to keep the men together, as the Military commanders of the Province bribed our men away to their Camps with higher wages; and I grieve to say that H. E. Yuan Shih Kai was believed to be an arrant offender in this way: when we had got our boys licked into shape, his people enticed them down to Hsiao Shan. I am at a loss to say whether Sir Robert Hart borrowed our light, or we his, in this matter of a Chinese Band; but in any case he finally beat us at the game, for he got an accomplished musician in Senor Encarnacco to take care of his orchestra, which by the bye still survives under the generous patronage of Sir Robert Bredon. We never aspired to 'strings,' but the Peking men did. Both were very apt at picking up new tunes; and I remember the astonishment of a musical enthusiast from home, who on hearing them play, promised to send them the score of 'Daisy Bell,' which was the latest musical 'rage' in London. By sheer coincidence the score had come to Tientsin that morning by post, and Mr. Bellingham had at once put it in practice, with the result that they played it that night immediately after the London visitor had expressed his pleasure. The Boxer Rebellion sent our Band sky high, and it never came down again; but for years afterwards when any of the old-hands went up to the Yamen receptions, Major Wong, our ex-conductor and the

chief musician to the Viceroy, used to give us a musical salute with a vim and a grin in honour of old times, which neither our rank nor merit deserved.

The year 1886 saw the first St. Andrew's Ball, the Decauville Railway, and a tael at 4.10½. The Ball, held as all social functions then were, in the Lyceum Theatre of the Club, was a wonderful 'show' for Tientsin. There were actually 135 present, and, *mirabile dictu*, of these 31 were ladies: we had of course to scour Taku and Tong Shan to make a score like this. Of this number there are 4 men and 2 ladies still in the Port. The 'Decauville' was a little Gallic salt spread by skilful fowlers on the tail of that wary old bird, Li Hung Chang, or, if I may mix my metaphors a sprat to catch a mackerel. It started behind Mr. Lai Sun's house in the Canton Road, dodged in and out among the graves of the present B.M.E. area, went out near the Electric Light Works and the Race Course Road gate, and brought the daring voyagers back in seven minutes. Li, mighty satrap, ventured his vice-regal anatomy in the 'car'; and after the opening ceremony, led us all into Mr. Lai Sun's house where we toasted 'Success to Railways in China' in the foaming grape of Eastern France. This house later on became the headquarters of the China Inland Mission and a Temple of Temperance; and knowing the saintly family which now adorns it, I grieve thus to chronicle its pristine degradation. Talking of Railways, reminds me that in November 23rd, of the same year 1886, Mrs. Kinder at Tsu Kuo Chang turned the first sod of the Peking and Moukden Line: the railway reached Lu Tai early in 1887, Tong Ku the same year and trains began to run from Tientsin to Tong Shan in 1888.

About this time too 1886-7 the B.M.C. purchased from Mr. Startseff the Western half of the spare lot in Victoria Road, and made arrangements with Messrs. Jardine to take over their eight years' lease of the Eastern portion. This led later on in 1887 to the institution of one of our most valuable social assets namely Victoria Park, as a permanent memorial in Tientsin of the great and good Queen. It

is odd to note in these days that this proposal did not pass without a strong protest from the late Mr. James Henderson, a painfully virtuous resident who had not one redeeming vice, and who was usually agin' the Government. His objection in this case was not to the policy in itself, but to the Council spending the Municipal funds without the previous consent of the Landrenters. The Consul of the day supported Mr. Henderson; but the Landrenters stood by their Council then very ably led by Mr. Detring. This was but a phase of a keen contention that lasted for years between the Consulate and the Council as to the powers of the latter body. Mr. Detring, strongly supported by the Landrenters as a body, sought to obtain power to raise loans, and to undertake all the duties and responsibilities of an English 'corporation.' The Consulate was eager to keep it in leading strings. Slowly but surely the Council won its emancipation, but not without some attendant doubt on the formal legality of its claims.

This year the Council proposed to spend Tls. 2,000 on a survey of the Hai Ho, then only known as Pei Ho. This was the primordial germ of the Hai Ho Conservancy: by a curious coincidence Mr. A. de Linde appeared in the Port at this time, and thus we got an approximation to the poetic synchronism of the 'hour and the man.'

The T.A.D.C. this year enlisted strong recruits in the persons of Mr. and Mrs. A. W. Harvey Bellingham who were so long, so ably and so honorably associated with our local Thespians, and indeed with every Club and institution which affected the welfare of Tientsin. The Corps or Club, I am not sure which it is, this year gave 'Our Boys' with Mr. Edmund Cousins in the role of Middlewick the genial Butterman. He excelled himself in this delightful presentation, and I can still hear him speaking with his Son on the subject of Vesuvius:—"Oh! Chawlie! why didn't you 'ave an eruption. I told you to spare no expense."

Mr. Cousins's co-actor on this occasion was our ex-Commissioner of Customs Mr. Harry Hillier; while Mr. Fulford appeared

in the programme under the thin disguise of Mr. Brimmingwater. Our appetite grew by what it fed on, and we aimed at higher game; but still, when it became known that the T.A.D.C. was aspiring to 'The Mikado' and later on to 'Patience,' the pates of the sapient wagged in dire prognostic. Both came off triumphantly, and Union Church folk will be either shocked or delighted to hear that Mr. and Mrs. W. C. C. Anderson were the chief contributors to the success of each; indeed, Mrs. Anderson was so striking and brilliant a success, that the A.D.C. went out of its way to give her a permanent memento of their gratitude. Messrs. Bellingham and Ash were early discovered to have a positive genius for comic opera. When we gave the immortal 'Pinafore' in the early Nineties, we probably reached high water mark in this special line: the cast is worth chronicling even now:—Mrs. von Hanneken made her first appearance as a *diva* in the role of Josephine'; Mr. Ellert, now the London Manager of the Deutsche Bank, was Ralph Rackstraw; Mr. F. Aglen, the Inspector General, was Captain Coreoran; Mr. Ash, 'Sir Joseph Porter'; Mrs. Bellingham a splendid 'Buttercup'; and her husband the most nefarious 'Dick Deadeye' that ever cut a stage throat. The man-o'-war's deck was a triumph of realistic scenery: we had a revolving light in a noble lighthouse on shore, real marines, and bo'suns' mates piping their whistles; and a Moon which rose in beauty, sailed across the Heavens in majesty, and set at the exact time to allow the rascally Deadeye to start his machinations. I was tickled to the death to hear our Stage-Manager harranguing the Moon, who was lying flat on his stomach high up in the 'flies' turning a handle with much complacency. "You pig of a Moon, if you don't keep her flat round to the audience and make her go slower, I'll apply my bootmaker to your tailor, and cut you two dollars."

I cannot leave the A.D.C. without stating that amusement rather than high art was our chief aim. We laid ourselves out to cater for the children at Xmas and the

Pantomime was the *master-piece* of the year: we gave them a fine Christmas Tree at the same time, with presents for every child in the room; and there was always a harlequinade. I have seen a fine strapping athletic Columbine 5'-10" high come of an egg, and do a *pas de seul* all round the Stage before a gasping audience, as you will see by the photograph I now circulate. The way the Pantomime was prepared was as wonderful as the show itself. A nursery story was chosen, two or three poets were turned on to make the quips and jokes, and the actors told to find their own songs and tunes: and of course the results were ludicrous. Every man kept his best things hidden till the evening of the performance, and then it was found that we all had the same subjects and local allusions in our topical songs. The repetitions was dreadful, but nobody minded. I regret to confess that quite without my own knowledge a dresser once did me up so as to present a ludicrous likeness to a virtuous and excellent citizen; and I was greatly taken aback to find my entrance received with shouts of laughter.

From the theatre let me turn to the Temple. Union Church was our only protestant church in those days. The services were taken by a series of volunteers who did right well by us.

Just before my arrival, stout old Consul Davenport used to wear a very stiff upper-lip to any preacher who exceeded the half-hour: sitting in the front seat, he would whip out his watch and hold it up before the reverend gentleman in a very significant way. On one occasion a dear Padre who was preaching said in loud apology "Just one minute Mr. Davenport, I'll only keep you a few moments." Bishop Scott is said to have read himself into his diocese in Union Church in 1881; the old building was still standing a few months ago in the Methodist Compound. The Anglicans came in 1890 in the person of the Rev. W. Brerton who had a fine and crusted wit, like old Port. I note in the *Chinese Times* that in 1887 Union Church had a total income of \$290, nearly all derived from seat-rents, and an expenditure of \$245.

On one occasion our clergyman forgot to come, and the Congregation was edified by an audible *soffo voce* contention between Messrs. Edmund Cousins, Walker and my unworthy self, as to who ought to read the Service. I weakly allowed myself to be bullied into it on the ground that the Schoolmaster was nearest akin to the Parson.

In the late Eighties we got much amusement from the reports sent down from Peking of the doings of the metropolitan Oriental Society. This august but somnulent society had got on to stereotyped lines and was sadly weighted by dry bones like those which troubled Ezekiel. Two wild and wayward wags in the persons of John Jordan and Charles Addis determined to galvanise it into life; there was a grand flutter in the dove-cotes of the Sinologues. Those who know the urbane kindness of our present Minister and his all tolerant courtesy should read his deadly onsets and philippics against Drs. Drysdust and Co., The youngsters were positive terrors, and nothing could hold them in: in the meantime the clever and sly Editor of Tientsin paper chuckled and chortled to get such splendid copy.

The Customs House was built in 1887, and we thought it quite an *imposing* affair at the time. Its builder, Mr. Chambers, was in my modest opinion a finer engineer than architect: he was also responsible for the Pei Yang University, now the German Head-Quarters, and also for the first and fundamental design for Gordon Hall. He was a most interesting man and was said to have been the last European to escape from Khartum before the Gordon tragedy. This same Jubilee Year saw the beginning of the Chamber of Commerce, the arrival of a travelling Circus and a military balloon, both of which vastly impressed the Chinese though they were greatly disappointed with the size of the lions—"not much bigger than dogs"—they said. I may state as a curious example of human eccentricity that an intimate friend of my own, and a very amiable man, went to the Circus every night for a month, telling me "Ma Lao Yeh, I could never forgive myself if that tiger bit off the trainer's head, and I was

not present to see it done." This is a true bill.

The event of the year was of course the celebration of the First Jubilee: we did it right royally and loyally by a Church Service in the morning, sports at the Race Course (in which Mrs. von Hanneken and the Rev. Arnold Bryson began their athletic careers as winners) and the opening of Victoria Park with fireworks galore in the evening. The surplus funds were spent in the existing Band Stand. Most of my hearers know that the Second Jubilee left permanent memorials in the place in the Victoria Hospital and the Recreation Ground Pavilion, the latter the generous gift of Mr. and Mrs. W. C. C. Anderson.

In the Eighties and early Nineties foreign Tientsin used to get endless fun and annoyance out of a nondescript *declassé* foreigner who, however, was repudiated by his Consul. He was reputed to steal our letters from the pigeon-holes of the Steamer Company Offices where our correspondence was usually to be found; he was also credited with the waylaying of chit-coolies, and cribbing the contents of letters when slackly closed, and also of buying up the contents of 'hong' waste-paper baskets with the idea of extracting black-mail. In short there was no rascality or crime which he was believed to be unable to achieve. He was the correspondent of a Shanghai paper and used to send down the most astonishing hodge-podge of our local doings. He did not hesitate to threaten those he disliked with the public pillory, that is, with newspaper exposure. He was like a nightmare to some residents, who would have liked to see him poniarded; but the rank-and-file took him good naturedly and regarded him as a contributor to life's enjoyment: they thought old Charlie's lies too transparent to be taken seriously. He greatly affected all the Steamer people who were in a position to give him free meals. Poor old chap, he fell on evil times, and there were ugly reports that he finally died of slow starvation in this land flowing with the milk-and-honey of cheap food: many of

us felt abominably uneasy about it when it was too late.

Another 'droll' was old Paddy Welsh. He had been a smart sergeant in the Army and stayed behind in 1863 to teach the Chinese foreign drill. He went 'nigger' or 'quashee,' West-Indian phrases which mean that he became a *native* in his scheme of life. He slept much in the open, and when in his worst phases lived on Chinese food, which was gratuitously and generously given to him by the Bund suttlers when foreign food and dollars were not forthcoming. He had but one failing, but that accounted for everything—he was so far gone that reform was practically impossible. One lady kept the old man in clothes, and vowed that he looked better in them than 'Jack'—Jack being her 'ilignant' husband. Another generous pair give him free battens at tiffin for years: he sat in the back verandah and got the same as his kind hosts, but was rigidly limited to one small bottle of beer. One day he made a homicidal assault on the 'boy' because the latter refused him a second. When he could not get good drink he reverted to the Chinese liquor and the poison of the Taku Road grog-shops, and was then sometimes a bit 'nasty.'

Folk in these days grumble if their Home mails take longer than 17 days but what do you think of a London letter taking 63 days, as I have known it? From fifty to fifty-five days was the winter average: the mail got to Shanghai in about 40 days and was then in a leisurely way sent up to Chinkiang to meet the overland couriers: these men took from ten to twelve days to do the journey and their speed depended on the state of the weather and roads, and on the weight of the mail. On the occasion I refer to they met a very severe snow-storm and were snowed up for over a week. The courier service was organised in detail by the Commissioner's mafoo Hu Jung An, happily still alive. The Government gave him a small button, and as he was of considerable use to Mr. Detring in any ways, he was dubbed the 'Deputy Commissioner.' Another well known servant was called universally 'The Taot'ai,' and it sticks to

him now when he is properous well-to-do son of Han. I have recollections of a famous banquet when his waggish Master rigged him up in a dress suit and had him drilled as a May-fair butler. The combination of black clothes, a huge shirt-front, a shaven head and a flowing pig-tail was too funny for words; and when he opened the door and bawled "Gentlemen, dinner is served" the fun was uproarious.

Another well known Chinese character was the old Barber, Feng Chi Tsen, who learned his trade from the Troops at Charing Cross in the City in 1861-2-3. He had a *sobriquet* which I cannot well quote here, though it exactly described him; suffice to say that like Esau, he smelled like a field which the Lord intended to bless. He had a hand as docile and clever as that of Raphael, and could have shaved the rust off an old anchor. The old man acquired considerable property in the village opposite to the Queen's Hotel, but the Boxer outbreak and its subsequent iniquities reduced him to poverty and broke his heart. Charing Cross was, if my memory serves me rightly, close to the 'curio' shops near the East Gate; and even in my time one could occasionally hear the blind musicians in the City giving recognisable attempts at old world tunes such as "Champagne Charlie is my name," "Rosa Lee, the Prairie Flower," "Billy Patterson" and "God save the Queen." The mention of old Feng the Barber reminds me that Nero fiddled while Rome was burning, and also that Clubland was split to its core over a battle round the old man at Tientsin's greatest and most vital crisis. Two days before the Boxers were at our throats, we had an exciting meeting in the Club to decide the momentous point whether we should keep on with our redolent friend Feng; or get rid of him, and take on an up-to-date Japanese barber. Strong feeling was shown, and as usual old Tientsin held together and tried hard to save the old man, but the innovators carried the day when it came to taking the poll.

Another question we used to be very truculent about was the Rink. There was an annual battle between the advocates of

an open rink and a closed one. Present Tientsinners will be surprised to hear that it was not till 1893 (thirty years after the opening of the Port) that we found out the secret of making a good ice-floor, namely by watering-cans with roses attached. It my memory is not at fault, Mr. von Hanneken greatly contributed to this simple solution of a long-standing difficulty.

1888 saw the novelty of illumination by oil-gas. Its pioneer was the late Mr. Carl Poulsen to whom the Community ten years later was indebted for the installation of Water Works, Mr. A. de Liude being closely associated with him in both enterprises. The gas made quite a sensation among the Chinese, who found a special delight in the daily round and common task of the lamp-lighter. This year witnessed many stirring events in our little community, of which perhaps the most interesting was the simultaneous arrival of four babies on July 1st. As our entire output for a whole year was only about 15, a simple sum in arithmetic will reveal the fact that this lucky day had just ninety seven times more than it proper due. The able foreman of our Fire Brigade was one of them; but as the other three were girls, I cannot quote their names, lest I be guilty of the unpardonable *gaucherie* of giving away the secret of a lady's age: the most powerful hydraulic press in Tientsin could not squeeze this information out of me, so please do not try. The same year saw the initiation of the policy of building Gordon Hall, and the birth of our first Literary and Debating Society. This latter institution followed on a lecture which I gave on Burns, or *Burrrrrrrns*, as he is occasionally called. Mr. Michie was its first President, and it took seven years to extinguish its initial fires. It was sometimes called the Gas Bag, but it exercised a twofold influence—1:—It taught the amenity and decorum of public debate in the Port, and also the right conduct of Public Meetings, in both of which we were sadly to seek. It also brought together in friendly contact the Missionary and lay elements of our society. Tientsin, I am delighted to tell you, never developed that

acute antagonism between 'lay' and 'clerical' which has disgraced some other places on the China Coast.

The Town Hall was built in 1888-9; it was estimated at Tls. 15,000, but finally cost as much as Tls. 28,000; and it is to be feared that even this sum did not quite cover everything. To those who know the solidity of the brickwork and the fundamental strength, the wonder is that it cost so little. The original plan of Mr. Chambers was modified by Mr. A. J. M. Smith, the first Secretary of the B.M.C., a man with the versatility of Leonardo da Vinci, assisted by Herr Franzenbach, a German baker, who had been a stone-mason in his youth, and who had ideas of sorts on the subject of building. Ruskin never saw our Town Hall, thank Heaven! but notwithstanding its artistic enormities, such as wooden mullions and frames in Gothic windows, crenelated battlements with crocketed finials, &c., &c., it has served its purpose right well. We opened it with great *eclat* in 1890, inviting La Hung Chang down to the ceremony, and banqueting him on the occasion. A year or two later when the great-man's seventieth birthday came round, we again asked him down to a banquet. This time he expressed a wish to contribute his share to the enjoyment of the evening, and sent a message that if we could have a 'platform' made he would bring down Chinese acrobats and actors. Thereupon Mr. Bellingham built the Gordon Hall stage at the Viceroy's expense. He also sent down some superb hangings and embroideries, vast numbers of which had come to him from all parts of the Empire. A week or two later on he sent his son down to say that these splendid samples of Chinese art were a gift; and they are still a highly valued possession of the B.M.C. Next time you see them, note the prevalence of the deer and the frontal development of the reverend seigneurs—both are emblematic of honoured old age.

For years the building was a sort of white elephant, and folk criticised it as a woeful waste of public money and a striking sample of Council ineptitude, far beyond present wants and those of all

time. We of course now know that this was sheer nonsense; the chief fault of the place in these days is that it is much too small for our social and communal needs. Beyond housing the Land Renters' Meeting, and an occasional field-night of the Debating Society and a very rare concert, the Great Hall was seldom used. There was reason for this. The capitalists and leading men of the Port were few, and formed a limited circle of intimate friends. From no fault of their own, but sheerly by force of circumstances the Councillors, the Proprietors of the Club, and the Directors of our one Joint Stock Company, the Taku Tug and Lighter Co. were practically one and the same body. Gordon Hall was at first a Municipal rival to private enterprise, which had provided the Lyceum Theatre as the centre of social and artistic Tientsin; and it took four or five years to convince us that the Hall was in all ways superior as a place for entertainments. The Hall only began to assert itself after its stage appeared.

The Taku Tug and Lighter Co. was a great power in those days. It was satirically said that no dog dared bark in the Concession without the permission of the Directors. The years 1887-8 saw the development of an internal quarrel in its *personnel*; a rival Company was started, and dividends fell off badly. There was a slump in its shares, and feeling ran high. A local pamphleteer, who shall be nameless though he is present to-night, wrote a *shit* which, like ginger, proved to be hot i'e' mouth. The author of the 'History of a Golden Venture' was sought far and near, some said even with shot-guns, but was not discovered till he revealed himself 15 years later. This skit was a stock subject of local conversation for years, and the nicknames in many cases stuck till a new generation came in.

The mention of the Taku Tug and Lighter Co., reminds me that in the Eighties and early Nineties the River presented a strange sight in the late Spring and early Summer with its miles upon miles of seagoing junks which brought up the tribute rice from the South: in number between 300 and 400 they constituted a wonderful armada.

They chiefly hailed from Ning Po and Amoy, and by their careless and lordly ways created a deadly menace to the navigation. Their crews, wearing huge baggy breeches, used to swagger on shore and terrorise the native Police. In 1889-90 these junk-men in alliance with one or two of the trade Guilds proved too strong even for Li Hung Chang. They compelled him to abandon the erection of a bridge from the *Rue de Chemin de Fer* to the Ho Tung side, after its abutments were built and the piling for the caissons was all but finished. The Viceroy got a bit 'mad' when told of the difficulties of extracting piles from such a depth. Only four were taken out in a fortnight; and he thereupon commanded the whole thing to be blown up with dynamite; and was with the greatest difficulty prevented from following this course which would probably have destroyed half of the French Concession.

This is one of the few retrograde steps which we have to chronicle about Li. As a rule he stood for progress. His strong support of the great and good Dr. Kenneth Mackenzie was infinitely to his honour. This devoted doctor was one of the great missionaries of all time, and did fine work in the early days of medical science in China. His school has since developed into the well known Pei Yang Hospital in the Taku Road, and many able and devoted Chinese Doctors still live to carry on his work. Unlike his fine old rival, Dr. Christie of Moukden, he was not spared to see the issues of his labours. He died in 1888 and was succeeded by a man of the same type in Dr. Roberts.

September 5th, 1890 saw the tael at the phenomenal height of 5.6½, a climax brought about by the working of the famous Sherman Act, by which the United States Government had to purchase so much silver bullion every month. I mention the fact because a very worthy and respected Tientsin Senior cleared out of China on top of this lucky wave—I refer to Mr. G. W. Collins. Originally a merchant skipper, he became a Taku Pilot, and invested his savings in a general 'store' in Tientsin which occupied the site of the present Yokohama Specie Bank.

For many years *Collins's* was a good deal more than a 'store': it was also a sort of *Club*, for we used to meet our friends there and stay for a chat of indefinite length with them and with the genial proprietor and his partners, Messrs. W. C. C. Anderson and W. W. Dickinson. In the later 'Seventies' Mr. Collins listened with keen ears to the stories which came town from the Plateau and Koko-Nor about boundless resources in wool, hides, pelts, furs, &c. His 'firm' got into touch with a wonderful Belgian named Graesel, who along with a fellow-countryman named Spingaard was more than an expert in the art of dealing with Chinese 'Borderers' and Mongol herdsmen: they put up a small cleaning 'plant,' and began to do something in the Export trade. Gradually this business grew, and Messrs. Collins and Co., which was at first an off-shoot of C. W. Collins and Co., waxed and waxed until it became the big 'hong' we now know. Mr. Collins and his shrewd partners were among the pioneers of the Tientsin trade as we at present know it. As the exchange rose, I remember he used to come in and tell his wife day by day "Well, my dear, we are so many hundreds of pounds richer than we were yesterday." He finally settled in New Zealand, where his family now survive him. Mr. Collins was a striking contrast in shrewdness to another Taku Pilot who accumulated \$20,000 (I really think it was \$30,000) in a sea-chest which he kept under his bed, from sheer ignorance as to how otherwise to dispose of it; though he finally was persuaded to 'place' it in Tientsin real property and did uncommonly well by the transaction.

Now let me like Othello turn my brief attention to moving accidents by flood and field. When folks first came to Tientsin they wondered why all the villages were perched high up on little platforms above the plains. The Sixties told no tales, but the Seventies revealed the truth, the Eighties accentuated it, and the year 'Ninety' showed it as dire tragedy—*Floods*. I hope those present will never see one with all the misery it entails. I shall now circulate a photograph taken from the West tower of Gordon

Hall in August or September 1890, and I would defy any human being to recognise it as the British Municipal Extension Area of to-day. One this occasion the Hai Ho came over the French Bund and I had to get and out of my house thereon by help of a sanpan: the Race Course Kea was submerged for many weeks and the Wei Tse and City walls were covered with thousands of ruined refugees from the villages (see photograph). I swam over the site of my present house in Meadows Road, and we were compelled to postpone building it for a whole year. Taku Road had two feet of water outside of Victoria Park; and of course winter famine and terrible suffering ensued. My daily occupation at that time took me to the Ear Arsenal, and I speak sober truth when I quote the following modes of getting there:—Sailing, swimming, rowing, towing: ice-boating, pei-tze-ing, skatng; by pony, donkey, cart and chair, and (most incredible of all) I have even walked it. The frozen plain brought to us new joys in life in the form of ice-boating; and just to show how big a hold the cult got on us, I now beg to circulate some photographs of the fleet. Speeds were incredible, 40 and 50 miles an hour being possible and actual: if a passenger was shed through careless holding on when the helm was put down, he or she shot out just as if from a catapult; and a Special Providence for ice-boaters is the only reasonable explanation that there were no fatalities. I have on several occasions sailed to the Race Course, tacking and retacking across the road, which was then two or three feet lower than now. We often used to go 'fut,' and get boat-wrecked on submarine graves.

But flood was not the only foe: in 1888 we had an awful earthquake which frightened us to the Nth. The shocks lasted about 35 seconds which seemed an eternity: most of us by instinct did the right thing, rushed out of the houses and lay down in the compound at a safe distance. It was touch and go with many of the houses; but happily they did not go, though they staggered to and fro like a drunken man. In 1889 we had a dreadful railway accident due, I fear, to preventible

causes. The up and down trains between Tientsin and Tong Ku met on a single line in the dark, and the result was unspeakable, as one of the trains caught fire. The driver of the down train, apparently unhurt, died from shock in a few minutes, and several of the Chinese passengers were veritably roasted to death.

A paper on Tientsin without some reference to the Library would be like a mutilated statue. The nucleus of the Library was a collection of three or four hundred books belonging to the Customs Club, and when the Tientsin Library was formed it was a stipulation that out-door Customs men were always to be free of the Institution. The Library was started in the early Eighties and had about 1,100 or 1,200 volumes in 1886. The B.M.C. consented to house it and give the services of an attendant and heat and light. When Mr. Bulcock was here as Consul in 1889, he urged us to avoid the fate which befel a public library at some Port up the River. The subscribers quarreled and left off subscribing, with the result that the membership dwindled to five: this inglorious quintet at last decided to stop, and to *divide the spoil*. I remember Mr. Bullock telling me that he knew the man who boasted of the Encyclopaedia Britannica as his share. To avoid this we called a Meeting of the subscribers and asked the B.M.C. to take it over in trust. They not only did so, but gave us the best room in the new Town Hall buildings, and have ever since been our consistent friends and generous supporters. I have played a fair number of roles in Tientsin in my time, but few give me so much pleasure in retrospect as my 11 years of Honorary Secretaryship in the Library, during which I saw it grow from 1,200 volumes to nearly 7,000. Along with the Churches, the Clubs, the Park and the Recreation Ground I consider it the most valuable social asset that the Port possesses.

The reference to Mr. Bullock, now Professor of Chinese at Oxford, reminds me of his great service to history and literature, in translating for years the best parts of the *Peking Gazette* as a labour of love. True, few people ever read them; and

they were regarded as literary dust and ashes; but make no mistake:—to the historical or sociological student they are the finest thing extant as a revelation of the Chinese mind and character, to be ranked with Dr. Arthur Smith's more lively studies in kindred subjects. They display the art of government in its most amazing nakedness and with a freshness and candour utterly inconceivable in the West. One could cull from Mr. Bullock's contributions from this, the oldest newspaper in the world, material for twenty papers for this Society; and I shall go one step further, and say that in my old friend Mr. Bryson you have the ideal man to do it. So, Mr. Vice-President, and Mr. Secretary, act the role of the 'chief among ye takin' notes.' Mr. Bullock once gave a splendid paper on this very subject; and I remember that Mr. Bryson's criticisms were as brilliant and informing as the paper itself. The mention of this honoured name, ever to the fore when the mental or spiritual progress of Tientsin is concerned, recalls another memory. We were visited in 1886 or '87 by a very sweet and gracious American lady, Mrs. Levatt, who was as able as she was eloquent: she preached a very intemperate sermon on 'Temperance' in Union Church, and, like many another teetotal enthusiast, spoiled a righteous cause by inordinate advocacy. I have been all my life peculiarly insusceptible to pulpit oratory and am disposed to think little of it, and indeed of all oratory—the orator so often as not obscures truth and judgment instead of elucidating them—but I have the liveliest recollection of the intense delight which Mr. Bryson gave me when on the following Sunday he preached a *temperate* sermon on 'Tem-

perance,' and appeared in the whole panoply of wit and wisdom, completely turning the tables on the lady, and setting forth the gospel of Temperance in its true light of moderation.

Now, Friends and Neighbours, I could have on *ad infinitum* with my memories. Instead of plunging into the vasty deep of 28 years of Tientsin life, I have chiefly confined myself to the last four years of the Eighties. I had to limit myself lest by the abundance of the trees you should fail to see the forest, and there is ever a danger of exhausting your hearers in trying to exhaust your subject. There are several old residents in the room to-night better qualified to deal with old Tientsin than I am; and I shall ask you, Mr. Carter, to exercise your presidential authority in requesting Messrs. Bryson, G. W. Clarke, Dr. Pyke and Dr. and Mrs. Peck to supplement my arid remarks by the more lively sallies of impromptu speech, in giving us some of their memories of a still older Tientsin. By the aid of these same Seniors I hope to be able to answer any question which may be put to elucidate obscure points, on the scores of subjects and matters which have necessarily been left out. I fear that some member may justly complain that I have said nothing of the stirring days of the Siege. Ah! well, well, the complaint is fair, but to do justice to that political cataclysm and social upheaval would require many evenings, and I throw it out as a suggestion for the next Session that it would be a splendid subject for an essay or for an address.

I thank you warmly for your kind and tolerant attention.