

stations to exact duty on the articles. The war-junks attached to these stations are, no doubt, those whose acts are complained of. The breach of treaty committed by the foreigners engaging in this traffic, leads to breaches of treaty being committed by Chinese; and while I complain of these abusive acts, the Chinese Government is remonstrating against the illegal proceedings of foreigners on the Yangtze River.

I have, &c.,

FREDERICK W. A. BRUCE.

*The Right Honourable Earl Russell,*

&c., &c., &c.

[Enclosure 1.]

*British Consulate, Hankow,*  
June 23, 1862.

SIR,

MESSRS. TURNER AND CO. complained to me, on the 28th May, of the stoppage of a chop of tea at the custom-house, about 160 lbs from Hankow, Hoo-peh province, and that a duty of 4 mace a chest of 75 catties had been demanded in excess of the transit duty which had already been levied in the Hoo-nan province. This payment had been tendered in Sycee, but the officer in charge of the barrier alleged the silver was not of sufficient pureness, and refused to allow the teas to pass, or to take the silver at a discount.

A messenger was then dispatched from Hankow with Sycee of the required pureness, but for some reason or other the teas were still detained, and on the 30th I was again addressed by Messrs. Turner and Co.'s agent, stating that in consequence of the non-arrival of the tea, he had been compelled to purchase other teas in the market in lieu of those detained, and that he had sustained a positive and immediate loss of 14,500 taëls, which he begged may be recovered from the Chinese officials.

I had, on his first complaint, addressed a letter to the Superintendent of Customs, telling him the officers would be held responsible for the detention and for the illegal exaction on these teas; and as up to the 30th I had received no reply, and there appeared no probability of the boats being released, I requested Lieutenant Poole, of H. M. gunboat "Havoc," to proceed to the barrier where they were detained, and effect their liberation.

But before the departure of the "Havoc" from the harbour, the boats containing the teas arrived.

On these teas an excess of 618.75 taëls had been paid.

Messrs. Dent and Co.'s agent, on the 30th May, brought to me Lekin receipts exhibiting an excess on transit duty of 940 taëls; this excess I claimed from the Superintendent of Customs, a copy of whose reply is enclosed.

On the 13th, a further claim for 462.40 paid in excess was made again by the same firm; and on the 11th and 12th June, Messrs. Gibb Livingstone's agent, and Messrs. Gilman's agent, made similar complaints of excessive charges of 541.60 and 467.20 respectively.

For all these charges Lekin receipts had been granted, and the papers were handed in to me by the several complainants.

On the 10th June, Messrs. Dent and Co.'s agent reported the stoppage of six boats, containing teas, at two barriers, Peh-how-kow and Tan-kow, on which the extra charge of four mace per chest was demanded. Certificates of the proper amount of transit duty having been paid on the teas in the Hoonan provinces were produced to me, and Mr. Evans further stated that he had

given positive orders to the Chinese in charge of the teas, on no account to pay the excess demanded; and as the officer of the station had declared that these boats should not be allowed to pass unless under this payment, there appeared but little probability of the teas reaching Hankow.

I had on so many occasions already addressed in vain both the Viceroy and the Superintendent of Customs on this same subject, that I resolved to place the matter in Lieutenant Poole's hands, and to request him to take such steps in the liberation of the boats as would more effectually impress the authorities of this port with the necessity of adhering strictly to the tariff rules. Lieutenant Poole accordingly left this port on the 11th, and returned on the evening of the 14th, having effected the release of the teas. Copy of his letter reporting his proceedings is enclosed.

Immediately on his arrival I sent a message to the Superintendent of Customs, requesting he would take charge of the Chinese brought down, which he did the same evening, and on Monday, the 16th, I addressed a letter to the Viceroy, of which the enclosed is a copy. On the eve of its dispatch a Wei-yuen visited the Consulate, and handed me a private note from the Viceroy, asking me to give up the boats, as orders had been issued not to levy the excess in future, and that thus the necessity of public documents on either side in reference to the subject would be dispensed with. The officer was informed that the Viceroy had been written to officially, and that when his official reply to that communication, promising the irregular and illegal acts should no longer be allowed, was received, the boats would be given up. No answer to my letter was received until the evening of the 21st, on which day the boats were handed over. Copy and translation of this, as well as of the Viceroy's private note, enclosed.

Since the opening of the port, the 7th Rule attached to the Tariff has been entirely set aside by the authorities. Exemption certificates for goods to be conveyed into the interior they have virtually refused to issue, and in case of exports the officers in charge of barriers have in many instances objected to recognise produce as being foreign owned, although reported so by the person in charge, and thus the merchants have been subjected to detention and illegal exactions. It appears that the Lieutenant-Governor of Hoonan has determined upon levying transit dues allowed by treaty on all produce passing through this province, irrespective of the authorities of Hoo-peh.

On goods arriving in the latter province, notwithstanding the transit duty has been already paid and a certificate to that effect given, a further demand is again made at the several barriers the produce may have to pass on its way to Hankow.

The local governments are thus contending each for its own particular levy, but the Hoonan requires the allowed transit duty, while the Hoopoh claims an illegal charge.

About twelve hours after the gun-boat had left this harbour, Chin, Superintendent of Customs, paid me a late visit, and after a variety of futile excuses, the chief of which was that these levies are made under the old regulations, and that nothing had ever been definitely settled in reference to collection of duties at Hankow, he informed me that orders had that day been sent off to the different officers in charge of barriers to discontinue these levies, and he requested that I would send off a messenger and call back the gun-boat; I informed him I had repeatedly addressed communications to the Viceroy and other authorities