

HONGKONG, THURSDAY, MARCH 2ND, 1843.

NOTIFICATION.

His Excellency Sir Henry Pottinger, Bart., is pleased to direct the publication of the following Letters for general information.

By Order.

RICHARD WOOSNAM,
Acting Secretary.

Government House,
Hongkong 1st March, 1843.

MACAO, February 26th, 1843.

SIR,

I have received your four Letters of the 21st, 22nd (two), and 23d Instant, with their accompaniments; and advertising to that part of them which relates particularly to the Hong Merchants' Debts, I think it proper to record my official opinion and intentions, not only for your guidance, but with a view to their being published for general information.

You are aware that I was at one time, since I came to China, disposed to allow the arrangement, that had been made, some years back, for the discharge of those Debts, between the Co-hong and our Merchants, to remain in force; and that I actually submitted my opinion to that effect to Her Majesty's Government, but, when I came to draft the Treaty at Nanking, and to give its provisions the full and final consideration, which they demanded, I saw that it was impracticable to carry through that plan, since the abolition of the Co-hong, (which I deemed to be a "sine qua non" in my measures) necessarily involved the abolition of the Consol Fund Charges, on which the ability of the Co-hong to discharge the Debts is understood to have depended; and I therefore stipulated in the Treaty for the sum of \$3,000,000, in round numbers, on this account.

You are also further aware, that it was brought to my knowledge, shortly after I came last from the Northward, that an Instalment of the Debts, agreeable to the arrangement referred to in the preceding Paragraph, would become payable in January 1843, and that the Funds for its payment were in readiness; in consequence of which, a Letter, of which I enclose a Copy, was addressed under my authority, on the 7th of January, to the British Merchants in China.

I have since, neither heard any thing further on the subject from our Merchants, nor have I been furnished with a single Receipt; but on the 31st of last month you enclosed to me a translation of a Communication from the Imperial Commissioner and his Colleagues, dated the 27th of January, in which they intimated, that "the Hong Merchants in a body have" delivered over the sum of Five hundred thousand Dollars, which we have deputed a special officer to hand up, and which we will trouble Your Excellency to receive, and to let us have a reply in course."

In enclosing the Communication from which the above sentence is cited, you requested me not to acknowledge it until I should hear further; and I accordingly deferred my reply till the 19th of this month, when you apprized me, that ELEROE & Co. were anxious for an answer, and thereupon I wrote to the High Officers explaining to them, that I had been expecting their Officer at Macao, but that I should now "send a Steamer to Whampoa to receive on board the money," and the officer in charge, and to convey them either to Macao or Hongkong, where the money having been counted and examined, the necessary Receipts for it shall be transmitted to Your Excellencies."

It now appears from your letters to which I am replying, and the Statements accompanying one of them, that the Instalment for January, to which the annexed letter to the address of the Merchants relates, and the \$500,000 alluded to by the High Commissioner, &c., are one and the same sum; and further, that it has been divided (or nearly so) amongst a number of alleged Creditors many of whose names and claims are perfectly new to me, and which names and claims I cannot find recorded in any shape, or document, in the Archives of the Offices, either of Her Majesty's Plenipotentiary, or Chief Superintendent of Trade, &c.

Under these circumstances I am obliged to express my wish, that you had not in any way interfered with, or taken aspect in the division of the above described \$500,000, both because that division seems to me to be calculated to add to the utter confusion and total absence of regularity which evidently pervade the whole of the transactions connected with the Debts; and because, as at present informed, I have considerable doubts, whether Dividends may not have been assigned to Firms and Individuals, whose Claims, as Creditors of the bankrupt Hong Merchants, neither have been recognized as valid, nor are likely to be so, by the British Government.

My intention was, before I authorized the payment of a single farthing of the bankrupt Hong Merchants' Debts through the medium of the Officers of the British Government, to have definitively ascertained the exact admitted amount of those Debts, nor did the sanction I gave to the liquidation, by the Co-hong, of the January instalment, militate against that in-

ention. On the contrary, it rather apparently assisted my proposed object of getting at the truth, as it is fair to presume, that the present Co-Hong would know best who were real Creditors, and would pay money to no others, especially when they felt, that they would be held responsible for the correctness of such payments. It is also to be observed; that at that time there was every prospect of ample leisure being afforded for investigating all Claims, as the Treaty only provides for the second Instalment of the monies receivable from China being forthcoming at Midsummer.

I presume, however, that it is not possible to recal what has been done; and I now therefore proceed to make you acquainted with my wishes and resolution as to future payments. The first step I wish you to take, is to obtain and transmit to me Receipts for the entire sum of \$500,000 which has been lately paid; and, should any Firm or Individual, on any plea whatever, decline to give you Receipts for their, or his Dividend, such Firm or Individual, will of course be excluded from all future dividends. As soon as you have obtained the Receipts in question, I next wish you to procure from the Merchants of the Co-Hong a complete statement of the acknowledged Debts of the Bankrupt Hongs, and which I understand are, or should be, inserted in the Consol Fund Books. I do not at first require any details. Simply a Statement showing the original debts, and the sums paid towards their liquidation, with the Balances still said to be due.

I intend to adopt steps for obtaining similar statements from all Claimants, and, where the parties agree as to the amount, &c., I conclude that Her Majesty's Government will consider the Claims to be finally established. On the other hand, where there are discrepancies, inquiry will be instituted (and on this point I may mention that I expect Instructions from England by Major Malcolm, into the cause of those discrepancies; but it is at once necessary for me to remark, that it is the business of the Claimants and not of Government to establish Claims that may be brought forward, and that, acting on this principle, I shall feel it to be my duty to suspend and refer all doubtful cases, unsupported by proper Vouchers, such as Receipts or Balances struck between the parties, to Her Majesty's Government, before I take on myself to record them as admitted Claims, or to authorize a single penny of their amount being paid.

As this letter will be published, as soon as possible, you are at liberty to make its contents, known to all interested in the matter:

I have &c.
[Signed.] HENRY POTTINGER
H. M.'s Plenipotentiary.

[True Copy.] RICHARD WOOSNAM
J. R. MORRISON Esq. Acting Secretary.
Canton.

COPY No. 12.
Government House Hongkong,
7th January, 1843.

GENTLEMEN,
It having come to Sir Henry Pottinger's knowledge, that an Instalment of the Hong Debt is due during the present month, and that the Hong Merchants are willing to pay it, provided such Instalment be considered as part payment of the Three Millions of Dollars, stipulated for in the Treaty, as the sum for the liquidation of those debts; I am directed by His Excellency to inform you, that he sees no objection to such an arrangement, but begs you will furnish him with a Memorandum of the sums you receive, that he may make the corresponding deduction.

I have the honour &c.
(Signed) RICHARD WOOSNAM,
Acting Secretary.

(True Copy) RICHARD WOOSNAM,
Acting Secretary.

The British Merchants in China
Creditors of the Insolvent Hong
Merchants.

Our time only affords us the opportunity of claiming the attention of our readers, to the important Official Communication, with respect to the HONG DEBTS which we now publish in an EXTRAORDINARY.

In our No 35, we expressed our opinions of those Claims, opinions based entirely on Parliamentary documents. Further inquiry, has confirmed their correctness, and the present publication, albeit tardy, (doubtless for good reasons) renders it quite supererogatory to make any further remark.

We find the following in the *Journal de Havre*, on the comparative returns of the mercantile trade of England and France.

In 1841, the English ports received or dispatched 42,719 Vessels, measuring 2,886,000 tons.

There had been, in 1840, 42,435 vessels, and 7,407,833 tons. This increase is inconsiderable, but, it must be stated that in the preceding year the augmentation amounted to 882,000 tons. The tonnage of the Vessels leaving or entering the ports of France, in 1840 was 2,896,000 tons. In 1839, the amount was 2,930,000 tons, showing it is true, only a small falling off, but still it was a falling off. Up to this point, putting aside the enormous numerical inferiority of our tonnage, the comparison is but of little importance: but it becomes eminently discouraging, when the parts which the Shipping of both countries have taken respectively in the general movement are considered.

In England, out of 7,525,585 tons, English vessels transported 5,525,429, giving a proportion of 74 to 26 or about three-fourths. In France, out of 2,896,000 tons, our vessels took only 1,211,000 tons, or a proportion of 42 to 58, or a little more than two-fifths. Thus, whilst for England the results of the preceding year give the same returns, showing that if the movement of the national navigation has not progressed, it has not at least retrograded; in France, the same examination shows that in the space of a year only, foreign shipping has taken from us a twenty-fifth part of the carrying trade. In 1841 the coasting trade of England gave the large total of 22,184,047 tons. In France, in 1840, the quantity was only 2,314,735 tons, not much more than the tenth part. The average burden of vessels employed in the English coasting trade, is about 80 tons, whilst in France it only amounts to 27 tons. The whole of the merchant vessels of England, amounted in 1840 to 28,692, measuring 3,311,528 tons. France, at the same period, possessed 15,600 vessels, the tonnage of which did not exceed 662,600 tons. A remark which these figures suggest, and which is not without interest, is, that whilst the number of our vessels is equal to nearly the half of those possessed by Great Britain, the amount of their tonnage scarcely reaches a fifth part."

SHIPPING.—The following results are derived from official documents:

Number and tonnage of sailing and steam vessels registered on 31st Dec., 1841, at the ports of Great Britain and Ireland, distinguishing those under, from those above fifty tons register, was as under;—*Sailing Vessels*, under fifty tons, 8,319; tonnage, 249,996; above fifty tons, 13,638, tonnage, 2,540,952. Total of sailing vessels, 21,957; of tonnage, 2,790,948.—*Steam vessels*, under 50 tons, 325; tonnage, 8,166; above 50 tons, 465; tonnage, 87,512. Total of steam vessels, 790; of tonnage, 95,678.—Gross total of vessels 22,747; of Tonnage 2,886,626.

Number and tonnage of vessels that entered and cleared coastwise at the ports of Great Britain and Ireland (including their repeated voyages), between the 31st Dec. 1840, and 31st Dec., 1841, was—*sailing vessels* (inwards), 133,016; tonnage, 9,637,380 (outwards) 123,819; tonnage, 9,961,352. Total vessels, 261,835; tonnage, 19,598,732.—*steam vessels* (inwards), 15,186; tonnage, 2,903,734; (outwards), 15,004; tonnage, 2,648,146. Total steam vessels, 30,140; tonnage, 5,541,930.—Gross total of vessels, 221,975; of tonnage, 25,140,662.

Number and tonnage of vessels that entered and cleared from and to foreign ports, distinguishing British from foreign, at the ports of Great Britain and Ireland (including their repeated voyages), from 31st Dec., 1840, to 31st Dec., 1841:—*British sailing vessels* (inwards), 9,803; tonnage, 1,516,283; (outwards), 9,863; tonnage, 1,595,266. Total vessels, 19,666; tonnage, 3,112,549.—*Foreign sailing vessels* (inwards), 7,045; tonnage, 1,231,896; (outwards), 9,262; tonnage, 1,270,435. Total vessels, 13,377; tonnage, 2,508,42.—*British sailing vessels* (inwards), 1,323; tonnage, 328,442; (outwards), 1,987; tonnage, 324,234. Gross total of British vessels, 23,591; of tonnage, 3,760,315.

Number and tonnage of vessels that entered and cleared from and to the colonies, at the ports of Great Britain and Ireland (including their repeated voyages) between 31st Dec., 1840, and 31st Dec., 1841:—*sailing vessels* (inwards), 6,350; tonnage, 1,484,253; (outwards), 6,362; tonnage, 1,471,118. Total vessels, 12,732; tonnage, 2,955,371.—*steam vessels* (inwards), 244; tonnage, 37,233; (outwards), 832; tonnage, 39,571. Total steam vessels, 476; tonnage, 75,804.—Gross total of vessels, 13,208; of tonnage, 3,031,175.—Times.

Printing and Stationery.—The average cost of Printing for the House of Commons during the five years ending 1840 was £23,000 per annum. Stationery during the same years for Government was amounting to £145,000 per annum. The Cost of Printing for the House of Lords is about £100,000 per annum.