

No. 14^B.

*Correspondence respecting the Armament of the Forts at Hongkong,
(in continuation of No. 14.)*

*Presented to the Legislative Council by Command of
His Excellency the Governor.*

Secretary of State to Governor Sir G. F. Bowen, G.C.M.G.

DOWNING STREET,
20th March, 1885.

SIR,

With reference to my despatch, No. 31, of the 14th ultimo, I have the honour to forward, for your information, copy of a letter from the War Office on the subject of the new Defence Works at Hongkong.

I have, &c.,

(Signed). DERBY.

Governor

Sir G. F. BOWEN, G.C.M.G.,

§c., §c., §c.

Enclosure.

War Office to Colonial Office.

WAR OFFICE, 13th March, 1885.

SIR,

I am directed by the Secretary of State for War to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 14th ultimo, forwarding a further despatch from the Governor of Hongkong, concerning the new Defence Works of the Colony; and in reply to acquaint you, for the information of the Earl of DERBY, that when the subject of the Defence of Hongkong was first considered, the guns with which it was proposed to arm the batteries were 10-inch. M.L.R. guns, which at 3,000 yards can only penetrate 9 inches of iron.

As the project developed, it was thought desirable to employ some more modern guns, and the 9.2-inch B. L. Gun was proposed;—a gun which was thought to be sufficiently powerful to beat off any ironclads likely to be met with in those seas.

More recent events in China have, however, demonstrated the possibility of the attack of Hongkong by Vessels of War carrying guns and armour with which even the 9.2-inch gun would be hardly able to cope, and it has now been determined to employ a certain number of 10-inch B.L. guns of 27 tons.

This gun is capable of penetrating nearly 18 inches of iron at 3,000 yards; and, although still more powerful guns are now being constructed, it is considered that guns of this nature, which are the heaviest that can be worked by hand, are amply sufficient for the Defence of Hongkong, aided as that defence would be by mines and also by Torpedo-boats.

Were heavier guns than the 10-inch of 27 tons employed, it must be borne in mind that hand power would no longer suffice for working them, and the difficulty of maintaining in working order at all times, at a foreign station, the machinery needed for the heaviest guns, which, if out of order, would render the guns useless and thus completely cripple the defence, has decided the Home Government not to attempt to mount heavier guns than these at Hongkong.

It will be seen from the above sketch of the history of the designs for the Defence of Hongkong that circumstances have compelled changes in the original proposals, and that each successive advance in the power of the Artillery, while throwing on the Imperial Government an increased charge for Armaments, has also increased the amount which will be necessary for constructing the works.

The exact increase in cost cannot at this moment be estimated precisely, but it will undoubtedly be considerably in excess of the amount which the Colony was asked to contribute at the time when the original scheme was under consideration.

The enclosures which accompanied your letter are returned herewith as requested.

I have, &c.,

(Signed), HENRY BRAND.

THE UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE,
Colonial Office.