"Foreign Devils" and Others.

(AN HISTORICAL STUDY.)

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In a previous paper it was pointed out that, when all has been said, the Chinese are found to have some reason for the various special characteristics and peculiarities which have so often been quoted and perhaps satirised in the West. One marked characteristic, not touched upon in that paper, may be interesting enough to call for an extended explanation, viz., the Chinese epithet for foreigners—fairly universal until recent years—the term "Foreign Devil."

Those who took up residence in the interior, twenty or more years ago, or even since then, have been treated to copious doses of this uncomfortable epithet—from the cavernous jaws of Chinese gamin, from the quivering lips of little maidens, and from the hoarse throats of a yelling crowd of adults—until all friendly intercourse with the generality of the Chinese has seemed to be hopelessly blocked. Let the foreigner but show his visage anywhere, smiling his sweetest smile, or open his mouth upon any subject, even the most pleasant and delightful, and he has been sure to be greeted by a blatant and disheartening cry of "Foreign Devil."

Terms of abuse for all nations except their own have certainly not been the exclusive property of the Chinese; and we may be inclined to pardon a moderate feeling of anti-foreignness in others when we remember that a famous British song declares:

We scorned the foreign yoke,
For our ships were British oak,
And hearts of oak our men.

Which, according to the principles of the "favoured nation clause," gives equal liberties to other nations, including the Chinese, to scorn the foreign yoke, or at any rate to dislike it, in their turn.

But even such apparently sound generalisations as these seem hardly sufficient to account for the fact that away up-country, where a passing foreigner, who does not intend to settle in that region, can scarcely be
imagined as conjuring up any ideas of a "foreign yoke," or of any definite actions to the harm of anyone, the natives, seeing him for the first time, yet make the hills resound with shouts of "Foreign Devil!"

As in our former study, we found that most Chinese characteristics may be traced to their origin in the village, so we can see that where those village districts are visited annually in the autumn by tax-collectors from the county-courts, unsalaried men of a low type, whose motto is "Grasp all you can" and who are as loyal to that motto as were any of the underlings of the publicani of old Roman times, a strong distrust and dislike of strangers may have naturally become a popular instinct, which in recent decades has been directed especially against the actual foreigner. But, however, such things may have helped to keep the cry of "Foreign Devil" alive, the roots of the matter may prove to go far deeper than that and to touch historical matters of bygone centuries. Let us, therefore, glance over the history of Western intercourse with China from the earliest times, and see if we do not by and by come to events which may fully cover the case. Many facts may be chronicled which may hardly deal with the question very directly, but which may be considered interesting enough to be set down in a general sketch of early Western contact with the Chinese. The earliest trace of Chinese intercourse with the West consists of a Chinese vase, found in an Egyptian tomb of the eighteenth dynasty (say 1750-1400 B.C.); on one side are Chinese characters which are easily decipherable as: "Flowers open; one more year" (i.e. another year has begun). It was probably brought from Chaldea to Egypt in one of the conquering expeditions which followed the driving-out of the Hyksos kings by the native dynasty that succeeded them before the time of Moses.

That the existence of China was well known in later centuries seems established by the mention of "the land of Sinim" in the Hebrew Scriptures (Isaiah xlix, 12) evidently as a land to the far east. The world Sinim seems to be an adaptation of the Chinese word Ch'in, the name of the large Western State of that period, a State with no definite western frontier, inhabited by semi-foreign tribes, who finally (in 255 B.C.) became masters of the whole land. The Hebrew Sinim was succeeded by the Greek Sinai (sometimes Thina), brought from India by the Macedonian Greeks; from which term we gained the word China, through the Portuguese.

The first explicit notice of China (under the name Thina) by the Greeks is found in the writings of Eratosthenes, who was born in the year 276 B.C. Aristotel, in the century before that, had a rather indefinite notice of silk. Pliny (23-79 A.D.) quotes the passage from Aristotle, and speaks of Assyria as the place of its origin; evidently using the word "Assyria" in a very vague and indefinite sense.
In the second century A.D., the Greek geographer and historian Pausanius mentions the Seres (i.e. the Chinese) and the spinning insect which produces silk. His knowledge of the case was certainly limited, for he describes that insect as "twice the size of the largest beetle, but in other respects like a spider," and states that it lives five years.

Up to that time European intercourse with China seems to have been at any rate begun by means of caravans through India to Ceylon. According to Pliny, the king of Ceylon sent four embassies to Claudius Caesar, and one of the ambassadors being interrogated as to his knowledge of the Seres (or Chinese), said that they lived beyond the Hai'mada or Snowy Mountains, that his father had been there, and that whenever caravans from Ceylon went there, the Chinese came part of the way to meet them in a friendly manner. Caravans of Roman merchants also attempted to trade with China by a cross-Asia route, but do not seem to have had much encouragement.

With the increase of luxury among the Romans, it seemed desirable to them to open up direct communication with China, for the purpose of getting silk. Accordingly, in the year 166 A.D., the Emperor Marcus Antoninus sent an embassy to China by way of Egypt and India. From Roman accounts it was coldly received, and led to no result. But this was not at all wonderful considering that those were the days when the Later Han Dynasty was tottering to its dissolution, and the century of upset, which has been called "the Chinese Wars of the Roses," was just about to begin. It is hardly in human nature to receive callers with due ceremony when one's house has begun to catch fire!

Meanwhile the wealthier Roman ladies, having worn comparatively small pieces of silk for personal adornment, such as a broad silk band around the waist, and ribbons by way of favours at the chariot races, desired to obtain more of the beautiful material. For at that time silk was so scarce that it was fully worth its weight in gold, and then was rarely pure silk. From the days of Pliny onwards, Roman girls were employed in an industry in which the silks imported from India were unravelled, thread by thread, so that the silk thread might be mixed with fine woollen yarn and rewoven. It is recorded of the inglorious Emperor Heliogabalus (218-222) that he was the first male Roman to wear a whole robe of pure silk; and the Emperor Aurelian (270-275) had to deny the Empress, his wife, the luxury of a silk gown, by reason of the forbidding expense.

At the beginning of the reign of Diocletian, in the year 284, a second embassy seems to have been sent to China, by way of Persia. But it happened at that time that the Chinese Court was much in the position of a man beginning to furnish a house rebuilt after a fire, and who was, moreover,
all the while in mortal fear of burglars. The Empire had only recently been
united under one head, and Hunnish tribes were preparing to steal half the
realm, which they succeeded in doing before many decades had passed. So
that we are not at all surprised to read that this second Roman embassy
was attended with little result.

Meanwhile the Persians, noting the growing demand for silk, and the
fact that the chief trade-route lay through their own country, decided to
make all possible gain out of the enterprise. Not having heard of the
modern gospel of Free Trade, and not being satisfied with the policy of bare
Protection, they seized a monopoly of the commerce with China, both by sea
and land, and would neither allow anyone from the west to pass through Persia
eastward, nor anyone from China to pass through Persia toward the west.

The Roman Court at Constantinople objected to this monopoly,
and in process of time made such imperious protests that the Persians
blocked the supply of silk altogether for a while. This made the Emperor
Justinian apply to the Arabians and the king of Abyssinia, hoping to induce
them to undertake the import of China silk, but without success.

What an interesting consideration for the student of human affairs: the
once completely-isolated Empire of China being connected with the Western
Powers of that day by just a single strand of silk thread! And even that
fragile thread seemed in danger of being permanently severed, as regards all
regions west of Persia. But along that thread there was carried from Persia
to China the first intimation that the West possessed a Gospel of national
uplifting, and personal salvation. Nestorian monks went with the caravans
as far as North India and Tibet; two of them penetrated to China itself, and
lived there long enough to become acquainted with the origin and preparation
of silk, then returned to report what they knew in Constantinople. The
Emperor Justinian thereupon engaged them to return to China, and bring
back some silkworms' eggs. This they did, carrying them in hollow canes
of bamboo to Constantinople, where they were successfully hatched, the
worms fed on mulberry leaves, and a local industry started.

It is a matter of history that the Nestorian monks made good their
connection with the East so that, in after years, they had not only succeeded
in introducing some Christian elements into the Buddhism which Korea and
Japan was to receive from Tibet, but were welcomed at the Court of China
in the year 635, and remained in favour for two whole centuries afterwards,
until a wholesale destruction of monasteries in 845.

With the annihilation of Nestorian institutions in China, the silken
thread, from East to West, seemed to be snapped in a very hopeless fashion.
And we have to ask ourselves whether it was not sadly for the best; for
after all what had Europe in the Dark Ages to bring to the East which would have been of any advantage to this section of the human family?

The light of Nestorianism having paled in West Asia no less than in the east, the commercial instincts of the Arabians found some little scope in China. And with the Arab traders came a small band of Mohammedan colonists, led by the maternal uncle of Mohammed. He built a mosque and left his tomb down south, and the descendants of that colony are to this day, if sparsely, spread over the country. They have held, without propagating, the central item of their religion, and their journeys to Mecca and Medina have served to keep open some slight intercourse with Western Asia. In this intercourse Europe has been a gainer. We must remember that in the long interval between the break-up of the Roman Empire and the birth of a Christian civilization, China was in many things ahead of Europe. And so the Arabs introduced from the Far East such items as the art of paper-making in the eleventh century; the art of block-printing; the mariner’s compass; and artillery: all in use in China centuries before, although the so-called artillery had apparently only been used for signalling purposes.

Then, in the thirteenth century, when China was in the hands of a Tartar dynasty, the conquests of Genghis Khan, and his hosts, induced the Pope to send an embassy to the Tartar Court. It was headed by John de Plano Carpini, of the Order of the Preaching Friars, who journeyed through Poland and Northern Europe, and reached the Court of the Khan at Karakorum, where he found ambassadors already arrived from Persia, India, and Russia. Carpini says of the Chinese: “Better artizans in all works cannot be found in the world. They seem to be a simple and humanised people.” This was in 1246-7.

A few years later, when Louis IX of France was engaged in his crusade against the Saracens in Syria, the Tartars made overtures to the French monarch, who gained the idea that the Tartar Khan and his statesmen had professed Christianity for three years, and that the Tartars generally were well-disposed to that religion. Hence the French king despatched two ambassadors, who started from Constantinople, crossed the Black Sea to the Crimea, and from thence to Karakorum.

In addition to this mission, two Venetians, whose family name has become famous, were seized with the spirit of adventure. Maffeo and Nicolo Polo, two brothers, went to Constantinople, and heard that there were great openings for commerce with the Tartars on the Volga—for at that time the Tartar dominion extended the whole length of Asia.

The brothers Polo arrived in safety at the West Asian Tartar capital, and had success in their trading; but when they would have returned, they
found it difficult for the reason that war had broken out between these Western Tartars and those of the east. But by adopting another route, they fell in with an envoy of Kublai Khan, the ruler of the Eastern Tartars. This envoy was an enlightened person, who made friends with the Venetian merchants, and invited them to proceed eastward with him, to the Court of Kublai Khan. Here they were kindly received, and had many conversations with that famous personage. The Khan was induced to open communications with the Pope, and to send a request that a hundred learned men be sent to teach their religion and the sciences in his dominions. A Tartar nobleman was also deputed to accompany the brothers Polo back to Europe.

This nobleman, however, fell ill on the journey, and had to be left behind; and the Venetian merchants found travelling so difficult, probably because of the circuitous route they had to adopt, that the journey to the Mediterranean coast occupied three years, when they found the Papal Chair to be vacant. But after some time Gregory X was elected, and he furnished them with two theologians who were reputed to be men of science as well. They departed with presents for the Khan, and diplomatic credentials.

Marco Polo, son of Matteo, a young man of nineteen, accompanied them. He, as readers of his travels know, spent twenty-four years in the employ of the Tartar Court, then residing at Peking (which he called Cambalu), visiting Nanking, and many of the famous cities of Northern and Southern China, to such purpose, indeed, that Marco Polo may almost be regarded as the discoverer of China.

About thirteen years after the return of Marco Polo, a friar named Oderic de Porteneau, was "seized with an unbounded desire to visit the remote and infidel countries of the East." He set off on his own account, penetrated to Southern China, and visited Cambalu, or Peking. On his return he wrote an account of the country and its government, agreeing closely with all that Marco Polo had related. But both writers were treated with incredulity. The chief things known about the Tartars had been the cruelties perpetrated by some of them in war; and any facts brought forward to prove them to be possessed of any civilization whatever seemed beyond all credence. Europeans judged by what atrocities had come to their hearing, and regarded the whole Yellow Race as atrocious; thus unconsciously anticipating the Chinese in their method of judging of the whole White Race by some unfavourable specimens, which were to visit China anon.

Passing by the names of a few more travellers to China, we come to the year 1516, when we find a band of Portuguese adventurers in possession at Malacca, waiting to come into touch with the regions beyond in the Far East. The chief spirit of the band, Albuquerque, in August, 1516, sent a
certain Rafaelle Perestrillo to Canton, in the junk of a native merchant. He collected a considerable amount of information, and after ten months returned to Malacca.

Fernando Peres d'Andrada had been hesitating whether to go to China or Bengal, but on receiving the information brought by Perestrillo, decided for China, and sailed with a small fleet of eight ships. He arrived in Canton waters in August, 1517, when a large Chinese flotilla surrounded him, and fired several shots over his head, for of course the natives were not sure of their visitors' intentions. To allay their suspicions, the adventurous Portuguese played upon instruments of music, and made various signs of peace; on which they were allowed to sail forward without opposition to the island now known in English as Bankshall, where they anchored. Here they found another Portuguese ship or ships, which had evidently put the Chinese on the qui vive a few days previously. The commander of this other party had recently come out of the river of Siam, and had been roughly handled by a fleet of Chinese pirates.

So, on consultation, it was agreed to send a messenger to the Viceroy of Canton—they had a native or two with them, it seems—and to represent that they wished to send an ambassador from the King of Portugal to the Emperor of China. The Viceroy did not grant permission, on which the Portuguese, losing patience, resolved to sail up to the harbour of Canton. A violent storm drove them back, and damaged their ships, but by skilfully using what materials they had, the two best vessels were repaired sufficiently to sail to Nanto, the mandarin of which place gave them permission to sail up to Canton, and furnished them with pilots.

The arrival of the daring Portuguese at Canton naturally caused a great stir among the populace, who seem to have been curious rather than unfriendly. After some delay, the three great officials of the city appeared and visited the ships, on three successive days, during which "the waters of the river could hardly be seen for the multitudes of boats decorated with banners and streamers," as we may very well imagine.

D'Andrada was now invited on shore for an audience, but sent a deputy who stated that they had brought with them an ambassador with letters and a present from the King of Portugal. In reply to which the mandarins courteously requested the ambassador to come on shore, where he would have all his wants supplied; but said that he must wait the orders of the Emperor before proceeding further. Receiving this permission, the Portuguese had to decide among themselves as to which of their number was to act the part of ambassador. The lot fell upon Thomé Pires, an apothecary of intelligence and good address. He went ashore and remained there, while d'Andrada
set sail and returned to Malacca, having left a very favourable impression among the Chinese, who had given permission for Portuguese merchants to come to the island of Bankshall and trade there. So that up to this stage all had gone well, and probably the epithet "Foreign devil" had not been suggested to the Chinese mind.

A native dynasty had succeeded that of Kublai Khan, and had lasted long enough to grow weak—for the downgrade of each dynasty has been one of the most constant facts of Chinese history. The Emperor Chêng Tê had been chiefly noted for his pleasure-loving disposition, but just about that time was being aroused from his frivolities by a formidable insurrection, headed by a prince of the realm. This was put down in 1520, but the Portuguese ambassador was subjected to various delays, and when he did proceed to Nanking and Peking, there was further delay at the latter city, and he failed to secure an audience with the Emperor.

The letters of the Viceroy of the Kuangtung province were not altogether unfavourable to the Portuguese; he informed the Emperor that they desired permission to establish a trading hong at Canton; that they were already masters of Malacca, and powerful in the Indian seas; but he also added that they were persons of ambitious pretensions, and difficult to satisfy. These latter words threw the Court into some perplexity; and unfortunately soon after other letters arrived from Canton, describing the Portuguese as restless conquerors, who had behaved with unbearable insolence at Canton. Meanwhile the apothecary-ambassador in vain appealed for an imperial audience. But the Emperor was really at Nanking, indulging his passions after the style of some of the less noble Roman emperors; and on the journey back to Peking he fell sick with an ailment which proved fatal in 1522. And by the time the unfortunate ambassador returned to Canton, he was told that open war had broken out between his countrymen and China; he was thrown into prison, and died soon after.

Affairs had taken an unfavourable turn on this wise: Fernando d'Andrada having returned to Malacca, did not come back, but the year after, his brother Simon d'Andrada took command of five ships and sailed for China. There was a great difference in the disposition of the two brothers. The Portuguese themselves described Simon as "pompous and vain-glorious, doing all things with an air of great majesty." Conciliatory measures had succeeded with the Chinese, but Simon's methods were anything but conciliatory. He took forcible possession of the little island of Bankshall; acted in a most extravagant manner, and put some natives to death without any provocation.

The Chinese expelled him from the island; and in his flight, falling in with some Chinese junks, he shot several of the crew. Then commenced
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a course of mutual retaliation. And to make matters worse, Fernand Mendez Pinto, the son of obscure parents, soon became a leading spirit in some avowedly piratical expeditions along the China coast. So that Sir Rutherford Alcock, in his parliamentary papers relative to Lord Elgin's Mission of 1857, says: "Simon Andrade and Fernando Mendez Pinto sailed up the Chinese coast, ostensibly for traffic in the north . . . but plundered the tombs of seventeen kings of an ancient dynasty, and made many piratical expeditions from Ningpo as a base of operations. This drew upon them the vengeance of the surrounding population, which rose upon them en masse, destroying their fleet of thirty-seven vessels, and killing the resident Portuguese . . . These events took place about 1545."

Now we are in a position to answer a question at the outset of the paper, as to the origin of the term translated "foreign devil." It is literally "ocean demon," a forcible Chinese term for pirate. The usual term "sea robber" (海賊) became "ocean demon" (洋鬼) after this Chinese experience of unscrupulous foreign pirates who became marauders on shore as well. From the Chinese standpoint was not the term justified in those days? And not only did the Portuguese nation furnish one or two unworthy specimens of Europeans, but so did Holland, and so did England, in the years which followed. The China seas, in addition to their own bands of native pirates, became infested in those early years with far more daring piratical spirits from these three nations. And, at first confined to the coast, the term "ocean demon" or pirate gradually spread into the interior, being propagated from place to place in reports and rumours which doubtless magnified the actual doings of the lawless Europeans into deeds of fiendish atrocity. Then after a generation or so, the term "foreign demon" was utilised by mothers with fractious children, much as the name Buonaparte was for a while in England: "If you don't stop that noise, I'll tell Boney to come and take you!" The mention of "ocean fiends" was found to afford a potent sedative for blatant juveniles, and so it has continued in use, since the sixteenth century until the present generation, an interesting, if unpleasant, instance of Chinese conservatism.

We suggested at the start that it is dying down in many places. Having been so long-lived in the past, it is dying hard. And, as all will admit, it has been the missionary foreigners, or the more genial men and women of that class, who have been the chief agents in changing it for something better. Not that the foreign babies have not helped. When in the sixties Dr. Porter Smith of Hankow walked in the Chinese streets with his little child on his shoulder, the Chinese exclaimed: "He cannot be a foreign devil. See! he is smiling at his little child."
With regard to the present-day attitude of China toward the foreigner, the case is of course a complex one, for the term foreigner, to the Chinese mind, not only represents the individual foreigner as such, but the foreigner as the representative of "foreign authority" (外 权) or the "foreign yoke." In India, speaking generally, the natives have accepted British rule and authority, and may either like or dislike the individual Britisher. In China the natives may get to like the individual foreigner, whether he be consul or merchant, or missionary, or foreign resident generally, but such liking does not carry with it any liking for foreign authority, unless it be in the form of foreign protection from "squeeze," blackmail, and oppression generally. And so deep-rooted is the objection to foreign authority that the objection to its presence, or its apparent presence, may become a handle in the hands of agitators to stir up mob violence against any set of foreigners, however popular they may have become with several or many around them. Hence riots against many of the mission stations in which mission hospitals and medical missionaries—everywhere popular—have come to grief, or against foreign residents, quite apart from any personal enmity toward those concerned.

But after such outbreaks there are sure to be messages of sympathy sent by the respectable Chinese to individuals who have suffered and survived. After the Shanghai riot of December 18th, 1905, for instance, a Chinese gentleman of the first-button rank of nobility wrote: "I am very sorry to hear that you were assaulted by the rioters... I hope you will always have the same friendly feelings towards your Chinese friends as they have for you."

Foreign nations are not likely to hand back to China any authority they may have acquired in the land of Cathay until they have received practical assurances that China can be trusted to hold that authority with the steady hand of one who is free from hysterical outbursts (as in the native press) or epileptic fits (as of mob violence) and the like. But meantime a message sent to a Western editor in China may be taken to heart by Western consuls, merchants, missionaries, and residents generally, as indicating a definite policy for each of them, to the adjusting of many of the points at issue. It was received from an educated Chinese in the United States and reads: "Your task is, I believe, to give new life to China, and to better the international relationship of humanity at large. Such being the case your responsibilities are great indeed. With my best wishes for your success, I am, yours, etc."