



(From the China Mail, August 24.)

PROCLAMATION.

S. G. BOEHM, Esquire, Companion of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath, Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the Colony of Hongkong and its Dependencies, and Vice-Admiral of the Seas, Her Majesty's Lieutenant and Chief Superintendent of the Trade of British Subjects in China. A Free Pardon is hereby granted unto Chun-tsun, alias Amoo, alias Tung-tung, convicted of Piracy in January 1843, and now in Jail under sentence of Transportation for Life. By His Excellency's Command, W. CAINE, Colonial Secretary.

GOVERNMENT NOTIFICATIONS. Inturbance of Ordinance No 207 1843, entitled, "An Ordinance to raise an Assessed Rate on Lands, Houses, and Premises, within the Colony of Hongkong, for the upholding of the requisite Police Force therein," it was determined by His Excellency the Governor, with the advice of the Executive Council of Hongkong, that a Rate of Five per Cent be paid for the Year commencing from 1st of July, 1848, on the Valuation made under the said Ordinance; and the amount of the First Quarter due will be payable from this date. By Order, W. CAINE, Colonial Secretary.

His Excellency the Governor has been pleased to appoint William T. Mercer, Esquire, Colonial Treasurer, who resigned his temporary seat in the Legislative Council on the return to the Colony of the Honourable Chief Justice Hulme, to be a member of the said Council. The Honourable W. T. Mercer, Esquire, has been re-sworn accordingly. By Order, W. CAINE, Colonial Secretary.

Table with columns: LATEST DATES, LATENT DATES, and specific dates for various locations like England, United States, Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, Sydney, Batavia, Singapore, Manila, Shanghai.

THE FRIEND OF CHINA AND HONGKONG GAZETTE. VICTORIA, SATURDAY, AUGUST 27th, 1848.

On Tuesday the police captured a party of Chinese in the 'Tried's cave. They appeared to have met for social purposes; there being an abundance of Chinese delicacies. The annoyance the natives receive from the police when they meet on these occasions is most objectionable; and to them in the highest degree offensive. It is said they are meetings of political associations opposed to the Tartar dynasty, a regular form of government, and courts of Justice - complete anarchy in short. Very little, however, is known of the secret societies in China - less probably than the uninitiated comprehend of masonry - but allowing that they are political clubs, we have no right to interfere with them, so long as they are quiet and orderly. This wretched intermeddling policy has been prolific of evil, and we really trust His Excellency will strictly prohibit all unnecessary interference with the Chinese. We are told that many of the men dragged off to Jail for no offence whatever, were of a respectable appearance; it is well known that the great majority of the Compradores are members of the secret societies which were so bitterly denounced by the ex Governor and his associates, and against which branding and other barbarous laws were enacted. The Chinese enquire how it happens that the police do not disturb Europeans when they meet to enjoy themselves; and whether it is reasonable that a distinction should be made in their case. The question is difficult to answer without an admission that they are treated with great injustice.

The insufficiency of the revenue of this Colony to meet the present expenditure is a matter of notoriety; and there is no doubt that 1848 will show a considerable decrease upon the receipts of the previous year. This is explained by the fact that in 1847 there were numerous prosecutions for arrears of ground rent - mainly for building allotments which had been abandoned in consequence of the unpromising condition of the colony; the revenue for that year was also swelled by fees, fines, and forfeitures aggregating £4,142, an amount which has never been drawn from any other year of equal number by similar indications. Assuming that there will be a decrease in the revenue of from 5 to 6,000, that will still be 25 to 30,000 drawn from a population of 400 Europeans and about 18,000 Chinese, the great bulk of the latter giving no pecuniary support to the government, indeed three-fourths of the entire amount may be said to come out of the pockets of the 400 Europeans, their taxes directed towards the support of a few hundred. As a general rule, Colonists are expected to pay their own

expenses; but like all other general rules this is frequently broken, especially in young colonies. Of late years we need only cite the settlements of Southern Australia, Western Australia, and New Zealand; the first of these has now a surplus revenue; the other two will be a burden to the parent country for years. The British parliament will be called upon to vote money to support the new colony of Labuan even with its moderate establishments; and when it is considered that Hongkong, with a small population and no resources within itself, has a most expensive civil establishment, it cannot be expected that the revenue will meet the expenditure until trade and traders are attracted to the place by a liberal commercial policy.

Comparisons are frequently made between Singapore and Hongkong; and usually unfavourable to the latter settlement. We are apt to forget that Singapore has had a growth of 29 years as a British possession, and Hongkong only five; - that the liberal views of Sir S. Raffles, the first Governor, were followed up under the able superintendance of Mr Crawford, Mr Boehm, and others, whereas the energies of Hongkong were pressed down by the illiberal policy of Sir John Davis at the very time their development ought to have been guarded and protected by a sound discretion. From its position Singapore is the highway between India and China; also drawing commercial prosperity from the eastern Archipelago; and latterly possessing no inconsiderable amount of the most valuable tropical productions. Hongkong has within its boundaries neither vegetable nor mineral wealth; manufactures there are none; trade there is none except what we draw from the adjacent territory, and the whole course of Sir John Davis's legislation was calculated to check an extension of that trade. With all these natural and acquired clogs to our prosperity, we will make an analysis of the respective revenues and disbursements of Singapore and Hongkong.

By a statement recently made public, it appears that for the year 1847-8 the revenue of Singapore was £29,033; the expenditure (exclusive of military and convicts) being £27,190. Last year the revenue of Hongkong was £31,078; the expenditure exclusive of military £50,950, from which may be deducted £15,180 laid out in buildings and public works, leaving £35,779 as the cost of the civil establishment. It thus appears that the matured settlement of Singapore is well governed for £27,190, while Hongkong has been misgoverned at an expense of £35,779; it appears further, that our revenue for the last year would support the Singapore establishment and leave a surplus of £4,000. We can appreciate the feeling which induces the British government to pay liberal salaries to public servants in the Crown colonies; but as it is very clear from the example of Singapore that the service can be performed here for much less; if

the Crown will not reduce the establishment or put it on a more economical footing, it will be unjust to demand that a few mercantile establishments and the population they have drawn to the Island be called upon to support an Executive disproportioned to the requirements of the place. A more minute examination of the details of the official returns of the two settlements may not be superfluous, and we begin with the -

Table with columns: Revenue, Land Rent, Fees of Office, Excise Taxes, Police Taxes, Auction Duty, Sale of Land & Surveying, Post Office, Miscellaneous.

It will be observed that at Singapore the main source of revenue is the excise duties, and at Hongkong land rent. The fixed population on the Island of Singapore is estimated at 35,000; but in addition there are numerous strangers brought by native vessels from Siam, Cochin China, Borneo the Celebes and other islands of the Archipelago, China, Sumatra, and the different parts of the Malay peninsula. The duties laid upon articles of consumption is comparatively light when shared by so many, and these duties have been gradually proportioned to the ability of the population to support them. The ground rent is small, police assessment there is none, auction duty there is none, and the fees, fines, &c., are little over one half of what is squeezed out of Hongkong with a population barely one-third of Singapore. The revenue of Singapore is raised chiefly by excise taxes which have been gradually imposed by judicious rulers in the course of twenty-nine years; the revenue of Hongkong on the other hand is principally derived from the building leases of public land, and the burden has pressed upon us since the infancy of the settlement, before it was even formally ceded to the Crown. It may be said that this burden is self imposed for as early as June 1841 the annual quit rent of land was sold by public auction at an average of £338 per acre. It is clear however that a young settlement can only support a certain amount of taxation, and that it will sink if over-taxed. Had the government been contented with the land rent, police tax, and moderate fees, the Colony would in all probability have increased in population and been the seat of a respectable trade. With an enlarged population

there would have been a demand for land, and revenue would have been drawn from its true sources. Our late Governor unfortunately could not perceive this; captivated by the excise taxes of Singapore he introduced a similar system here, regardless of the condition of the two places, and overlooking the fact that this community in rent of land pay into the treasury an amount in excess of the taxes of the old flourishing settlement if rated by the population. The result of this apparent infatuation is precisely what was foreseen. The excise taxes gradually diminished in amount, the population fell off, land was forfeited, and it is no exaggeration to say that trade was driven from the port. For a period of two years some large houses did not sell a bale of goods in Hongkong, and most of them removed to Canton, though since the invasion in April 1846 and the murders last December, some of them have returned to the colony for the safe keeping of their papers and books, Canton still being the field of mercantile operations. Until the vexatious question of the right of entering Canton has been settled and the disposition of the people mollified, Hongkong will continue to afford an asylum to many of the British merchants and their families. A favourable opportunity is thus offered for drawing trade to the port, and we cannot help thinking were the matter laid clearly before Her Majesty's Ministers, the existing restrictions would be removed even at the temporary sacrifice of a few thousand pounds of revenue. The auction duty is a criterion of the local trade. In 1846 it yielded £459; in Sir John Davis's estimate for 1847 it was put down at £500, and realized £255; for the first six months of the present year it amounts to £100 and is still decreasing.

Table with columns: Civil and Revenue establishments, Judicial and Police, Ecclesiastical, Marine, Medical, Pensions, School, Seaman's Hospital, Poor House, Public Works, Steam Press, Post Office, Conveyance of Convicts, Contingencies.

Statement of the Proper Receipts and Disbursements at SINGAPORE, for 1847-48 exclusion of Militia and Convicts.

Main financial statement table with columns A and B, listing various receipts and disbursements with amounts in dollars and cents.

Table with columns ADD C, listing additional financial items like Salary of the Governor, Do. of the Registrar, Do. of Pension of Mr. T. G. Mitchell, Do. of the Expenses incurred on account of the H. C. steamer Hoongly &c. for duty.



