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The Chronicles of the
EAST INDIA COMPANY
trading to CHINA
1635-1834

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H.M.S. *CENTURION*, 60 Guns, 1743

The Chronicles of the
EAST INDIA COMPANY

trading to CHINA

1635-1834

By HOSEA BALLOU MORSE, LL.D.

Author of *The Currency of China, The Gilds of China*
The Trade and Administration of China
The International Relations of the Chinese Empire

VOL. I



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TO THE MEMORY OF
EDWARD B. DREW
WITH GRATEFUL RECOLLECTION
OF OUR FRIENDSHIP OF FIFTY YEARS

PREFATORY NOTE

THE preparation of this work has been made possible by the liberality of the India Office in giving me access to all of the Honourable East India Company's records relating to China which survive. It is much to be regretted that there are several missing years in these records, which must have been at the disposal of Mr. Peter Auber, writing in 1834, but which since that date have disappeared. One gap, from 1705 to 1711, covers the period in which was carried into effect the union between the old (the London) and the new (the English) Company; during these years there can be no doubt that there were events recorded of some importance. In the middle of the century there are a few years missing—1743-4, 1748, 1752—but for those years some information has been obtained from the Letter Books, which have been preserved to April, 1753, containing the instructions and observations of the Court of Directors to all stations, including China. Then there is a gap of twenty-one years, from 1754 to 1774, *hiatus valde deflendus*, in which there remain neither ship's diaries, nor Council's consultations, nor Court's directions. During this period the two most significant events, in their effect on the China trade, were the Seven Years' War and the North American Acts—the Stamp Act and the Tea tax. By the first the French power in the Indian Peninsula was shaken, and French merchant ships became lawful prize of war to the British navy; as a result French trade was temporarily driven from the Eastern seas. The second led to American Independence and the introduction of one strong rival, of kindred blood and spirit, in the place of the French, Dutch, Danish, and Swedish competitors, who had formerly challenged the supremacy of the English Company, but, with the outbreak of the war with France, in 1793, disappeared from the scene.

From 1775 the records are complete, and continue so to the abrogation of the Company's charter in 1833. Up to the break

in 1754 the records consist of the diaries kept by the supercargoes of the individual ships for the information of the Court of Directors; these are meagre, and give little of that economic and naval history which we have come to prize above all other facts; but meagre as they are, they give us vignettes of early transoceanic trading which are of great value. In 1775 the Company's affairs in China are under a Council of supercargoes, with a Chief who is *primus inter pares*, but who may on occasion be saved only by his casting vote from being outvoted; this Council remains in China from year to year, and has a continuing policy and continuous records. The Council is superseded, temporarily in 1779, and permanently in 1786, by the Select Committee. This consisted at first of six, and afterwards more commonly of three, of the seniors among the supercargoes, who were relieved of much of the routine work and left free to superintend the execution of the Court's orders. During these years the Canton records are quite complete, and in them we have a graphic representation of the doings of the Company's agents in China. From these records every fact has been extracted which could be of economic value to the student of the commercial history of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

The reader will find few references to other works. English books on the trade of England cover too much ground, and are not really helpful on the trade to and from China; consultation of French and Dutch works on the trade of those countries would take more time than I have at my disposal; and the American trade has not yet been fully worked out, though Mr. Latourette's paper¹ shows that the material exists in the United States. The scope of this work is exactly indicated by its title, and I have given, generally speaking, such facts concerning the English trade as are recorded in the Company's chronicles preserved in the India Office, and such facts only concerning the trade under the American, French, Dutch, Danish, Swedish, and other flags as have note taken of them in the records of the English Company. } For the statements,

¹ *History of Early Relations between the United States and China, 1784-1844.* By K. S. Latourette. Transactions of Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1917.

except where otherwise noted, my authority is in all cases the diary or consultation for the ship or the year concerned.

I have spoken of the English Trade. It was literally English. It was a trade between Canton and London, preserved as a strict monopoly for the benefit of the United Company of Merchants of England Trading to the East Indies, commonly referred to as the Honourable (English) East India Company. The products sent as stock were lead, tin, and copper from Cornwall, woollens from Yorkshire, and latterly cottons from Lancashire; but even if the products of others of the three united kingdoms were sent, I should have to refer to the trade as English, since I need British to include the great trade with the Indian Presidencies, as well as the smaller trade with British North America and Botany Bay or other parts of New Holland. It will be noted, however, in the course of this narrative, how prominent a part in the affairs of this English Company has been taken by men with Scottish names, and, in the later years of the Company's monopoly, how enterprising were the 'private English' of Scotch extraction.

I have found it confusing to write of 'the season 1779-80', and still more confusing to write of 'the three seasons 1779-82'; I have therefore in this work called each season by one year. It will help the reader if I record the period covered by the transactions for one season at Canton, which for convenience I call 'the season 1779'.

The silver dollars, woollens, and lead sent from London for stock were contracted for in the spring and summer of 1778, and shipped before the close of that year; ships dispatched Bombay and China, Coast (Madras) and China, or Bay (Calcutta) and China, ordinarily sailed in August or September 1778; direct ships received their sailing orders in January, February, or sometimes March, 1779, and sailed from the Downs as soon thereafter as the wind permitted (cases are on record in which ships were wind-bound in the Downs for forty days); the first ships might arrive in July, 1779, and the others were strung along from then until, sometimes, as late as February, 1780. Contracts for the homeward investment were made from March, 1779, to December, 1779; but odd lots were bought in the market up to March, 1780. The earliest ships were sometimes

dispatched from Canton in November, 1779; the greater number by the end of January, 1780; a belated few in March, 1780; and occasionally one in the first week of April, 1780. A few early ships arrived in the Downs on the return voyage in time for the September sales, 1780; a considerable number arrived after that date, and their cargo must then wait until the December sales, 1780, or the March sales, 1781.

These are the transactions of the Canton season 1779.

I most gratefully acknowledge my indebtedness to the late Sir Frederick William Duke, G.C.I.E., K.C.S.I., Under-Secretary of State, for the permission given to me to burrow in the records of the India Office; and to Sir William Foster, Kt., C.I.E., formerly Registrar, and now Historiographer, to the India Office, whose unequalled knowledge of Indian history and of Indian commercial facts has always been placed at my disposal, and has been of the greatest service. For my illustrations I am indebted to Mr. James Orange, who has generously given me prints from pictures in the collection of Sir Catchick Paul Chater, Kt., C.M.G., of Hongkong; and to Captain H. Parker, of 12A Berkeley Street, London, from whom I received several illustrations of shipping at different periods. I am indebted to the Right Hon. the Earl of Lichfield for the print of H.M.S. *Centurion*, taken from the contemporaneous model of the ship.

Finally I wish to express my deep sense of obligation to Sir Francis Arthur Aglen, K.B.E., Inspector-General of Chinese Customs, for his constant support and encouragement.

H. B. M.

CAMBERLEY,
October, 1925.

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CHINESE OFFICIALS

At Canton :

Viceroy (Tsungtu, Tsongtock, Chuntuck, Zuntuck) : the highest civil official over the two provinces of Kwangtung and Kwangsi (the Two Kwang) ; his official seat was at Shiuhing, but he was frequently at Canton, where he had a ' flying office '.

Tartar-General (Tsiangkün, Chunkoon) : commandant of the permanent resident Manchu garrison ; his position under the Empire may be compared with that of the Warden of the Cinque Ports.

Hoppo (Quanpoo, Yüeh-hai-Kwan-pu) : the Imperial Commissioner of the Kwangtung Customs, with head-quarters at Canton.

Governor (Fuyuen, Fooyen, Fuion) : the subordinate colleague of the Viceroy in matters relating to Kwangtung ; his seat was at Canton.

Treasurer (Pu-cheng Shih-sze) : in control of the provincial revenues remitted to Peking.

Judge (An-ch'a Shih-sze) : judge of offences committed by officials, and the connecting link in judicial cases referred to Peking.

Grain Commissioner } in control of the grain tribute and the salt gabelle
Salt Commissioner } respectively.

Taotai : the administrative authority over two or three Prefectures.

Prefect (Kwangchow Fu, Quangcheofou) : the official in administrative control of the Fu or Prefecture of which Kwangchowfu (or Canton) is the chief city.

Namhoi Hien : the Magistrate over the western half of the city of Canton and the District lying to the westward (up-river) ; in this District and under his jurisdiction are the foreign factories at Canton.

Punyü Hien : the Magistrate over the eastern half of the city of Canton and the District lying to the eastward (down-river) ; in this District and under his jurisdiction is Whampoa with the foreign shipping lying there.

Titu : the Commander-in-Chief of the Chinese troops (the Green Banner) within the Province.

CHINESE OFFICIALS

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Tsungping (Chumpien) or Chentai : the commander of the Green Banner troops within the Prefecture or Fu.

Futsiang or Hiehtai : the commander of the Green Banner troops within the District or Hien.

At Macao :

Heungshan Hien (Hiangshanyün) : the Magistrate over the District of which Heungshan is the chief city ; Macao lies in this District.

Tsotang : the Sub-Magistrate or deputy of the Heungshan Hien, residing in Macao.

Künming Fu : the military officer in command of the station at Casa Branca, established to hem in Macao.