

The Hon. Mr. Burlingame, head of the Chinese Embassy in Europe, and for some time past sojourning at Berlin, recently addressed a despatch to Count Bismarck on the subject of the relations between the Celestial Empire and the North German Confederation, and received a satisfactory reply. We (*Galignani*) are now able to lay before our readers the text of the two documents. The following is Mr. Burlingame's communication:—

“Chinese Legation, Berlin, Jan. 4, 1870.

“Your Excellency,—In our conversations of yesterday and to-day I had the honour to state that it was not so much the desire of the Chinese Government to make new treaties as to secure a fair execution of old ones.

“Existing treaties, with the opportunities of changing them afforded by the presence at Peking of the representatives of the Treaty Powers, are sufficient for commercial purposes, but from the manner in which they were established, and the harsh stipulations consequent thereon, they are difficult of enforcement.

“Without here questioning the propriety of their origin, or denying the obligation of the Chinese to observe them, I may be permitted to request such forbearance in their execution on the part of the Western Powers as shall be compatible with the independence of China, and the true interests of civilisation.

“Upon this subject, while there may be an equal desire to do justice, there is great diversity of opinion; one party maintains that, as the treaties had their origin in force, pressure must be continued in their support, and that any relaxation of this system would be fatal to progress. The other party holds that this system is neither wise nor safe; that, while it may be convenient for the moment, in the end it must be destructive of the interests of its promoters; that it is inconsistent with the true sovereignty of China, and with that international law which does not measure the rights of nations by their power to resist, or by the interests of those who do not belong to these nations; that it weakens and degrades the Central Government of China by dealing with the local authorities, and submits the great question of war to the caprice of those whose interest it is to make it.

“There can be little question as to which of these parties is right, and it is with great satisfaction that I recall to the mind of your excellency the action in favour of the latter party on the part of the Treaty Powers already visited by the mission. The treaty concluded with the United States recognises broadly the right of China to the jurisdiction of its own affairs, and offers substantial protection to the Chinese in California. It was this latter consideration which led to the adoption of the more solemn form of a treaty in the United States—a treaty being the supreme law of the land, overrides the obnoxious local legislation against the Chinese emigrants.

“The correspondence between Lord Clarendon and myself, and his instructions in accordance therewith, disclose a determination on the part of Great Britain to maintain a conciliatory policy towards China, and to restrain its agents within proper limits.

“The cordial reception of the mission by the Emperor of France, and the just views expressed by him at that time, as well as the subsequent declarations of his Ministers in the same sense, together with the gratifying responses by direct letter to the Emperor of China on the part of the Sovereigns of Holland, Denmark, and Sweden, are assurances of a general desire for harmonious and considerate action towards China.

“The more than official courtesy extended by his Majesty the King of Prussia to the mission, and the ever-recurring kindness of which it has been the recipient at the hands of her Majesty the Queen, will be remembered not only with gratitude by every member of the mission, but will excite a lively sense of obligation in the breasts of the Chinese people.

“I assure your excellency that the Chinese Government will appreciate and respond to the generous spirit of the Western Powers. Indeed we just learn that that nation, which has been charged by its enemies with a disposition to retrograde, has made large concessions in favour of foreign nations. The British Treaty contained stipulations by which, in the year 1868, the treaty might be opened for revision, and as, by the favoured nation clause, what is granted to one is granted to all, the other Treaty Powers were equally with Great Britain interested in the results of any negotiations which might ensue.

“Negotiations were commenced by Sir Rutherford Alcock, the British Minister, in co-operation with the representatives of the other Treaty Powers, Mr. Hart, inspector-general of Imperial customs, acting in conjunction with the Chinese and for them. These have resulted, as reported by English telegrams, in a modification of the transit dues, the opening of two new ports, the right to work coal mines, a reduction of duties, the right of navigation on inland waters, and the right of foreigners to temporary residence in any part of the country. This is sufficient answer to those who but recently declared that China would avail itself of the action of the Western Powers in its favour to restrict rather than enlarge the privileges of foreigners.

“This favourable result was not arrived at until the Chinese Government had fully comprehended the treaty made with the United States and the full effect of the action of the British Government against the aggressive spirit of its subjects in China, not until after Lord Clarendon had severely censured many of the British officials there for unjustifiable action at Yang Chow, Swatow, and Formosa.

“I will not after the generous expressions of yesterday inquire further as to the views of your excellency. I hasten in the name of China to thank you for them, and to request that you will, in response to this, place them upon record, to the end that their declaration may give still greater confidence to China and an additional incentive to further progress on its part.—I have the honour, &c.,

ANSER BURLINGAME.

Count Bismarck sent the subjoined reply:—

“Berlin, Jan. 16, 1870.

“Your Excellency,—I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 4th inst., referring to our conversation of the same and the preceding day. While bearing witness to the accuracy of your recital of what you said, I willingly comply with your request, by reiterating in substance and placing upon record what I answered you.

“It is a matter of great satisfaction to me that I should have received the first direct diplomatic communication from the Chinese Government to this country; and I trust that the intercourse thus established in accordance with the law of nations will prove equally beneficial for both parties.

“The reception you have met with here, and of which you and the other members of the Embassy have been pleased to convey to me so warm an acknowledgment, testifies the sympathy of the German people with China, and its desire to cultivate with her the most friendly relations. I am happy to add, that the North German Confederation and his Majesty the King, my most gracious Sovereign, being the head of the same, will not cease to observe a policy concurring with that popular disposition. They are convinced that, in the intercourse of our respective countries, the interests of Germany will best be served by what is conducive to the well-being of China—that is to say, the activity of a Central Government, enjoying respect, authority, and power commensurate to the magnitude of the empire, both in territorial extent and number of population. By maintaining order, and security of life and property throughout the realm, such a Government will afford the best guarantee for fair and on the part of the servants and subjects of the Emperor, the most efficacious and universal protection to our countrymen resorting or trading to China; the safest way to secure the execution of treaties and to obtain the redress of grievances.

“When embarrassed by internal dissensions and foreign conflicts, the Government would naturally concentrate its energies upon the further development of the boundless resources of the country; industry at home and commerce abroad would grow together, and increasing prosperity would, it may be trusted, strengthen the hands and fortify the determination of the Government to follow up the policy of active intercourse, of amity and mutual confidence with foreign nations, as initiated by your mission.

“Resting upon these suppositions, the North German Confederation will ever be ready to suit its attitude to the exigencies of that authority, the impairing of which in extent or intensity would open a prospect difficult to imagine, but certainly the reverse of what the interest of the Western Powers, in the growth of commerce and spread of civilisation, demands.”