

# William Melrose in China 1845-1855

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THE LETTERS OF A SCOTTISH  
TEA MERCHANT

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## PREFACE

William Melrose and his father Andrew were among the few British wholesale tea dealers engaged in the China trade to any large extent. Their activities throw new light on the import, sale and distribution of tea in Britain during the early years of free trade. In contrast to the majority of importers whose purchases were financed by profits from opium or the sale of British manufactured goods, the Melroses dealt exclusively in tea. In order to benefit from his vastly superior knowledge of the domestic market, Andrew needed as a complement to his own activities in Britain a personal agent in China who was both well-trained and attentive to the requirements of his principals. William supplied an indispensable link in what proved to be a highly successful trading chain. The record of his activities, unlike most accounts of Sino-British commerce which focus their view on China, gives a particularly well-rounded picture of all aspects of the tea trade. At the same time the letters document the social life and family relations of a mid-Victorian business man who felt equally at home in Scotland, England or China.

We would like to thank the directors of Messrs Melroses Limited of Leith for permission to publish the collection of letters and for making our search of the archives of Andrew Melrose and Company a memorable and pleasurable occasion. In particular, we are grateful to Mr J. Macmillan and Mr A. T. Macmillan for their enthusiastic interest and assistance in our work. Miss B. C. Downer of Shrewsbury was generous in showing us the records of the family of A. S. Craig. Miss K. M. Richardson of London patiently answered our inquiries concerning the family of James Richardson. Permission to study the archives of Jardine Matheson and Company was kindly given by Mr Alan Reid of Matheson and Company, London.

While limitation of space precludes acknowledgment of individual librarians and their staffs for unfailing co-operation and helpfulness, we hope that our gratitude may be conveyed, however inadequately, by a listing of the libraries: the National Library of Scotland, the Scottish Record Office, the General Register Office (Edinburgh), the Shropshire Record Office, the Office of the Superintendent Registrar (Shrewsbury), the Anderson Room of the

Cambridge University Library, the British Museum Newspaper Library (Colindale), the General Register Office (Somerset House), the India Office Library, the Library of H.M. Customs and Excise and the local history division of the public libraries at Edinburgh, Glasgow, Liverpool, Manchester and Shrewsbury.

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Last but by no means the least, Dr G. G. Simpson and Dr T. I. Rae gave us exceedingly helpful advice and encouragement.

St John's, Newfoundland  
*September, 1972*

H.C.M.

L.H.M.

## CONTENTS

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Preface v

Introduction ix

### LETTERS OF WILLIAM MELROSE I

Appendices 259

Index 276

FACSIMILES *end pocket*

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## Introduction



THE SIGNIFICANT PART played by the Scots in forging the commercial links of the British empire, especially in the Far East, has been well recognized. In the China trade of the nineteenth century the names of Jardine and Matheson are legendary; little, however, is known concerning merchants of more modest means and attainments, largely due to the lack of records. Too frequently those who have surfaced in consular reports and other public documents have been the more unruly elements of the commercial community. We are, therefore, extremely fortunate to have this richly informative collection of family and business letters written by William McIrose (1817-63) during his second sojourn in China in 1848-53. The picture they depict is very different from the general impression conveyed in most accounts of life in the treaty ports. At times, as he tells his father, he almost feels as if he were back home in Chapel House, Edinburgh. Indeed, to those for whom politics, or in this instance, diplomacy, is the *stuff* of history, these letters will be singularly disappointing. William seems to have gone about his affairs with little knowledge of the involved diplomatic negotiations that have become the standard fare of the historian on the British in China.

But the value of these letters goes well beyond the merely descriptive. For information on the tea trade in China and in Britain during the crucial years following the Opium War of 1839-42 they are without doubt unparalleled. The affairs of Jardine Matheson and Company were so intertwined with opium and with cotton and other manufactures that it is almost impossible to extract from the Company's voluminous papers anything approaching the specific and detailed account so conveniently available in this collection. William confined his activities almost exclusively to tea, an area of trade for which he was eminently qualified.<sup>1</sup> The state of the tea

<sup>1</sup> While the Rathbone papers, ably analysed by Sheila Marriner, *Rathbones of Liverpool, 1845-73* (Liverpool, 1961), are particularly revealing on the problems of exchange

and money market in China, the activities of his competitors, the problems of buying, shipping and insuring – these and many other aspects of the trade are reported in simple straightforward language. That many of the transactions were organized as joint ventures poses questions that should perhaps be further explored. Did the Scots use this method of promoting trade more frequently than the English; or was it, in fact, much more extensive than has hitherto been noted? To judge from the evidence, this form of trading organization provided a number of advantages that might well recommend it to nineteenth-century merchants.

But perhaps the most exciting and rewarding feature of the letters is the intimate picture that emerges of a mid-Victorian businessman at work in China – the opportunities grasped or lost, his philosophy of life and of business in particular. In short, we catch William in the process of deciding and can see what were the considerations that impelled him to act. That his endeavours were by and large successful during difficult years adds not a little to their interest.

The letters selected for publication fall into three main groups. Those to his father, Andrew Melrose of Edinburgh, have the widest interest and form the longest series. From the time William boarded the Peninsular and Orient steamer *Ripon*<sup>1</sup> at Southampton on 20 June 1848 until his return in July 1853, he wrote to his father with unflinching regularity. Of these letters, only two are missing. There are, in addition, a few written before he sailed for China and after his return, as well as several written during his voyages to and from China describing conditions and pleasures of travel. The letters may lack literary excellence, but William wrote with a warmth and intimacy and a certain boyishness that is often touching and frequently entertaining. Deeply attached to his father, he wrote freely and openly of his daily activities, of his dreams for the future, and of his fears and apprehensions. He gossips about mutual friends and

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in China, they are much weaker on the intricacies of the tea trade. Tea was for the partners of the Liverpool firm a new venture, and their comments are not infrequently coloured by lack of experience and knowledge of the trade, at least during their early years in China.

<sup>1</sup> The *Ripon*, a 1,508 ton paddle-wheel vessel, was built in 1846 with two masts and two funnels; for a picture and description, see James Orange, *The Chater Collection, Pictures relating to China, Hong Kong, Macao, 1655-1860; with Historical and Descriptive Letterpress* (London, 1924), 428, 441.



relates the passing events of the foreign communities in China. Waxing eloquent on his new house in Canton which faces the river, he assures his father of a hearty welcome. To be sure, business is never far from William's mind; it forms the accompanying orchestration to almost all the letters, sometimes on a low key but more generally gay and lively. But these are not business letters; at least they were not intended as such, although much can be learned from them.

For purely business affairs the most important letters are those addressed to John Simpson, a partner in Andrew Melrose and Company. From July 1849 to April 1853, they form an almost continuous series. A few have not survived and several are incomplete, but on the whole they are in remarkably good condition. The letters contain very long detailed accounts of the business that William has transacted for the Company, or for the joint ventures, together with his comments and suggestions on sales in England and future purchases in Canton. He grumbles and growls at the instructions and advices (or lack of them) that he has received, fulminates at the rate of exchange, and gives weighty reasons for being allowed greater discretion in his purchases. Except for an occasional jocular remark, the tone is businesslike and sometimes quite sharp, certainly not personal. While the letters indicate occasional bickerings and some mutual recriminations, on the whole William is revealed as fairly level-headed and even-tempered, willing to concede mistakes but firm and confident in his judgment. One senses a certain resentment against the older man's assumption of superior knowledge and experience and what appeared to William as carping criticism. But the two retained a smooth working relationship that bore up relatively well under some trying circumstances.

The third and much smaller group consists of letters addressed to Andrew Melrose and Company. Of the many extant, only those most informative or representative have been chosen for publication. Usually they are short formal notices acknowledging receipt of bank credits and bills, requesting insurance of designated shipments, or informing the Company of the purchase of teas, the sale of bills or other matters of business. Some are merely covering letters for bills of lading and invoices. Unlike most of William's

letters, their format is somewhat untidy; but care is taken to list each bill separately by number, bank, venture and sale price. Space is sometimes saved by using empty corners for last minute entries; but the writing is always clear.

There is, in addition, some correspondence with James Richardson and Company of Glasgow, one of the major co-venturers: a wet copy of a letter from William and several to William or to Andrew Melrose and Company. As they cast some light on how the three co-operated as well as reflect on William's judgment, a few have been included for publication.

Commercial papers, such as invoices, bills of lading, insurance policies and bills of sale, among others, are often mentioned in business histories; but surprisingly few such documents have been preserved. What instrumental changes have occurred in their form and content have of necessity gone unrecorded. To some they are mysteries beyond comprehension, as William's brother-in-law, Alexander Craig, a solicitor in Shrewsbury, admitted to Andrew Melrose.<sup>1</sup> For the business historian and others, samples of these documents are reproduced in facsimile. One shipment of tea has been traced from the bill of lading to the broker's statement of sale. They are very clearly drawn up and with the help of a few notes should be intelligible to even the uninitiated.

Twice-monthly mail service to China was inaugurated by the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company in January 1853. Until then, the mail boat arrived once a month, making its return trip usually within a few days. William waited for the mail before writing or completing a letter that he may have started. He never missed a mail and the regularity of the boats is quite amazing. William's father very carefully dated the receipt of the letters at Edinburgh and as many of the envelopes have been preserved, the series forms an exact record of the mail service. It took 52 to 56 days for a letter to reach Edinburgh from Hong Kong.<sup>2</sup>

The letters refer to many different ships, some of which were famous clippers. To simplify identification, they are listed alpha-

<sup>1</sup> A. S. Craig to Andrew Melrose (hereafter A. M.), 23 Jan. 1852, Andrew Melrose Archives (hereafter AMA). For Craig, see below, pp. lxxii-lxxiii.

<sup>2</sup> A complete list of the letters, containing this and other relevant information, is deposited with the Hon. Secretary of the Scottish History Society.

betically along with the tonnage, captain and other relevant information in Appendix II. While no attempt has been made to check the builder's specifications, the list does provide an easily accessible and relatively accurate account of a large number of ships in the China trade.

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William, the second son of Andrew Melrose<sup>1</sup> and Margaret Dickson<sup>2</sup>, was born on 17 March 1817. At the time his parents were living in Nicolson Street near their main shop.<sup>3</sup> It was a large household; in addition to the family, there were rarely less than six apprentices and sometimes as many as ten or more shopmen.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, it was William's introduction to the world of business. Many years later a young man for whom Andrew had written letters of introduction lamented that he had not 'been bred in a merchant's office'; it was, he feared, a serious handicap.<sup>5</sup>

In 1823 Andrew purchased a country home in the parish of Lasswade. The estate, now known as Pittendreich but to William as Pendreich, consisted of a fairly extensive tract of farming land which provided the town and country houses with milk, vegetables, fowls and other sundries as well as some surplus for sale. The large roomy house commands an impressive view of the valley. Here William had ample opportunity to ride and to acquire a taste for the

<sup>1</sup> The rise of the Melrose family followed a pattern of mobility characteristic of the industrial revolution. At Andrew's birth on 17 Aug. 1789, his father was a tenant farmer at Nether Mosshouse in the parish of Penicuik, but by 1796 was listed as a vintner. Andrew was apprenticed to Robert Sheppard, one of the leading grocers of Edinburgh, to whose training Andrew's subsequent success owed not a little. Within eight years after he opened his own shop in 1812, Andrew's business had expanded to include three shops and a warehouse. He was admitted a Burgess of Edinburgh in 1816, one of the Guild Brethren in 1823, a life member of the Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce and Manufactures in 1824 and a director of the last in 1830. (See Parochial Register, County of Edinburgh, Marriages, 1811-21, fo. 101, and Pennycook, Births, 1783-96, fos. 58-114; *Roll of Edinburgh Burgesses and Guild Brethren*, ed. C. B. B. Watson (Edinburgh, 1933), 109; Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce and Manufactures, Subscription Book, ii, and Minute Book, iii, 311, 462; and H. C. and L. H. Mui, 'Andrew Melrose, Tea Dealer and Grocer of Edinburgh, 1812-1833', *Business History*, ix, no. 1 (Jan. 1967), 31-32, 45.)

<sup>2</sup> Born, 1790, at Kelso, the daughter of a wright, d. 1847.

<sup>3</sup> Below, pp. 76-77.

<sup>4</sup> AMA, Wages Book, i (1815-51), and Private Ledger, 1818-96.

<sup>5</sup> William Cameron to A. M., 19 Sept. 1851, AMA, Misc. Letters to A. M., 1845-52.

life of a country gentleman. In the 'peace and tranquility' of Pendreich, the family retained a little of the flavour of the countryman.<sup>1</sup>

William's father may have been a keen businessman but he was withal a kindly, considerate and affectionate person and not without a sense of humour. He and his wife remained throughout their lives staunchly loyal to their various relatives. Andrew's generosity is amply demonstrated by the advances of money to various relatives recorded in the account books and by the annuities provided for his sisters and his servants in his will.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the rapidity with which Andrew rose to prominence in the business community of Edinburgh was not achieved at the price of some of the simpler virtues of family living. Andrew may have worn his religion lightly – he was no bigot – but it formed an integral part of the daily life of the family. One of his staunchest and closest friends was John Clark, minister at the Old Kirk, who journeyed to Shrewsbury to baptize Andrew's first grandson.<sup>3</sup> Neither business nor pleasure were allowed to interfere with his attention to the services of God. Nor did the family live extravagantly.<sup>4</sup> But it was a happy congenial home.

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For the wholesale tea dealer, the abolition of the East India Company's monopoly in 1833 presented a challenge. Not all were convinced of the merits of free trade. For over half a century the Company had provided tea dealers of the kingdom with a relatively safe market – a supply of tea closely tied to the fluctuations of demand, a series of upset prices at the Company's auctions that varied little from year to year and, above all, a fine assortment of kinds and qualities constantly adjusted to changes in taste. All these were to be displaced by what seemed to some the mad scramble of free trade. Despite the vigorous opposition of London dealers, five outports were to be opened to direct importation from China.

<sup>1</sup> AMA, A. S. Craig to A. M., 11 May 1851; Pendreich Private Cash Book, 1823–53.

<sup>2</sup> AMA, State of Accounts between the late A. M. of Glencorse and Messrs A. M. & Co., 1855; Pendreich Private Cash Book, 1823–53; the will of A. M., sro, Commissariat of Edinburgh, Record of Testamentary Deeds, 1855, xlii, 634–6.

<sup>3</sup> A. S. Craig to A. M., 31 Oct. 1849, AMA. For Clark, see below, p. 11, n. 1.

<sup>4</sup> For A. M.'s personal expenditure, see below, p. lxxv n. 2.

A few predicted that tea or rather 'trash' would be carted around Liverpool in wheelbarrows and the trade ruined.<sup>1</sup> However, to the more ambitious and adventurous, especially those in the country, free trade seemed to hold out unlimited prospects. Some with more enthusiasm than knowledge were already chartering ships; others were opening up branches in the new centres of import.<sup>2</sup> To all, the changes called for new methods and more extensive knowledge in the handling of the 'exotic leaf'.

Those most easily able to adapt to the new situation were the London tea brokers. In 1832 there were twenty houses, some tracing their lineage to the beginning of the eighteenth century.<sup>3</sup> From long experience in judging almost all the tea imported by the Company, they knew to a nicety the different kinds and qualities. In addition, as buying agents for dealers at the Company's auctions, the brokers had acquired an intimate knowledge of the special demands of various markets throughout the country. The private trade and most of the re-exported tea was handled by them.<sup>4</sup> Nor were they completely unacquainted with the China market. From 1790 onward the East India Company had sent one or more tea inspectors to the Canton factory. The post, a highly esteemed one, was usually filled by a junior member of a brokerage firm. Thus, the brokers were among the few individuals in the country with personal experience in the China market. It is, therefore, not surprising that after 1833 the brokers came to occupy a pivotal position in the trade of the free importer and that of the domestic dealer.

Under the changes that accompanied the advent of free trade,

<sup>1</sup> Testimony of John Layton, a London tea broker, in *First Report, Select Committee on Affairs of the East India Company: China Trade, British Parliamentary Papers* (hereafter BPP), 1830, v, (644), 488.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, the activities reported in *Nicholson's Commercial Gazette*, ciii (22 Mar. 1834), 89, 93; cviii (26 Apr. 1834), 132; cxli (13 Dec. 1834), 393; and Circular of Henry Tuke & Co., 30 Apr. 1835, Mennell (Tuke) Archives, courtesy of the late Robert O. Mennell.

<sup>3</sup> *Robson's London Commercial Directory, 1832*.

<sup>4</sup> India Office (hereafter IO), Court Minutes, cxxxiv, 621-2; cxxxv, 27 June, 1 Aug., 7 Nov., 28 Dec. 1827; 30 Jan., 28 Mar. 1828, no pagination; Petition from Varnham, 2 Mar. 1826, H.M. Customs Library (hereafter HMCL), Excise and Treasury, cxxi, 72-73, and Excise Report, Mar. 1828, *ibid.* cxxvii, 135; E. H. Pritchard, 'Private Trade between England and China in the Eighteenth Century, 1680-1833', *Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 1, two parts: (Aug. 1957), 108-37 and (Apr. 1958), 221-56.

Andrew Melrose's long association with the brokerage house of Larken Varnham and Hamilton<sup>1</sup> was to prove particularly helpful, both for his own activities as well as for those of his son William. One of the leading firms in London with a long and distinguished history in the tea trade, it included among its partners some of the most reputable and highly qualified men. Charles Arthur, a junior member of the firm, was selected as the first tea inspector for Canton, a choice highly approved by the trade. He was followed by Edmund Larken who remained in China until 1808.<sup>2</sup> But perhaps the most influential was Charles Varnham, who under the East India Company's monopoly acted as the principal spokesman for the trade.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, John Nicholson who had waged a sustained verbal battle against traditional dealers as well as the brokers described Varnham in 1834 as the 'one man' to whom 'the trade and the public are eternally indebted'.<sup>4</sup>

Well before 1833, the firm had acquired considerable experience in the China trade, first through those sent as inspectors and later by serving as brokers for the private trade tea of C. Magniac and Company.<sup>5</sup> At the abolition of the monopoly, the firm was among the first to send a representative to China. In April 1834, Andrew Melrose was informed that Hugh N. Maccaughey, 'our late partner,

<sup>1</sup> Over the decades, the style of the firm changed as follows: 1813: Messrs Arthur & Co. 1815: Larken Varnham Hamilton. 1832: Varnham Ewart & Co. 1846: Ewart Maccaughey Delafosse & Co. 1853: Ewart Maccaughey Delafosse & Mounsey. The years given refer to the date of the evidence and not to the time when the change occurred. (Excise Report, 11 June 1813, HMCL, Excise and Treasury, lx, 213; AMA, Personal Ledger, 1815; *Robson's London Commercial Directory: 1832*; *Post Office Directory* (hereafter *POD*) of *London and Nine Counties* (London, 1846); *Watkin's London Commercial Directory, 1853*.)

<sup>2</sup> Arthur remained in China until his death sometime before 1801 (10, China: Court Letters, ii, 10 May 1790, paras. 50-51; v, 5 Apr. 1801, para 32; H. C. and L. H. Mui, 'The Commutation Act and the British Tea Trade, 1784-93', *Economic History Review*, xvi, no. 2 (Dec. 1963), 243). Although Larken had to return from China due to illness, he remained a broker in London as late as 1823-4 (10, China: Court Letters, 27 Mar. 1811, paras. 55-57; *Report, Select Committee on Affairs of East India Company*, BPP, 1812-13, (122); *Pigot and Company's London Directory, 1823-4*.)

<sup>3</sup> 10, Court Minutes, cxxxii, 761, 780, 787, 789, and cxxxvi, 19 Nov. 1828, 7 Jan. 1829, no pagination.

<sup>4</sup> *Nicholson's Commercial Gazette*, cii (15 Mar. 1834), 85; for a brief description of Nicholson's career, see [? ? Smith], *Tsiology; a Discourse on Tea* (London, 1826), 111-30.

<sup>5</sup> Larken Varnham & Co. to C. Magniac & Co., 21 Apr. 1824, Jardine Matheson Archives (hereafter *JMA*), Corr. In: London, B1/156, fo. 30.

is now safe in Canton'.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, close commercial relations were established with Jardine Matheson and Company to whom the brokers forwarded at the former's request a plan for the most favourable assortment of tea to be sent to England.<sup>2</sup> Under free trade their link with China was further strengthened by acting as recruiting agents. Over the years they supplied some of the major agency houses with tea tasters trained in the firm.<sup>3</sup>

When Andrew Melrose opened his first shop in the Canongate, he purchased his tea through Larken Varnham and Hamilton, and they remained his London brokers throughout his life. Chance may explain Andrew's first choice, but not his prolonged and constant association with this London firm. Given his initiative and drive and his determination to trade in ready cash at the first market and at the cheapest prices – a policy from which he rarely deviated – one may conclude that Larken Varnham and Hamilton gave consistent satisfaction. From 1817 to 1833, Andrew's annual tea account with the brokers fluctuated around £12,000, which he discharged promptly by bills 'at sight' or 'three-days sight'. After free trade, the account was much higher.<sup>4</sup> During all these years there was not the slightest sign of dissatisfaction on either side and the relationship moved from one of mutual respect to that of friendliness, as their correspondence shows.<sup>5</sup> Thus, when the China market was thrown open, Andrew had in his London brokers trusted friends upon whose advice he could rely and upon whom he could depend to handle his affairs with care – no mean advantage during the initial disorganization that accompanied the first few years of free trade. For William, the firm served as a stepping-stone to his future role as buyer for Andrew Melrose and Company.

William was entered as an apprentice to his father in 1832.<sup>6</sup> For

<sup>1</sup> Charles Varnham to A. M. & Co., 26 Apr. 1834, AMA, Misc. Letters to A. M., 1845-52.

<sup>2</sup> C. Varnham to Jardine Matheson (hereafter J. M.) & Co., 13 June 1834, JMA, Corr. In: London, B1/160, fo. 1390; and same to same, 12 Dec. 1834, B1/161, fo. 1569.

<sup>3</sup> Maccaughey to A. M., 2 Sept. 1845 and 11 Nov. 1846, AMA, Misc. Letters to A. M., 1845-52.

<sup>4</sup> For the period before 1833, see Mui, 'Andrew Melrose', 33-34, 36-37; the totals for 1844-54 are in AMA, Sales Ledger 'O', Wholesale, 1841-54.

<sup>5</sup> Maccaughey to A. M., 2 Sept. 1845 and 11 Nov. 1846, and William Cameron to A. M., 19 Sept. 1851, AMA, Misc. Letters to A. M., 1845-52.

<sup>6</sup> List of Apprentices, AMA, Wages Book, i, 1815-51.

a young man on the threshold of a career in the tea trade, it was a very stirring time. During the years of his apprenticeship William witnessed not only the many adjustments called for by the abolition of monopoly but the excitement and anticipation that accompanied the direct ventures between China and the outports. Indeed his father was one of the first to import tea into Leith in 1835, an event that created considerable enthusiasm at the time.<sup>1</sup> The problems that were encountered in subsequent years undoubtedly demonstrated to Andrew and to William that the road to success lay through the brokers.<sup>2</sup> After 1833, for a young man seeking a career in the tea trade, some experience in a brokerage house became indispensable. The waiting list of those seeking an opportunity to serve their time with the brokers was often very long, but Andrew had little difficulty in placing his son with Ewart Maccaughey and Company, successors to Larken and Varnham. Having served his apprenticeship with Andrew Melrose and Company, William left Edinburgh in 1839 to complete his training.

William remained for two years at Ewarts learning the mysteries of the trade at 4 Copthall Court. They were happy but busy years, as his reminiscences in 1854 so poignantly show.<sup>3</sup> Endless hours were spent in tasting and distinguishing the infinite varieties and qualities of tea or, in the language of the brokers, 'characterizing the tea'. It was an old custom reaching back to the early eighteenth century, and the brokers had evolved an elaborate set of symbols. The mark assigned to a chop (a parcel of tea of the same quality) largely determined the price it would command. In all, the practice amounted to an art which required as fine a discrimination as that of the highly lauded wine-taster and as much, if not more, training.

But if a broker's art was a prerequisite for eminence, it did not assure commercial success, particularly after 1833. In recommending an upset price at the auction, a nice balance had to be struck between quality, supply and demand. He needed, therefore, to watch carefully the various market conditions throughout the kingdom. From 1833 onward, the ports of Bristol, Liverpool, Glasgow, Leith and Hull were open to the China trade. While London continued to have

<sup>1</sup> *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, 18 May 1835; and *The Scotsman*, 20 May 1835.

<sup>2</sup> Below, pp. xxxiff and lxxf.

<sup>3</sup> Below, p. 253.



the entire country as a market, each outport commanded its own trading area which was distinguished by the quantity that each could consume and by the special kinds most suitable to its demand. Thus, the amount and assortment of tea that could be profitably imported into the outports varied widely.<sup>1</sup> Two shipments of tea arriving at Bristol in one year could ruin the market there, and a fine Hyson tea that would command a high price in London might be almost unsaleable in Glasgow where green tea found little favour. The training William received at Ewarts on all these matters was invaluable, as he himself recognized. In later years he advised his younger brother James that in addition to acquiring a 'good knowledge of teas', he 'should pay great attention to the imports and consumption, etc., for more depends on that than being a judge of tea'.<sup>2</sup>

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In 1842 William had the opportunity to test the knowledge he had acquired. Having accepted a post as tea taster and buyer for Jamieson How and Company, he arrived at Canton in October after a long trip around the Cape.<sup>3</sup> Barely twenty-five, strong and healthy, he could enjoy to the full, as he never would again, all the strange exotic sights, sounds and smells of the Orient. It was, as he later recalls, a most exhilarating and exciting journey.

Jamieson How and Company was a substantial house originating in Glasgow and with branches in Liverpool, Calcutta and Canton.<sup>4</sup> It shipped cotton and other goods from Britain and opium from

<sup>1</sup> For a further discussion of these regional differences, the origins of which can be traced back to the eighteenth century, see H. C. and L. H. Mui, 'Smuggling and the British Tea Trade Before 1784', *American Historical Review*, lxxiv, no. 1 (Oct. 1968), 59-60, 66-67; W. S. Shuttleworth, Bristol, to A. Robertson, 4 Sept. 1844, JMA, Corr. In: GB, B1/137, fo. 793.

<sup>2</sup> Below, p. 92.

<sup>3</sup> Below, p. 152.

<sup>4</sup> The firm was founded around 1817 with Andrew Jamieson in Glasgow, his brother Robert in Calcutta and William M'Cracken in Liverpool. From 1835 Robert and Andrew became residents in Liverpool where the firm was styled Jamieson Brothers whereas in Glasgow it was Jamieson How & Co. The latter ceased to exist around 1849 but the Liverpool branch continued until 1864. See esp. *Chinese Repository* (hereafter CR), *China Mail* and the directories of Glasgow and Liverpool, 1817-65.

India with tea forming the major return and had little to do with agency business.<sup>1</sup> In 1845 the managing partner at Calcutta was John Gifford, later replaced by his brother Alexander; in China, Joseph Frost Edger managed the firm until 1851 when he established a business on his own. During the period William was with the firm, the house in China consisted of one managing partner and five assistants.<sup>2</sup>

William's original terms of employment were for three years during which time his father stipulated he was not to trade on his own account; it was an arrangement wholly satisfactory to the Jamiesons, for a complaint frequently made against assistants in China was that they too often neglected the business of the house to attend to their own private affairs. William at least was not one of them. As he later recalled, it was a very wise restriction: 'if I had had my own way, I might have ruined myself . . . from not having experience enough'.<sup>3</sup>

During the four years that William remained with Jamiesons he had ample opportunity to acquire the experience he considered so essential. As tea taster, one of William's major duties was to choose a correct assortment of good quality tea at favourable prices. During the busy season, what with tasting tea, attending to its shipping, making out documents and keeping an accurate account of the purchases, there was probably little time for leisurely meditation. He worked hard and diligently, never leaving Canton for the gayer life at Macao. As Samuel J. Hallam, a friend of Andrew's and a buyer for Russell and Company, observed in 1843, William 'conducted himself very steadily and there seems nothing to prevent him from doing well. His prospects are very good; and he will probably while quite a young man return home with a handsome fortune acquired honourably'.<sup>4</sup>

In Canton William shared a house with Alexander Walker, a fellow assistant. Here they lived and worked in hot crowded quarters. It was house no. 3 of the Old English Factory, a building formerly

<sup>1</sup> The activities of Jamieson How & Co. are extracted from the shipping cargo lists published in *China Mail* throughout the year 1845-6.

<sup>2</sup> *CR*, xiv (1845), 11; xv (1846), 3-8.

<sup>3</sup> Below, p. 92.

<sup>4</sup> S. J. Hallam to A. M., 25 July 1843, AMA, Misc. Letters to A. M., 1845-52.

occupied by the English East India Company. The factory was located between the Spanish and Chow Chow factories, all of which were fronted by an open square leading to the river, known as the English and American Garden. The Old English Factory, which measured about 400 feet in depth with a frontage of about 85 feet, consisted of six rows of buildings running from front to back. The only access to the houses was through a passage on the ground floor. Number 3 had as its neighbour on one side a house occupied by Rathbone Worthington and Silva, and on the other one occupied by William Le Geyt and T. C. Piccope of Mac Vicar and Company. By all accounts, the houses, especially those in the middle, were poorly ventilated and tended to be hot and stuffy.<sup>1</sup>

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Life in Canton had changed very little over the years; if anything it was a little worse than pre-treaty days. The foreigners were still confined to the quarters set aside by the Chinese authorities, a small area measuring about 1,100 feet in length and about 700 feet in depth. It lay southwest of the old city walls of Canton, entry to which was still forbidden, and was bounded on the south by the Pearl River swarming with boats of all kinds. The only unbuilt area measured about 500 by 300 feet. During the days of the East India Company, the supercargoes could enjoy a quiet stroll by the river and even a little bowling. Now it was crowded with Chinese vending carts, goods loading and unloading, and people shouting and milling in a medley of sights, sounds and smells.<sup>2</sup>

The foreign community consisted almost entirely of men and was truly international. Besides the British and Americans who vastly outnumbered all others, there were Arabs, Dutch, French, Germans,

<sup>1</sup> CR, xiv (1845), 347-51; William C. Hunter, *The 'Fan Kwae' at Canton before Treaty Days, 1825-1844* (London, 1882), esp. chart of factories facing 24; H. B. Morse, *The International Relations of the Chinese Empire* (3 vols., New York, 1910), i, 71.

<sup>2</sup> For pictorial views of the city, see Auguste Borget, *Sketches of China and the Chinese; from Drawings . . .* (London, 1842), esp. plates xviii, xxiii, xxx of 1838-9; G. N. Wright and Thomas Allom, *China, in a series of Views . . .* (4 vols. London, 1843), ii, 62-63; iv, 33-34 whose drawings are unfortunately over-westernized; Orange, *Chater Collection*, contains many reproductions of George Chinnery's drawings. For verbal descriptions, see esp. Henry Charles Sirr, *China and the Chinese* (2 vols. London 1849), i, 67-105; Hunter, *The 'Fan Kwae' and Bits of Old China* (London, 1885).

Indians, Moors, Parsees, Swiss and the Portuguese who, when they strayed from Macao, were included among the foreign residents.<sup>1</sup> In 1845 the 262 males listed as living in Canton would alone have filled that small *open* space. It is little wonder that a writer in the *Chinese Repository* complained that the living quarters were 'neither sufficiently spacious nor airy'. They were, he said, both 'inconvenient and unhealthy', particularly to those unaccustomed to the heat and with little resistance to the diseases that thrived in the hot muggy climate.<sup>2</sup> There was little chance to exercise except on the river. Boating became the one relatively safe outdoor sport and the Regatta the event of the year.

Nor were there many cultural outlets. Newspapers from home arrived months late although avidly read by those who hoped to return with their fortune made. A few local newspapers reported movements of ships and current events, and argued the merits of various proposals for improving life at one or another of the ports.<sup>3</sup> The monthly *Chinese Repository* looked into more serious matters such as the proper translation of the word God into Chinese. But Canton was a businessman's world and his time was fully occupied in turning the dollars over. Drinking parties there were and surely gambling. What the foreign community lacked most were some of the amenities that family living would bring.

The price the foreigner paid for the privilege of doing business with the Chinese was, in terms of comfort and health, a high one. Confined to a very small quarter and subject to periodic abuse by the local population of Canton whose hostility was easily aroused, the foreign merchants were, if not in danger of life and limb, exposed to numerous annoyances that, together with the heat, created a smothering atmosphere which occasionally burst out in violence. If the blame sometimes lay with the merchants whose overbearing manner irritated, the Cantonese were not innocent victims. During the period William resided in Canton several very

<sup>1</sup> Below, p. lxxvii n. 3.

<sup>2</sup> CR, xiv (1845), 347ff.

<sup>3</sup> All papers published in Hong Kong and Macao were available and in William's time they included, among others, *The Canton Press* (weekly), *The China Mail* (weekly in Hong Kong), *The Friends of China and Hong Kong Gazette* (twice weekly), *Overland China Mail* (monthly), *Overland Friends of China* (bi-weekly), *Overland Register and Price Current* (monthly in Hong Kong).

unpleasant incidents occurred which must have left a deep impression upon him. The most serious occurred in December 1842, just two months after his arrival. It was a riot that started with a brawl between a few Chinese and Lascars on shore leave and culminated with the burning of the Dutch, the Creak and the New English factories. For twenty-four hours a crowd of unruly Cantonese took possession of the English Garden and were dispersed only with the arrival of several hundred Chinese soldiers. Although no British lives were lost, the threat of rioting against the *foreign devils* was no idle one.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, violence of this sort was not a daily occurrence and few British lives were lost by such depredations – none in fact during the period of William's residence at the Old English Factory. Moreover, conditions of trade had definitely improved since pre-treaty days; and relations with Chinese merchants remained amicable. Still, the foreigners lived, as it were, in a fish bowl; and the nervous tensions that built up during the hot summer months – a period that required the greatest amount of exertion with tea arriving daily from the interior – put a strain on the health and sanity of the strongest. It was in July 1846 that Charles S. Compton, a British merchant well known to William,<sup>2</sup> created the *cause célèbre* of the year that brought upon him the ire of the British government. Compton resided in the Mingqua Factory along the side of which was a narrow alley known as Old China Street. Here on a hot afternoon an unfortunate fruit vendor chose to call out his wares, his raucous loud voice bounding off the walls of the enclosing buildings. The heat, the mosquitoes, the strident voice were all too much for Compton that day, it would seem; and in a fit of rage he rushed the man, chased him out of the alley and added injury to insult by overturning his cart. The incident might have ended there, except that four days later a neighbouring merchant similarly accosted another innocent but admittedly noisy seller. Into the fray came Compton, apparently still seething, and the two beat the poor vendor with canes, or so it was said. This time the local

<sup>1</sup> This and other incidents are discussed in *CR*, xi (Dec. 1842), xiv (Sept.-Oct. 1845); Morse, *International Relations*, i, 327-8, 369, 374; *Correspondence respecting Insults in China*, BPP, 1857, xii (325), esp. 19-20 and 38.

<sup>2</sup> Below, p. 8 n. 5.

populace responded, and by the evening hundreds were milling around Mingqua's Factory yelling 'kill the foreign devils', and attempts were made to set fire to the building. The situation was not brought under control until midnight with the arrival of Chinese troops.<sup>1</sup>

Compton's behaviour was without question reprehensible and he was severely reprimanded by British officials. That his fellow merchants exonerated him may be due not alone to the strong community spirit that existed among them but also to an awareness of the pressure under which they all lived and worked. The pressure was real and the spectre of death overlaid the search for wealth. No study has been made of the mortality and morbidity rate within the foreign communities in China but the hazards to health were well recognized by contemporaries. S. J. Hallam warned William's father who was contemplating a trip to China in 1845 that the Celestial Empire 'may be the residence of the Son of Heaven: it is very far from being heaven, although it may be perhaps a short cut to it'.<sup>2</sup> One wonders if that nervous energy so characteristic of the Old China Hands, which found expression sometimes in acts such as those of Compton but more generally in fertile plans for riches quickly got and not always too honourably, was not in part the result of an acute awareness of the brevity of life.

William certainly shows an inordinate interest in his health which may reflect this awareness, but was most probably the result of his unfortunate and almost fatal experience. In 1846 he began trading on his own account and towards the end of the year entered a joint venture with Andrew Melrose and Company, his share amounting to about £7,000. The account, which ran with various interruptions from March 1846 to April 1848, showed a final credit balance of £1,495.<sup>3</sup> But the small fortune that Hallam had so confidently predicted for him in 1843 was not forthcoming. Some time in the spring of 1846 William fell dangerously ill and was confined to his bed during the whole summer. At the time his friends despaired of

<sup>1</sup> *Overland Register*, 28 Nov. 1846; *Papers relating to Riot . . . in July 1846 and to Proceedings taken against Mr Compton*, BPP, 1847, xl (808); Morse, *International Relations*, i, 381-4.

<sup>2</sup> Hallam to A. M., 28 Oct. 1845, AMA, Misc. Letters to A. M. 1845-52.

<sup>3</sup> Account of William Melrose, AMA, Sales Ledger 'O', Wholesale, 1841-54.

his life; but early in 1847 he was sufficiently recovered, although still very thin and far from well, to return home under the care of a doctor.

In the good invigorating air of Pendreich, William regained his strength. His return to the family was saddened, however, by the death on 12 August 1847 of his mother.<sup>1</sup> During the period William remained in Scotland he does not seem to have been actively engaged in transactions with China. The tea trade was undergoing at the time one of its periodic slumps. Even had he been sufficiently recovered, not much could have been made in the China trade.<sup>2</sup>



By June 1848, with his health fully restored and the prospects for the tea trade somewhat improved, William embarked on a second trip to China. But this time he went as buying agent for Andrew Melrose and Company and its co-venturers and, as such, has left us perhaps the only records of a tea dealer engaged to a large extent in the China trade. William traded not with cotton or opium, the usual media of exchange, but with letters of credit, and confined his transactions almost wholly to tea. And yet, in a trade that was reputedly one of the most difficult to prosecute, he managed in five short years to pile up a neat profit for himself and his correspondents. The success was no windfall but the result of hard work and careful management on both sides of the trading chain, as William's letters abundantly testify.

The idea of establishing what amounted to a branch house in China was undoubtedly that of Andrew Melrose. As wholesale tea dealer, grocer and merchant, he may be ranked among the driving and innovating entrepreneurs of his time. His success was based on a constant search for the first and cheapest source of supply, on cash transactions, and on the employment of various methods in the recruitment of capital and in the promotion of sales.<sup>3</sup> But his earlier

<sup>1</sup> Parochial Register, Lasswade, Deaths 1820-56; A. S. Craig to William Melrose, 14 Aug. 1847, AMA, Letters of A. S. Craig.

<sup>2</sup> G. Armstrong, Liverpool, to J. M. & Co., 25 June 1847; J. Ewing, Glasgow, to same, 23 June 1847; A. Robertson, Bristol, to same, 23 June 1847; JMA, Corr. In: GB, B1/137, fos. 1280ff.

<sup>3</sup> Mui, 'Andrew Melrose', 34, 36-37.

experience in the direct import of tea from China showed that without a personal representative in that country, few British tea merchants could afford to invest large sums in the trade. Indeed, free trade had proved a mixed blessing, at least to tea dealers; the reason lay in part in the nature of the China market.

The heirs and greatest beneficiaries of the abolition of the East India Company's monopoly in 1834 were the India and China agency houses, some of which were eventually to dominate the field of Sino-British commerce. Included among these were such giants as Jardine Matheson and Company and its equally famous rival, the Dents.<sup>1</sup> In the decade following 1834, however, there was an influx of new firms. Some operated as agency houses; others, such as Jamieson How and Company of Liverpool and Hyde Lenox of London, traded primarily on their own account. Even ship-owners, in addition to providing carrier service, dabbled in the seemingly lucrative China trade.<sup>2</sup> R. B. Forbes, a partner in the American agency house of Russell and Company, one of the oldest firms in the China trade, complained that every merchant and ship-owner who had ever heard of a chest of tea looked to China as an inexhaustible source of riches.<sup>3</sup> But such illusions were quickly shattered. The demand in China for the cotton goods of the market-hungry manufacturers of Britain proved inadequate for their voracious appetites while the quantity of tea that arrived in Britain during the first few years of free trade was so great and the quality so inferior that much of it was unsaleable.<sup>4</sup> Neither market was sufficiently elastic to respond to the increased volume of trade:

<sup>1</sup> The best study of Jardines is still M. Greenberg, *British Trade and the Opening of China, 1800-1842* (Cambridge, 1952); there is little fresh information for this period in Edward Le Fevour, *Western Enterprise in late Ch'ing China, a Selective Survey of Jardine Matheson & Co's Operations, 1842-1895* (Cambridge, Mass., 1968). For Dents, see Basil Lubbock, *The Opium Clippers* (Boston, 1933).

<sup>2</sup> Scattered evidence indicates that there were in 1831 five British firms in Canton plus about a dozen individual agents, but by 1846 the total number of foreign firms and agents was 152 including Parsees. Cf. Greenberg, *British Trade*, 30, 185; *CR*, xv (1846), 3-8 and xx (1851), 11.

<sup>3</sup> R. B. Forbes, *Remarks on China and the China Trade* (Boston, 1844), 41.

<sup>4</sup> R. O. Mennell, *Tea, an Historical Sketch* (London, 1926), 51-55, summarizes contemporary reports of the British market; copies of the original are in the editors' possession. See also B. R. Mitchell and P. Deane, *Abstract of British Historical Statistics* (Cambridge, 1962), 356, for the slow rise in the per capita consumption of tea after 1834.



prices of tea rose in China but fell to a ruinous level in Britain bringing down many of the early venturers. Those who survived and prospered were the dealers in opium, the profits from which financed a large part of the export of tea and silk. It was the tremendous increase in the sale of opium in China, which doubled in the decade 1830-40, that tipped the balance of trade in Britain's favour.<sup>1</sup>

But if opium was the main source of profit to the British, it formed only a part of the structure of the China trade. Whether a firm traded on its own account or acted as an agent, it was involved in a series of transactions in goods and currencies, the whole of which was complicated by the lack of an efficient banking system in China and that of an adequate circulating medium. The only coined money was the copper *cash*, sufficient for ordinary daily dealings but of little intrinsic value.<sup>2</sup> Originally, large commercial transactions were settled in *sycee*, a shoe-shaped silver ingot. From the very early days of trade with China, foreigners had found it necessary to supplement their meagre supply of saleable goods by importing large quantities of treasure, usually silver dollars but occasionally gold. Eventually the quantity of Spanish and Mexican dollars circulating in the coastal areas of China was so increased that they tended to become the common currency, even among the Chinese.

Under the East India Company there was in effect an official rate of exchange between the dollar and sterling or the India rupee. When an agency house remitted funds to London or India, it deposited dollars in the Company's treasury at Canton, accepting the usance and rate set by the Company (rarely more than 4s. 3d. a dollar) for bills drawn on the Court of Directors or the Indian Presidencies. This control of exchange was one of the major objections to the Company's monopoly; free trade allowed the dollar to find its market value. As William's letters show, the exchange

<sup>1</sup> Morse, *International Relations*, i, 209-11; Greenberg, *British Trade*, ch. V, esp. 139-42; J. K. Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast, the Opening of the Treaty Ports, 1842-1854* (Stanford, Calif., 1969), 65-66.

<sup>2</sup> 1,000 cash equalled one tael. See also J. R. Morrison, *A Chinese Commercial Guide* (Hong Kong, 1848), 233-41; L. S. Yang, *Money and Credit in China* (Cambridge, Mass., 1952); S. R. Checkland, 'An English Merchant House in China after 1842', *Bulletin of the Business Historical Society*, xxvii, no. 3 (Sept. 1953), 178-80.

rate fluctuated, sometimes widely, within a single trading season for bills drawn on London or India and even between various credit instruments or at different ports. Largely a function of the balance of trade, the rate also reflected conditions within China. The uncertainty created by the Taiping Rebellion led to a hoarding of dollars by the Chinese and in 1852-3 the rate at Shanghai shot up and became in effect nominal as no dollars were available. As a result almost all trade there was conducted on a barter basis.<sup>1</sup>

The two great staples of Sino-British commercial exchanges were Indian opium and Chinese tea supplemented by British manufactured goods, particularly cotton piece goods and woollens, and Chinese silk.

In purchasing tea, the silver dollar or bullion assured the most favourable prices.<sup>2</sup> For British merchants, the basic problem involved the initial cost of dollars as against the sterling return on tea. To facilitate transactions, most major firms established branch houses or very close commercial connections in Britain, India and China. Merchants like the Jamieson brothers were in a position to ship cotton and other goods either to China or India, depending upon the state of the market. When William first went to China, the market for cotton piece goods and woollens was very brisk and remained good until 1845.<sup>3</sup> During those years the Jamieson firm not only reaped a profit from the sale of manufactured goods but acquired dollars to purchase tea. Even if prices for tea declined in Britain, the firm stood to gain from the two-way traffic. After 1845, when the sale of British piece goods became sluggish in China, it could still barter cotton for tea or preferably ship cotton goods to India. In the latter case, dollars could be obtained in one of several ways. The China house could issue bills for rupees drawn on Calcutta and sell them to the Parsees and other opium dealers at Canton in exchange for dollars. Or opium could be purchased in India and shipped to China. While occasionally the drug might

<sup>1</sup> Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy*, 403-4; below, p. 238.

<sup>2</sup> When a large buyer persuaded the teaman to barter manufactured goods for tea, the nominal price for both would be shifted upward. Thus to a cotton manufacturer the sale price of his tea in England might seem unusually low compared to the purchase price in China and gave grounds for much complaint, cf. Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy*, 298-9, 404 ff.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 284-7.

be bartered for tea and silk, the sale of opium was more frequently a cash transaction. Thus dollars flowed into the coffers of those who handled large consignments of opium. In defending the 'traffic in opium', Jardines argued with some justification that the trade had 'enormously extended the export of tea and silk . . . and enabled these articles to be supplied . . . at a lower price than could otherwise have been the case'.<sup>1</sup> The Chinese opium smoker was in effect subsidizing the British tea drinker.

Jardine Matheson and Company was unquestionably one of the leading firms in the China trade. Together with Dents, it maintained for many years a duopolistic control of the opium trade along the coast of China.<sup>2</sup> But opium, the most profitable of all produce transactions, was only one of its many sources of profit. As principal and commission agent, the firm handled at one time a third of the British trade at Canton. Its revenue from insurance alone, as agent and as the largest holder of shares in several companies, would have been sufficient to launch a lesser company in the China trade.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the firm owned ships from which it received a substantial income. In addition, its fast sailing smuggling boats, armed for protection in the pirate-infested China Sea, enabled the Canton office to obtain advance information on market conditions in India and Britain, a no mean advantage in the days before the telegraph. Above all, as bill brokers and bankers, Jardines could profit from exchange transactions by maintaining a wide margin between the buying and selling rates.<sup>4</sup> After the removal of the East India Company, the firm converted its enormous dollar surplus to sterling either by remitting in bills or through shipments of tea and silk – a nice adjustment between bills and produce assuring the maximum return for the dollar.

<sup>1</sup> *Papers relating to the Opium Trade in China, 1842-1856*, BPP, 1857, xliii (2221), 65.

<sup>2</sup> Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy*, 71, 238-40.

<sup>3</sup> Greenberg, *British Trade*, 173, 184. In 1836 the surplus of one of Jardines' insurance firms amounted to £20,000.

<sup>4</sup> Jardines were, of course, not the only firm engaged in this type of transaction. Indeed, the objection emanating from the large agency houses in India and China has been given as one reason why chartered banks were not established earlier than they were (J. W. MacLellan, 'Banking in India and China', *The Bankers', Insurance Managers' and Agents' Magazine*, lv (Jan.-June, 1893) in two parts, II, 214-15; A. S. J. Baster, 'The Origins of the British Exchange Banks in China', *Economic History (A supplement to the Economic Journal)*, iii (1934-37), 144).

That the firm considered tea as an alternative means of remitting funds is amply illustrated in its correspondence. Agents in various British ports invariably contrasted the proceeds from the sale of a shipment of tea with the current exchange rate at Canton. For example, Archibald Boyd, who managed the firm's shipments at Leith, regularly reported the results in terms of the dollar. In advising on the sale of two cargoes 'per *Passenger* and per *Belhaven*', he was 'glad to say the former will nett near 4s. 6d. per dollar and the latter rather more'.<sup>1</sup> When the partners of the firm retired to Britain, their money was remitted in a similar manner. In November 1843 the firm in China informed James Matheson that 'after naturally considering the prospect of exchange upon England this season, we can see little chance of any material improvement in the present rate of 4s. 2d. - 4s. 3d. per dollar, at which bills to any extent cannot be procured, and looking to the large amount of your funds in our hands, say about 12 lacs [\$1,200,000], we have resolved to appropriate to you part of our early purchases of fine Congou, as those likely to yield a better result than bills . . . and to the estate of the late Mr [William] Jardine the whole cargoes of the *Passenger* to Leith and the *Walker* to Hull'. The cargoes of seven ships despatched to various ports in Britain were listed as partial remittance of the funds of the partners.<sup>2</sup> The command of large dollar resources enabled the firm to operate on the tea and bill markets in China and Britain and the result of its decision could determine the outcome of a tea venture, especially for merchants in the outports of Britain.

To large dealers in opium whose profits were made in China and to the British cotton manufacturers for whom the China market remained during these years primarily an outlet for their surplus goods, the proceeds of a shipment of tea were calculated not in terms of its cost but rather on the comparative advantages of remitting in bills or tea.<sup>3</sup> A tea merchant had no such cushions. He did, however, have one advantage: unlike most of his competitors, he was thoroughly conversant with all aspects of the

<sup>1</sup> Archibald Boyd to J. M. & Co., 5 Feb. 1845, JMA, Corr. In: GB, B1/137, fo. 838.

<sup>2</sup> J. M. & Co. to James Matheson, 4 Nov. 1843, JMA, Europe Letter Book, B6/v, fo. 177.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, R. Garnett & Sons, Manchester, to J. M. & Co., 24 Oct. 1836, JMA, Corr. In: GB, B1/137, fo. 705; Hardcastle, Bolton, to same, 23 Jan. 1851, *ibid.* B1/139, fo. 1536.

domestic tea market. But to succeed in a trade not strictly governed by costs, his purchases in China required very careful attention to market conditions. By obtaining dollars and tea at favourable rates, by selecting varieties and qualities suitable to specific markets in Britain and by regulating the quantity and shipment to the supply on hand and expected arrivals, a tea merchant could reap the benefit of his vastly superior knowledge of the domestic trade. But to operate successfully, he needed the close co-operation of an agent in China. In Andrew Melrose's early ventures no such services could be obtained through large agency houses, in part because they had other interests.

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By the mid-1840s Andrew Melrose had been engaged in the China trade for over a decade. His transactions during those years not only provide an illuminating contrast to the conduct of his affairs under William but also cast some light on the problems of the tea trade. From the beginning Andrew brought to bear on his orders to China all the knowledge and experience he had acquired but, it would seem, to little avail. Behind the various difficulties lay his inability to control effectively the despatches of his agents.

Andrew was one of seven merchants who organized the first shipment of tea to Leith. For the occasion, they secured a new ship, the *Isabella*, which sailed on 20 December 1833, returning in April 1835 with a cargo of 7,000 chests of tea.<sup>1</sup> The purchasing agent in Canton was Jardine Matheson and Company<sup>2</sup> to whom Andrew submitted very careful instructions on the quantity and quality of tea to be shipped for each of eleven different varieties. To finance his purchase he remitted bills at sixty days sight, rather than the usual six months for which, as he informed Jardines, 'we expect the full advantage'.<sup>3</sup> In the event, the venture proved less than

<sup>1</sup> The *Isabella*, capt. Robertson, registered 422 tons. Hutchison & Co. to J. M. & Co., 23 Nov. 1833, JMA, Corr. In: GB, B1/134, fo. 253, and 2 Dec. 1833, fo. 259; *Evening Courant* (Edinburgh), 2, 4, 7, 18 and 20 May 1835.

<sup>2</sup> James Duncan to J. M. & Co., 26 Nov. 1833, JMA, Corr. In: GB, B1/134, fos. 260, 261, 265, 266, and Donald Matheson to same, 25 Nov. 1833, *ibid.* fo. 255.

<sup>3</sup> A. M. to J. M. & Co., 28 Nov. 1833, JMA, Corr. In: GB, B1/134, fo. 257; and compare, for example, the orders of other importers such as Robert Schaw & Co. to same, 5 Dec. 1833, *ibid.* fo. 263.

satisfactory and produced the first rumblings of what in the future would be a chorus of complaints against agents. The dissatisfaction of the importers was aptly summarized by Hutchison<sup>1</sup> who complained bitterly of the quality of the tea consigned to him and of the 'miserable [sic] low prices' realized for the shipment. He warned Jardines of a very poor trade unless 'prices fall with you or the rates of exchange become more favourable'.<sup>2</sup>

Nonetheless, the importers were willing to make another trial and on 28 May 1835 the *Isabella* departed for its second voyage to China.<sup>3</sup> Andrew's letter was formulated as a guide to future purchases. He specified the kinds that proved 'coarse and of inferior quality' or unsuitable to the Edinburgh market in his previous shipment.<sup>4</sup> There is no record of the reaction of the importers to the venture, but the report from Jardine Matheson and Company carries a characteristic refrain. In Canton high prices ruled and fine Congou was scarce. The firm feared that the rate of exchange 'may occasion you some disappointment' and regretted it had not been able to invest the full amount remitted.<sup>5</sup>

In subsequent years Andrew tried various agency houses. In 1837 he tested Wetmore and Company as well as Turners but did not repeat his orders.<sup>6</sup> And in 1838-9 his teas were purchased through the Americans.<sup>7</sup> He also entered into joint ventures, sometimes with a supercargo sent along as purchasing agent.<sup>8</sup> But throughout the period Jardine Matheson and Company remained his major agent; presumably he found the services of the firm comparable to, if not

<sup>1</sup> Hutchison was owner of the *Isabella*, wine and spirit merchant at Leith, engaged in trade with New South Wales.

<sup>2</sup> Hutchison & Co. to J. M. & Co., 20 and 26 May 1835, JMA, Corr. In: GB, B1/136, fos. 505, 506, and Charles Cowan & Co., Edinburgh, to same, 25 May 1835, *ibid.* fo. 501.

<sup>3</sup> James Duncan to J. M. & Co., 28 May 1835, JMA, Corr. In: GB, B1/136, fo. 511; Shipping Documents of *Isabella*, 18 Jan. 1836, and Sales Catalogue by James Duncan & Co., AMA, Papers connected with Direct Shipments from China, 1835-36.

<sup>4</sup> A. M. to J. M. & Co., 26 May 1835, JMA, Corr. In: GB, B1/136, fo. 506.

<sup>5</sup> J. M. & Co. to A. M., 2 Dec. 1835 and 18 Jan. 1836, AMA, Papers connected with Direct Shipments from China.

<sup>6</sup> Appendix IV.

<sup>7</sup> Circular of A. M. & Co., 1839 (internal evidence), AMA, The Grocer.

<sup>8</sup> Account of R. Schaw & Co., AMA, Town Ledger 'No. 1', 1841-56; account of James Duncan, AMA, Town Ledger - Wholesale, 1838-47, refers to tea by *Isabella* in 1839 and 'adventure per *Monarch*' in 1842.

better than, those of others. Nonetheless, until the mid-1840s his investments in the trade remained small. In 1837, for example, his account shows a total of £76,400 for all bills drawn on him but the China portion was only £10,350.<sup>1</sup> Given Andrew's persistent efforts and his later activities, one must assume that the means then available to him were not satisfactory. The obstacles which a merchant trading on a small scale would have to overcome are clearly exhibited in the correspondence of Jardine Matheson and Company for the years 1841-44. If the Rathbones saw no incompatibility in combining agency business with that of merchanting, at least some of Jardines' correspondents may well have felt differently.<sup>2</sup>

On 2 October 1841 Andrew sent out his annual order requesting the purchase of fine Congou.<sup>3</sup> But in Jardines' handling of the order, the interests of merchant seem to have interfered with those of agent. At the time, the Canton firm was 'heavily interested in tea' and had already despatched the *Rajah* to Cork and Leith.<sup>4</sup> Upon receipt of orders from Edinburgh, the firm allotted 370 chests of the ship's cargo to A. Melrose and Company and some to Archibald Boyd. Shortly afterwards, Andrew was informed that his bank credits had been negotiated at 4s. 9d. and the rest of his tea would be shipped on the *James Ewing* to the Clyde.<sup>5</sup> But in September 1842 the Canton firm wrote that the fine Congou Andrew ordered could not be procured.<sup>6</sup> The *James Ewing* carried instead a cargo of tea on joint account of the Canton firm and its agent at Glasgow.<sup>7</sup>

In the light of the reception of the *Rajah* at Leith, the 370 chests hardly compensated Andrew for the bills already negotiated. The

<sup>1</sup> Appendix 1v.

<sup>2</sup> Marriner, *Rathbones*, 67-68. There is, of course, no implication that any firm acted dishonourably, a subject that the Rathbones seem to have been concerned about, but rather that there was an almost unavoidable conflict between the interests of large agency houses in China and those of British tea merchants.

<sup>3</sup> J. M. & Co. to A. M., 5 Sept. 1842, JMA, Europe Letter Book, B6/iv, fo. 59.

<sup>4</sup> J. M. & Co. to Magniac Smith & Co., London, 7 Feb. 1842, JMA, Europe Letter Book, B6/iii, letter no. 22.

<sup>5</sup> Same to same, 11 Feb. 1842, *ibid.* letter no. 28 and 9 Mar. 1842, letter no. 45.

<sup>6</sup> J. M. & Co. to A. M., 5 Sept. 1842, JMA, Europe Letter Book, B6/iv, fo. 59.

<sup>7</sup> J. M. & Co. to Magniac Jardine & Co., 6 Sept. 1842, JMA, Europe Letter Book, B6/iii, letter no. 116. For other joint ventures in which J. M. & Co. participated, see Matheson Scott, Liverpool, to J. M. & Co., 21 July 1848, JMA, Corr. In: GB, B1/138, fo. 1316, and 23 Oct. 1845, B1/137, fo. 1010.

reaction of the buyers to the shipment was described in the forceful language of A. Boyd. He reported that the 'extraordinary coarseness' of the tea 'has been universally complained of' and the assortment 'was most unsuitable for this market'. The buyers had so much difficulty in selling the tea that 'a very great proportion has been sent' elsewhere. In all, Boyd recommended that the *Rajah* never again be loaded for the port as 'I have no doubt whatever that a strong prejudice will ever attach to her name'. Neither he nor Andrew were reassured by Jardines' explanation that the teas had not been purchased specifically for Leith.<sup>1</sup>

The shipment for 1843 was not spectacularly disastrous but could hardly have inspired confidence. Andrew's bills were negotiated at 4s. 9d. and the tea shipped on the *Anna Watson*, together with 2,351 chests on account of Jardine Matheson and Company and 710 chests each for A. Boyd and W. Sprott Boyd.<sup>2</sup> While there is no record of Andrew's response, A. Boyd was extremely dissatisfied. Reporting on the sale, he noted that Jardines' tea netted about 4s. 10d. 'but my brother and I . . . not above 4s. 5d.' due to the very low prices realized by two of the chops.<sup>3</sup> Whether or not Boyd's complaint was justified, his suspicions of foul play would seem unavoidable.

The years 1842-44 were difficult ones in the tea trade, but especially so for someone like Andrew who was both dependent upon and competing against his agent. The end of the Opium War witnessed a vigorous revival of the activities of the agency houses in China with the result, as Boyd observed, that the trade in Britain was suffering from an excessive supply.<sup>4</sup> Sales were indeed 'accelerated', and not only in the outports, as Jardines had advised their London house to do early in 1842.<sup>5</sup> In the capital, importers 'were pressing tea on the market'. They bought in their own

<sup>1</sup> A. Boyd to J. M. & Co., 29 Aug. 1843, JMA, Corr. In: GB, B1/137, fo. 731.

<sup>2</sup> J. M. & Co. to A. M., 1 Dec. 1842, JMA, Europe Letter Book, B6/iv, fo. 152, and 10 Dec. 1842, fo. 169; J. M. & Co. to Magniac Jardine, 1 Dec. 1842, *ibid.* fo. 153, and same to same, 1 Dec. 1842, *ibid.* B6/iii, letter no. 150.

<sup>3</sup> A. Boyd to J. M. & Co., 29 Aug. 1843, JMA, Corr. In: GB, B1/137, fo. 730, and 2 Oct. 1843, fo. 736.

<sup>4</sup> Same to same, 2 Sept. 1843, JMA, Corr. In: GB, B1/137, fo. 734, and 2 Oct. 1843, fo. 736; and compare Circular of Tuke and Copsie, 19 Oct. 1839, Mennell (Tuke) Archives, courtesy of the late R. O. Mennell.

<sup>5</sup> J. M. & Co. to Magniac Smith & Co., London, 7 Feb. 1842, JMA, Europe Letter Book, B6/iii, letter no. 22.



imports at auction and resold the tea 'privately . . . below the prices at which [the teas] have been knocked down'.<sup>1</sup> Even Jardine Matheson and Company had to admit that its 'shipments of teas to the outports' were adversely affecting the sales of its London house. But, as Andrew Jardine shrewdly noted, 'if we don't do it, others will, which would have an equally bad effect . . . and without benefiting us in the least'. He suggested shipments to Hull be discontinued for the present as that market was overstocked 'but do not lose sight of it'.<sup>2</sup>

With the possible exception of Liverpool, the outports were almost completely dominated by Jardines. Bristol, which could accommodate only one shipment a year, was supplied solely by the firm.<sup>3</sup> At Glasgow, as at Leith, Jardines were the major supplier, despatching in 1842 at least three ships either on the firm's own account or jointly with James Ewing.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, to merchants in the outports, Jardines posed a serious threat. Against a firm that had its ear to every movement in the trade and immense advantages in the purchase of tea, few could compete, certainly not without establishing an outpost in China. Short of that, they could join with Jardines in an attempt to control the imports.

A movement to organize some of the importers at Leith was initiated in 1842, but the results of the effort exposed even more clearly the difficulties in achieving co-operation. At the time Archibald Boyd who had submitted a proposal to the Canton firm was informed that it could not 'take orders for teas on the terms you mention, unless you can secure the whole of the importers for the season'.<sup>5</sup> By the following August, Boyd reported that he had effected an arrangement with Andrew Melrose and Robert

<sup>1</sup> A. Boyd to J. M. & Co., 1 Sept. 1843, JMA, Corr. In: GB, B1/137, fo. 733.

<sup>2</sup> Andrew Jardine to Alexander Matheson, Hong Kong, 5 Sept. 1844, JMA, Corr. In: GB, B1/137, fo. 794.

<sup>3</sup> Below, pp. 33, 36-37; Alexander Robertson, Bristol, to J. M. & Co., 6 Jan. 1845, JMA, Corr. In: GB, B1/137, fo. 812, 22 Feb., fo. 849, 6 Aug., fo. 967, 22 Nov. 1845, fo. 1036; J. M. & Co. to James Matheson, 4 Nov. 1843, JMA, Europe Letter Book, B6/v, fo. 177.

<sup>4</sup> J. M. & Co. to Magniac Jardine, 6 Sept. 1842, JMA, Europe Letter Book, B6/iii, letter no. 116, 14 Nov. 1842, letter no. 143, 27 Dec. 1842, letter no. 171.

<sup>5</sup> J. M. & Co. to A. Boyd, 5 Nov. 1842, JMA, Europe Letter Book, B6/iv, fos. 112-13; for details of another proposal, see James Duncan to James Matheson, 21 May 1844, JMA, Corr. In: GB, B1/137, fo. 788.

Schaw to import tea to Leith 'on our joint account' and shortly afterwards sent an order for over 3,000 chests of various kinds. But Boyd strongly urged delay in executing the order until prices in China dropped and exchange fell to 4s. 4d. or below, as Leith was expected to be over-supplied for some time.<sup>1</sup>

But in spite of this and of the fact that the Canton firm had sent, just before receiving Boyd's letters, the *Passenger* to Leith with a large cargo of tea, the order was despatched immediately on the *Belhaven* which carried, in addition, tea on Jardines' own account. Moreover, the 'early purchases of fine Congou' were apparently reserved for the firm. Of the teas ordered by Boyd and his co-venturers, no less than 900 chests of 'finest Pekoe flavoured Congou' and 50 half-chests of Scented Orange Pekoe were not procurable as 'none remained in the market'.<sup>2</sup> The arrival of two ships at Leith at about the same time was itself sufficient to jeopardize the venture; without a consignment of superior quality Congou it was doomed. Common Congou, as William repeatedly reminded his correspondents, often cost more in China than in Britain. Nor was the exchange favourable; for their bills Boyd and his co-venturers paid 4s. 6d. plus the usual one per cent negotiating commission. Jardines' teas on the *Belhaven* netted about 4s. 6d.<sup>3</sup> What the co-venturers received has not been recorded, but they complained at the rate of exchange as well as the quality and prices of the tea and compared the purchases most unfavourably with those obtained by Andrew Melrose from Russells. In reply Jardines now maintained that the missing tea was not obtainable within the price limits specified in the original order; on the superior quality and better prices obtained through Russells, the firm could do no more than bring the matter to the 'the attention of our people in Canton'. As to the rate of exchange, 'we do our best' but would not comment on the rates secured through Russells 'without a more specific description'.<sup>4</sup> Thus

<sup>1</sup> A. Boyd to J. M. & Co., 30 Aug. 1843, JMA, Corr. In: GB, B1/137, fo. 733; A. Boyd, R. Schaw and A. M. to same, 2 Sept. 1843, fo. 734; A. Boyd to same, 2 Sept. 1843, fo. 734.

<sup>2</sup> Above, p. xxx; J. M. & Co. to A. Boyd, A. M. & Co. and R. Schaw & Co., 24 Jan. 1844, JMA, Europe Letter Book, B6/v, fos. 376-7, and 7 Feb. 1844, fos. 426-7.

<sup>3</sup> Compare the exchange rates quoted for 1843, above, p. xxx.

<sup>4</sup> J. M. & Co. to A. Boyd, 9 Oct. 1844, JMA, Europe Letter Book, B6/vi, fo. 312. A year later, in reply to a chorus of complaints on the exchange rate, the firm sent

concluded the last order from Andrew Melrose to Jardine Matheson and Company.

Bickerings between correspondents and agents were neither unique to the tea trade nor unusual. Even William, successful as most of his ventures proved, did not escape criticism although complaints were more frequently couched in the form of a discussion on various possibilities. One of the most striking features of the letters is the continuous comment on market conditions which informed the actions on both sides. It was just this kind of exchange that seems to have been absent in the transactions between Andrew Melrose and Jardines. The quarterly circular distributed by the latter gave little more than a very general summary – information easily available to Andrew through his brokers or by his own observation. Moreover, the specific instructions sent from Scotland had apparently little effect on the actions of the agent in Canton. At times the orders seem to have been executed to suit the convenience of the agent rather than that of the correspondent. While not even the closest attention to exchange and to the quality, price and shipment would guarantee success, the impersonal, more or less routine services provided by large agency houses in China could turn out profitable only by chance. The attempt to establish a quasi-monopoly at Leith failed for just such reasons and in the end resulted in Andrew terminating his relations with Jardine Matheson and Company. He could do so with some confidence as he had by the mid-1840s more personal contact in China.

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With William serving as a tea taster at Jamiesons, Andrew was undoubtedly kept well informed on affairs at Canton. But Andrew's view towards the possibilities of the China trade was most probably affected at this time by the contact he had at Russell and Company. With the firm was Samuel J. Hallam who, before joining Russells in 1842, had been for at least ten years proprietor of Hallam Spence and Company, tea dealers at 54 Princes Street, Edinburgh. The extent of the Company's business can be gauged by a protracted

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nine identical letters to various correspondents in Britain assuring them that 'we get no benefit'; see letters of 27 Sept. 1845, *ibid.* fos. 404-5.

lawsuit involving transactions totalling over £45,000.<sup>1</sup> The 'old acquaintance' who wrote to Andrew in 1843 was, therefore, no stranger to the tea trade. As William noted, he was highly regarded by the partners of Russell and Company.

Although Andrew's first order to Russells was small, it was handled with unusual care and attention. As market conditions were at first discouraging, the firm had refrained from buying 'until the new crop came in' and had waited for 'a favourable rate of exchange' before selling the bills. In a long detailed letter, in marked contrast to the form letters from Jardines, Hallam described the market at Canton, the prospects for the coming season and the activities of the various shippers, even making suggestions on the kinds of tea 'likely to pay well'.<sup>2</sup>

The difference such personal attention made to Andrew's outlook on the trade is demonstrated by the change in his investment. Until 1844 his commitments to the China trade, including joint ventures with Duncan, never exceeded £13,000 in any one year and for some fell well below that level. In 1844, however, they shot up to £20,000 and by 1846 had reached £30,000.<sup>3</sup> It is true that these ventures did not, any more than those through Jardines, prove very profitable and some resulted in small losses.<sup>4</sup> In fact, Hallam was not optimistic with 'high prices here and low ones at home'.<sup>5</sup>

By the mid-1840s, however, the tea trade began to reflect the general improvement of economic conditions in Britain. From 1843 onward per capita consumption of tea showed a definite upward swing.<sup>6</sup> For a driving business man like Andrew Melrose, ambitious

<sup>1</sup> The dispute was with Frederick Gye & Co., a firm of aggressive innovating wholesalers in tea who introduced during the 1820s new methods of distribution. The judgment vindicated completely S. J. Hallam's part in the matter; see *The Scotsman*, 23 May 1835; account of Hallam Spence & Co., AMA, Town Ledger, 1838-47, and the copy of an interesting booklet, published by the firm in 1832, in AMA, Misc. Letters to A. M., 1845-52.

<sup>2</sup> Hallam to A. M., 25 July 1843 and 28 Oct. 1845, AMA, Misc. Letters to A. M., 1845-52; also compare Checkland, 'English Merchant House', 166, 174, and Marriner, *Rathbones*, 106.

<sup>3</sup> These totals are calculated from the List of Joint Ventures, AMA, Bills Payable Book from 1826, and represent the maximum sums to be invested but not necessarily the amount actually paid out as the negotiated bills or credits became due.

<sup>4</sup> Account of Russell & Co., Canton, AMA, Sales Ledger 'O', Wholesale, 1841-54.

<sup>5</sup> Hallam to A. M., 28 Oct. 1845, AMA, Misc. Letters to A. M., 1845-52.

<sup>6</sup> Mitchell and Deane, *British Historical Statistics*, 356.

for himself as for his sons, keenly sensitive to the signs of changing market conditions and, above all, accustomed to bold and quick decisions, the characteristic response was a proposal to visit China, possibly to establish a branch there.<sup>1</sup> He was, moreover, in a position financially to consider such a prospect: the balance sheet for 1847 stated the assets of Andrew Melrose and Company as £74,487.<sup>2</sup> William's illness, however, made any such plans unthinkable for the time being.

Nevertheless, the stage had been set for independent trading ventures to China. If Hallam's activities on behalf of Andrew Melrose pointed a way to secure the essential care and attention in handling purchase orders, William's post at Jamiesons provided the experience necessary for a successful prosecution of the trade. Thus, when William returned to China in 1848, he and his father were fully prepared to take advantage of the opportunities available in China.

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As agent, William was to receive a fixed commission for the goods purchased and shipped but he was also to share in the joint ventures with Andrew providing the capital investment to a maximum of £10,000 per trading season.<sup>3</sup> He was allowed to trade on his own account and to act as agent to other importers.

The arrangement enabled Andrew to engage in the trade on a scale not hitherto possible and to bring to bear on the ventures all the experience and knowledge that he had gained over the years. As a leading tea merchant in Edinburgh with a reputation for probity and good business sense, he had little difficulty in providing a secure financial basis for William's purchases in China. During the following five years, Andrew diverted to the trade almost all the capital and credit facilities which in former years had been invested in various merchanting activities. From 20 November 1848, when the first China bills became payable, to 31 December 1849 he paid out over £71,000 for bills negotiated by William.<sup>4</sup> In addition,

<sup>1</sup> Hallam to A. M., 28 Oct. 1845, AMA, Misc. Letters to A. M., 1845-52.

<sup>2</sup> AMA, Balance Sheets, A. M. & Co., 1839-89.

<sup>3</sup> Below, p. 43.

<sup>4</sup> Calculated from invoices in AMA, Misc. Material relating to the China Trade, and Bills Payable Book from 1826.

Andrew was able to recruit several of his business associates, some of whom dealt directly with William. But by far the most important means of increasing capital resources was the joint account venture. As it played a major role in William's activities and has received little systematic study, it would seem desirable to describe those of Andrew Melrose in some detail.

The joint account venture was the merchant's pragmatic response to the hazards of trade and the form it took varied extensively according to particular circumstances. Basically it was an informal *ad hoc* arrangement whereby several merchants jointly shared in the operations, risks and profits of a trading venture. In certain respects it differed little from older practices. The importers involved in the *Isabella* were not strictly joint venturers as each was responsible for his own purchases. Indeed, the co-operative sponsoring of the voyage bears a striking similarity to the eighteenth-century practice on the east coast of Scotland when smuggling tea from the continent was at its height.<sup>1</sup> Such co-operation allowed a merchant to disperse risks and to engage in several kinds of trade for which his own resources were not adequate. Joint ventures were permutations on this general theme. Broadly speaking, it was a means of recruiting capital or talent. At the simplest level, two merchants jointly financed and managed the purchases and sale of a quantity of goods. The 'established rule' of Scottish banks that two names be lodged on bills of commercial credit<sup>2</sup> undoubtedly encouraged such a practice. But in its most highly developed and efficient form, the joint account venture was a functional division of labour that crossed national boundaries and drew into a smooth working relationship the buying and selling merchants who received for their labour a share in the profits of the total operation.

Throughout his business career Andrew Melrose was engaged in joint ventures of various types covering a wide variety of transactions in both domestic and foreign trade. His co-venturers were either friends or close business associates, co-operating in a relationship that rested on a high degree of trust. Usually each party shared equally in the total investment. Occasionally Andrew supplied the capital,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Mui, 'Smuggling', 60.

<sup>2</sup> See, especially, National Bank of Scotland to A. M. & Co., 21 Nov. 1850, AMA, Misc. Material relating to China Trade.

but generally the participants made their own financial arrangements. While the total investment was fixed at the outset, it might be increased by agreement, or a part of it held over for another venture. Most joint ventures were formed for a specific object, a once-only affair, with the duration of the agreement depending upon the transactions involved. Those with William sometimes extended as long as three years. As most arrangements were made on a friendly basis, the management was flexible and varied according to circumstances. The co-venturer best versed in the trade often handled the purchase, shipping and sometimes even the sale of the goods; but, at times, each might undertake that aspect of the operation for which he was best qualified. Profits were distributed after all transactions were completed; and, as far as can be determined, except in the case of William, no commission was paid for services rendered. In Andrew's experience, there was no record of a co-venturer withdrawing before the venture was concluded; but it was a frequent occurrence for the parties to start a new venture before the completion of an earlier one, or for each to enter into separate ventures with other parties. In 1845 Andrew was a party to at least twelve overseas ventures involving seven different parties.<sup>1</sup> By such adjustable arrangements, merchants were able to increase their capital resources and to utilize the special knowledge and skill of their co-venturers.

Indeed, the surviving accounts of Andrew Melrose and Company record a variety of arrangements that illustrate the flexibility of such commercial co-operation. In 1818 John and Thomas Black were acting as commission agents for Andrew. By 1820, however, they were enlisted as joint venturers in tea with Andrew handling the purchase and supplying the capital, and the Blacks doing the selling, each party receiving one-half share of the profits. Andrew also acted in a similar capacity for James Richardson, with the latter supplying sugar and each sharing the profits.<sup>2</sup> Such small, almost monthly ventures, enabled a rising businessman to increase and extend his trade.

<sup>1</sup> The above description is based on the joint venture accounts in *AMA*, Personal Ledger, 1815, the separate accounts of the Canton ventures in Sale Ledger 'O', Wholesale, 1841-54, and the list of joint ventures in Bills Payable Book from 1826. For discussion of a different version of the organization, see Marriner, *Rathbones*, 68-71.

<sup>2</sup> Mui, 'Andrew Melrose', 37, 41-42.

If the management of Andrew's early ventures was comparatively simple, the steady expansion of his business in the following decades increased the number and complexity of the joint ventures. By 1840 he began a special list of the major joint ventures in which he was engaged.<sup>1</sup> Accounting procedure also changed over the years and became more systematic. Originally the various transactions were posted to the running account of the participants, often interspersed with other entries. Later, with the development of his overseas trade, a record was kept in the account of the agent or co-venturer who handled the purchases, such as Russells of Canton or Hardmans of Calcutta.<sup>2</sup> Profit or loss was then entered into the account of the various participants. When Andrew was not the manager of a venture, the only indication of a joint account is an entry in the ledger: 'to adventure per *Monarch*' as in the account of James Duncan.<sup>3</sup> Eventually, a separate account was set up for each venture. There is a complete record of all the transactions incurred in purchasing, shipping and selling the tea for most of the ventures handled by William. Even postage was debited to the account.<sup>4</sup>

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Throughout Andrew's career, the most prominent of his co-venturers and the one most heavily involved in William's trade was James Richardson (1789/90-1860).<sup>5</sup> For the years 1849-54 his account with Andrew Melrose and Company totalled over £137,000.<sup>6</sup> Richardson's career paralleled in many respects that of

<sup>1</sup> The list is in AMA, Bills Payable Book from 1826.

<sup>2</sup> See their accounts in AMA, Sales Ledger 'O', Wholesale, 1841-54.

<sup>3</sup> Above, p. xxxii, n. 8.

<sup>4</sup> These accounts are in AMA, Sales Ledger 'O', Wholesale, 1841-54. As they are scattered in various pages of the ledger and some of the ledgers are missing, it is possible that the list in Appendix v may not be complete.

<sup>5</sup> James was the third and youngest son of Thomas Richardson, a tenant farmer of Linlithgow. See [Livingston], *Edinburgh Shops*, 18ff; *Memoirs and Portraits of One Hundred Glasgow Men* (2 vols. Glasgow, 1886), ii, 173-6; Directories of Edinburgh and Glasgow; Parish Registers of Linlithgow, Edinburgh and Glasgow; *List of the Matriculated Members of the Merchant House of Glasgow* (Glasgow, 1897), 56; Mui, 'Andrew Melrose', 31, 33; and K. M. Richardson to editors, 21 Dec. 1968.

<sup>6</sup> Account of James Richardson (hereafter J. R.) & Co., AMA, Sales Ledger 'O', Wholesale, 1841-54. The entries mainly consist of the exchanges of tea and sugar as in former years. But not all joint ventures in tea between 1848 and 1852



Andrew Melrose: both served their apprenticeship under Robert Sheppard and commenced business for themselves at about the same time. James's major interest, however, was sugar; and in the early 1830s he and his family moved to Glasgow which became the centre for his wide-ranging activities. There, under the title of James Richardson and Company, the firm continued to play a major role in the Scottish sugar trade until the late nineteenth century.

In a trade that was notorious for excessive credit dealing, James achieved an enviable command of the sugar market by enforcing a policy of cash transactions. Nonetheless, like many merchants, he tried his hand at almost every trade, boasting that there was hardly an 'article of commerce that I have not bought or sold'.<sup>1</sup> His business methods were marked by the same careful and tireless attention, shrewd calculations and bold decisions that characterized those of his old friend, Andrew Melrose. Richardson was one of the first to enter the sugar trade to Mauritius where his son David established in 1839 a branch house.<sup>2</sup> James was in every respect a 'pillar of society'; at his death his personal estate was valued at over £200,000.<sup>3</sup> But above all, in the world of business James Richardson was recognized as a man of fierce integrity, a reputation he bequeathed to his sons. In 1869 Richardson and Company was one of the eleven firms that received an 'A-1' rating among a total of 1,807 Glasgow firms.<sup>4</sup>

James had climbed the ladder a little higher than his fellow apprentice, but the two were of the same mould and remained close personal friends as well as business associates.<sup>5</sup> William, on the other hand,

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are included as their accounts were kept separately. Moreover, the total does not include the smaller amounts recorded in the account of Richardson's firm in Edinburgh.

<sup>1</sup> *100 Glasgow Men*, ii, 274.

<sup>2</sup> *100 Glasgow Men*, ii, 275. The total production of sugar on the island was in the early 1850s about 160,000 tons a year. For David Richardson, see below, pp. 14-15, 72.

<sup>3</sup> James married in 1814 Catherine (1792-1839), daughter of David Weemys, writer of Edinburgh, by whom he had five children. The Will of James Richardson, sro, Records of Settlements and Inventories, Renfrewshire, xxvi (1860), 393-420; and K. M. Richardson to editors, 21 Dec. 1968.

<sup>4</sup> *The Glasgow Commercial List, 1869-70* by Estell & Co. (London, 1869), pt. II. Each firm was ranked under six headings which included general and specific credit standings as well as extent of trade.

<sup>5</sup> James was an executor of Andrew's estate; the Will of A. M., sro, Testamentary Deeds, 1855, xlii, 631.

displays some ambivalent feelings towards the Richardsons, a little envy perhaps, but there was also a genuine desire to please and to show his merits as a businessman. To Catherine Ronaldson, James's only daughter, he sent such a beautiful set of chessmen that she knew 'not how to thank Willie for his kindness'.<sup>1</sup>

Given such associations, it is not surprising that the operation of the joint account ventures with William was conducted with remarkable harmony and with understanding for the problems encountered on each side. Indeed, the parties formed an excellent team of experts on various aspects of the trade which contributed not a little to its success. When Andrew officially retired in 1850, James shared some of the responsibilities for the ventures in constant consultation with Andrew Melrose and Company. How important his 'friends' in Edinburgh were for the successful pursuit of the tea trade he had already experienced. In a letter to William he admitted 'we have made a pretty mess of our first venture on our own account'.<sup>2</sup>

Robert Schaw of Leith played a minor role in the joint ventures but he did transact some business with William on his own account.<sup>3</sup> Tea was not one of Schaw's major interests nor did he have the command of the trade that Andrew showed from the beginning.<sup>4</sup> But like most businessmen he dabbled in all kinds of transactions. He and Andrew had engaged in many joint ventures to Mauritius, India, China and elsewhere for sugar, tea and other produce. During the five years, 1841-46, Andrew's investment in joint ventures with Schaw was at least £69,000.<sup>5</sup>

Andrew also turned to his old partner in tea ventures, James Duncan, whose very substantial account with Andrew Melrose and Company extended back to the 1830s. In 1849 he and Duncan were planning a joint cargo to Leith but William discouraged them, pleading his inability to handle single-handed any further orders.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> C. Ronaldson to A. M., 17 May 1852, AMA, Misc, Letters to A. M., 1845-52.

<sup>2</sup> Below, p. 187.

<sup>3</sup> Below, pp. 38, 53, 99.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. R. Schaw to J. M. & Co., 5 Dec. 1833, JMA, Corr. In: GB, B1/134, fo. 263.

<sup>5</sup> List of Joint Ventures, AMA, Bills Payable Book from 1826, and Town Ledger, 1838-47, account of R. Schaw & Co. The ventures accounted for here do not include those initiated and managed by Schaw.

<sup>6</sup> Below, p. 36 and n. 1.

Several friends and business acquaintances of Andrew, people whom William knew well, also found it convenient to submit through Andrew Melrose and Company small orders for Chinese curios. While such orders entailed a great deal of work for the small commission charged, they served to extend the influence of William's small agency and added their mite to the China business.

In all, during the years William was acting as buying agent, Andrew recruited far more capital than could be invested profitably, for reasons fully explained in the letters. But the amount was not trifling. The accounts of the joint ventures show a total of £156,600 drawn on Andrew Melrose alone. James Richardson and Company, in addition to private orders to William, was involved in joint accounts totalling at least £57,000, representing roughly half the amount originally committed.<sup>1</sup>

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While Andrew's role in the China trade was to organize and finance the ventures as well as to supervise the sale of tea in Britain, he left to his junior partner, John Simpson, the day-to-day management of specific transactions. Simpson wrote the long detailed instructions, reports and critical comments which William sometimes found tedious and carping, but to which he rarely failed to respond. Indeed, Mr Simpson, as William invariably addressed him, performed an invaluable service and at the same time allowed the relationship between father and son to remain free of the bickerings that arise in the normal course of business.

By 1848 Simpson (1798-1864) had been with the firm for more than thirty years and was thoroughly familiar with all aspects of the wholesale and retail trade. He entered the firm in 1814 as one of four shopmen, receiving a wage of £5 in 1815; and as Andrew's business expanded, Simpson was given more and more responsibility.<sup>2</sup> In 1822 he was put in charge of the High Street shop and received in lieu of wages one-fifth share of the profits from that

<sup>1</sup> Appendix v.

<sup>2</sup> AMA, Wages Book, i (1815), 9 ff; Mui, 'Andrew Melrose', 39; Register of Deaths, Kirkliston, Linlithgow, 1864, dclxvii, 8. John was the son of George Simpson, a house carpenter in Edinburgh.

shop, or £154 for that year. For several years Simpson lived in the Melrose household, withdrawing very little of the accumulated profits and by 1829 had to his credit £787. The capital that he had in the firm represented a very small portion of the total assets of the business; nonetheless, that year Andrew made him a partner, giving him one-quarter share of the profits of the firm, a portion he retained until Andrew's retirement.<sup>1</sup> Although no formal or written agreement was drawn up, Andrew had obtained by the arrangement a thoroughly tested manager, one upon whom he could rely.

Simpson appears to have been a man of modest ambition who lived well within his income.<sup>2</sup> If he made no significant mark on the business world of Edinburgh, in the operation of Andrew Melrose and Company he provided a stabilizing force, and was an appropriate complement to the dynamic and wide-ranging actions of Andrew. Industrious, trustworthy, careful and competent, although at times unimaginative to the extent of being irritating, Mr Simpson could hardly be thought of as a man without the prefix; but neither could his advice and warning be ignored, as William sometimes discovered to his chagrin.

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William reached China in mid-August 1848 at an opportune time. Although the market in Britain, just recovering from a slump, had taken an upward turn, the exchange rate and tea prices in Canton remained favourable. He regretted not having started a month earlier, but lost little time in claiming a share of the market. Within two-and-a-half months he purchased and despatched in seven different ships approximately £24,000 worth of tea.<sup>3</sup> So busy was he during the month of September that he failed for the only time during his five years in China to write to his father. Nor was he daunted

<sup>1</sup> AMA, Private Ledger, 1818-96.

<sup>2</sup> The changes of his address as reported in Edinburgh FOD, 1827-63, seem to follow the increase of his income and household expenditure. At its peak, his credit balance with A. M. & Co. was about £10,000 and his estate after his death remained over £9,700 (SRO, Commissariat of Edinburgh, Record of Inventories, 1864, cxxix, 8-15).

<sup>3</sup> Calculated from accounts of joint ventures of A. M. & Co. and William, AMA, Misc. Material relating to China Trade.

by lack of funds. William carried with him to China only £10,000 in commercial credits, receiving a few months later an additional £3,000. To finance the remainder of his purchases, he drew on his father, selling the bills against the shipments. It was a method not wholly approved by Andrew, smacking too much of speculative buying; William was himself somewhat hesitant but in the end decided that conditions were so favourable that there was little danger of loss. He was in fact following a broad policy that was to guide his future conduct of the trade.

Of all considerations, William attached perhaps the greatest weight to the cyclical nature of the China trade. In his non-technical language, each favourable period was inevitably followed by an unfavourable one. And what a merchant most needed for success was the ability to judge the swings of the pendulum: to plunge in at the beginning of the upswing and withdraw before the onset of the next downward movement.<sup>1</sup> September 1848 was, he thought, a little late but he envisaged a period of healthy trade and acted accordingly. By the latter part of 1852 he was contemplating the arrival of danger. In both instances, his judgment was substantially correct. Those first purchases netted a profit of 15.8% and his next shipments purchased a few months later for the joint account of Andrew Melrose and Company and James Richardson, Jr. and Company<sup>2</sup> brought a return of 22%. William does not expound a theory on trade cycles or attempt to isolate the indicators; rather he seems to accept booms and depressions as the nature of the business world – something he had to act with and guard against. The absence of reckless, speculative buying when he arrived encouraged him to look forward to some good years of ‘legitimate’ trade.<sup>3</sup> When the activities of the speculators increased, he sensed the oncoming of bad times and was prepared to ‘break the tasting cups’ and go home.<sup>4</sup>

Far more trying to William were the short term, almost seasonal, fluctuations to which the tea trade was particularly subject. In a situation of intense competition abetted by speculators, the slowness of communication and transportation was at least partly responsible for enhancing the magnitude of these troughs and peaks.<sup>5</sup> Until the

<sup>1</sup> Below, p. 161.

<sup>2</sup> The Edinburgh brand of J. R. and Co.

<sup>3</sup> Below, p. 21.

<sup>4</sup> Below, p. 129.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. J. D. Chambers, *Workshop of the World* (London, 1961), 152-3.

installation of telegraphic services, about four months were necessary for an exchange of letters between an agent and his correspondents in Britain.<sup>1</sup> Upon receipt of news of favourable trading conditions in Britain, buyers in China rushed on the market which could rarely respond to the sudden demand. The upshot was a rise of prices, often accompanied by an unfavourable turn in the exchange rate. But by the time the goods reached the shores of Britain some three to six or seven months later, market conditions might have changed drastically. As mail travelled faster than goods, the expectation of a large supply was itself often responsible for a downward movement in tea prices.<sup>2</sup>

How to adjust purchases to the ceaseless ebb and flow of trade was a matter that continuously exercised William's ingenuity. His letters report endlessly, sometimes tediously, the state of the market: quantities of tea on hand and sold in Britain compared to previous years; changes in patterns of consumption; prices that the various teas brought; quantities purchased and shipped from China. These, as well as the exchange rate and the prices paid for tea at Canton and Shanghai are constantly reviewed and form the basis for his decision as to how much and what to buy. In general, he entered the market when exports were low and held off as exports, prices and exchange rose, always with an eye to conditions in Britain. When he thought the bottom of a short slump had been reached, he took advantage of the lower prices in Canton to buy an assortment of teas for which he expected a rise in demand in Britain. Whenever possible he purchased those types the prices of which were least affected by the volume of supply. But adjusting to the short term fluctuations was, as William so frequently noted, a very 'chancy' matter in the China trade. Like most merchants he tried to get his tea in first but the hazards faced by the sailing boat made

<sup>1</sup> The important advantages that Jardines gained from an earlier receipt of intelligence has become legendary. For a version of the devices employed by William Jardine, see C. A. M. Smith, *The English in China and Far Eastern Trade* (London, 1920), 102.

<sup>2</sup> A cargo ship travelled around the Cape of Good Hope while mail was despatched overland through the Suez. In addition to the itinerary, the number of stops en route and other considerations, the monsoons greatly affected the duration of the voyage as well as freight charges; see D. R. MacGregor, *The Tea Clippers, 1849 to 1869* (London, 1952), 20-24, 200-1.

the passage homeward a sheer lottery that might work for or against the shipper. He sent off the *Auguste and Bertha* with high hopes that it would arrive in Glasgow long before its competitors. As it turned out, the ship made a very slow passage but managed to arrive when prices were beginning to rally after a brief decline. Indeed, William gave due credit, sometimes over modestly, to Lady Luck for the fortunate outcome of his operations on the market.

In a trade notorious both for its speculation and for its bankruptcies, William achieved a remarkable record. His success was paradoxically the consequence of his limitations as a business man. Here was no great entrepreneur driven by an overwhelming ambition to seek an ever-widening scope for his activities. William sought not fame, power or great wealth but a competence; and he husbanded the resources at his disposal with that end in view. And it was precisely because he was cautious and alert to the dangers that he was able to steer his little agency over the rough waters of the China sea and bring home for himself and his correspondents a snug profit. At the same time he may have left untried some alluring prospects. The one change in the China situation which certainly affected his trade but to which he refused to accommodate was the rise of Shanghai and the corresponding decline of Canton as the centre of foreign trade in China. William's letters frequently comment on some features of the change and he contemplated several times a move to that muddy city in the north but in the end chose what he considered the safer course and 'broke his tasting cups'. His judgment, influenced one suspects by a reluctance to test unfamiliar terrain, was in this case undoubtedly a wise one. As William observed and later historians have recorded,<sup>1</sup> the foreign trade at Shanghai was exceptionally speculative and for these years favoured the interests of the opium dealers. Moreover, almost all trade was conducted on a barter system and by the latter part of 1852 the supply of dollars was so short that British importers of legal goods could not obtain sufficient cash to pay the Chinese import duties. Armed only with commercial credits, William would have found it almost impossible to transact business there.

Admittedly opinions differed among contemporaries as to what constituted speculation. The correspondence of nineteenth-century

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy*, 288-9, 298-9, 400 ff.

merchants frequently leaves the impression that 'the speculator' was always the other man.<sup>1</sup> To William and his co-venturers, the speculators were those 'engaged in foreign trade who care nothing about the prices they pay for goods and are not guided by the home market at all'.<sup>2</sup> It was not the way William conducted his affairs. Fairly conservative in his purchases, he preferred a small but more secure profit to the risk of a heavy loss in the search for large gains. Sometimes he seems more concerned to avoid loss than to seek profit; nevertheless, when a venture proved something less than profitable, he accepted the result philosophically as a natural hazard of business and as an object lesson for future operations. Both sides of the trading chain relied on a quick turnover as security against loss and rarely bought to hold in anticipation of a future rise in price.

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William's transactions for the five years totalled a little over £200,000, an amount that was considerably less than the capital resources available to him.<sup>3</sup> Of the £60,000 remitted in 1851 on joint account of Andrew Melrose and Company, William Melrose and James Richardson and Company, he invested only a little over one-third, much to the relief of his Scottish correspondents. While the extent of William's business was small compared to the large agency houses whose remittances in tea alone ran in the neighbourhood of £200,000 a season, it was nonetheless a sizeable trade. The volume of transactions handled by the Rathbones' branch house in China has not been indicated, but their net earnings for the years 1849-53 were considerably less than those that accrued to William and his business associates.<sup>4</sup> Among the reasons the Rathbones gave for their very modest success in the China trade, was the 'cumbrous and expensive machinery' set up to conduct a small business.<sup>5</sup> Their Canton

<sup>1</sup> An interesting example of this is described in S. Marriner and F. E. Hyde, *The Senior: John Samuel Swire, 1825-98* (Liverpool, 1967), 5.

<sup>2</sup> J. R. to A. M. & Co., 20 Dec. 1851, AMA, Misc. Material relating to China Trade.

<sup>3</sup> Calculated from AMA, Bills Payable Book for 1826, and references in William's letters.

<sup>4</sup> Marriner, *Rathbones*, Appendix I, 228.

<sup>5</sup> Cited in *ibid.* 87.



establishment consisted of two resident partners, at least three assistants and the usual Chinese comprador.<sup>1</sup> By contrast, the cost to Andrew Melrose and Company of what was in substance a branch house was William's commission. Until 1851, he charged five per cent on the prime cost of the tea after deducting the two per cent discount he received from his Chinese teamen.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, William kept his own expenses to a minimum, managing, it would seem, without a comprador although he did have a servant in Canton. There seems little doubt that all parties benefited from this inexpensive arrangement, one that would not have been possible had William been acquiring his dollars by the import of British goods. At least there was no heavy overhead when trade was slack.

William certainly earned his commission. During the trading season he laboured tirelessly, tasting, buying, arranging for shipping and selling the commercial credits. Without clerical assistance, he maintained his accounts in excellent order and kept a record of the price that each chop of tea realized as a guide for future purchases. He often worked late into the night preparing with great care, almost with the pride of an artist, the necessary commercial documents.<sup>3</sup> But he still found time to write long detailed reports on the current market and the prospects for the future, on his competitors' activities, on what he had purchased and why. If the incoming mail had been delayed, he sometimes had only a day in which to reply to the instructions and advices from Scotland in order to be sure to catch the return mailboat. Such attention was hardly to be expected from an agency house working on a commission of five per cent. And yet, it was just such an exchange of information that enabled both sides of the trading chain to act to the best advantage.

The only threat to effective co-operation arose in 1851. While the disagreement did not assume serious proportions, it does illustrate one of the perennial problems in the relationship between agent and correspondent. Until then, most of William's instructions

<sup>1</sup> CR, xvi (1847), 349. Most agency houses relied on their comprador who had some command of pidgin English to handle their financial and commercial transactions with the Chinese merchants, sometimes to their sorrow. See William's reference to the loss sustained by Mr Edger through his comprador, below, p. 131.

<sup>2</sup> Below, pp. 163, and facsimiles of invoices.

<sup>3</sup> Below, pp. 99, 148, 151, 188.

came from Andrew Melrose and Company and he seems to have been allowed considerable discretion within fairly wide limits. But when Andrew retired in the latter part of 1850, James Richardson and Company assumed responsibility for orders from Scotland. Although the Company remained guided by 'their friends' in Edinburgh, it introduced several changes against which William raised some persuasive objections. Henceforth he was to be included as joint-venturer, his commission reduced to two and a half per cent, but was at the same time tied 'down with positive limits and instructions' emanating from Scotland.<sup>1</sup> William was understandably displeased with the reduction in commission and Richardson finally agreed to allow him three and a half per cent if the ventures proved profitable. But what appeared more serious to William was the possibility of having, as agent, to follow 'strict instructions' that he might consider injudicious but for which, as co-venturer, he would have to bear his share of loss. The problem transcended the obvious conflict of roles that William envisaged and raised the thorny question of how much latitude a China agent should have.

It was William's contention that instructions from Scotland were based on information concerning the China market that was at least four months old by the time they reached him – time enough for trading conditions to have changed drastically. Under these circumstances William thought it essential that he be allowed a certain discretionary power to revise the orders and especially so if he was to be one of the joint venturers. As William cogently argued, he was in a far better position to judge what might be the most appropriate purchases than those in Scotland. Moreover, to be tied too strictly would prevent him from taking advantage of favourable opportunities that could not wait for new instructions. An experienced merchant in China would probably have agreed that those on the spot who could act quickly were the more likely to profit from the trade. On the other hand, William did not think an agent should have complete freedom but rather that he be permitted to use his own judgment within certain limits and under the guidance of his correspondents. He was undoubtedly correct. After his initial outburst, William settled down to the new arrangement.

Generally, he and Richardson arrived at similar views on the prospects for profitable purchases.<sup>1</sup>

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William's description of the life and work of a foreigner in China is in marked contrast to the picture which emerges from the standard studies that focus on the complex political relations.<sup>2</sup> In a period when the traditional Sino-British relations established over the previous 150 years were being thoroughly revised under circumstances that seemed always delicately balanced between an uneasy peace and the renewal of war, and in a commercial situation where the foreigner often appeared as an aggressive and ruthlessly acquisitive scavenger along the coast of China, William seems to have conducted his business and daily life in a fashion hardly distinguishable from that of his correspondents in Scotland, carrying his gun 'just for the look of the thing' when he went walking on the outskirts of Macao. He was, if not unaware of, at least unconcerned about rumours of those negotiations which it was the business of a diplomat to make intricate and secret. To be sure, William did not trade without encountering problems, some of which flowed from those broader changes that later historians have disentangled but which William could only dimly perceive. At least he experienced few of the annoyances from his Chinese counterparts that were discussed so frequently in diplomatic despatches.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, on one occasion when he had purchased a wrong assortment of tea, his 'Chinamen' were willing to accept the return of the goods at their loss.<sup>4</sup> Otherwise, his only observation that may be interpreted as unfavourable concerned the abstract Chinaman who, not knowing the true meaning of love, could hardly be expected to be Christianized.<sup>5</sup>

William, who was almost an 'old hand' when he returned to China in 1848, had a certain affection for the place as well as a wide circle of friends. Inured to the difficulties of life in Canton, he quickly adjusted to the hectic pace of a busy trading season. This, together

<sup>1</sup> Below, p. 197.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Morse, *International Relations*, i; W. C. Costin, *Great Britain and China, 1833-1860* (Oxford, 1937); Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy*.

<sup>3</sup> Marriner, *Rathbones*, 92-94 and *passim*; Checkland, 'English Merchant House', 165.

<sup>4</sup> Below, pp. 103, 109.

<sup>5</sup> Below, pp. 125-6.

with a well-trained ability to distinguish and evaluate the various qualities of tea, an expert knowledge of the British tea trade and a willingness to work hard and long when necessary, enabled him to avoid many of the errors of the uninitiated and to grasp whatever opportunities were available. While his activities are described at length in the letters, a brief review of the principal considerations involved in acquiring a satisfactory shipment will demonstrate the value of having a personal agent in China who was both experienced and eager to please his correspondents.

New teas usually reached the Canton market during the month of June. These were the fine black teas made from small leaves and buds that sprouted in the spring. Of the three or four crops yielded by the tea bushes, the first was considered the highest quality and was noted for its delicate flavour.<sup>1</sup> Upon arrival of the new crop, foreign buyers and their Chinese teamen examined the tea – smelling, tasting and noting the form of the leaves. Offers were then made to the Chinese brokers and only after a price for at least one chop was settled was the market said to be open. The whole process might take as long as a month, especially if the foreign merchants were pessimistic about the market, but could be concluded within a week. The opening price for what was referred to in the trade as ‘first class Congou’ would tend to determine that of second class and middling quality black tea unless a sudden demand arose for a special type. The quantity of really fine tea available to foreign merchants was always small and its price remained firm; those for middling teas fluctuated and if the market was sluggish an experienced tea taster could often pick up very reasonably chops of good quality after the first rush of the season was over. The price of common black tea, which formed the bulk of those purchased by large shippers, was closely geared to the British market and, according to William, often cost more in Canton than in London.

For William, the basic problem was how to invest the funds at his disposal in a well-chosen assortment of teas at a ‘lay-down’ price, a composite of the first cost and charges, that would yield

<sup>1</sup> For a brief description, see Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy*, 290-1; for more details, see Robert Fortune, *Two Visits to the Tea Districts of China and the British Tea Plantations in the Himalaya* (2 vols. London, 1853) esp. ii, ch. xv. Fortune travelled to China on the same boat as William Melrose (*China Mail*, 17 Aug. 1848).

a profitable return to his consignees. The market for which the tea was destined, the despatches of competitors, the cost of the tea in terms of exchange rate as well as the charges for freight, had to be balanced against the ruling prices for different qualities of tea on the various British markets. In determining the quantity to be shipped William kept a keen eye on the most recent market reports from Britain and the current shipments from China. In deciding on the quality and types he focused on those sorts most suitable to the tastes of the market areas for which the goods were destined. The importance of a correct assortment has been shown in the purchases Andrew made through Jardines and is explained over and over again in the letters. The careful attention William gave to the selection of teas was amply rewarded by the general satisfaction they gave his correspondents. The rare exception, the purchase of a large quantity of Gunpowder tea that looked at first exceedingly promising but later proved almost unsaleable, an incident humorously dubbed 'the Gunpowder Plot' by Andrew,<sup>1</sup> was itself an example both of his careful observation of market requirements and his ability to extricate himself from what threatened to be a very unprofitable venture.

Tea tasters were frequently accused by contemporaries of making purchases on the basis of personal preference. William does not seem guilty on that score. It was, however, his firm conviction that, given the limited resources available to his correspondents, greater and more secure profits could be derived from teas marked by superior quality or those that met a small but specialized market. In selecting the latter William brought to bear the knowledge that he had acquired in his father's business. Before the advent of standardized packaging, blending was one of the time-honoured arts of the tea dealer, the secrets of which were passed down from father to son.<sup>2</sup> By keeping a close watch on current shipments and stock on hand in Britain, William was able to detect possible shortages in those kinds required by dealers for blending. As large

<sup>1</sup> Below, p. 125. Gunpowder was a green tea, so named because of the pellet-like form of the leaves.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, the passionate defence and explanation of the practice in Richard Twining, *Observations on the Tea and Window Act and on the Tea Trade* (London, 1784), 38-40; and *An Answer to the Second Report of the East India Directors, respecting the Sale and Prices of Tea* (London, 1785), 3-4.

shippers concentrated on teas most commonly consumed, William was frequently able to obtain other types at very reasonable prices. The Gunpowder was purchased because he had noted the small quantity of green tea on hand and had it proved equal to muster would have netted a considerable profit.

Prices for tea were always quoted in taels per picul,<sup>1</sup> with the tael bearing a standard relationship of 720 to 1,000 Spanish dollars, or \$1.388 per tael. How to acquire dollars at the most advantageous rate was a constant source of worry to William and one which entailed considerable exertion on his part. To finance its share of the shipments, Andrew Melrose and Company remitted commercial credits issued either by the Commercial or the National Bank of Scotland drawn on their respective London correspondents, Jones Lloyd and Company and Glyn and Company. The bills were usually at 90 days sight.<sup>2</sup> The Richardsons used the Union Bank of Glasgow, and the sensitivity of the Canton bill market is well illustrated in the reaction of buyers to the credits issued by this bank. It was apparently unknown and buyers were wary of bills drawn under its credits with the consequence that William had to pay as much as  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. more for each dollar until he established its credit-worthiness.

During the period William was in China the movement of exchange rates was upward. On his arrival in August 1848 he sold some bills for as little as 3s. 11d. per dollar; and even for bills at six months sight drawn on Andrew Melrose and Company against shipping documents he was able to obtain a rate of 4s. 1d. to 4s. 2d. By January 1851, however, he was paying 5s. 3d. for a dollar. In general the rate fluctuated from month to month by 1d. to 2d. Only once, in April 1851, did it drop suddenly from slightly over 5s. to 4s. 8d., which William regarded as very unusual.<sup>3</sup> For William

<sup>1</sup> Picul, a Chinese unit of weight equal to 133 $\frac{1}{2}$  lbs; the tael, a Chinese monetary unit equivalent to an ounce of silver, Morrison, *Commercial Guide*, 234-5.

<sup>2</sup> National Bank of Scotland to A. M., 15 Feb. 1836, AMA, Papers connected with Direct Shipments from China, 1835-6; same to same, 14 Apr. 1849; 22 Aug. 1850; and Commercial Bank of Scotland to A. M., 17 Apr. 1851 and 17 June 1851, AMA, Misc. Material relating to the China Trade. The bank commissions were usually a half per cent or three-quarters per cent.

<sup>3</sup> The above is based on a compilation of the rates at which William actually secured his dollars; full details will be supplied on request. It may be of interest to add that

the problem was one of deciding the most appropriate time to sell. If the bills were sold before shipping, they would be presented for payment in Scotland long before the arrival of the tea. But if William held off until the goods were shipped, he would be forced to sell whatever the rate, as it was then that he had to pay his Chinese suppliers. And in this respect William acted quite honourably, paying promptly and without demur which, according to the Rathbones, was not typical of foreign merchants in China.<sup>1</sup>

The banks upon which the bills were drawn, the usance, the denominations of the bills and last but not least, the energy, skill and persistence of the seller all affected the rate obtained at any one time. William would have added luck to the list although he left little to chance. Occasionally he turned to his friend Hallam when Russells were large buyers. More frequently William attended the market himself and, through endless prospecting and hard bargaining, generally succeeded in selling at a rate he considered advantageous. His best customers were the Parsees who offered the most favourable rate and, as William noted, bills sold for India usually took an extra month to reach Britain. But Parsees were very particular about the bills they would accept, preferring those drawn on London banks and in small denominations, a fact that did not escape William's attention.<sup>2</sup> Although William suffered moments of anxiety bordering on desperation, he was usually able to find among his regular customers buyers willing to pay what he thought should be secured for 'good Scotch bills'. Unlike the Rathbones, William did not find bill-dealers secretive although he frequently fulminated against the Oriental Bank whose published rates he maintained were usually nominal.<sup>3</sup> William was on the whole quite pleased with his operations on the bill market, frequently comparing the more favourable rates he had obtained to those received by his competitors. Perhaps his boasting might be viewed as a form of self-promotion but a check of the quotations given in the letters and shipping

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while the denomination of each bill frequently affected the exchange rate, the total amount of sterling sold at one time seemed to have effected little change.

<sup>1</sup> S. G. Rathbone to W. Rathbone, jr., 13 May 1850, cited in Marriner, *Rathbones*, 95.

<sup>2</sup> Checkland, 'English Merchant House', 180; and below, pp. 65-66, 121.

<sup>3</sup> Checkland, 'English Merchant House', 178; and below, p. 71.

documents against the rates published in the newspapers, quotations frequently unobtainable on the market, would seem to indicate that he had reason to be proud of his efforts.<sup>1</sup> One suspects that few agency houses would have exerted themselves as much as William did.

In shipping the goods, William could charter a full cargo or despatch the tea in separate parcels; each presented special problems. If a cargo was to be shipped to one of the Scottish ports, William would have to wait until late August or September before he could acquire a selection of various qualities of tea. During June and July only first quality tea was obtainable and a cargo of such tea would not answer the needs of the Scottish market. But if he waited to acquire the middling and lower quality teas, he ran the danger of a competitor shipping off teas to Leith or Glasgow before him. William generally made discreet inquiries on the activities of those likely to ship to Scotland without divulging his own plans, and was in this respect fortunate in having a wide circle of friends. Such informal channels of communication enabled smaller merchants to avoid a 'clash of interests' with the large China houses and sometimes to beat them at the game. Secrecy about one's own affairs and a ready ear for information about competitors was a communal pastime that whetted the sporting instinct and heightened the interest of the combatants.

But once the teas had been purchased William had to act quickly to acquire a ship that fitted his requirements: the carrying capacity, seaworthiness and speed of the boat, the reputation of the captain in handling it, as well as the freight rate had to be considered. Sometimes he sought the assistance of his friend, that enterprising if litigious merchant, Y. J. Murrow, who had himself supervised the building of several ships in Hong Kong and was an experienced despatcher.<sup>2</sup> William preferred Scottish boats which he maintained

<sup>1</sup> Based on comparison between William's rates and primarily those in the *Overland Friend of China* for one year, 1851. In the individual instance of Dec. 1849, when many Parsees were seeking the Rathbones bills at 4s 6d. to the dollar, a rate which they considered favourable, William secured 4s. 5d., and the month before, 4s. 2½d.; Marriner, *Rathbones*, 189.

<sup>2</sup> The activities of Murrow were often reported in the local papers. He was involved at one time in a case against Jardines and Dents who, to maintain their duopolistic control of the coastal trade, had refused to insure one of his boats which was



could be had at slightly lower rates. But in 1851, when he was late shipping, he had to be satisfied with one from Hamburg, the *Auguste and Bertha*. William generally supervised the loading, especially when he was anxious to push it off early; and, as the letters show, getting all the tea purchased for the Scottish market on board could be quite an exhausting task. He sometimes chartered the boat to Cork for orders, partly to conceal its destination but mainly to allow the consignees an opportunity to decide where the tea could be most advantageously sold.

When tea was shipped in separate parcels, William considered freight rates in terms of the quality of the tea and the desirability of early arrival. First quality tea, the demand for which was small, he usually shipped on the earliest and fastest boat to London, sometimes within a week after the market had opened. But for other qualities, William was guided by market conditions as well as cost of shipping. Of all charges on tea, that of freight was the most variable and sometimes represented the highest single charge, ranging from 7.5% to 2.8% of the gross sale proceeds.<sup>1</sup> When prices were low in Britain, a difference of 5% was sufficient to change a bare return on one's investment to a loss. Freight rates reflected the general state of the trade; in 1849 when trade was brisk William chartered the *Magellan* at £4 10s. per 50 cubic feet, but in 1852 was able to get it for £2 15s., somewhat under the going rate. The speed and prestige of the boat also affected the rates. But besides the effects of demand, other considerations entered into the cost of shipping. An important saving, as much as a third or more, could be effected if the shipper was willing to 'break bulk', that is, allow his shipment to be placed in various odd spaces rather than in one consolidated lot. It was a practice frequently resorted to by William and accounted for some of the variations in shipping charges. Parcels of cheaper teas he tended to hold until a favourable opportunity arose to ship at a low rate. In fact William seems to have

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acknowledged to have been exceedingly well built. See esp. *China Mail*, 2 Mar. 1848, 30 June 1849, 5 July 1849, 1 Jan. 1851; *Overland Friend of China*, Feb. 1852; and Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy*, 209, 238 ff, 317-18.

<sup>1</sup> Based on calculations of eleven different shipments; for other examples, see Appendix vi.

given as much attention to shipping as to exchange, both of which entered into the calculations of the 'lay-down' price.

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When the tea reached the shores of Britain, the skill, experience and contacts that Andrew Melrose and his company had acquired over the previous thirty-five years were freely used to harness market conditions to advantage. In effecting the sale of tea, it was essential that an importer secure the services of a reliable broker. In this respect, Andrew and his co-venturers were extremely fortunate. Among the brokers they could call upon and with whom James Richardson or Andrew had established close personal relations were some of the most prominent houses: in London, Ewart Maccaughey; at Liverpool, Littledale and Company with whom James, Andrew's younger son, was completing his training; and in Glasgow, William Connal and his London associate, the well-known broker, W. J. Thompson.<sup>1</sup>

The two basic services rendered by the brokers were to sell the tea and to advise importers on purchases. On both scores brokers were accused by some contemporaries, particularly those unfamiliar with the tea trade,<sup>2</sup> of not sufficiently protecting the interests of the importers. It is, therefore, rather refreshing to note the amicable relations that the Melroses maintained with their brokers.

Maccaugheys sent William fairly full reports on the market, on samples despatched, and on the prices obtained for teas shipped to London. William found the advices helpful. He also received reports from brokers in other towns; some of these he considered excellent. But it was the long, detailed instructions and reports prepared by Mr Simpson that were the guideline for William's purchases for Liverpool, Glasgow and Leith. In these towns, the market was soon glutted and required very careful attention to quantity and kinds of tea. Due to differences in taste, a tea that commanded a good price at Leith might be unsaleable in Glasgow or Liverpool. At the

<sup>1</sup> *100 Glasgow Men*, i, 87-90. Connal had started his business career in the sugar trade and was an old associate of Richardson.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, the criticism cited in Marriner, *Rathbones*, esp. 102-7.

same time, taste itself was fickle, responding either to fashion or to changes in the social composition of the consumers. On all these important considerations, William was informed continuously by the firm in Edinburgh. As one of the major wholesale dealers in Scotland, Andrew Melrose and Company was in a better position than London brokers to observe and anticipate changes in these more localized markets. Indeed, until the qualities of this highly variable natural product were standardized, those merchants who possessed a knowledge of local differences had an important advantage over their less experienced competitors.

It would hardly be an exaggeration to call tea brokers the forgotten middlemen, and yet they performed functions without which few cotton manufacturers could afford to accept tea as a form of remittance. A broker undertook to unload, insure and store the tea, and advanced payments for all charges incurred, including wharfage, freight, fire insurance and storage.<sup>1</sup> In arranging for the sale, he evaluated the quality of the tea and recommended a price that he felt it could command. Then the tea was parcelled into lots containing a convenient number of chests of similar quality and kind and upon his advice a decision was made on whether to sell by public auction or private contract. If the former, the broker advertised the sale; and if the latter, negotiated with prospective buyers. Finally, he was responsible for collecting payment from the buyers, due three months after the sale. For all these services, he received a commission of one per cent of the gross proceeds of the sale plus interest on any advance payment he had made. Notwithstanding the criticism levelled at them, usually by newcomers to the import trade, most brokers fulfilled their role with honour and probity. It is perhaps no mere whim of the fortunes of trade that many brokerage firms were renowned for their longevity and few accumulated great wealth.

Those who have criticized the brokers have tended to overlook their dual role.<sup>2</sup> In addition to the services they performed for the importer, the brokers were equally responsible to the buyer who expected his interests in the quality and prices of the tea to be protected. Before 1833, the brokers, with the full cooperation and

<sup>1</sup> Freight charges were usually due two months after the ship's arrival.

<sup>2</sup> See examples in Greenberg, *British Trade*, 188-9, and Marriner, *Rathbones*, 104.

support of the East India Company, had issued for each quarterly sale a catalogue in which every chest of tea was graded by quality and character. The description served as a guide to the buyers at the sale. Neither they nor the East India Company saw fit to question the judgment of a group whose reputation was unsullied by any suggestion of partiality. Free trade disrupted the fairly harmonious relationship that had existed among the three parties. In 1834 buyers were very much concerned: could they continue to trust a broker now serving as selling agent? would tea of inferior quality be promoted in the trade? These fears were allayed in the highly charged and dramatic atmosphere of the first sale in London of free trade tea. At the auction the brokers freely admitted that much of the tea was of a quality decidedly inferior to any the East India Company had hitherto imported and were quite prepared to remove it from the sale.<sup>1</sup> That first sale set the standards for the future conduct of the brokers. Traditionally they had acted as disinterested judges of the quality of tea; it was a policy they were to continue to pursue. To the free trade importers, however, it was one that seemed to favour 'the trade', as the Rathbones some twenty years later irritably complained.<sup>2</sup> But it is difficult to see how the brokers could have acted differently or what personal advantage accrued to them.

Indeed, Andrew Melrose, who certainly could not be easily deceived, was quite prepared to accept the judgment of William Connal in a case that may have led a less experienced importer to suspect ill play. After the auction of the cargo by the *Naomi*, one of the buyers claimed that a portion of the tea he had purchased was inferior in quality and demanded a reduction in the agreed price. The affair was settled amicably through the intervention of Connal; a 'fair reduction' was negotiated and at the same time the buyer agreed to purchase the remainder of the damaged tea. Both Richardson and Andrew were satisfied, after inspecting the tea themselves, that while the new price represented 'a small loss', it compared favourably with current London quotations. There is

<sup>1</sup> See the very vivid description of this sale in *Nicholson's Commercial Gazette*, 11 Oct. 1834, 325. Ewart of Varnham and Ewart was the broker at the first sale held at Garroway's on 9 Oct.

<sup>2</sup> Marriner, *Rathbones*, 105.

no suggestion in the correspondence between Richardson and Andrew that the broker had acted improperly.<sup>1</sup>

Of all the tasks performed by a broker, that of pricing teas for sale involved the most complicated considerations and exposed him to a chorus of complaints. While a broker might be an impeccable judge of the quality of tea, in recommending an upset price he was confronted with all the vagaries of highly fluctuating markets. It is, therefore, not surprising that evaluations of individual brokers differed or that occasionally the prices were pitched too low. The papers of Andrew Melrose and Company indicate that brokers erred in both directions. In any case, the prices they set were merely suggestions which importers were free to change. There was the rub. Those importers who complained most loudly had little knowledge of domestic markets and were in no position to adjust the prices.

What an experienced dealer could do is demonstrated by Andrew Melrose's handling of the cargo of the *Naomi* in 1851. Appendix VII gives the valuations by two brokers as well as those by Andrew for fourteen chops of tea. As Richardson who was managing the sale in Glasgow observed to Andrew, the brokers' valuations 'are in many cases very different, and still more so with your own'.<sup>2</sup> Not surprisingly it was Andrew's valuations, which for most chops were somewhat higher, that determined the upset prices. More remarkable was the accuracy of his judgment on the prices the various chops would command at the sale.<sup>3</sup> The partners to the venture could congratulate themselves on their management of the sale; certainly it spelled the difference between profit and loss.

There were other ways that a merchant familiar with the trade could at least offset loss. Teas that did not find a ready market in London, Liverpool or Glasgow could sometimes be sold profitably in Edinburgh. The Souchong which Richardson confessed 'people here don't buy' was shipped off to Edinburgh where it commanded a better price.<sup>4</sup> Sometimes a whole consignment of tea to Liverpool

<sup>1</sup> J. R. & Co. to A. M. & Co., 15 Feb. 1851, AMA, Misc. Letters relating to China Trade.

<sup>2</sup> Same to same, 5 Feb. 1851, AMA, Misc. Letters relating to China Trade.

<sup>3</sup> Appendix VII.

<sup>4</sup> J. R. & Co. to A. M. & Co., 13 Mar. 1851, AMA, Misc. Letters relating to China Trade.

or London was removed to Edinburgh<sup>1</sup> to be sold by auction or worked-off gradually. As a last resort Andrew Melrose and Company could purchase the tea themselves, paying the market price if it was a joint venture.

In disposing of the tea, it was important to effect sales quickly as warehouse charges were high, rising to six or seven per cent of the gross sale proceeds for cheaper teas.<sup>2</sup> Andrew had little to grumble about on that score. A random sample of the bills of sale from London and Liverpool shows that a sale was generally held within a week or ten days after the arrival of the ship. Usually the tea was sold by public auction, but if the whole consignment was not disposed of immediately then a private sale was held within a day or so afterwards. In fact, to Richardson and Andrew the *villains* of the trade were not the brokers with whom they maintained a smooth working relationship but the *speculators* whose shipments of tea seemingly bore no relationship to market conditions.

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But whatever difficulties William and his trading partners encountered, the financial returns were in striking contrast to Andrew's earlier experience with large agency houses. If the general improvement in trade during 1848 and 1849 contributed something to the success of the ventures, by 1850 the speculators were once again active. It is remarkable, therefore, that except for the Gunpowder episode there were no losses sustained by any of the co-venturers. While not all records of William's transactions are extant, those involving joint ventures seem complete. These show an average profit of 13% on transactions totalling over £194,000. Profits for individual ventures ranged from as little as 5% to as much as 35%, the latter probably due to the sudden reduction of duty in 1853 from 2s. 1d. plus 5% to 1s. 10d.<sup>3</sup> As far as one can determine,

<sup>1</sup> Account of sales of tea per *Euphrates* by Littledale, Liverpool, 25 Mar. 1851, and State of sale of Tea per *Naomi*; enclosures in J. R. & Co. to A. M. & Co., 8 Feb. 1851, AMA, Misc. Material relating to China Trade. In a case like this, one chest was sold to ascertain the market price on which the broker's commission would be based.

<sup>2</sup> Appendix VI.

<sup>3</sup> Appendix V; and *Customs Tariffs of the United Kingdom*, BPP, 1898, lxxxv.

after 1850 cargoes to Glasgow generally proved more profitable than shipments to other ports.

The China ventures netted Andrew Melrose and Company £11,185, which represented a substantial portion of the profits earned during those years. From June 1847 to June 1853 the declared profits of the firm totalled £17,046, of which the three partners – Mr Simpson, John Melrose and Andrew Melrose, jr – each shared one-third. Although Andrew did not retire officially until 1850, he gave to the new partnership his share (nine-sixteenths) of the profits after 1847, a sum amounting to almost £5,000.<sup>1</sup> It was a substantial reward to Mr Simpson whose funds in the firm amounted to only £4,000 and provided John and young Andrew with their initial capital investment, £2,919 each. At the same time Andrew allowed the firm to retain the use of his accumulated profits which in 1847 were estimated at £33,000.<sup>2</sup> The firm was thus able to continue to function at the same level and Andrew's two sons were well set up in a flourishing business.

As for William himself the net gains for the half-decade totalled almost £10,000. When he went to China in 1848, his account with Andrew Melrose and Company showed a credit balance of £1,500; by June 1853 it had reached £10,982, almost £6,000 of which represented the profits from joint ventures with Andrew Melrose and Company and with James Richardson. The remainder came from ventures on his own account in tea and Chinese 'curiosities', the latter yielding as much as 50% profit.<sup>3</sup> In all, William's small agency brought a return of over £30,000 to himself and his principals. It was no small amount in a trade generally conceded to be extremely hazardous.

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William's life in China was not an unending and relentless drive to augment his fortune. Even in Canton, the centre of his activities,

<sup>1</sup> Calculated from AMA, Private Ledger, 1818-96, and Balance Sheets, A. M. & Co., 1839-89.

<sup>2</sup> AMA, State of Accounts between the late A. M. of Glencorse and Messrs A. M. & Co., 1855.

<sup>3</sup> Account of William Melrose, AMA, Sales Ledger 'O', Wholesale, 1841-54.

there were days, and occasionally weeks, when little business was transacted. And however assiduous he was in his conduct of the trade, he was equally able to appreciate and enjoy hours of quiet leisure. William does not seem to display, at least during his second sojourn in China, the hectic, nervous drive that propels more aggressive business men. The frequent references to retirement and the plans to travel with his father suggest that William was not prepared to give his whole life to business. His very serious illness may have left an indelible imprint; it was, in fact, to shorten his life. If not a prey to morbid fears, William had a healthy regard for his physical and spiritual well-being. It is not perhaps without significance that two of his closest friends in China were physicians – Dr Watson, a Scotsman, in Macao and Dr Kenny in Canton – and that of the four executors named in his will two were medical men. On the other hand, it is equally possible that their style of life and not their medical knowledge was the greater attraction. While William had many long ‘cracks’ with business acquaintances in his cool, comfortable house in the old hong of Mowqua,<sup>1</sup> he seems to have preferred the company of those who lived a quiet family life and enjoyed reading, music and drama. In fact, he enrolled himself as an admirer and student of George Chinnery, the painter, and tried his hand at painting. If he had many of the characteristics of a dilettante, there was also a moral earnestness in his approach to art as his advice to a younger brother David shows. Such interest he thought would be a shield against the debilitating influence of ‘bad’ company and prevent him from becoming involved in gambling and drinking. And although he did not describe in detail the lovely countryside of Macao, he fully appreciated the attractive climate of this most beautiful port of the east.<sup>2</sup> There he could enjoy the simple pleasures of country life: riding, shooting and taking long walks in a manner hardly distinguishable from life at Pendreich.

Macao, the oldest European settlement in China, had not yet

<sup>1</sup> The building may be located in a graphic map in Hunter, *The ‘Fan Kwae’*, 25; for Mowqua, see below, p. 54, n.2.

<sup>2</sup> See works referred to above, p. 21, n. 2; Robert Elliot, *Views of the East* (2 vols. London, 1833), ii; and Alexander Michie, *The Englishman in China during the Victorian Era* (2 vols. London, 1900), esp. i, 287 ff.



been replaced by Hong Kong as a popular resort to which foreigners retreated during the months that separated each annual trading season in Canton. But while the Portuguese had acquired certain rights in Macao since the mid-sixteenth century, their jurisdiction was never clearly defined. If the Portuguese repeatedly claimed the settlement, the Chinese continued to exercise control over their own subjects and disputes over the rights of each were frequent. But whatever its political status, Macao had long before the nineteenth century lost its commercial importance. During William's sojourn in China the Portuguese made several desperate attempts to take advantage of the confusion that accompanied the opening of the Chinese coastal ports, but to no avail.<sup>1</sup> The city remained a sleepy place, a haven from the heat and the hustle and bustle of Canton, and possessed some of the attractions of the east as well as the comforts of western living. Indeed, many old China 'hands' had retired to live amidst the grace and charm of this decaying reminder of the wealth and opulence of the once great empire of Portugal.<sup>2</sup>

The dateline of William's letters shows that, except for the winter of 1852-3, he spent from one and a half to three months of each year in Macao where he enjoyed the comforts of domestic life in the home of his friend Mr Seare or in that of Dr Watson, whose wife became his favourite hostess. William usually moved to Macao sometime before Christmas and remained there until Chinese new year or after, a period when trade was generally slack at Canton. But occasionally he dropped down to Macao or Hong Kong for a brief visit to relieve the pressures of life in Canton. Indeed, for most members of the foreign community, the movement was frequent and so well facilitated by Chinese river boats, western clippers and steamers that it would seem more appropriate to regard the population of these three cities as a unit.<sup>3</sup> And yet each community was developing its own particular style and characteristics.

<sup>1</sup> For a brief history of Macao, see Morse, *International Relations*, i, 41-46, 337-41; and Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy*, 47-48, 325-8, 341 ff.

<sup>2</sup> See esp. the nostalgic picture of life during the heyday of the East India Company in Hunter, *The 'Fan Kwae' and Old China*.

<sup>3</sup> No census of the foreign population in China was made in this period. However, up to 1851 the CR published an annual list of 'foreign residents', supplemented very irregularly by various kinds of summaries and breakdowns. Women and children

Of the three, Hong Kong had the least savoury reputation.<sup>1</sup> The record of its early years as a crown colony reveals a long list of public officials who were either found guilty or implicated in various kinds of dubious and irregular behaviour, which was in turn founded on a society characterized by violence and lawlessness of every kind. The colony had from its beginning a predominantly Chinese population composed mainly of the outcasts of the empire. Even the Europeans, some two per cent of a total population of 39,000, were sharply divided between a small number of wealthy persons and the poor, 'the usual off-scourings of the port'. It was, moreover, an extremely unhealthy place; the notorious Hong Kong fever raised the mortality rate to an appalling height. But despite these disadvantages, by the early 1850s the colony was beginning to replace Macao as a place of residence for the increasing number of women who accompanied their husbands to China. And with the women and children came changes in the style of life. Out of the boisterous, unruly male colony was emerging a settled community that could boast all the amenities of life at home. At the same time, from 1849 onward, the slow but steady increase in shipping and trade was further stimulated by the rise of the colony as the embarkation centre for mainland Chinese emigrating to the United States, the West Indies, Australia and the Straits Settlement.

William witnessed some instances of these changes but his interest

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were not included, nor the Portuguese in Macao. The following table is calculated from the various lists published from 1837 to 1851.

NUMBER OF 'FOREIGN RESIDENTS' IN CHINA, 1837-51

Year	Totals		Year	Totals	
1837	[307]	(158)	1846	—	
1841	[230]		1847	728	
1842	[259]	(146)	1848	614	[476]
1843	[336]	(180)	1849	810	
1844	442	(270)	1850	994	[766]
1845	690		1851	1,007	[788]

NOTE: Figures within square brackets indicate totals for Canton, Hong Kong and Macao; figures within parentheses are numbers of British origin. All figures from 1843 onward include residents in the ports opened by the Treaty of Nanking, 1842.

<sup>1</sup> For pictorial views of the colony, see works cited above, p. xxi, n. 2.; G. B. Endacott, *A History of Hong Kong* (London, 1958) is easily the best modern study (see esp. pp. 61-68, 85-87, 122-3 and 126-28).

in the colony was largely confined to the postal services it provided and to his friends, particularly Mr and Mrs J. F. Edger and Y. J. Murrow. William made only fleeting visits to the colony until the winter of 1852 when he remained there for two months.

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What lay behind William's rather abrupt decision to embark for Britain is nowhere explicitly explained although it is foreshadowed in his many gloomy references to the state of the tea trade. For some time before his departure, William had recognized, without fully understanding, that conditions in China were undergoing drastic changes. What seemed inexplicable to him was the continuous expansion of exports from Shanghai despite the financial disaster that seemingly visited those involved in the trade.<sup>1</sup> Equally mysterious was the increasingly unfavourable rate of exchange. Added to all this was the rapid spread of the Taiping Rebellion which, although it had not yet visibly affected trade at Canton, was nonetheless becoming more and more threatening throughout the Manchu Empire.<sup>2</sup> For William, who had been on the alert for a downward turn in the cycle, it undoubtedly signalled a spell of unfavourable trade and time for 'breaking the tasting cups'.

Whether he intended to return is difficult to say; once home, however, the incipient changes which he had witnessed assumed an even more threatening aspect for someone interested in conducting a nice quiet trade. The Taipings, if unsuccessful in overthrowing the Manchus, nevertheless succeeded in disrupting the normal course of trade and kept the country in a state of turmoil for several years. Meanwhile, the Chinese continued to reject the demands of the foreigners. Disputes piled up on top of each other. By 1856 the *Arrow* incident was quickly followed by the revival of the question of entry to Canton, the destruction of foreign factories by the Cantonese, and even an attempt to dispose of all 'foreign devils' at

<sup>1</sup> Hindsight clearly indicates these years to have marked a definite change in the centre of the China trade from Canton to Shanghai. In 1851, 62.5 million pounds of tea were exported from Canton in contrast to 36.7 million from Shanghai but by 1853, their respective quantities were 31.8 and 69.4; see Morse, *International Relations*, i, 366.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* i, 438-56.

Hong Kong by a massive poisoning of the bread supply.<sup>1</sup> In 1857 the crisis which William had been anticipating materialized on a world-wide scale causing a number of well-established China houses to fold.<sup>2</sup> There was therefore little to encourage further ventures to China.

But perhaps more important to William were the changes that accompanied the reorganization of Andrew Melrose and Company. Although Andrew never completely withdrew from the firm, as the letters of his son-in-law, Alexander Craig, indicate, the major burden of management rested upon the new partners, particularly after 1853. Even if William had been inclined to return to China, it is questionable if any of them possessed the drive and initiative that characterized Andrew's conduct of the business.

Of all Mr Simpson's virtues, an enterprising spirit was not one of them. Moreover, although he himself had benefited financially by Andrew's retirement, he may well have felt there was little future for his two sons in the newly organized firm; his subsequent actions point in that direction as do a few stray references in William's letters. Whatever the reason, he was by 1857 withdrawing substantial amounts of his capital in the firm to establish his two sons as wholesale tea dealers. Finally, in 1862 Mr Simpson terminated relations with Andrew Melrose and Company.<sup>3</sup>

John, Andrew's eldest son, was admitted a partner in 1838 but he does not seem to have taken an active part in the China ventures. In December 1841, about the same time as William was preparing to go to China, Andrew established John in a branch house in Glasgow under the title of John Melrose and Company.<sup>4</sup> It was a move designed to tap the Glasgow market and its environs, one of the few areas in Scotland that had not been penetrated by the Edinburgh firm. Organized to serve the small retailer, the company offered to purchase teas at auction 'in London, Leith, Glasgow, etc. for one per cent on whole lots or ½d. per lb. for lesser quantities'.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Morse, *International Relations*, i, 422-35.

<sup>2</sup> See esp. D. Morier Evans, *History of the Commercial Crisis 1857-58* (London, 1858).

<sup>3</sup> Edinburgh POD, 1861 through 1870; inventory of the estate of John Simpson, SRO, Record of Inventories, cxxix (July-Sept. 1864), 8-15; account of John Simpson, AMA, Private Ledger, 1818-96.

<sup>4</sup> Glasgow POD, 1842-3. The company was located in the Virginia Buildings.

<sup>5</sup> Circular of John Melrose & Co., 30 Dec. 1841, AMA, Historical Documents.

It was an ambitious project, as the elaborate set of account books opened at its inception indicates.<sup>1</sup>

Although the company survived for only two years and in the end occasioned a small loss to the parent firm, it was highly successful in its initial attempt to invade the Glasgow market.<sup>2</sup> The enterprise, however, was probably doomed to failure from the start given the nature of the general depression of 1841-2 which particularly affected the small consumer and his retail supplier. Certainly, it would not be fair to judge John's business abilities by the ignominious end of John Melrose and Company. One thing at least can be said in his favour: his ledgers were kept in meticulous order and he seems to have grasped the importance of cost accounting.

John gives every evidence of being methodical, hardworking and conscientious, but hardly an innovator. It was undoubtedly he, known among his contemporaries primarily for his 'religious and philanthropic work', who opened an account in the Town Ledger in 1855 for the Chinese Missionary Association.<sup>3</sup> A deeply religious man who watched over the morals of the apprentices under his charge, John was perhaps more fitted for a clerical life than that of business.

Young Andrew presents a striking contrast to John: lively, friendly, fond of hunting, riding and good fellowship. William found him a genial companion and respected his knowledge in classical studies,<sup>4</sup> but there is little evidence that Andrew played an active role in the affairs of the Company. He had, however, received a fairly thorough training and in 1846 was being groomed at

<sup>1</sup> The accounts may be found in AMA, Town Ledger, 'No. 1', 1841-56; Sales Ledger, 'N', 1843-46; Sales Ledger 'O', Wholesale, 1841-54; Country Sales Ledger, Wholesale, 1841-53; Cash Book 'A', 1841-43; and Stock Ledger, No. 1. Altogether these seem to form a complete set of business records that illustrate current methods of accounting.

<sup>2</sup> Of the company's 300 trade customers, over two-thirds were in Glasgow and its trading area; to the west, a string of towns on both sides of the Clyde as far as Dunoon; to the north-east, as far as Carluke; and to the south-west, from Paisley to Saltcoats and along the Ayrshire coast. In addition, some of the biggest customers were in Belfast and Londonderry. Compare the distribution of the customers of the Edinburgh firm in Mui, 'Andrew Melrose', 45-46.

<sup>3</sup> AMA, Town Ledger, 'No. 1', 1841-56 and the interesting reminiscence of William Stewart Watson, Melbourne, Australia, to A. M. & Co., 24 Feb. 1909, AMA, Historical Documents and Wages Book, ii; Watson was employed from Feb. 1859 to July 1865.

<sup>4</sup> Below, p. 124.

Maccaugheys for a post in China. Although he appeared 'most willing' to apply, the trip did not materialize. A second proposal in 1851 was postponed as William was not then prepared to return home.<sup>1</sup> By the autumn of 1852 young Andrew had developed a protracted illness.<sup>2</sup> Whatever his potential may have been, he virtually retired from business the same year as Mr Simpson.

But even if the partners had wished to engage in trade with China, financing the ventures might have proved difficult. After William returned, Andrew drew no more bills in his name.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, more and more of his capital in the firm was diverted elsewhere. By 1854 almost £31,000 had been invested in various properties, the most recent of which was the estate of Glencorse.<sup>4</sup> While his financial transactions were still inextricably involved in those of the Company, such large inroads on the trading capital must have affected the scale of operations of the new partners. This is strikingly illustrated in the balance sheet for 1855, drawn up after Andrew's death: at that time, the assets of the Company totalled only £27,480.<sup>5</sup> It was to take the firm more than a decade to recover from the setback sustained by the retirement first of Andrew and then of Mr Simpson.<sup>6</sup>

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William returned to Edinburgh on 19 July 1853 in a jubilant mood. Whatever plans he might have made for the future, the following few months were devoted to a round of social activities with various members of the family. A short tour of Ireland was completed by a prolonged visit to Shrewsbury.<sup>7</sup> The charming and commodious

<sup>1</sup> Maccaughey to A. M., 2 Sept. 1845, 11 Nov. 1846, 24 and 30 Dec. 1846, AMA, Misc. Letters to A. M., 1845-52; and below, p. 161.

<sup>2</sup> A. S. Craig to A. M., 15 Nov. and 14 Dec. 1852, AMA.

<sup>3</sup> The last bill recorded in AMA, Bills Payable Book from 1826 fell due on 5 Oct. 1853.

<sup>4</sup> Calculated from AMA, State of Accounts between the late A. M. of Glencorse and Messrs A. M. & Co., 1855.

<sup>5</sup> AMA, Balance Sheets, 1839-89.

<sup>6</sup> By the 1860s John had acquired a new partner, Mr John Macmillan, who for many years guided the fortunes of A. M. & Co. It may also be noted that when Andrew Jr died in 1869, he protected the interests of the company by allowing his money to remain in the firm with only interest going to his inheritors.

<sup>7</sup> A. S. Craig to A. M., 16 and 20 Sept. 1853, AMA.

Georgian house of Helen and Alexander Craig was a favourite rendezvous for her family;<sup>1</sup> for William it was to become a second home. Indeed, Shrewsbury held many attractions for him.

He and his brother-in-law were close friends and, despite their different backgrounds, shared similar interests.<sup>2</sup> Alex maintained a standard of life which he considered necessary and fitting to his position as solicitor.<sup>3</sup> While the expense bore heavily on his income, he was proud of his lovely home built on the foundations of the ancient town wall. In 1854 when it was necessary to have three nurses for his offspring, the possibility of having to dispose of his carriage and horses caused him much distress.<sup>4</sup> A sincerely religious man with a strict moral code, he drove himself indefatigably but was at the same time a gentle, considerate and sympathetic husband and father. An exceptionally hospitable host, Alex was as fond of William and his sisters as he was of his 'dear wife' Helen. While he enjoyed riding and hunting, he read widely and like William found contentment and ease of mind in meditation and solitude.

In the company of a favourite sister, her congenial husband and a wide circle of friends, William could re-live the romance of those months of leisure in the beautiful port of Macao. On the immense shooting grounds of Robert Muir,<sup>5</sup> William was able to pursue his favourite sport without threat of attack from a hostile population. When tired of the pleasures of Shrewsbury or of life at Pendreich, he could journey to London to talk business or to reminisce with his friend John Thomas Mounsey, now a partner in the firm of

<sup>1</sup> The will and inventory of Alexander Samuel Craig, Shropshire RO, Will Register, 1885, fos. 667-72; the house still stands.

<sup>2</sup> A. S. Craig to William Melrose, 14 Aug. 1847, AMA.

<sup>3</sup> Alexander Samuel Craig, b. 3 Aug. 1819 - m. 17 July 1844 and 24 Apr. 1848 - d. 29 Nov. 1884, was the fourth son of the Rev. James Craig (b. 1767 - m. 1811 and 1832 - d. 1845). His father had been minister at Dalsersf, Lanarkshire, but moved in 1817 to Wem, Shropshire, to join a branch of the family that had settled in the county in the seventeenth century. While the Craigs were well-established in Shropshire society and had intermarried with some of the local gentry, their Scottish identity was strengthened by the reunion of the two branches. See the Downer Family Records; the sketch of James Craig in *Fasti*, iii, 247, however, confuses the minister's two marriages and the list of his children is incomplete.

<sup>4</sup> A. S. Craig to A. M., 3 and 12 May 1854, AMA.

<sup>5</sup> Below, p. 4, n. 2.

Ewart Maccaughey.<sup>1</sup> Although the proposed trips with his father to the Holy Land or to America did not materialize, the life of a leisurely gentleman, which had seemed far away during his despondent moods in China, was now within his reach.

That William's thoughts were moving in that direction is indicated in his account with Andrew Melrose and Company. In March 1854 he withdrew £4,500 to invest in the Great Eastern Railway; a year later approximately £3,800 was paid to Ewart Maccaughey for East India Rupee Stock, and in subsequent months further sums were debited to his account. By 1856 his investments, primarily in railroads, totalled at least £9,700, the annual income from which was over £500.<sup>2</sup> Given the intricate and overlapping stratification of mid-nineteenth-century British society and especially the exceedingly varied orders of the group identified as the 'middle class', it would be difficult if not fruitless to attempt to place William in a precise position within the social structure. The figure he cut in Shrewsbury would be vastly different from that in London. But the income from investments alone could support a way of life com-

<sup>1</sup> Mounsey was a brother-in-law of Ewart and had known William before the latter left for China in 1842. In 1845 he handled a small shipment of tea sent by William. In June of that year Mounsey sailed for China, having secured a position with J. M. & Co. for a term of three years. By 1850 he was back in England handling some transactions between Ewart Maccaughey and J. M. & Co. He was one of the executors of William's will. (Maccaughey to A. M., 11 Nov. 1846 and J. T. Mounsey to A. M., 30 June 1845, AMA, Misc. Letters to A. M., 1845-52; James Matheson to J. M. & Co., 23 June 1845, JMA, Corr. In: London, B1/164, fo. 2643; Mounsey to J. M. & Co., 24 Jan. 1850, *ibid.* B1/165, fo. 3203, 24 June 1850, fo. 3334 and 26 Sept. 1862, B1/172, fo. 6504; the will of William Melrose, Principal Probate Registry, London, viii (1863), 374ff.)

<sup>2</sup> The investments and estimated income of William Melrose as calculated from the Account of William Melrose, AMA, Country Sales Ledger, Wholesale, 1854-69, and Personal Estate of William Melrose, Historical Documents, may be tabulated as follows:

<i>Types of Investment</i>	<i>Value</i>	<i>Total annual Income</i>
Harwich - Great Eastern		
United Railway	£4,500	£173 5s. od.
East India Rupee Stock	£3,800	£237 10s. od.
Great Western Railway Co.	£2,000	£77 0s. od.
Great India Peninsular Railway	£700	£48 2s. 6d.
<i>Total</i>	£11,000	£535 17s. 6d.



parable to that of his immediate circle of friends and relations. Mr Simpson, with a wife and two sons to support, rarely spent over that amount;<sup>1</sup> John Melrose's expenses were well under it until the mid-1860s. Even his father's annual personal expenses had not ranged much above £300 until 1847.<sup>2</sup>

However, William's new pattern of life was disrupted by the double tragedy that hit the Melrose family in March 1855. On 2 March James, a quiet, serious young man who had returned to Edinburgh when his brother Andrew was taken ill and had remained with the firm, died at the age of twenty-nine. And on 21 March his father followed. William was visibly moved by the events. During that month his account was debited with various sums for charitable purposes.

The death of Andrew affected particularly the lives of his unmarried children who had made their home either at Pendreich or Chapel House, both of which together with Glencorse and the other properties were to be sold to settle the estate. Marriage was a solution for some. On 14 June 1855 Agnes was married to Mark, son of William Morrison, merchant of Edinburgh, and David to Isabella, daughter of John Ferguson, surgeon of Rothes, Elgin. Ten months later, on 13 April 1856, Isabella, whose first husband William Law had died in 1851, married George Mathieson of Clifton Lodge, shipowner and agent for the Aberdeen, Leith and Clyde Shipping Company.<sup>3</sup>

William soon followed the example of his sister and brother.

<sup>1</sup> In 1827 Simpson married Hannah Elizabeth, daughter of John Jameson, an Edinburgh school master. Simpson's household and personal expenditure ran about £250 a year until the late 1830s after which it rose, reaching £500 and above from 1845 onward. He owned several small houses in Tranent and two shops on Queensferry Street when he died (above, p. xlvi, n. 2).

<sup>2</sup> AMA, Private Ledger, 1818-96. It is not possible to estimate Andrew Melrose's total expenditure as his accounts of Chapel House have not survived and those of Pendreich seem incomplete. The State of Accounts between the late A. M. of Glencorse and Messrs A. M. & Co. from 1847, was calculated from originals, no longer extant, with a view to re-assess his property and personal assets.

<sup>3</sup> For Morrison and Mathieson, see Edinburgh POD, 1846 through 1855, and AMA, Corr. regarding A. M. Jr's share in A. M. & Co. For Ferguson, see Register of Marriages, 1855, District of Dean Boroughmuirhead, Morningside, Edinburgh, 35, and Register of Deaths, 1866, Parish of Rothes, Elgin or Moray, 'David Melrose'. Elizabeth, the eldest daughter, remained unmarried and made her home with the Craigs.

On 25 February 1856, he married Eliza Laura Bella, the daughter of Rev. Henry Stedding and Marie Eliza Newman. According to family legend, the young wife was a 'ravishing beauty'.<sup>1</sup> The couple settled in Manchester in a freehold residence at 90 Plymouth Grove,<sup>2</sup> but domestic bliss was short-lived. Early in 1862 William fell ill and suffered for twelve months. He died on 1 March 1863 in London where he and his wife had gone during the previous summer, perhaps with the hope of obtaining better medical care.<sup>3</sup> The small fortune he had acquired by dint of hard work had not been squandered in a round of social activities. At his death the estate was valued at £16,000.

★

In preparing the present volume, we were fortunate in having access to a number of private family records and business archives. Of the latter, the Andrew Melrose Archives and the Jardine Matheson Archives have been especially valuable. However, both collections contain material pertinent to a wide range of interest. In addition to William's letters, the Andrew Melrose Archives contain other correspondence of social interest and various legal papers. But the richest part of the collection is composed of business account books of various kinds covering almost the whole of the nineteenth century; these shed important light on wages and other costs, prices, profits and networks of wholesale and retail distribution as well as business organization and methods. As Andrew Melrose and Company handled many other articles besides tea, abundant information is available on the trade in these goods, including both suppliers and customers. The material in the Jardine Matheson Archives that deals with the British in China is well known and has been the source for a number of studies. Less well known and hitherto ignored is

<sup>1</sup> Register of Marriages, Glasgow, 1856, 24; and Downer Family Records.

<sup>2</sup> *Slater's Royal National Commercial Directory of Manchester ...* (1858), 104, 308; *ibid.* (1861), 323; and *Slater's General and Classified Directory ... of Manchester ...* (1863).

<sup>3</sup> William Melrose, Entry of Death, General Register Office, London, Kensington Town, Middlesex, 1863, and AMA, Instructions for Legal Proceedings in connection with William Melrose's Estate, 1871.

the voluminous correspondence on market conditions and other economic activities within Britain.

In editing the letters, we have omitted all salutations and conventional endings but added a heading to each letter not addressed to William's father. In addition, passages which repeat subject matter more effectively described elsewhere have also been omitted and a cross-reference indicated in the footnotes. In identifying persons and events, only references to manuscript sources and published material not easily available are cited in footnotes. Excessively long paragraphs discussing several distinct subjects have been separated into shorter units. Punctuation and capitalization have been changed to conform with modern usage: in particular, dashes are replaced by full-stops, and superfluous semi-colons, colons, commas and underlinings eliminated. As William's use of numerals is not always self-evident, we have introduced conventions to provide clarity. All British monetary references have been uniformly rewritten in the form 4s. 6d.; to all Chinese monetary references are added T. or Tls. for tael or taels; all numbers used to designate the chops of tea are prefixed with [chop no.]; for dates, abbreviations such as st, nd, rd, th, etc., have been either spelled out or deleted according to context. Finally, numbers which appear as the first word of a sentence have been spelled out.



The enclosed facsimiles represent commercial documents current in the China trade of the mid-nineteenth century. We hope they will supply the business historian with evidence of contemporary practices as well as enlighten the layman for whom such papers are often mysteries beyond comprehension, as William's brother-in-law confessed.<sup>1</sup>

The documents include a complete set of papers relating to a shipment by the *Eliza and Hester*. Of these, only the invoice needs some annotation. Columns (1) to (10) should be entitled as follows :

- (1) chop mark and number of packages in each
- (2) total number of packages
- (3) kinds of package
- (4) kinds of tea
- (6) name of Chinese suppliers
- (7), (8) and (9), respectively, gross, tare and net weight per package in lbs.
- (10) total net weight in lbs.

The remaining columns are identified in the *Naomi* invoice.

For the sale value of the tea by the *Naomi*, see Appendix No. VII.

<sup>1</sup> A. S. Craig to A. M., 23 January 1852, AMA.





William to Mr Simpson

Canton, 23 June 1845

THIS MORNING I HAD THE PLEASURE to receive yours of 3 April, and am glad to see you think that the teas per *Baring* and per *Buccleugh* will pay well in spite of the very gloomy state of the market with you. If you get from 2s. 5d. to 6d. for the Congou by the *Baring* it will leave a little profit. Ewart<sup>1</sup> does not quote them so high; he says they are heavy of sale at 2s. 3d. to 5d. In one sense the *Mellish's* loss has been favorable to you as she had 3 or 4 chops fine, which no doubt would have, had they arrived, lowered the price with you.

I wrote you a few days ago by the *Coquette* and have nothing new to add. The only purchase we have made for you is:

60 half chests Young Hyson at 23.8 long cash and no discount  
50 half chests Twankay at 17½ long cash discount 2%

Sound Common Green teas must come down rapidly especially Young Hysons, Imperials and Gunpowder;<sup>2</sup> but if bought looking forward to a considerable reduction, I think them safe enough (if not rank and low) for they are teas that will be sure to go into consumption as soon as price comes down. However, the export of those three kinds alone is upwards of 6,000,000, which is double last years and it was thought large last year. I will be in no hurry to settle your 180 of Imperial and Gunpowder as the price will come down here from the bad accounts this mail brings and from what the future may be expected to bring. Some plain Orange Pekoes have been sold as high as 30 long for America; 1s. 6d. is your highest price. How would it do to buy a few hundred ½ chests at 1s. 6d.

<sup>1</sup> Ewart, senior partner of Ewart Maccaughey, a brokerage firm in London; member, Select Committee on Tea Duty. *Report, S.C. on Tea Duty, BPP, 1834, xvii (518)*; for the firm, see above, pp. xvi ff. and xvi, n. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Imperials and Gunpowder: names of tea, see Appendix III.

and send them to America or hold them? If you could get good middling flowery leaf<sup>1</sup> and good liquor at 1s. 6d., they are much below their intrinsic value and should they come into taste again would rise. I would not mind going half with you, provided you advance the needful, but my money would be of more use to me in other ways than locking it up in them.

Only that one chop of new Congou that I wrote you about settled as yet; few or no good ones down. I doubt they must lower their ideas or send something better before they get Tls 40 for them this year.

They are asking Tls 55 now for Scented Orange Pekoe,<sup>2</sup> and that not very good, not new teas. I see they are coming down with you and as the bulk of the supply will have to arrive after our last from you, it is likely they will continue to fall; if that is the case, most probably we shall be able to get them cheaper here. I should like to see them down to Tls 28 and Tls 30 again, but I doubt, from the competition we have here now, that those good old days are gone for a time at least. Everything that will pay 1d. is snatched up – but that cannot last long. I wonder how many of them feel now, that were buying and shipping low Congou with the expectation of a fall in the duty. Hoping this will find you well.

William to Mr Simpson

Pendreich, 25 May 1847

My father has got statement of account from Jamieson How and Company of China. They have mixed my private account with the business one and I suppose you will have to separate them the best way you can. If not too much trouble I should like a statement of my account with Andrew Melrose and Company when you have put in the items in the account current from Jamieson How and Company. The 'Bank Commission' and 'return premium' I am not sure about, but from Walker's<sup>3</sup> letters suppose the former goes to my debit and the latter to my credit.

<sup>1</sup> Good middling flowery leaf: a character of the quality of tea.

<sup>2</sup> Scented Orange Pekoe: a name of tea, see Appendix III.

<sup>3</sup> Alexander Walker: an assistant in Jamieson How & Co., Canton, in the 1840s, a contemporary of William who shared a house with him. *CR*, xiii (Jan. 1844), 10; xiv (1845), 11, 347ff; xv (1846), 6, 429.



I suppose the best plan to do with the Oolongs will be to keep them till you are clearer handed than at present and see what can be done with them in the States. We might write Bacon<sup>1</sup> for his opinion on the subject. I got account sales of the Greens sent from Shanghai to there – the Hysons (good Common) were sold at 22 cents, about 10d.

Excuse this hurried note.

Liverpool, 16 September 1847

We arrived here yesterday morning after a pleasant passage in the *Admiral* steamer. I should have written you yesterday but delayed until it was too late to send off a letter. We called on the Jamiesons and saw them both (Andrew and Robert).<sup>2</sup> They were very civil but just dignified and pompous enough for their first meeting with one who had been four years in their House, however they were very kind. I promised to call again before leaving for China and Mr Andrew seemed very anxious that I should do so. He is a shrewd hand and will never lose an opportunity of learning any information about his business however trivial it may be.

We also called on Hulbert<sup>3</sup> and left a card he not being in.

We also paid two visits to Littledale<sup>4</sup> but saw none of the partners; we saw a sample of the *Inglewood's* Congou at their office and left our names.

We start for Shrewsbury at quarter past one o'clock today – the weather for shooting not being very tempting we saw no occasion

<sup>1</sup> Bacon: not identified.

<sup>2</sup> Andrew and Robert Jamieson: senior partners of the firm Jamieson Brothers, Liverpool; for the firm, see above, pp. xix ff. and xix, n. 4.

<sup>3</sup> James A. Hulbert: a tea broker at 26 North John Street, Liverpool.

<sup>4</sup> T. & H. Littledale & Co: a prominent brokerage firm in Liverpool, founded in 1795 by Thomas and I. Littledale. In 1825 Harold Littledale (d. 1889) became partner. Under his management, the firm handled almost all 'the Liverpool business in tea' imported after 1834. The firm also dealt in cotton and wool in addition to serving as 'factors in indigo, silk, sugar, coffee and other products'. The brokers supplied A. M. & Co. with tea and sold its imports. In 1850 James Melrose, a younger brother of William, was admitted into the firm for a brief term. See esp. obituary files, Liverpool Central Library; Thomas Ellison, *Cotton Trade of Great Britain* (London, 1886), 213-16; account of Littledale & Co., AMA, Sales Ledger 'O', Wholesale, 1841-54.

for hurrying to Mr Craig's.<sup>1</sup> Will write from Shrewsbury. Hope this will find you all well.

Shrewsbury, 19 September 1847

We arrived here Thursday night but delayed writing you until we got settled at Mr Craig's house, which we are now. Mr Samuel, being at the country did not [come] home until late last night.

We dined with Mr Muir<sup>2</sup> on Friday and with a friend of his yesterday. The people are uncommonly kind and we are enjoying ourselves greatly. Tomorrow we go with Mr Muir to shoot over his ground.

I have no time to say any more at present as there is a gig waiting at the door to take us to the country to dine with a friend of Mr Muir's. We have just come from Church. Kind remembrance to all, and hoping this will find you all well.

London, 12 May 1848

I have this morning received John's note and the *Scotsman*.

Mr Maccaughey<sup>3</sup> will not make his appearance here until Monday. I saw Mr Ewart this morning and am going to dine with him this evening. He seems to be pretty sanguine of good . . . to be done in importing next year. He says with ready money and ordinary prudence . . . a person lying in wait for the cheapest purchases with ready money is almost sure of making profitable shipments. I called on North<sup>4</sup> and on Bedwell.<sup>5</sup> Graham<sup>6</sup> was out – Hodgson<sup>7</sup> I saw.

<sup>1</sup> Alexander Samuel Craig, 1819–84: a solicitor in Shrewsbury, Salop., married Helen Melrose, sister of William. See above, p. lxxiii and n. 1, 3.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Muir: manager, National Provincial Bank of England, Shrewsbury, from c. 1840 to c. 1855.

<sup>3</sup> Hugh N. Maccaughey: a senior partner of the London brokerage firm, Ewart Maccaughey. For the firm, see above, pp. xvi ff.

<sup>4</sup> North: a partner of North, Simpson, Graham & Co., wholesale tea dealers, London; between 1844 and 1849 supplied A. M. & Co. with refined sugar, loaves, titlers, rice and a small quantity of Souchong to the amount of about £2,000 a year. Account of North Simpson Graham, AMA Sales Ledger 'O', Wholesale, 1841–54.

<sup>5</sup> Bedwell: of Bedwell Yates & Co., wholesale grocers and tea dealers, London. The firm maintained a continuous business with A. M. from the beginning of his career, supplying mostly sugar and other groceries. Mui, 'Andrew Melrose', 33, 35–36; account of Bedwell Yates, AMA, Sales Ledger 'O', Wholesale, 1841–54.

<sup>6</sup> Graham: a partner of North Simpson Graham.

<sup>7</sup> Hodgson: a partner of Bedwell Yates and Co.

I made some inquiries about Dakin's<sup>1</sup> business and will write what I have learned and any more I can hear tomorrow as I find I am late enough to be in good time for Ewart's dinner.

ps. I did not know it was so late when I began to write – will write you fully tomorrow. Met an old China friend, put off my time.

London, 17 June 1848

You vanished very quickly this morning. I had no idea you were off until some minutes afterwards. I called on Hodgson and took 120 half chest per *China*, at 1s. 1d.; 60 chests at 1s. 3½d.; and 18 at 1s. 8½d. He will advise you of the purchase himself.

I called on North's with James. Saw Caudery<sup>2</sup> and had some conversation with him. I promised as a favour to take out for him a large parcel to China and then asked him if he could take in James. He said he had no objection to his coming and going round the warehouses and taking samples with his young man and attending the tea sales. Of course I should think he must mean him to *taste* the samples too. Perhaps I should have asked him to take him in altogether, but the other will be not far short of that and nearly all he requires.

No more at present as I am in a hurry.

London, Sunday morning, 18 June 1848

I have slept too long this morning to be in time for church, so I take the leisure time to write a few lines to you. I saw James shipped off last night; he got a berth with two beds and a sofa in it for himself. The man who took the money for the passage asked very kindly for you and said he could recollect of you making passages with [him] for fifteen years. We had not left him five minutes when a gentleman came up and inquired if either of us was named Melrose and neither of us was ashamed to confess that that was the appellation we were generally known by. He then introduced

<sup>1</sup> Dakin & Co: tea merchants, London. *Watkins's London Directory*, 1853.

<sup>2</sup> Caudery; a member of North Simpson Graham & Co. *Nicholson's Commercial Gazette*, 22 Mar. 1834, 90.

himself as Mr Small,<sup>1</sup> brother of Charles Small, or perhaps better known by the name of 'Frosty' from the very bright red colour his nose always had. I asked him what he was about now, when he told us to our great satisfaction that he was in command of the steamer. He seemed very happy to have met such old friends and brought Mrs Small and introduced her to us. So if James does not find himself as much at home as it is possible for one to do, it is his own fault.

Well, I had no sooner parted with the captain and James, in fact I was just walking slowly up the ladder and thinking that I had now seen the last of you in James for a year or two and how like it was in almost every particular to my leaving you the first time I started for China, when my musings were cut short by the appearance of the face of another old friend, indeed more ancient than the one I had just so accidentally met – and who was this? No other than the long missing Captain Hamilton!<sup>2</sup> He gave a better account of himself than I expected and has been in London for some days. He says Boyd<sup>3</sup> told him he had no influence in appointing the officers and that Jardines<sup>4</sup> had only a share in the steamer. He will now wait here and take the first vessel he can get for China. I told him I would have no time on Monday or Tuesday to see him but agreed to take my chop with him today at one-half past four.

You had better keep Caudery in mind of his promise to let James go sampling. I think the best plan would be just to send a note to Graham or Caudery, asking what time he could take James into the tea department which he had been kind enough to say to me when

<sup>1</sup> Small: captain of the *Royal Victoria*, which maintained a weekly passage between Edinburgh and London. It sailed from Granton Pier at Leith and St Katharine's Steam Wharf in London. Fares charged were £2 first class cabin, £1. 2. 6 second class; with provisions £2. 10 and £1. 10 respectively. There was also a steward's fee of 2s. 6d. and 1s. 6d. for cabins. Advertisement in *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, 27 Apr. 1848 and 11 Apr. 1850.

<sup>2</sup> Samuel Hamilton: see below, p. 38.

<sup>3</sup> Archibald Boyd: East India merchant. At Leith before 1846 Boyd handled the shipments of tea despatched by J. M. & Co. to Scotland and traded on his own account. In 1846 he moved to London. Although he continued to correspond with Jardines on tea sales in London, his business seemed to have declined, being confined largely to such goods as rice, rhubarb, Cassia Signa and iron goods. *POD, Edinburgh*, 1842-43; Boyd to J. M. & Co., 16 Aug. 1849 and 24 Jan. 1850, JMA, Corr. In: London, B1/165, fos. 3168, 3223; and above, pp. xxx, xxxiv-xxxvi.

<sup>4</sup> Jardine Matheson & Co., Canton: see above, pp. xxxix-xxxvi.

in London he would be able to do. James has Bedwell's samples. Kindly remember to all.

London, 19 June 1848

I have just asked Mr Maccaughey to write you off 100 chests Congou at 1s. I have had my eye on them for one or two days. I took a sample of it down to Hodgson; he tasted it and thought it, he said, very like Moffat's<sup>1</sup> one at 1s. 4½d. I asked Mr Maccaughey to send you down a sample of it. He said he thought it was the cheapest tea they had to sell and that he had sold a good many chests of it today and another party was after the remainder and he thought that there was little chance of any remaining unsold when your answer would reach. Under those circumstances, I thought the best thing I could do for your interest was to secure you 100. They must at least be market value as only forty more chests remain and all the rest has sold at 1s. It is not strong but a nice rather flavoury tea.

Fine Congous are getting very scarce. I don't think it possible to get any fine under 1s. 8d. to 9d., but I don't think there is much need of being in a hurry to buy at that price as they will likely remain without a further rise. I received Mr Simpson's letter with credits for £5,000 from the Commercial Bank which please inform him of, as I may not have time to write him. You may also tell him that the [chop no.] 441 Congou he mentions in his letter was the identical *Frances Burn* they had before at 1s. 3½d. – not to be had now under 1s. 6d., which is certainly dear at that price. Bedwell's 1s. 3½d. will look cheap beside it. Let me know what you think of the 100 chests of Congou. I think them cheap and well tasted.

I was glad to see by John's letter this morning that you had arrived safely.

My luggage went down today and my precious carcass I intend sending down to Southampton tomorrow. There is another Congou

<sup>1</sup> Robert and William Moffat: tea and coffee brokers, London. After 1834 imported tea directly from China as an experiment to test the market; established a continuous business relationship with A. M. & Co. that lasted until the 1850s. Moffat & Co. to J. M. & Co., various dates in 1834, JMA, Corr. In: London, B1/160, fos. 1302, 1351, 1396, 1421; account of Moffat, AMA, Sales Ledger 'O', Wholesale, 1841-54; William Cameron to A. M., 19 Sept. 1851, AMA Misc. Letters to A. M., 1845-52.

at 1s. 6d. which I think Mr Maccaughey is sending to you. It is the only 1s. 6d. one left he says. I tasted it but did not think much of it. P.S. Please mention to Mr Gray (James Gray) that I have received his letter to his son<sup>1</sup> which I will take charge of with great pleasure and say that I fully intended to call on him to ask if he had anything to send but forgot in the hurry of leaving. I wish some of the girls would make an apology to the Laidlaws<sup>2</sup> and tell them I quite forgot to call until it was too late.

Ripon, Southampton, 20 June 1848

I have no pen and cannot get one, so you must be content with a pencil. I got up this morning and went to Ewart's as usual to see teas and remained there until nearly nine, never imagining that the Southampton railway station was so far from the City. I went to St Paul's to breakfast by way of the railway office and found that I must start in half an hour to catch the Express, so you may think I had little enough time to get my things in order and get breakfast and pay the bill.

I hurried there of course and to my astonishment there was Thomas Richardson<sup>3</sup> sitting at breakfast. He was equally surprised to see me and to find that I was off so soon. He introduced me to Mr McEwan<sup>4</sup> who was along with him.

I got down here in good time, have got a large cabin to myself, two beds and two sofas, so if I get tired of the one I can take to the other. Very few passengers and seem all nice quiet people. I know the captain and Mr Compton<sup>5</sup> well, the only individuals I know.

I received your letter this morning when at breakfast but was

<sup>1</sup> Samuel Gray: below, p. 62, n. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Laidlaws: not identified.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Richardson, 1815-72: the eldest son of James Richardson, was known for his knowledge of the laws regulating the sugar trade and frequently acted as arbiter in business disputes. *100 Glasgow Men*, ii, 276; K. M. Richardson to editors, 21 Dec. 1968.

<sup>4</sup> McEwan: not identified.

<sup>5</sup> Charles Spencer Compton: in business with Maxwell Daniel and William Dickinson in Canton, a partnership dissolved in July 1847. Shortly after his arrival at Canton with William, Compton went to Foochow seeking to buy tea directly from one of the tea growing districts. *Overland Register and Price Current*, 28 Nov. 1846; 24 Aug. 1847; 29 Aug. 1848; *CR*, xviii (1849), 10; Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy*, 292; above, pp. xxiii-xxiv.

then in such a bustle did not get it read. I'll write again from Malta. Farewell at present. Remember me to all at home.

*Ripon steamer, 30 June 1848*

I sent a letter for you to the post office at Gibraltar on the 26th instant,<sup>1</sup> but as no steamer would leave that place until the 4th of July, contrary to what we had expected, perhaps this may reach you nearly as soon or sooner than it. We are now within twenty-four hours sail of Malta; we expect to be there tomorrow at midday. My letter from Gibraltar contains all the news about the ship passengers, etc. and I have little or nothing to add to it except that we have had fine weather and have been progressing both speedily and pleasantly. We shall remain most probably twenty-four hours at Malta. There we expect to find the China news for April and 24 June from England. I hope you will have thought of sending me a letter. The weather begins to feel very warm, quite the warm climate again, thermometer 82°. Four days after we leave Malta we shall be in Alexandria. We will have an opportunity of writing from Alexandria by the return of this mail, and probably from Aden and Ceylon, so that you will hear from me every two or three days which is very different from the time it takes to receive a letter from one going round the Cape.

I wish we were at Alexandria where we shall get the main mail from China and will see what shipments have been made. I think yet the tea is very cheap now in England and sometimes wish I had bought a few more chests to hold, especially since you offered to advance the money at the prompt and charge me interest. But perhaps I have done as well waiting until I see what news from China there may be at Alexandria. I will write you from there should I think it advisable to buy any for me. I think I should have yet about 200 or more uninvested in your hands.

Malta, 2 July:

We arrived here yesterday at 3 o'clock. I had a walk through the town, saw some churches, one, I think St John's<sup>2</sup> the most beautifully decorated place I ever saw. Every inch of wall was covered

<sup>1</sup> This letter is not extant.

<sup>2</sup> Church of St John, Malta, now co-cathedral of Malta.

with painting or elaborate carving and the floor was all marble mosaic work. We start today at 12, which leaves little time to give you any news. I think I had better wait and write you from Alexandria or on board the steamer.

I bought Mrs Edger<sup>1</sup> a present of mitts, nine pairs long and short. I have also bought a few pairs for my sisters which I will be obliged by you distributing. Do not forget Helen. And should any of them be writing her, tell her I sent them to you to send to her as a remembrancer and my remembrance to Mr Craig.

A good many of the passengers leave us here – have heard of another revolution about to be in France. I received a letter from Ewarts yesterday; none from you as yet. I fear you did not think of catching me at Malta. I see teas are better. I am glad I bought you the Congou. No more at present.

*Ripon, 5 July 1848*

Within 24 hours sail of Alexandria

My last I sent you from Malta enclosing a few pairs of mitts. I sent it by Marseilles as no opportunity by Southampton offered before the 14th or 15th of the month while there was one via Marseilles on the 4th and the postage only tenpence more. We remained about twenty hours at Malta. The evening of the day of our arrival I spent in looking through some of the churches – one I saw there, St John's – but I think I wrote you about it from Malta.

Next morning four of us started in a carriage to visit the village of Civita Vecchia.<sup>2</sup> There is a cathedral there, beneath which there is a cave where it is said St Paul, when on the island, lived; we went down and saw it. They have two large statues of him, one of them most beautifully sculptured. After this we went to see the catacombs beneath another church, which are dark subterranean passages . . . where they buried people long ago. We saw a great many places where coffins had been. These passages extended, the priest told us, for miles beneath the ground and that on one occasion

<sup>1</sup> Mrs J. F. Edger: see Joseph Frost Edger, below, p. 20, n. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Civita Vecchia, Malta, a town on a hill in the centre of the island, the see of the bishop. The town was so situated that from it might be seen the whole island and sometimes the coasts of Africa and Sicily.



a schoolmaster and seven of his pupils went to go to the end of one of the passages, but were never more heard of.

It was Sunday morning – we went into a good many of the churches and saw them at service and really I think you would lose some of your good opinion of the Catholics if you had seen the mummerly and nonsense they appeared going on with. I saw two or three women confessing to the priests and getting absolution. I could not help thinking what a contrast their worship was to our plain form in Scotland and at the same time felt, but I may be wrong, that it was as much more sincere as it was plainer than theirs. What with the statues, paintings, images, the noise of the organ and the singing and the dresses and gestures of the priest, I would have found it almost impossible to indulge any serious reflections – but it may be different with those who are accustomed to it. And I could not help feeling when I entered any of the churches that their service was got up more to awe the people into respect for the church and the priest than for respect of the head of all the churches.

We now went to see the governor's (of Malta) gardens; they were large and very pretty and curious to us as we saw oranges and grapes growing abundantly. There were not many flowers in them, mostly fruit trees. As far as appearance goes I would prefer Pendreich garden to it. We had some very fine figs off the tree which I liked very much. You could get as many as you could carry in both hands for a penny. But money goes a very far way in Malta. We came home and had a bath and breakfast and started on board. Malta altogether is a very strange looking place, it is quite impossible to give any idea of it from description. It is a place of great strength naturally and this has been improved and turned to the best possible account by fortifications and military science. The houses of the Knights of Malta are very large houses, you may say palaces and well built.

Tomorrow we expect to reach Alexandria; from there we expect to start about five in the afternoon and go up the Nile for Cairo, then, across the desert to Suez. The passage as far as it has gone has been very agreeable and I hope you will keep your promise and go with Mr Clark<sup>1</sup> to the Holy Land next winter. I am sure

<sup>1</sup> John Clark, 1790-1859: born Glasgow, son of John C. Clark. Minister of the Canongate from 1833, and of the Old Kirk from 1844.

after you were fairly started you would have so many things to interest you that you would enjoy it more than any trip you ever took. As I will not have time to write from Alexandria, I will close this now. I will write a few lines to Mr Simpson on business matters. From his last he has been speaking to Schaw<sup>1</sup> and Richardson<sup>2</sup> about orders, which is very kind of him.

William to Mr Simpson

*Ripon Steamer, 6 July 1848*

We expect to reach Alexandria about 1 o'clock. We have had a very pleasant passage touching at Gibraltar and Malta. I received yours of 17 June before I left London and also the credit which I acknowledged in my father's letter. We were disappointed in not getting China news at Malta, however we got all the news at least as late ones as we could have expected from China from England: the April mail; the May mail we expect to get in Egypt.

The temporary improvement in tea in England in the month of January had encouraged shipping in China during April, but I have no doubt that the news of the French revolution and depression that took place next month would put a stop again to shipments; and the only news that would encourage shipments after that, I think, will be the news by the mail which goes with us and which I will be in Canton I hope to take advantage of.

I quite agree with what you say about new Congou fine being the first to get scarce and rise; and should any fine remain when I get to Canton at a reasonable price, I must endeavour to settle a chop or two before the others can make up their mind. We shall see what the May mail says now in a day or two. The June mail we expect to get at Ceylon, the July one at Singapore and you will hear from me from China by the August mail.

I am much obliged to you for reminding Schaw and Richardson about orders; if they send them good and well; if not, it's no great matter as a little well done this year would be almost sure to bring a good many orders next year while much not well done might terrify them away altogether from the trade. It will no doubt be

<sup>1</sup> Robert Schaw & Co: see above, p. xlv.

<sup>2</sup> James Richardson & Co: see above, pp. xlii-xlv.

better to take the 2% discount if you can possibly retire the bills – the discount on £10,000 at 2% is £200 – while I suppose you would only save two months interest at home at say 5%, or £41 to £42.

I wish now that I had bought some common Congous before I started; both Maccaughey and Delafosse<sup>1</sup> advised me not, else I certainly would. I have great mind to buy some Gunpowders yet. I will write when I see the China news in Alexandria. I think I will get a profit on my Scented Orange Pekoe, but don't sell till I write although they may rise, as I will have a good guess how they will go when I see what have been shipped. If Common Congous rise, the Oolongs<sup>2</sup> will rise in proportion. *Nous verrons.*

*Bentinck*, 17 July 1848, near Aden

We are now within three hours sail of Aden; the worst part of the journey over, Egypt and the Red Sea. We had a tedious passage up the canal and the Nile. There happened to be very little water in the Nile and consequently little in the canal, half the way up the canal we were dragged by horses. This occupied about fourteen hours which was very tedious work.

But to make you able to follow the route better, I will give you an outline of it. From Alexandria to Cairo is travelled by water – the distance is about 160 miles; from Alexandria to a place called El-Atf,<sup>3</sup> about forty-four miles distance, there is a canal up which a small steamer generally tugs the passengers in canal boats; from El-Atf to Cairo the distance is about one hundred and twenty miles up the Nile and performed in a steamer. Betwixt Cairo and Suez the desert intervenes about eighty to ninety miles across. From there being little water in the Nile we were two days and the most part of two nights in getting from Alexandria to Cairo, or up the canal and Nile; the boats were much crowded, scarcely room on deck to lie down. We arrived at Cairo betwixt two and three of the morning, I forget what day. We started from Cairo that morning or noon for Suez and arrived there at ten next morning taking about twenty-two hours to cross the desert. The road

<sup>1</sup> Francis J. Delafosse: a partner of Ewart Maccaughey, see above, p. xvi, n. 1.

<sup>2</sup> A kind of green tea.

<sup>3</sup> El-Atf or Al-Atf, a village in Beheira province, lower Egypt, on the Rosetta branch of the Nile near El Mahmudigya.

across it now is much smoother than when I crossed going home. At Suez we found ourselves in an uncommonly hot place and much fatigued for want of sleep and as there is nothing to be seen there, nothing but a few streets of mud houses, we got through the day the best way we could and went early to bed. I assure you I slept sound in spite of the heat, not having been in bed for three nights previous. But had there been water enough in the Nile we would have made the journey much more comfortably.

On Tuesday the 11th we got on board here and have had a pleasant passage so far, excepting the great heat we experienced. The captain and officers say they never felt it hotter than it has been this voyage and you must know that it is always far from cool in the month of July in the Red Sea. The thermometer stood I think sometimes as high as 98°. I am glad to say it is much cooler today. After we leave Aden we shall get into cooler weather and I hear must make up our minds for a little rocking and pitching. That I do not care about as I am never seasick and a good breeze will keep us cool.

There is a Mr Fisher<sup>1</sup> on board who tells me he is well acquainted with David Richardson<sup>2</sup> at Mauritius. In the course of conversation about Richardson of Glasgow he said 'Richardson has lost a great deal of money lately'. I told him I was very intimate with him and thought he was wrong in supposing he had lost much; he told me the particulars about the cargo of sugar which David shipped and paid so well. I forget the name of the ship. However, he said he met David one morning and was talking to him about shipping sugars and about the vessel's prospect of turning out a profitable cargo when David told him if he would give him 5% upon the amount of the cargo, he would send it all home to be sold on his account. This he declined because he said he had no very sanguine hopes of sugar turning out well and besides he could make himself at that time certain of making 10% by remitting money home in a particular way, so he preferred a certainty of 10% to the chance of the out-turn of the cargo.

A few months after this, one morning on which the mail or some

<sup>1</sup> Fisher: not identified.

<sup>2</sup> David Richardson, 1817-96: the second son of James Richardson. See above, p. xliii.

news had arrived at Mauritius, Fisher met David and asked if he had any news from England. Nothing important, was the reply. Come up and I'll show you all I have got. He handed him over the account sales of the sugar cargo showing a clear profit of £7,000. Mr Fisher said he felt that he wished the cargo had been on his own account. That is his version of it. I cannot see how David would offer the cargo for 5% if it were possible to make 10% by remitting, or by the exchange as Mr Fisher said it was possible to do at that time; but perhaps I don't know enough to judge. He is to remember me kindly to him.

In crossing the desert we met the passengers from India and stopped to hear and give the news. I saw two from Canton whom I knew, we had only about a minute or two and then off again; however, we were lucky to get a China newspaper from one of our Canton friends. They have been shipping more than I expected they would, but it seems to be the opinion that five millions less will go home than the year before. I am afraid the news of the rise which we take out with us will send a lot of them into the market. Scented Capers I see by the *China Mail* selling at Tls 14 to 16 and Scented Orange Pekoe very cheap. What does Simpson think of them? Low price in China and stocks getting low at home, I think some good may be done in them.

After dinner: close on Aden the man comes on board for letters as soon as we arrive. Farewell, remember me kindly to all. Next place we arrive at is Ceylon and a 10 day trip.

*Bentinck*, 28 July 1848

Tomorrow we expect to reach Ceylon. I posted a letter for you at Aden which gave you all the news of our voyage until a few hours before arriving there. As soon as I got on shore there, which was at sundown, I got on one of the horses they have always ready for passengers to hire and rode out to see the camp and town but it was dark before I got there so that I did not see much. However I saw the narrow pass cut through the rock, which is rather singular; but I enjoyed the ride after being so long without one. The distance there and back is 10 miles. I pitied the poor little Arab boy who was my guide. I was in a hurry to get there before dark and, when I got

there, in as great a hurry to return as it was getting late; so I kept the little fellow, a boy about 10 or 11 years old I suppose, running behind me all the way. How would Davie like that, to run 10 miles, say out to Pendreich and in again without stopping? I would not have hurried him back but he hurried me, for a reason I found out when I got back on board and that was, the danger of being robbed, which I hear is rather great when late out. I had paid him half-a-crown for the horse and I suppose he was afraid of losing it.

I slept at Aden during the night and we sailed again next day at 4 o'clock. We had four or five days, as we expected, very rough weather and most of the passengers seasick; however the wind cooled the air and indeed it was cool enough to be pleasant. I who was not seasick thought I would be able to enjoy some good nights rest in my cabin which before, from the hot weather, I had not been able to sleep in, at least not with any comfort; but now that it was cool enough to sleep in, unluckily the heavy weather had made the vessel leak or something that caused a very bad stench of bilge water in the cabins and made it quite intolerable below, so that for sleeping, I was worse off than in the hot weather. It was impossible to sleep on deck and quite as impossible to sleep in the cabins so I passed some uncomfortable nights in the saloon. As soon as the heavy weather ceased we got on much more comfortably.

I had a good laugh at a young man next cabin to me and also going to Canton; his cabin is just at the bottom of the stairway. Well, he awoke me in the middle of the night crying out that he was half drowned; a sea had come right down the stairway into his cabin and drenched him, his bed and all his clothes. I fell asleep hearing him calling out loudly for the steward; by and by I was awakened again by him coming into my cabin saying he had no place to sleep. Now, in my cabin there was a berth unoccupied just at the bottom of the skylight and a window from my cabin opened into the skylight. I told him he was very welcome to my spare berth of which he seemed very glad and lay down on it immediately. He had just put on dry clothes and put everything to rights in his own berth; he had fallen to sleep, congratulating himself on getting so cool a place to lie down, when down came a sea through the skylight right on the top of him, wetting through of course everything he had on for the second time. I was a little way

back from the skylight and got none of it, but my cabin was nearly ankle deep of water. But in spite of that and although I felt vexed for my companion, I could not keep from laughing for nearly half an hour afterwards – he seemed so snug on my couch and was in such a rage at being twice wet through.

There is nothing else that happened during the voyage worth mentioning except a small row amongst the ladies, and I suppose a voyage never was made with women on board ship without having a row amongst them. I cannot give you the particulars of it, but two of them had a slight quarrel and did not speak for some time. One of them who is going out to be married found in her writing case a verse or two of poetry ridiculing her personal appearance. This she showed to her brother and it is suspected that the other lady got a young man who had been paying her some little attention to write the poetry and the lady herself put it into the other lady's box. What may come of it I do not know – should think nothing.

We are to get into Ceylon tomorrow morning at 7 o'clock I hear. So I have just an hour before dinner to pack up. Farewell at present – will write again from Singapore. I hope James is settled in London by this time.

*Braganza, 4 August 1848*

Here we are within twelve hours sail of Penang. I wrote you a letter which I posted at Ceylon. You will receive it in all probability at the same time you get this. We remained from eight in the morning until four p.m. at Ceylon when we got on board this vessel and started.

I met a few old friends at Ceylon which made me feel more at home than I had done at any time during the voyage. The first I saw was the captain of the vessel I came down in from China to Ceylon on my way home. I went and spoke to him, he could not recollect me, I told him my name he said he recollected an invalid of that name going home with him about eighteen months ago, but would hardly believe that I was the same person until I assured him I really was. I afterwards saw the purser of the same vessel. I was pretty intimate with him going down, he had not the remotest

idea who I was either, and when I told him, he hardly believed it possible that the eighteen months at home could have made so great a difference for the better. The next old friend I met was at the hotel in Ceylon, his name is Rouse.<sup>1</sup> He made a passage with me, if you recollect, in the *Pearl* from Hong Kong to Shanghai. He knew me at once so we had a crack about old times. He said he had heard that I had left in very bad health and was glad to see me looking so well, taking that into consideration; but that he thought that I was not looking nearly so well as when I was on my way to Shanghai with him. Well, the next old friend I met was one of the officers of the ship I went around the Cape in, in 1842, Mr Bernard;<sup>2</sup> he is now officer onboard this ship. I knew him in a moment, but he said he would not have known me I was so much altered, he said he thought I had grown stout. I dare say you will think I am very particular in giving you the opinion everyone expressed on my very valuable carcass, but the reason for my so doing is because the difference of the opinions amused me so much that I thought the same could not altogether be indifferent to you.

I often contrast the feelings I have now in going out with those I had when I went out first, how sobered down and accustomed I feel to everything now in comparison to what I did then. What a zest and relish I enjoyed everything with then, in comparison to what I do now. It must either have come from my having a stronger stomach and being more capable of enjoying all the good things of this life or, perhaps as probable, to arise from that kind of life being quite new to me then. I feel like an old campaigner now, and I gather and predict from all that, that this time I will have much more chance of keeping my health excepting accidents or casualties occur, which God forbid. You must not show this letter to any strangers – for I don't know how, but it has turned out quite sentimental and all about myself, which is too selfish.

We are getting near the end of our journey now; the two Dutch gentlemen going to Batavia will leave us at Singapore, say in three days. I have made great friends with one of them. He is a man upwards of forty, married and settled at Batavia and is a very fine gentlemanly man. He presses me to go and spend some time with him at Batavia.

<sup>1</sup> Rouse: not identified.

<sup>2</sup> Bernard: not identified.



I hope to hear next month that you have been to see Helen and that she is well and enjoying her new home. If James is in London, tell him to give me a letter now and then about what is going on there in the way of business.

I hope no settlement will have been made in the new Congous until I get to Canton. I see exchange is only 4s. and if they go cheap in China, it might be quite possible, I think, to lay some fine chops down at about 1s. 5d. I feel pretty sure that the low prices in England will have kept the market from opening, at least will have left a good many fine chops in the market when I get there; but perhaps the low freight and low exchange and short export may have induced people to ship. However, I must hope that I will be there in time to secure a few good chops cheap.

If I could get up to Canton a few hours before the news of your market being firmer, I might have an advantage over the others; but even then I doubt it would be difficult, after being two months out of the way of seeing tea, to be so certain and confident of the quality as to justify me in buying so weighty an affair as a chop or two at first sight. Perhaps I may be able to compromise with somebody – tell me all the best chops in the market and I'll tell you the news – but most likely I will be in Canton no sooner than the letters. If that's the case, tasters there, who can lay their hand upon the finest teas as soon as they hear the news, will have a better chance than I. But the news will be no great inducement to make them ship after all as they do not advise any advance worthwhile.

Well, the next time I write will be from that delectable place Canton and perhaps, I hope, may advise some cheap purchases. It seems to me only a few days ago since I was riding out and in to Pendreich. It is astonishing the quickness with which one can travel now, 54 days and you make what used to be one of the most tedious and longest voyages. But I am growing prosy, so think I had better conclude. I will remember D.R.'s<sup>1</sup> parcel at Singapore and would write from there, but the steamer will most likely have passed there before we get in, which makes Penang the safest place to post a letter. Kind remembrance to all. I feel uncommonly well and hope you all do the same.

<sup>1</sup> D. R. : David Richardson.

Canton, 28 August 1848

I got to Hong Kong about the 16th and next morning started for this place; Rothwell<sup>1</sup> and Murrow<sup>2</sup> were living at Edger's<sup>3</sup> so I had the pleasure of seeing them all as soon as I landed. They had no idea I was coming out, so got rather a surprise. What a great pity it was I did not start a month sooner; had I done so I feel sure I could have made a good deal of money both for you and myself. Exchange was about 3s. 10½d. and fine new Congou Tls 25 to 26. I hardly think we shall ever have an opportunity like it again, however it cannot be helped now.

When I got to Canton there was not a fine Congou to be had so I set to to find the best left and got three chops which are good strong Congous with some Pekoe flavour, costing from Tls 20 to 21½, about 1s. 1½d. in England. I think them very safe at that. I think they are all Congous that will please Andrew;<sup>4</sup> they are the old and strong kind with some rather tarry Pekoe flavour. There is one of them, the Tls 21 one, I am afraid is just rather old tasted; but it struck me to resemble the *Leith* [chop No.] 30 at 1s. 3½d. so much that I took it, thinking Andrew would be sure to run it off at a profit in Scotland. I will try to send you a sample of it by this mail; if it pleases, I will not have any fears for the other two. I think they would all leave £1 per chest profit on the prices ruling when I left London, but so much fine has left costing only about Tls 5 more that perhaps the market for Congou may come down when so many chops get all in together.

<sup>1</sup> Richard Rothwell: a fellow assistant with William at Jamieson How & Co., Canton, in 1845-46 and continued in service when the company changed its style to Jamieson Gifford. See esp. *China Mail*, 10 July 1851; R. Rothwell to Thomas Hunt, 26 Sept. 1852, JMA, Corr. Local, Canton, B2/18, fo. 2408.

<sup>2</sup> Y. J. Murrow: an enterprising, controversial and litigious merchant of Canton and Hong Kong. In addition to his attempts at invading the Chinese coastal trade in opium and tea, he was regarded as very knowledgeable on ships. See esp. *China Mail*, 5, 14, 30 June, 5 July 1849 and 2 Jan. 1851; *Overland Friend of China*, Feb. 1852; Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy*, 238, n. b, 317-18.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph Frost Edger: the Canton partner of Jamieson How & Co., later Jamieson Edger & Co. which was dissolved in 1850; elected a justice of the peace in Hong Kong, Dec. 1849, and appointed member of the Legislative Council, Hong Kong, June 1850. Under his management the Canton firm dealt in cloths, opium and iron goods. *China Mail*, 12 Sept. 1848, 17 May, 6 Dec. 1849, 20 June, 31 Dec. 1850, 2 Jan. 1851; J. F. Edger to T. Hunt, 29 Dec. 1853 and other dates, 1854, JMA, Unbound Corr. Local, Hong Kong, B2/80, fo. 3593 and B2/81, fos. 3690, 3946.

<sup>4</sup> Andrew: William's younger brother; above, pp. lxxi-lxxii.

However, I do not think they can lose as I think that even when teas were their lowest when I was at home, they would at least have brought cost and I do not think they will be so very low next year as they were at the beginning of last. In fact I rather look to an improvement as the export of Congou from China at the end of last June is  $3\frac{1}{2}$  million less than the previous year; and I do not think so much tea will go home this year as formerly, for although they have certainly shipped largely as far as the season has gone, yet I do not think they will go on shipping for the remainder of the season as they used to do. The low exchange and the low price of fine Congou has enabled them to lay down tea at a very safe rate. But unless the prices for middling and common Congou rise in England, it will be very difficult, and impossible at the present prices here, to lay them down<sup>1</sup> at a saving figure. People have been so severely bit lately that I do not think they will ship unless they can lay them down at a good margin. Besides that, there is none of that reckless speculation going on now that there was in the past two or three years. The trade altogether here seems much more healthy and legitimate. Besides the Congou, I have bought two chops of Sou-chong, one at Tls  $24\frac{1}{2}$  and another at Tls 28, and 125 half-chests of Gunpowder. But as I will have to write Mr Simpson all about the tea, I need not be saying any more.

I assure you I have had a busy time of it since I arrived, I have been tasting and comparing until I was almost sick and my mouth sore. I was so much behind the other tasters here that I found I had to work pretty hard to make up to them, as they had tasted and knew all the chops in the market intimately.

I am in Murrow's house in the meantime but have made no arrangement; however, I think it likely that I will remain with him at least over the winter. I believe he has come to an arrangement with his Chinese creditors and I suppose means to pay his English ones in full as they are for small amounts I understand; however he has said nothing to me about it. He has been really very kind and useful to me since I arrived and from his long residence here knows the

<sup>1</sup> 'To lay them down' or 'to stand' at the price of . . . : a current expression of trade denoting the imported cost which included the prime cost of the goods, freight, insurance and charges of commission all calculated at a specific rate of exchange between the pound sterling and other currencies.

people and the customs so well that I often find his advice in business matters very useful. For instance, this time he has enabled me to sell your bills at good deal better exchange than I would have been able to do, and better than most other people have done. He has a very comfortable house and I at present occupy in it a large tea room and bedroom.

Most people here seem to think Shanghai now the best place for buying tea; they say some of the tasters there have been making small fortunes.

I find the steamer goes two hours sooner than I expected, so must close. I am very well, very few of my old friends here knew me at first sight, they said I was so much improved in appearance. It is very hot, thermometer 89° to 90° for the last two days, but it was cooler before that and we have had rain tonight which has cooled us down a bit. Please remember me kindly to them all, not forgetting Ellen. I am sorry I have to close in so great a hurry.

Canton, 16 October 1848

I was sorry that last month I was so busy that it was quite impossible for me to write you even a few lines; for six or seven days before the mail started I assure you I had a busy and rather anxious time of it.

If you recollect, I had not drawn against you for anything the previous month and I found I had a large quantity of tea bought and all to pay for immediately after the steamer for England started. The month before I had not been able to sell any except the bank bills and I was in a terrible fright that this time I might be able to sell as little, and just upon the top of all this I found out that it would be impossible for me to draw on the Congous in the *Grecian*, about 1,900 chests, from having consigned them to 'A. M. & Co.' instead of 'to order'. The only recourse I had was to ship all the rest I had bought, get the captains to sign the bills of lading and sell your drafts secured by them; but I was afraid to ship the tea until I had sold the bills because the Chinamen do not expect you to pay them until you ship. Now, it is very difficult to sell bills until just within a few days of the mail leaving, so that you have only four or five days left to weigh the tea, engage tonnage, ship it, get

the bills of lading signed, policies of insurance made out, and I can tell you I had just as much as I could possibly manage.

I did not care about the work but I was always afraid something would go wrong. For instance, two of the ships I had sent the tea down to, I was told, would not be able to take all I had sent. Then the person who had bought your drafts secured by the bills of lading told me he could not take the draft unless the teas were all shipped and the bills of lading signed before the steamer left. I don't know what I would have done had the teas been shut out of the vessel, but as it happened they got them all in. But I did not hear of them being all right until just the day before the steamer sailed and you may know it kept me pretty anxious.

Dent had one of the ships that could not take in all I had sent down, so I called on John Dent<sup>1</sup> and asked as a great favour to get them in if he could. Really he was very obliging and told me I might depend upon getting them all in though he had to take out his own tea. The ship's name was the *Dauntless*. In the *Marian* the consignees promised me 100 tons and only took in 80, but by good luck I got Dent to give me room in the *Dauntless*. In the *Hugh Walker* the consignee only promised me room for 1,500 chests but by good luck and management he got all the three chops of Congou in her. However I was much afraid he would not be able to take them and it was only the day before the mail started I heard the ship had taken all of them in.

It is very troublesome work drawing on the documents to a large extent. Everything has to be done just in a few days before the mail leaves: the bills to be sold first, tea to be weighed, shipped, and tonnage to be engaged in some vessel that is to go directly after the mail. However, they are all off now and I wish we may make something out of them and think we will. I must say I have been very lucky in getting them all shipped in splendid vessels, and all of them sailed almost as soon as the tea was on board. In fact the *Dauntless* sailed two or three days before the steamer and the other two were off as soon as her or a day or so after. They are all first class ships and fast sailers especially the *Hugh Walker* and *Marian* and should make good passages. The *Grecian* I have known for

<sup>1</sup> John Dent: a partner of Dent & Co., an agency house in China; concurrently Portuguese consul at Canton, 1849, and chairman, Canton Regatta Club.

some years – she is fast too and made one of the fastest passages home last season.

Andrew and Mr Simpson will have seen the samples long before this and I hope they think them cheap; they are certainly cheaper than I ever saw them here before. Now that I have had leisure to taste the Congous against some of the finest chops at Tls 26, really I have often made our Tls 20 and 21 ones in the *Grecian* as good as some of their crack ones. They may not be quite so fine but they are quite as strong Pekoe flavour. However, I recollect an old saying of yours about ‘counting chickens before they are hatched’ and I will say no more about them; but this much I will say, that I hope they will pay well, first because they are entirely on our own account and secondly because it will just show Schaw and Richardson that we can go into the field single-handed and come off victorious too and it serves them right. We took all the risk this time and a very bad time it appeared to be, and we certainly are entitled to all (if there is any) the profit.

It is just as well they did not come forward because you will be perfectly able to do without them as the teas will be in long before you require to meet the bills. The *Grecian's*, about 1,900 chests, should be in in the middle of January or beginning of February at the latest and that will put £9,000 in your hands to meet the other drafts. The other ships will be in no doubt in fifteen days after her, so that even allowing you had not the *Grecian's* to calculate on, you would have four months to sell the teas and meet the drafts and they are all well insured. But having the *Grecian's* makes you quite safe. Besides that the bank bills of the Commercial will come due first and I believe you need not pay them unless you like until the teas are sold.

If we make a little on our shipment this year, both Schaw and Richardson will be glad enough to take an adventure next year, and if they are not inclined we need not care much as we will be able to do a little safe trade on our own account. I would just follow the same plan you did this year, that is, to appear quite independent of them and certainly not solicit their orders. We will be very lucky if this turns out a good season and have all the shipments on our own account.

There is certainly as much Congou shipped up to this time as

there was to this time last year, but I do not think they can keep it up at the same rate. Fine teas being so cheap here and rising a little in England besides have tempted them to invest but I think they will be very wary of buying the common kind. I do not think a large export of Congou this year may be expected. I can see a great difference in the way people are buying here; they are very cautious in comparison to what they were and no shipping on Chinese account, so that the general aspect of things looks pretty healthy although the quantity of Congou shipped is pretty large. I will write again before the steamer leaves.

Now don't let Schaw or Richardson get around you and get you to promise them a share in this year's shipments; you may recollect they (Richardsons) wanted a share in the *Aberfoyle's*, or to claim one rather. I will write after I receive your 24 August letter.

7 o'clock p.m. Canton, 28 October 1848

I have just closed up my last letter. The steamer will be off in an hour or so, and that you may have the latest news from me, I have kept this half hour for a letter to yourself. I wrote you before on the 16th but as it was nearly all on business matters and the sheet well filled, will let it go separate (not wrong this time I hope).<sup>1</sup>

I have received your two August letters which contained lots of news. I am very glad Easy and Law<sup>2</sup> are one at last and hope it may do them both good. You say Hallam,<sup>3</sup> you think, intends going out in September. There are a great many 'old China residents' coming out by next (September) steamer; old Gibb<sup>4</sup> of Gibb, Livingston & Company, Russell Sturgis<sup>5</sup> of Russells house and many others. I suppose they find the late bad times have left them with less than they had calculated on and are coming out to try to make a little more.

<sup>1</sup> Probably referring to extra postal charge, 2s. 3d.

<sup>2</sup> William David Law, d. 8 May 1851: elder son of William Law; married Isabella Melrose, sister of William, 31 July 1848. For William Law, the father, see below, p. 44, n. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Samuel J. Hallam: see above, pp. xxxvii-xxxix.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas A. Gibb: senior partner of Gibb Livingston & Co., Hong Kong, Canton and England.

<sup>5</sup> Robert S. Sturgis: an assistant of Russell & Co., had returned to England in May 1847. W. M. has made a mistake with his name.

Congous are going to do well I think. There is very little gone home this month in comparison to October last year and next month I don't think there will be more than this month – but dinner is ready, you see we dine late, must finish after dinner.

15 minutes past 8: Have just finished dinner and taken an extra glass of wine in consideration of it being mail day and hard worked. I think we are going to have pretty good times again. Teas this year have been very cheap at all events. What a pity I made so great a mistake with the *Grecian's*, I mean in making out the bills of lading in such a way as to make it impossible for me to get any advance on them. However, I have made a very good arrangement, I almost think better than if I had been able to get an advance on the *Grecian*. Mr Simpson will explain it all to you. I have written him all about it. Now keep all the teas this year to ourselves; you will have plenty funds to pay for all the bills as they come due and get as many orders as you can next year. If ours pay well this year, they will be glad enough to send out orders. . . .

I have written both Mr Simpson and A. M. & Co. to be sure to send me out £3,000. See it is not forgotten because no doubt I will be in debt before it gets here. Green teas are going to be very cheap and I think our Congous will pay a little.

By the by, there was a passenger who came out overland with me, a Mr Orense.<sup>1</sup> He was mail agent for the Spanish government and conveyed the Spanish mails to Manila. He was a respectable man I think; I know I saw a letter of introduction which Jardine had given him and Jardine said in his letter of introduction that he was a Marquis' son or some near friend of one. But perhaps a Marquis in Spain is no great thing, I do not know, but I know he is very anxious to make money and in talking about one thing and another we got to tea. He told me he was sure of getting 5s. a pound for it in Spain, so I thought we might try it and I promised to write you to give him or his friends 100 chests of the Oolong to try and sell them. But after I came out here, I got so busy I forgot all about it and only about an hour ago I got from him a letter which I enclose. He

<sup>1</sup> P. Manuel S. Orense: drowned at Capsingmoon at the mouth of the Pearl River, 18 Sept. 1849. He was on board the Portuguese lorcha no. 33 which was boarded by pirates within eight miles of Hong Kong. The captain and a Chinese also lost their lives. *China Mail*, 22 Mar. 1849. His letter to William, 9 Sept. 1848, is in AMA, Letters of William to Andrew Melrose.



comes out with one steamer and goes home by the next in charge of the letters. So I suppose he has been home and written you long before this: I would try him with a little tea if I were you.

So you are selling my Orange Pekoes. I would rather you had kept them to October, but sell and repent is a good principle to go on, and I admire you for doing it, though I would not have done it myself. You mind I wanted to buy some Gunpowders and Maccaughey would not let me. I wish I had. I see they too are up.

But they are waiting for my letter, so farewell. Next month here they have a 'regatta' and it will be a racketty month so I am going to take a trip down to Macao and get some shooting. I would like a change. At any rate, two months I think now quite long enough in this hole, although before I did not use to think eighteen months too long - experience teaches fools.

William to Andrew Melrose and Company

Canton, 28 November 1848

I beg to acknowledge having received your two favours of 18 and 23 September enclosing Commercial Bank of Scotland credits to the amount of £18,000, and take note of all you say regarding its investment. The mail from England only arrived (the Canton portion) yesterday afternoon and the mail for England is despatched today, which has only left about twenty-four hours to answer the letters and do sundry things which cannot be done until the mail from England arrives. I have therefore not had much time to give to the consideration of the contents of your letter, and would not like to say anything definite until I have more time to think over the matter.

However, I rather think I will decide on shipping in separate parcels and ships, as your funds I think at present are rather late out in the season for purchasing a cargo, and to almost all the outports vessels have already been despatched. If a cargo is shipped to any of the outports the bulk of it must be Congou. Now I think at this rather advanced time of the season it would be difficult to select a cargo of Congou at safe prices, at all events it would be a work of a long time, and I almost feel sure I will decide on keeping your funds by me and taking advantage of any chop of any kind that may appear safe and cheap.

I am sorry so little time to advise home has been left to us this month; next mail I have no doubt I will be able to give you every information. Today I sold of the £18,000, £4,500, numbers of which you have on the other side. Some Bombay merchants particularly wanted them for India and offered me 4s. which was a very good rate, as good bills at thirty days sight have been sold at the same figure. Besides that, I thought it better to sell a few this mail, as it is not at all improbable that exchange may go up next mail, as Russells are not sellers of bills this month, and also next month brings the China New Year very near, when dollars are generally wanted. The bills too, I know, from their going to India must take a month longer than going home direct and so will not be presented any sooner than bills sold next month and going direct. I see I have just time left to give you the numbers:

38/20	£1,000
38/45	500
38/30-44 (all the £300s, all the £200s, all the £100s)	3,000
Total: £4,500 at 4s. per dollar	\$22,500

ps. The *Lasca* you will observe has sailed for Leith.

Canton, 28 November 1848

The boat which is certain to catch the mail to be despatched from Hong Kong left last night at 9 o'clock, and it was all I could possibly manage to get through before that time with business that could not wait for this opportunity. I have no doubt this one will also catch the mail.

I spent nearly all last month at Macao and came up from there about three days ago. I had shipped every package of tea I had on hand and intended going down to stay there for about two months, thinking that I had done quite enough and it would be better to be living down there than in Canton when I had nothing to do. . . . I need not say that your September letters put an end to all those cogitations.

I was very comfortable at Macao all last month. I lived with an

old friend of mine who lately has had his family out. He has only one son, a mere boy. He has a fine large house and garden, poultry, sheep, goats, and a pony. Of the latter description of animal I was busy endeavouring to provide myself with one to be a companion to my friend's. There are no very good riders at Macao and very often when the owner of a horse has to go to Canton or Hong Kong, he likes to leave his horse in the hands of someone who has been accustomed to horses to exercise for him. I was just getting up my name as a horseman when I left. And indeed I had got the riding of one horse, but unluckily after the first ride I gave it, it has been so stiff that it has never had anybody on its back since; and I am not sorry for it, as it was the most stumbling brute I ever laid legs across. Its tendency to devotion was certainly very marked and so were its knees from frequent kneeling.

Macao is greatly improved. They have had a new governor there who knows well how to treat with the Chinese, and instead of being liable to insults and being plundered when a mile away from the town, you are now able to walk for four or five miles with perfect safety. And the roads are much improved and are for a considerable way really good macadamized carriage roads. I think betwixt it and Canton there is no comparison; the air seems so much purer at Macao and always a cool sea breeze. The houses are built quite close to the seaside, in fact the principal street or 'Praya Grande', as it is called, might be taken for warehouses on a quay - had they not the look of dwelling houses - you know what I mean. The weather is cold here now; I don't know how it is but I feel the cold more I think than I did even at Pendreich, that you all said was so cold.

I used to take the gun out in the morning at Macao and take a saunter for an hour or two, dined at 3 o'clock and either took a walk after dinner with Mrs Seare<sup>1</sup> and son or took a ride on Mr

<sup>1</sup> Benjamin Seare: a close friend of William, arrived in Canton Sept. 1842 as assistant in Hyde Lenox & Co. which he left after some four years' service. In 1846 he acted as consignee for the ship *Torrington* (British, 144 tons, Capt. Well), plying between Hong Kong, Whampoa and Shanghai. His business association with L. Carvalho in Macao was dissolved in 1849. J. M. & Co. to Hyde Lenox & Co., London, 10 Feb. 1843, JMA, Europe Letter Book, B6/iv, fos. 322-3 and 4 Apr. 1843, fos. 423-4; *China Mail*, 5 Nov. 1846, 28 Jan. 1847 and 2 Feb. 1849. For Hyde Lenox & Co., see below, p. 152, n. 2.

Seare's pony. I dare say you may recollect of my writing about an old man, an artist, Mr Chinnery,<sup>1</sup> the last time I was at Macao before I went home. He was ill when I left at that time, but he is looking better than ever again. He is nearly eighty I should think and still adheres to what he used to say, that Macao was the finest climate in the world. I do not quite agree with him there though and should, if anything, rather prefer the climate of Lasswade. We'll suppose he means the finest climate in the East. So much for Macao.

The captain of the *Euphrates*, Gifford,<sup>2</sup> a brother of Gifford, partner in Jamieson's house in Calcutta, has invited Murrow and some more of us to a dinner on board his ship tomorrow (St Andrew's Day). I have been uncommonly well since I arrived in China this time. Young Smith<sup>3</sup> whom I met in London before I started came out with the last mail (arrived the day before yesterday). He says I appear to be in a much better state of preservation now than I did when he saw me in London. Hallam, I suppose, has been so busy that he has not had time to come to see me and I had not an instant all yesterday from before breakfast to 9 o'clock when the boat was sent off, and then I felt more inclined to go and sleep than go visiting. I'll see him today.

You will see by my letters that I have drawn on you this mail again for about £2,400 and odd. I am afraid you may think I am going beyond what you intended me to do, but I think the tea so safe and the bills at long dates that I think you will come to approve of it. I thought it much better this mail to draw for what I wanted on you and keep Richardson's a separate thing altogether. I can recollect the trouble you had when Hallam mixed up your funds some time ago. I have sold £4,500 of the bank credits just sent out; they go to India and take a month longer to be presented that way than going direct. I did this because I thought exchange may rise,

<sup>1</sup> George Chinnery, 1774-1852: a famous painter who left India in 1825 and henceforth made his home at Macao. He and his wife had settled in India in 1802 and, it is said, he went to China because no women were allowed there at that time. In addition to his widely recognized artistic talent, Chinnery 'became a general favourite [in Macao society]; his anecdotes of Indian life, his powers of description, his eccentricities made him a much sought for guest'. *China Mail*, 30 June 1852; Orange, *The Chater Collection*, 293-4; Hunter, *Old China*, 267.

<sup>2</sup> Capt. Gifford: his brother John continued as a partner in Calcutta after the firm was reorganized as Jamieson Gifford & Co. in 1851.

<sup>3</sup> H. H. Smith: of Ripley Smith & Co., Canton.

it is getting near the China New Year and besides I like always if I can to have enough of funds by me just not to oblige me to sell bills. I find when I am in that position I can always make a better bargain than when I must sell by hook or by crook. Hope you are well. Remembrances to all.

ps. Remember me kindly to Mr Richardson and Russell.<sup>1</sup> Tell them I think I will be able to pick up something cheap at China New Year and have taken care to provide against anything they may entrust me with. Suffering from not having a second person here. My affairs are anything but complicated and an arrangement easily made.

Macao, 25 December 1848

About an hour ago I got your letters from Hong Kong. I am glad to hear that you are all well. My poor horse dead! What a pity, it was such a quiet sensible beast. However I should be thankful your letters bring out no worse news. You see I am at Macao again. I did not think when I wrote you last month that I would be able to get down here; but I found, after buying all that I thought worth having, that there was no more to be done at least for a time. And I hate to stay in Canton when there is no business to occupy one's time, so I started for this place on the 17th and got down next day.

I am all alone, Mr and Mrs Seare having gone to Canton to spend their Christmas. They would not have gone up to Canton had I not come down here to take charge of their house during their absence, and to tell the truth I was very glad to get down. I have bought about £5,000 worth of Congou for you and J. R. and Co. I think them cheap and the market at home must come very low indeed before they can lose: three chops Congou, two at Tls 14½ and one at Tls 15½, good Congou. I don't think I can be far wrong with them to say the least, as I know Hallam was after the two Tls 14½ ones, and had offered Tls 14 for them on his own private account, he told me so himself. And Ripley<sup>2</sup> was after the Tls 15½ one and I know had offered Tls 15 for it. But you will see all about the purchases in my letter to the firm.

<sup>1</sup> George E. Russell: partner of James Richardson in Edinburgh from about 1831.

<sup>2</sup> Philips W. Ripley: of Ripley Smith & Co., Canton.

I am very fond of Macao and really am very comfortably housed and so on. The governor of it has lately made it now quite safe to walk or ride out for miles in the country and a robbery here now is never heard of. I take advantage of this privilege twice every day; I have a long walk in the morning before breakfast and then a long ride in the evening after dinner and come in to tea, just as I used to do before I left. Sometimes I can almost fancy I am at Lasswade, and if you consider that there is a pretty large garden to the house, with cocks and hens and turkeys and sheep and a horse, and that I spend my day and evening in much the same way as I did at Pendreich, it does not take so great a stretch of imagination to suppose I am there, as one would at first imagine.

I had a good laugh this morning. You may recollect that Mr Simpson sent out my boxes in the *Ann Cropper*. I have been anxiously expecting her arrival for the last fortnight and looking daily at all the arrivals to see if possible her name. Four or five mornings ago I saw her name, and immediately wrote to Sherard<sup>1</sup> at Hong Kong to get my boxes and send them over here to me. However, as soon as my letter to him was despatched, I was much disappointed to find that I had made a mistake. Her name was in the list certainly, but the list that it was in was 'vessels expected' and not among the 'arrivals'. I thought to write another letter explaining the mistake but did not take the trouble to do it, and left Sherard to make out of my letter whatever he pleased. This morning I got a letter from him in which he is quite surprised how I should know of the arrival of the *Ann Cropper*. By the merest chance in the world she, it appears, arrived in Hong Kong just about an hour after my letter to him and he is very anxious for me to tell him how I could possibly know the exact time she was going to arrive. I will make him believe I have got a table for calculating the number of days ships take at certain seasons of the year.

Many thanks for your hint to me about conveying anything of a private nature to you. I will keep it in mind. I like a look of the *Scotsman* once a month and have friends (Scotch) who do the same but the *London Price Current* is of little or no use. I think the Hodgson<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> R. S. Sherard: an assistant, contemporary with William, of Jamieson How & Co., Canton. In 1850 Sherard was managing clerk of Jamieson Edger & Co.

<sup>2</sup> Hodgson (Liverpool): not identified.

you saw at Liverpool must be a brother of Hodgson<sup>1</sup> that was out here. I knew him very well; perhaps that is the reason he inquired about me. It will do James good to be in Littledales a while and I daresay he will learn a good deal. You will be able to give Littledale the sale of the teas going home, which will always be something in his way.

By the by, mind and get their (Littledale's) valuation of all the chops as well as Ewart's; often there is a difference betwixt the Liverpool and London prices and by trying both places you may sometimes get 1d. or 2d. more which is a good profit. If I were you, I would get valuations of all of them also in Dublin and in Bristol. It can do no harm, and if any of those places give a higher valuation than London, all that is to be done is to tell them to sell it if they can by the sample. I think Bristol must be a good market; Jardines always send a cargo there. Mounsey<sup>2</sup> told me in confidence that some parts of the same chops that went to Leith sold in Bristol for from 6d. to 11d. a pound higher than in Leith. I think he said some 11d. per pound difference, at least it was a difference very remarkable. Leith, he told me, was a wretched bad market. He said the part chops wherever they were had always sold much better. If I recollect rightly, Ewart said that the Leith cargoes had brought a penny more than they would have done in London, and Mounsey you see says different and has a better opportunity of judging than Ewart had because he got the prices of the same tea in different ports. I think Mounsey is right, and think yet, as I always did, the *Glenmore's* cargo was the cheapest that ever was sold. I know there was nothing in London when I got there within 2d. per pound of it. *So you had better always get two brokers' valuations.* He says too that the *Glenmore's* cargo was of a finer description of Congou than the *Flora McDonald's*. The *Glenmore* took a good many of the best chops, first class new Congou, while the *Flora McDonald's* was all second class. Ask Andrew what he says to that, he never would let me say the *Glenmore's* was the best assortment.

I have a letter from James; he writes a capital hand and really

<sup>1</sup> J. Hodgson: an assistant in Dirom Gray & Co., Canton; in 1846 he was stationed in Shanghai.

<sup>2</sup> John Thomas Mounsey: tea taster in Jardines from 1845; partner of Ewart Maccaughey Delafosse Mounsey from 1850; an executor of William's will. Above p. lxxiv, n. 1.

writes a capital letter altogether. I was only sorry to see so good a letter spoiled with a few misspelled words. I suppose by the time you get this he will be in Liverpool. You should make him write you often and look at the spelling.

26th 10 o'clock a.m.

Just finished breakfast and a very good one it was. The little fish here are very sweet; as a proof of it I think I must have made from six to eight of them disappear, after that some fresh laid eggs, and wound up with wheat bread and strawberry jam. After all such good things I sit down now to finish your letter in the firm conviction that there certainly are some worse places in the world than China; but you must remember I had at least an hour and a half's walk before breakfast.

By the by, Hallam is out; I had nearly forgotten him. We had a long crack together. How vividly the look of his face and hearing him talk of you and the rest brought Chapel Street and Edinburgh in my mind; could almost have gone up to the old parlour I thought after he left. He has made good use of his time; America seems quite familiar to him now. I should like to take a trip there some day. Next time I go home you should meet me at Alexandria in the winter, take a tour through Egypt and the Holy Land, then go home, and when tired of England or Scotland and tired of living idly on our fortunes, we will kill time by rambling through America. It is easy speaking; my fortune looks mighty far in the distance yet if the tea market is going to keep as low as it is by last mail. We will see, I do yet think we will make a little out of our purchases this year. You have a good guess by the time you get this.

I am expecting my boxes by the *Ann Cropper* over from Hong Kong every day. Farewell at present. I hope Eliza<sup>1</sup> is getting strong. Is she?

27th December

p.s. I hope you have all spent a merry Christmas and wish you all a happy New Year.

<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Melrose: suffered with a weak heart.





Canton, 26 January 1849

WE HAVE JUST finished dinner. Murrow and his brother have both gone out, leaving me and Mr Piccope<sup>1</sup> by ourselves. Mr P. has taken a book to amuse himself and I the pen to amuse and occupy my leisure and I hope a little of your leisure also about 60 days hence.

I left Macao about the 10th and had a pleasant but tedious passage up; since then I have of course been here, picking whatever I thought worth buying. For the purchases I must refer you to my letter to the firm. I think they are safe although things look so very bad at home. However, for the teas bought now these gloomy accounts coming out are the best thing that could happen as it will keep people here from sending too much home. But for those teas arriving and about to arrive when your last letters were sent away, it looks rather black.

I see you have got my September letter and accepted the bills. You think that in these bad times drawing so much is, you say, rather hazardous. I quite agree with you and I assure you I had many anxious cogitations on the subject before I drew so heavily. But after twisting the subject over in my mind until I was tired of it, I came to the conclusion that if the ships arrive safe it was next to impossible you could lose at the prices the teas will be laid down at; and even now, when your last letters bring out much worse accounts than any person expected, and although I have yet no idea of the value of our shipments from your letters, I say still, I feel sure they will not lose, and losing was the only danger in drawing heavily. But another thing that made me draw more largely than I would otherwise have done was my knowing that you had given me a smaller quantity of funds out with me than you would have done had times been better, and of course I thought it was not so hazardous drawing on you at six months sight as it would have been, had

<sup>1</sup> W. N. Piccope: an assistant in Murrow & Co., Canton.

you in good times given me nearly as much as I have invested altogether, at three months sight.

I am anxious now to get your next letters and hope and think in spite of the low advices that the valuations (nasty greasy paper, I wish you may be able to make it out) will leave a little profit. The weather has set in very cold, I don't understand but I feel it colder now than I did at Pendreich. Hallam is looking well. We are very 'thick' and have often long cracks about teas and home, and our own private affairs. I think he bears a warm side to you and all of us. At least as far as I am concerned, I am sure he would do anything to assist me. I think much more of him now than I did before and will take care nothing on my part occurs to cause any difference betwixt us.

Mr Simpson writes that you were thinking of sending out funds for another cargo with J. Duncan & Co.<sup>1</sup> I have quite enough at the present in my hands for all that can be bought, but I think it would be advisable for you to have out some funds about June. If the Congou market opens low next year, I think good may be done. The export of Congou was short last year and I think will be short this year too. Now I think two years running of short exports is sure to be felt about the third year and if the new Congous next year open at a low rate (and I don't see why they should not), I should think they would pay. At any rate if you want a cargo to Leith and one to Glasgow, have the funds out in time for the new Congous, because I have always observed that the purchases early in the season are always the best. If new Congous open low next year, I could have a cargo off to Leith in a small vessel before Jardine's knew anything about it. I think from some hints I have got that Bristol is a good port, it might be worth your while inquiring about it. A vessel could go to Cork for orders. Duplicate chops of either the *Flora McDonald* or *Glenmore* sold in Bristol at

<sup>1</sup> James Duncan & Co., Leith: brokers, 'a particular friend' of D. Matheson who in 1833 introduced the firm to Jardines, Canton. In turn, Duncan introduced A. M. & Co. With the latter, Duncan maintained an extensive business from 1838 to 1849, diminishing considerably thereafter. The transactions included the supply of sugar and tea to A. M. & Co. with whom the brokers also entered into joint ventures on tea. The largest total involved was about £50,000 (1840) but for most years it fluctuated around £25,000. D. Matheson to J. M. & Co., 25 Nov. 1833, JMA, Corr. In: GB, B1/134, fo. 256; account of James Duncan, AMA, Town Ledger, 1838-47, and Town Ledger 'no. 1', 1847-57.

good prices about the same time as one of those ship's cargo sold in Leith. Perhaps Mr Simpson could find out what they sold at. I have written him but forgot to mention this. Jardines always send a cargo to Bristol; a cargo there before them would surprise them not a little. But let us see how this year does first.

I have been busy buying curiosities for the last four or five days and intend making a consignment to Leith and sending the remainder as a spec on my own account to some of the large inland towns of England. By and by you will get more particulars of them. I will only say here that it is far harder work buying them than buying a whole cargo of tea.

ps. I have a letter from Thomas Richardson this mail and have written him. 27th No time to say more.

Canton, 7 o'clock, 25 February 1849

I have just got through with all my letters and so on and have not left myself much time to write to you.

I received yours of 21 December about 10 days ago; glad to see you are all well. I am sorry you think I have been rather incautious but really I thought the opportunity too good to let slip; and besides you did not send out much funds with me. I hope they will all turn out pretty well, I feel sure they won't lose. As I have always said, the only chance I could see of drawing so much on you becoming injurious to you was the chance of perhaps some of the ships being wrecked and the insurance office breaking. However, I thought that so unlikely that I thought it proper to ship and take the risk. I assure it cost me a good deal of anxiety and thought before I drew so much; and taking everything into consideration I could not think what I did was rash. However, I hope all that drawing is at an end, and I will be content with what you are pleased to send out.

I was afraid Ewart would not make the Congous so good as Andrew and Mr Simpson as I bought them to please their taste. The strong tarry Pekoe flavour is going out of vogue in London now but they still seem to keep up their name in Leith. It would not be a bad plan, as those strong tarry kinds are always to be had four or five taels cheaper here than the fine chops, to send a few

chops of them to Leith. I think you could get them cheaper here, and that they would bring a price in Leith equal to first class tea. However, you had better not tell that they cost cheaper or they will think them inferior. I have a letter from Mr Schaw; he is very anxious that I should get him some like them. There is none now.

I hope you will sell the *Grecian's* and [chop No.] 20 in Leith, in Scotland somewhere, or Dublin, for it would be throwing away those teas to sell them in London. Some of those chaps there that know their value in the outports would soon pick them up and get a profit on them. I don't think there are many other strong tarry chops gone, so you may nearly have the market of them to yourselves.

Captain Wilson<sup>1</sup> and the *Euphrates* arrived here. Samuel Hamilton has come out with him as second mate, and Dr Andrew Thomson's<sup>2</sup> son as third. I have not seen Hamilton yet. Wilson has brought out his wife with him. I believe Thomson would not go to see his wife – or I rather think she would not allow him to see her; however, I hear from [ ]<sup>3</sup> she has relented and sent him an affectionate letter wishing them to be again united. Mounsey I think goes home next mail.

I think I will go down to Macao for two or three weeks in 8 or 9 days. There is not much to do here now. What has to take place in April nobody knows.<sup>4</sup> There was a meeting of the English and Chinese authorities at Whampoa<sup>5</sup> to talk over the matter, but everything was kept so strictly private that we are in entire ignorance of what passed. There were all manner of reports flying about but none of them I should think worthy of credence. I hope this will find you all well. I have no more to say. I have written Mr Simpson and the firm on business matters.

<sup>1</sup> Capt. Wilson: not identified.

<sup>2</sup> Dr Andrew Thomson, surgeon, Edinburgh.

<sup>3</sup> MS. blank.

<sup>4</sup> By the Treaty of Nanking, 1842, the British claimed that they had gained the right to establish officials inside the city of Canton. Owing to opposition, exercise of the right was repeatedly postponed until the Chinese agreed to allow entry on 6 Apr. 1849. But the British Government had decided before that date to refrain from the use of force to gain the object, hence the negotiations. Morse, *International Relations*, i, 367, 388, 395-8; Costin, *Great Britain and China*, 138-9; Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy*, 102-3, 392.

<sup>5</sup> Whampoa, a port on the Pearl River where all foreign shipping first anchored on their way to Canton.

Macao, 27 March 1849

I received yours of 22 January some days ago. I am glad to hear that you are all well. You will see by the place this is dated from that I am at Macao. I arrived here two days ago from Hong Kong. I was down at that place spending a few days with Mr and Mrs Edger. I wanted to leave sooner but they would not hear of my going away. Mrs Edger told me if I did go, she would not only put me down as the most ungallant person she had ever met but really consider that I did not wish to stay with them. She wanted me to promise to stay another week but I objected to so long a stay and promised to remain till the mail came in. They were really very kind. Mr Edger is certainly a very pleasant good-hearted man; his wife is a nice person too but I don't like her quite so well as him.

I came over here in the *Rob Roy* clipper and had a pleasant passage over. My friend Mr Seare, whom I generally stay with when down here, I found had gone up to Canton. His wife and child he had left here, but of course I could not go to stay there in the absence of the lady's lord and master. So I took up my quarters at the hotel and was looking out for a house when I got a pressing invitation from the doctor here to take up my quarters for a day or two with him, which I did and am now writing this in his house after tea. His wife is a Kelso body and I think as nice a kind body as I ever met, the doctor is (Dr Watson)<sup>1</sup> a very good quiet man and much liked here. They have been a long time in Leith, they tell me, and are acquainted with James Duncan. He was educated in Edinburgh, so I feel quite at home with them; and Mrs Watson is such a homely frank kind body it would be hard if I could not. Last night was Sunday night, we read the chapter and prayer and had our wine negus before going to bed just as we used to do in Chapel House,<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dr T. Boswell Watson, Macao: apparently first arrived in China in 1845, not being listed among foreign residents before 1846.

<sup>2</sup> Chapel House: situated at 2 Chapel Street, Edinburgh, a building distinguished by a row of stone vases or urns adorning its roof, first built at the beginning of the eighteenth century by Richard Frame. It was purchased by Andrew Melrose in 1839 for about £1,500, and used as a residence for the apprentices of the company as well as for the family. After Andrew's death, the building was acquired in 1856 by a committee for a maternity hospital. Charles B. Boog Watson, 'A Lecture', *Book of the Old Edinburgh Club* (1930), xviii, appendix, p. 9; A.M.A., Pendreich Private Cash Book.

and I could hardly make myself believe I was 10 or 12 thousand miles distant from that place. The doctor is fond of music and painting and we spend our leisure hours very pleasantly.

I do not think I will go up to Canton for some time; there is nothing doing there, or rather nothing to be done now, and the weather there at this time is not very wholesome. Next month I think is the worst of the twelve, hot and damp. Here it is much pleasanter, tolerably cool and a nice sea breeze blowing. If I do not go up, and I do not think I will, I will take a small house for a month. House rent is not dear here now and I'll be able to live amongst my friends, I dare say. It would be infringing on the doctor's goodness to stay a whole month with him.

Mr Edger got a horse for me at Hong Kong and I get Seare's one here, so I get on bravely. Webster<sup>1</sup> is out; I have not seen him yet. I wonder if anything will be done on the 6th of April about entering the city of Canton. Everything relating to what may be done is kept secret but the general impression is that nothing will be done in the way of forcing an entrance. I saw poor Strachan<sup>2</sup> at Hong Kong the other day just before the steamer came in. He told me he expected to hear of his father's death by her and I am sorry to say the news by her confirmed his fears.

I am glad to see teas looking a little better by your last letters and hope they will go on improving. If they take the duty off I hope they will do it before our teas are sold, but I hardly think they will. Unless we had a great deal of tea on hand so that we might greatly benefit by a rise in the price on the duty being reduced, I would rather see the duty kept on, as I never think you can get so large a profit on a cheap article as you can on a dear one. If tea were to

<sup>1</sup> Robert Webster: merchant in Macao during the early 1840s, dealing in opium, tea, and rhubarb. Arriving in Hong Kong, Mar. 1849, he went to Shanghai where he was found dead in bed on 4 Oct. 1849. *China Mail*, 22 Mar., 25 Oct. 1849; R. Webster to J. M. & Co., 19 Feb. 1840, JMA, Corr. In: Local, Macao, fo. 2125; same to James Ryan, 8 Mar. 1840, *ibid.* fo. 2153; A. G. Dallas to J. M. & Co., 21 Dec. 1849, *ibid.* Private Corr.: Shanghai, B4/21, fo. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Strachan: merchant and publisher, Hong Kong. He was resident in China from 1838 and as a leading merchant signed in 1845 a protest to the government in Hong Kong on land tenure. In Apr. 1849 he announced the purchase of the *Hong Kong Register* and promised to be neutral in politics but to render the paper as a 'useful and correct' journal of trade and the market. The death of his father, John, occurred in Edinburgh on 25 Dec. 1848.

fall to the price of salt, it would be difficult to get a half penny profit on it.

Captain Wilson of the *Euphrates* told me the other day that I owed him \$12 or \$13, about £2 12s., for duties he paid for me on the box of dresses and things I sent to you by him long ago. He says you reminded him of the account whenever you saw him, to get it paid, but that he told you he would see me some day and get it from me. I am not sure whether you did not pay it to Jamie-son's in Liverpool. Perhaps you will ask Mr Simpson to look at my account and see, as I know Wilson is sometimes a little forgetful in these little matters.

I hope this will find you all well. How is Eliza? I am very well, even better than I was at home but we have the summer before us now. But I will change about and not stick at Canton as I used to do. There are two steamers here now – and more coming out. Some people from China have made their fortunes at California. Kind remembrance to all.

Macao, 20 April 1849

I received your last letters (February) yesterday morning. So poor Uncle John<sup>1</sup> is gone at last. I suppose another of those shocks had carried him off. Pendreich will look to some degree lonely without O'Donnell; what a long time I can recollect him, he could not have been very young. I have letters from Craig, Helen, Eliza and Easy. I am glad they seem all so well and write in such good spirits.

I have been here all last month. When I wrote you my last letter, I told you I was staying at Dr Watson's and if I recollect rightly told you that I was writing a letter to you in his house after tea. Strange, this month finds me doing the same thing at the same time and in the same place. I am now writing you from the doctor's house, we have just had tea. The doctor and Mrs Watson are busy on each side of me with their letters. I stayed in their house for about a week, but not wishing to trespass on their kindness I thought it better to take one or two rooms for a month, and when they wish

<sup>1</sup> John Melrose, a brother of A.M., possibly invested, or lent, capital to Andrew in the latter's first shop. Mui, 'Andrew Melrose', 31.

me to come and see them they could ask me and then I would feel sure I was not troubling them. Mr Seare, the friend whom I used to stay with here before, came down from Canton shortly after I took the rooms, but as he brought down the Canton doctor's wife<sup>1</sup> with him to stay some days, he could not give me a bed in his house, so it was as well I took them. Both Dr Watson and he ask me to dine with them and spend the evening almost every day, so I have only dined at home, I may say, once or twice since I came here. If I can, I generally take advantage of the doctor's invitation. They are so like our own people at home and know so many of the people and places that I know, that I feel quite at home with them.

Mrs Watson is really a very nice body. I am sure if you knew her you would have a high opinion of her. She is so kind and has such good sense. She and I have become great friends; her mother's people, she tells me, live at Melrose, Mrs Stedman;<sup>2</sup> their place is close to the railway station. She has made me promise that either you or some of you must go and see her mother; and if any of you are going that way, I really wish you would give them a call. She has written them that they may expect to see some of you. From what I can gather from the conversation of her and the doctor sometimes, her mother must be a very good old lady; and I think they are a family you would derive great pleasure from being acquainted with. Of course I had to ask her, should any of her friends be in Edinburgh to tell them to pay you a visit. She says she will write them and that it is most likely they will go and see you. So much for my Macao friends!

I have not a word of news to give you. I have been living here all the last month in the same way as I wrote you last month, except that I now stay in my house until about 3 o'clock when I go either to the doctor's or Seare's and stay till bedtime. I intend going up to Canton on the 24th after my letters are away. A steamer touches here now every few days; I will wait for her as it is safer than the Chinese boats. You see I am growing careful of myself in my old age.

I am glad to see by Mr Simpson's letters that you have disposed

<sup>1</sup> Wife of Dr B. Kenny, surgeon, who maintained a practice in Canton, and, in association with Dr R. Wilson, at Whampoa.

<sup>2</sup> Mrs Stedman: not identified.



of so many of the teas; if the *Hugh Walker's* Congous do as well as the *Grecian's* we will make a little money this year. I notice what you say about going too deep. I knew I was doing more than you thought I was, but I thought it was a pity not to take advantage of what appeared a good year and of my arriving fresh from England with the latest and best information of the markets there; and I felt very sure they could not lose unless something like a war or revolution broke out perhaps.

I hope Richardsons are pleased with what I have done; everything yet that I have bought for them appears well, I think. By the by, I would like to know if my joint account with you this year is joint with you on all the shipments you have a share in, as it was formerly, or confined to the £10,000 I started with. Perhaps you will let me know or tell Mr S[impson] to let me know in his next. I always like those things understood before the teas or goods get home; and whether they turn out well or ill then, there is no mistake about who is the gainer or sufferer. I recollect there was some difference of opinion about some Edger sent in the *Sir Robert Sale* about whether they were on my own account or joint account, which is disagreeable.

Are you going to make up a cargo amongst you this next year? I think if I had sent the *Grecian's* to Leith, they would have paid better; they seemed to suit the Leith people's taste so much. Now that I see there is such a difference of taste betwixt them and the London people, I think something might be made of it, and I am now in favour of a cargo either to Leith or Glasgow or both. When I say in favour, I mean I think it likely teas might be bought in China, sent to those ports and leave a better profit than any that could be bought and sent to London, because the kinds that please the Leith people may be had much cheaper here in proportion than those that please the London people, and most likely if they please would fetch a good price.

The Chinese refused to allow the English entrance into the city and the governor issued an order to the effect that no person must try to enter. What will be done next I don't know. Everything is quite quiet.

I am glad the scheme to meet you at Egypt seems to meet so hearty an approbation on your part, but am not quite prepared to

put it in practice in so great a hurry as you seem to think desirable. As travelling is very expensive and as when I do travel I should like to do it in style, I think I had better wait here for a winter or so more and endeavour to increase the gravity and longitude of my purse preparatory to starting. Besides this, the Nile travelling at present is anything but pleasant, the Pasha being engaged in making sluices on the Nile which renders locomotion on that river for the present anything but safe. So after giving the matter mature deliberation, I have come to the conclusion that our trip might reasonably and prudently be delayed for a short time.

Kind remembrance to Andrew and Aunts etc.

Macao, 22 May 1849

I received your March letter some days ago and am glad to see that you are well. I am much obliged for your endeavours to do something with my money in my absence and hope you will make no scruples about turning it to account in any way you think best should you feel inclined to take the trouble to do so.

It was rather unfortunate that the sugar turned out odd flavoured, or otherwise from what I can see in the *Price Current* sent, they would have left a good profit.<sup>1</sup> But that was merely an unlucky accident and one which you could not provide against. I would not have thought Graham was so touchy. He seems, from the letters you sent, in a great rage at Law;<sup>2</sup> you did quite right I think not to show it to Law. If the loaves are, as you say, a little odd, I think Graham has taken up the matter rather in too bad a humour. But I cannot judge as I have not seen Law's letter about the sugar; and I rather

<sup>1</sup> Between 1847 and 1849 Andrew invested in sugar for William on four separate occasions. The amounts involved varied from £171 to £500 each. In the present case, the sugar purchased from North Simpson Graham was sold to Law who claimed that the goods had been adulterated and refused to pay the agreed price. The dispute ended with a loss of £9 to William's account. Accounts of North Simpson Graham and of William Melrose, AMA, Sales Ledger 'O', Wholesale, 1841-54; North Simpson Graham to A. M., 26 Feb. and 10 Mar. 1849, AMA, Misc. Letters to A. M., 1845-52.

<sup>2</sup> William Law, 1799-1873: born in the parish of Midcalder, was the son of a small farmer. Law was apprenticed to Robert Sheppard, Edinburgh grocer, about the same time as A. M. and later opened his own shop as grocer and coffee and tea dealer. He was elected to the Edinburgh Town Council in 1848 and became Lord Provost of Edinburgh in 1869.

suppose it must have been written in a manner to give offence or surely Graham would not have been so wrath, especially when he knew that the loaves were not quite the thing. If Mr Law has offered only 48s. for the titlers,<sup>1</sup> I am quite at loss to know how he can reconcile that price with the quotations in the *London Price Current* and his terms of bargain with you; but I hope he will give more and keep himself up in our estimation and me up in pocket.

I dare say you will think that I am always at Macao; it is a pleasant place to stay at, but must not be allowed to interfere with business. As soon as I had despatched your last letter, I went up to Canton in the steamer, started from here at seven in the morning and got up to Canton by two o'clock in the day – quick work. We have got out a capital steamer now – runs up and down to the different places in no time. I arrived in Canton on the 25th of last month and went through all the market but could not find anything worth buying so I came down here again on the 7th of this month.

I left with Hallam the credits to sell if he could get 3s. 11½d. to 4s. for them, if not, to wait. I would just as soon he sold them as myself as Russells<sup>2</sup> are always large operators in exchange; and it is better for both parties when only one appears as a seller as it prevents the rate rising from competition. And as he takes it in hand as a friend I am sure he will do his best. I dined with him at Russells just before I left; they dine at 3 o'clock so I had the whole evening afterwards to spend with him.

I am beginning to wonder if you are going to send me out any funds for next mail. I think some good might be done with them. The price keeps low at home which may and will I think keep down the price here; and as your stock of black is small, I think Congous at or about the same price as last season would be a good investment. I wrote you in my last to let me know whether I had an equal share with A. M. & Co. in the purchases made for them and J. R. & Co. I can see from Mr Simpson's letters that such is intended; but these things should never, if possible, be left in doubt.

<sup>1</sup> Titlers, a description of fine sugar. P. L. Simmonds, *A Dictionary of Trade Products* (London, 1858).

<sup>2</sup> Russell & Co: the most prominent U.S. firm in China, founded in 1818 by Samuel Russell, a native of Middletown, Conn. The firm owned ships and dealt in opium as well as other goods. Hunter, *Old China*, 118-9, 123, 156-7; J. K. Fairbank, 'Assignment for the '70s', *American Historical Review*, lxxiv, no. 3 (Feb. 1969), 875-6.

But whether that be the case or not, I hope they will pay well because if they do it will appear to bear out so well what I said to Mr Richardson before I left; and really both he and Tom behaved so kindly that if they do not pay them well I should feel much disappointed. As far as I can see, they look well at present, the Scented Capers and Flowery Pekoes especially look well; but you will say, I know, 'never count your chickens etc.'

Confound that *Hugh Walker*; had her Congous got in and been sold, then I would not have cared how low Congous might have gone for a month or two, because it would keep down the price here; and very likely, before the *Clifton* got in, the price might have rallied again and helped you to a profit on her Congou which would have answered beautifully. I hope to hear that the *Walker* is in and most sold by next mail. The new Congous I believe will be down about beginning of July and then comes the 'tug of war' again.

No more at present. I am glad to think you all keep so well. My oldest friends here, the doctor, Murrow and Hallam and Seare, all tell me they never saw me in a better state of preservation, so if you have any regard for my health, that must give you great consolation.

Canton, 20 June 1849

I have received yours of 17th April. The £20,000 you advised I have received all right. I felt not a little anxious and not a little surprised to see by your letter that you had been in Dr Renton's<sup>1</sup> hands again, for I think you had so much of the doctor's company when I was at home that you should have been entitled to a long absence from it – professionally, of course. However, on reading on I was glad to learn that, although troublesome and painful no doubt, it was nothing very serious and that you got through it all so well. I know a little of what the feeling is to wait for Syme's<sup>2</sup> appearance and can sympathize with you.

I came up here about the 9th of the month. I heard that a chop of new Congou was down so set off in the steamer directly; however,

<sup>1</sup> Dr Robert Renton: a life-long friend and physician of A. M., and a well-known Liberal in Penicuik before 1832. Undated letter from A. M., AMA, Misc. Letters to A. M.; *The Scotsman*, 9 May 1835.

<sup>2</sup> Dr James Syme: Professor of clinical surgery, University of Edinburgh.

I might as well have stayed another week as nothing has been settled yet. I have sold a good many bills though, at 4s. and 4s.  $\frac{1}{2}$ d., to be ready. I thought it was better to make sure of some at that rate than run the risk of getting perhaps a halfpenny more next month and perhaps 2d. or 3d. less. I don't think the rate will be much worse; in fact I have no reason to think it will be worse at all but thought it better to make sure of a pretty good rate. I sold some as you will see by Mr S[impson]'s letter at 4s.; and although I say it myself 'as shouldn't say it', the best sale made of bills this month. The bank here was glad to get 4s. 1d. for theirs, at six months to be sure, but according to the people's calculations out here, there is little more than a farthing betwixt three and six months paper.

However, some people have been laying down their dollar much below that lately, by buying rupees or Company's bills and selling them out here. I believe they lay a dollar down at about 3s. 9d. or 3s. 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. They have been getting lately for 213 and 214 rupees, \$100. To make it plainer: say you buy a bill for 214 rupees in London at 1s. 9d. a rupee, you pay £18 14s. 6d. You sell that bill out here and you get \$100 for it, that is you get \$100 for £18 14s. 6d; now, if \$100 give £18 14s 6d., what will \$1.00 give, that will be a question for Mr Simpson. I make it 44.94 pence, or nearly 3s. 9d. per dollar, which you must allow is very cheap and would make a great difference in the price of a cargo. I only mention it in case you might at any time be plenty of money, and perhaps might be able to make more of it by remitting in this way than you could make of it at home; or in case you might have any rich friends inclined to make a spec in tea, you could explain to them how favourably sometimes money could be laid down in China. No doubt the way you do at present, as I daresay you will remember old Jardine telling you in London, is the best. There is a way too of saving a rupee or two per hundred by remitting one to Calcutta for acceptance and the second one here; but I will explain that to Mr Simpson, as I know you cannot be bothered with such details. There are about 33 new chops down, nothing positively settled yet. I think of sending one or two fine chops to London and a cargo to the Clyde if they open low, but will write Mr S[impson] or the firm about all these things.

There was a row in Macao;<sup>1</sup> you will see it all in the *China Mail*. I was there at the time, saw the boats land the men, and was dining with the doctor when the firing induced us to go out to see what was wrong, but it was managed so quickly we saw very little of it. I wish the market would open and let us see what is to be done; but the longer it is of opening the better, no doubt about that.

You say I must soon come home again and breathe my native air. Congous will require to pay better than the *Hugh Walker's* before I can do that. How unlucky she has been. I am told all her cargo is damaged; I saw it myself in Ewart's letter to a party out here. If ours are in any way damaged I would claim for the extent damaged; the valuations were lowered about 2d. a pound after the chests were seen. I am writing Mr Simpson and Mr Schaw. There is not a word of news to give you. Remember me kindly to all.

This sheet, I did not observe when I began it, had been scrawled on before to try a pen or something; but I dare say you will be able to make it out. I never was better in my life. I have not even had a cold or a headache since I left. Hope this finds you all well. ps. By the by, I want a favour from you. It will cost you about five minutes time and 5s. to 10s. I want you to send me out one of those daguerreotype portraits of yourself. I should like much to get one, so be good enough not to forget it. Send it per Southampton, it won't cost much and no fear of it being lost. Very hot - 90° - but it seems to agree with me now for they say I am getting fat on it. It's the change I suppose. 22nd No more to add.

William to Andrew Melrose and Company

Canton, 2 July 1849

Per the steamer which left last month I advised you to protect by insurance to the extent of \$30,000 as it was more than probable

<sup>1</sup> The row arose from the arrest in Macao of James Summers, a Protestant missionary teacher at the Colonial Chaplain's School, Hong Kong. On 6 June 1849 Summers refused to remove his hat as a mark of respect for a Roman Catholic street procession and was jailed to await trial by order of the governor of Macao. In the afternoon of 8 June Capt. H. Keppel, commander of the British navy in China, led an expedition

that I would ship to that extent before the departure of next steamer. I now beg to hand particulars of the shipment:

283 chests Congou per <i>Aden</i> to Liverpool	
296 chests Congou per <i>Aden</i> to Liverpool	
Value (10% added on bare invoice cost) say	\$15,560
283 chests Congou per <i>John Bibby</i> to London	
297 chests Congou per <i>John Bibby</i> to London	
Value (as above) say	\$15,560
	<hr/>
	\$31,120
	<hr/>

Will forward duplicate per next steamer.

Canton, 23 July 1849

I have yours of 21 May before me and am glad to see that you are all well. I have been tasting for [a] month until I am nearly sick of it. You will see by my other letters that the price went up for this season's Congous far higher than was expected. I am afraid you will think what I have purchased rather dear but I thought you would like to get some home in the first ships. It has been a most troublesome season to do anything in Congous. Here is such a prejudice against the tarry flavour (is Andrew as fond of it as ever?) that it requires the greatest care in trying as nearly all the chops are a little touched with it. I am only afraid that one that I have got (the Tls 28 one) has got a touch of it, but as it is very strong and rich enough, it may not be very much against it. I went down to Macao via Hong Kong after I had got the chops purchased merely for the trip and to put off a few days until the price would come down. They are a good deal more reasonable now and I dare say I may be able to get something that may do good.

I am sorry to see so many of the Congous in the *Prouse* damaged, it is very provoking. I am sure the tea was as sound as could be when I shipped it. I hear the *Clifton* has put into the Cape and damaged

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into the city, broke into the jail and escorted Summers to a British man-of-war. Summers claimed, after the incident, that no Britisher was subject to Portuguese jurisdiction in Macao which the British Government had recognized as Chinese territory. The claim therefore became associated with the current dispute between the Portuguese and the Chinese over the status of the city. *China Mail*, 14, 21 June 1849.

a good deal of her cargo too. Our Congous will have come in for their share no doubt.

Murrow is giving up his Canton house and going to remain at Hong Kong, so I will have to look out for a house or part of one for myself. I am not sorry he is giving it up. It was not a very cool house and besides, his having failed some time ago some people might have thought that I was connected with him in some way. However, we had always been good friends and he made me as comfortable as anyone could do. It must have put a little in his pocket too as I paid half or nearly half his expenses and was very little more expense to him by staying in his house. House rent is a dear commodity here; we have to pay \$950 betwixt us for the house we are in. I hope I may be able to get half of a house with somebody, for if I have to pay for a whole one, I doubt I won't be able to retire quite so soon as you seem to think.

Poor Yates!<sup>1</sup> However, he had attained a good old age. If Hodgson is in no great hurry to retire it might be a good opening by and by. They must have had a good business.

I enclose a paragraph I saw in the paper you sent me out, it refers to Pennycuik and his son.<sup>2</sup> They both went out passengers with me to Ceylon. The father was one of the plainest looking men you could imagine - 'plain footed' and very plainly dressed and certainly did not appear anything in the least like the great warrior he is made to be in the paper, a very quiet, unassuming man. I took him at first for some broken-down man of business going out to India to repair his fortune. His son again was just a little devil, smart, good-hearted, forward boy - thin, wiry, sickly looking chap - but a great deal of spirit. I recollect of him telling me he was a Scotchman, although I think he said he was born in England; and he seemed very proud of being a Scotchman. His father he said was at the top of the regiment and he was at the bottom of it

<sup>1</sup> Yates: see Bedwell, above, p. 4, n. 5.

<sup>2</sup> John Pennycuik (and his second son, James Farrell): brigadier-general, born Soilarrie, Perthshire, 28 Oct. 1789. At the end of 1848, he served in the Second Sikh War. On 13 Jan. 1849 his brigade led an attack with guns unloaded under orders of Lord Gough and became exposed. In the subsequent engagement, Pennycuik and a lieutenant-colonel as well as twenty two other officers were killed. Among the latter was Pennycuik's son. The newspaper clipping mentioned here was from the *Scotsman*, 7 Mar. 1849.



(meaning the officers of course) so he said they formed the beginning and the end of it. Poor fellow he had a short career.

I have Helen's letter, many thanks to her. Must excuse me writing this mail as I have very little spare time.

William to Andrew Melrose and Company

Canton, 23 July 1849

I have received your favors of May and note their contents. Immediately after the last month's mail was despatched, the market opened and at much higher rates than was expected. I immediately offered Tls 27 and 27½ for a good many chops that I had chosen as first class, but they nearly all sold the same day at Tls 30 to 31½. Having a large quantity of ready money by me and not feeling inclined to let them all slip me, I was induced to purchase one chop at Tls 28 and another at Tls 26. The first one, though not so fine as the finest, is very good first class; the next one (at Tls 26) is a very strong tea but had a high burnt flavour which was rather objectionable. However the teas are now brought to Canton for sale so very soon after they are made that there was a great chance of this high burnt flavour going off; and as the price comparatively was moderate, I bought it.

I have purchased another at what I am afraid you will think a very high price, Tls 29.70. When I bought it, I made it the finest tea I had seen this season but now I cannot make it come up quite to my first opinion of it; however, it is fine tea and has a beautiful leaf. I send samples of them so you can judge for yourselves.

This has been one of the most difficult seasons to invest to any advantage that I have ever known. The prejudice against the tarry flavour has made everyone run on the kinds free of it and raised their price above their value; in some instances they have run them up to Tls 33 and 34. Besides that, the teas are now brought so soon to market after being manufactured that many of them alter very much in character after being kept for some weeks.

I have shipped one half of the Tls 28 one and one half of the Tls 26 to London in the *John Bibby*, a very fast vessel; the other two halves I have shipped to Liverpool in the *Aden*, also a fast ship. I did not know at the time I shipped to Liverpool that the *Mencius* would be

sent to that port, her destination being kept secret (Jardines). It was currently reported that she was going to Cork for orders. As the *Rifleman* for London (chartered by Russells) was leaving just at the same time as the *Mencius*, I thought their only motive for sending her to Cork for orders could be to send her to Liverpool had the *Rifleman* arrived in London; and should no vessel have got into London, to send her to London. And as I thought she (*Mencius*) would be sure to be first home, being a better vessel and having a captain well known (Captain Robertson<sup>1</sup> formerly in the *John o'Gaunt*), I thought it more than probable that the *Mencius* would get orders at Cork to proceed to London and that the *Aden* would take the first of the new season's teas to Liverpool; when to everyone's surprise, Jardine sent round a circular stating the *Mencius* was for Liverpool. What their motive could be for making a secret of it I don't know; had they said at first that she was for Liverpool, very likely the *Aden* might have gone to London and kept the market more bare and more in favour of their own cargo. I cannot see what benefit they could possibly expect to reap from it.

I advised you by the *Mencius*, and sent duplicate of the same to the Post Office in Hong Kong to forward overland per first mail, of the amount to be insured on the *Bibby* and *Aden*. I did this in case something might happen to the vessels betwixt their departure and the time of the mail leaving so that I could have proved my intention to insure.

The high priced chop (at Tls 29.70) was not down in time or I would have shipped it and kept back some of the others, and I am now hesitating whether to ship it or keep it and try to send a cargo to the Clyde. The price is much lower than it was, and from the prices of the *Lascar's* and the cargoes into the Clyde, I think better prices may be obtained there than in London. I think I will now be able to pick up some good second class about Tls 23 or 24 and some more good chops about Tls 21 and perhaps one or two about Tls 19; one or two chops of Souchong and a few Scented Capers, a small chop of Flowery Pekoe – say 4,500 to 5,000 chests altogether. However I will be able to say more on that point next mail. I am so busy tasting and comparing and the Chinamen (brokers)

<sup>1</sup> J. Robertson: a friend of A. M., later captain of the famous tea clipper, *Stornoway*; below, p. 167.

are so frequently coming in that I find but little time left for writing.

I send per this mail bills of lading for the *Bibby* and *Aden's* shipments. I wrote you previously about insuring them; the amount of the two is about \$30,000. Invoices I will send by next month's mail.

William to Andrew Melrose and Company

Canton, 24 July 1849

I beg to hand you bill of lading for 552 half chests of Congou shipped per *Bibby* to London and also policy of insurance for same: (1) 151 chests at Tls 24 I have put to our joint account, (2) 401 half chests I have appropriated to Mr Schaw and have advised him to that effect per this mail. I have insured the same at 4s. 9d. per dollar and drawn on you for the whole of the premium. Mr Schaw's share of insurance, invoices etc. I must delay sending till next mail.

The insurance draft is No. 27 - £43 6s. 6d. at six months. I have also granted a small draft on you in favour of Dr Kenny - No. 28 for £40 at 4s. ½d. at one month's sight. I have sold no bank credits this mail. Exchange is from ½d. to 1d. higher. For market advices etc. I must refer you to my other letters to Messrs A. M. & Co. and to Mr Simpson.

p.s. I send a box of samples to Ewart's address. I enclose list of them.

William to Mr Simpson

Canton, 24 July 1849

I have been obliged to send the letters off to the post without writing you. I now write a few lines in hopes of meeting with somebody to take it down to Hong Kong for me. I have received your letters of May. I dare say the sale to Harrison<sup>1</sup> is a good one, but the lowest quotation for Scented Capers in Ewart's circular is

<sup>1</sup> Harrison and Crosfield: tea and coffee merchants, Liverpool. Their account with A. M. & Co. started in Mar. 1844, the merchants supplying mainly tea and coffee, amounting to £5,000 to £6,000 a year. AMA, Sales Ledger 'O', Wholesale, 1841-54.

rs. 3d. to 3½d. I have put the half chests that I wrote you about last mail to Mr Schaw's account. I could not get any other half chests so reasonable. I hope they will please.

The *Walton's* and *Hardinge's* shipments I have not insured here. You wrote me . . . [or] rather Thomas Richardson, about insuring at home, that I thought you intended always insuring at home; and as you would see that I sent you no policy, I have no doubt you have insured them before this. Confound the ships, they seem to do nothing now but damage their cargoes. The sample G I have just settled at Tls 22¾. I think it is cheap, so that is two for the cargo at any rate. Sorry I have left so little time to write you.

Hope to pick some good and cheap chop for the Clyde. I daresay you will think I have paid too high prices for the *Bibby's* and *Aden's*. In haste.

ps. I only put G to distinguish it from the others.

Canton, 21 August 1849

I have yours of 20 June. I have begun to write you early this month as expect I will have plenty on my hands about the time the mail is leaving. I have come to the conclusion to ship a cargo to the Clyde and have got about as much bought as will fill a small ship. I have not got a ship yet, but am on the outlook for one now. . . .<sup>1</sup> I wrote . . . to Murrow in Hong Kong to charter . . . one at £4 5s., £4 10s. or even £4 12s.; . . . for we had much better sacrifice about 10s. a ton or about £220 on the whole cargo, and be sure of having the first cargo in and the teas soon to market, than lose 1d. or 2d. a pound on the tea. . . .

Murrow, I told you in my last, had given up his Canton house and that I would have to look out for new quarters. I have got just such a place as I wanted; it looks to the river, in fact quite on the river side, so that I have a fine breeze in all day and night. It is one of the old Hong merchants' houses (*Mowqua*)<sup>2</sup> but done

<sup>1</sup> The substance of the passage omitted here is repeated below, pp. 57-58.

<sup>2</sup> *Mowqua*, or *Kuang-li hang* (Chinese firm name), was founded by Lu Wen-wei, a native of Kuangtung province. Liang, Chia-pin, *Kuang-tung Shih-san hang K'ao* (Shanghai, 1937), 3, 302-3, 260-2, [a study of the thirteen hongts at Canton]; Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy*, 249. For a chart showing the location of the buildings, see Hunter, *The 'Fan Kwae'*, 25, where the name is spelled *Mou Qua*.

up in English style. I have two bedrooms – one I sleep in and in the other I have my bath and shower-bath – office, tea room, dining room, and a veranda. Next summer I am going to have it all ‘matted’ over to keep off the sun, and with a nice breeze generally blowing I think it will be one of the coolest houses in Canton, and one great advantage over the houses in the old factories is that I will always have fresh air. It is something like living in the country, instead of living in a close town. So much for the house.

I am sorry to hear of John Craig’s<sup>1</sup> death. They used to say he imagined he was unwell, but it appears now that it must have been worse than imagination.

25 August:

Well! I have got the vessel, £4 10s. if to the Clyde and £5 if to Leith. Rather dear, but they tell me she is very fast, and I wanted to get the tea home as soon as possible as an immense quantity has gone. Everyone, it would appear now, thinks that the first home has the best chance and the consequence is that as much tea has left in two months this year as should have gone in four months. If I had known this was going to take place, I would have thought twice about sending the cargo; however, I was too deep to think of going back when I learned the great quantity going and it makes me very anxious to get teas home soon. And I am now hurrying them with the vessel as much as I can, but doubt it will be 10 or 12 days before I can get her off.

I don’t think there is much to be feared about Turners sending a cargo. They have just been to me to enquire what I will sell my bills at. I have offered them at 4s. 1¼d; exchange is dearer. I sold £2,000 yesterday at 4s. 1d. but can sell no more at that rate, in fact six months credits Barings have gone as high as 4s. 2¼d. and I am beginning to despair of getting 4s. 1¼d. I sent around a circular stating I had the bills for sale and had a good many applications – the bank, Dent, etc. – but none of them would give 4s. 1d. for them. This makes me a little anxious as I have only sold about £2,000 this month and have a great deal of tea to pay for; but I think the bills are worth 4s. 1¼d. and won’t sell at less if I can help it.

<sup>1</sup> John Craig: b. 12 Dec. 1814 at Dalsersf, Lanarkshire, d. 13 June 1849 at Shrewsbury, was an elder brother of Alexander S. Craig. Downer Family Records; A. S. Craig to A. M., 21 June 1849, AMA.

The poor governor of Macao<sup>1</sup> was murdered the night before last and his head cut off by some Chinamen. You will no doubt see it in the papers. He had made himself very obnoxious to the Chinamen by some rules and regulations he had enforced, and has been no doubt, they considered, a great annoyance to them for a long time; and it is thought that the Chinese authorities had offered a large reward for his head, so they (the assassins) carried away his head with them. He was a clever man but very hot tempered and obstinate; and the Chinese being very obstinate, they have kept Macao in hot water nearly since he first became governor.

You seem to think Bedwell's affair no catch.<sup>2</sup> Well perhaps you are right. I suppose their business now is not very extensive.

I sent samples by this mail. I have got some Souchong I think will please you. I think it fine myself but other people here do not as they have given 15 and 16 and 20 taels more for some chops they like. The fact is I think there are very few people here know anything about Souchong. Perhaps I know as little as the rest but if I am right this time with the Souchongs (last year you know Ewart wrote me the one I sent at Tls 28 was as good as any nearly that had gone home), I will begin to think I know them better than my neighbours and give more attention to them than to Congou, because there are plenty capital judges of Congou out here and that gives you very little chance of getting a chop below its value; and with Souchong just the reverse. But don't say anything about it until you see what the Souchongs turn out because they are difficult tea to judge and I may be wrong.

Please thank Eliza for her letter; I have not time to write her this mail. Kind remembrance to Helen, Easy and all the rest.

William to Andrew Melrose and Company

Canton, 28 August 1849

I wrote you last month that I had some intention of shipping a cargo to the Clyde. I have now to advise having chartered a vessel

<sup>1</sup> João Maria Ferreira do Amaral, governor of Macao, murdered 19 Aug. 1849 (not 22 Aug. as reported elsewhere). The assassination was the climax of a series of disputes between the Chinese and Portuguese governments over the status of Macao and the unruly behaviour of many Portuguese in the newly opened treaty ports.

<sup>2</sup> See above, p. 50.

and that I have a cargo ready for her, which will be put on board as soon as she is discharged. Had I known the export of Congou was going to be so excessive in comparison with last year's export to this time, I almost think I would have been inclined to invest in some other description than Congou; but I could not learn that the export was so large until the cargo was two thirds bought, and the only way then was to go on with it. However, I think the teas I have got are rather cheap and if the vessel makes a good voyage, or rather a fast one, they may do well enough.

I had considerable difficulty in getting a ship both fast and the size I wanted her. You will think the rate of freight high, but one cannot get a good ship to go to the outports for less than 10s. extra, and even more should the vessel be thought fast. A Scotch ship, I know, would have been had cheaper but I could not get one. To Jardine or Lindsay<sup>1</sup> I thought it better not to apply for any of theirs because they would directly conclude where she was going to be sent and most likely fill her themselves and send her before I could secure another vessel. The necessity of keeping the matter secret makes it much more troublesome to get a proper vessel.

There was another circumstance which made [me] anxious to secure a fast vessel. Turner & Co.<sup>2</sup> had a vessel about the size I wanted and never hearing of Turners ever shipping to Scotland I thought there could be no danger in asking them, when to my surprise their young man told me they were thinking about sending a cargo there themselves, and that he could not say anything then regarding the chartering of the vessel.

Immediately after this I heard that the *Magellan* had arrived at Hong Kong and that she was very fast and had come out in 3½

<sup>1</sup> Lindsay & Co.: a British firm in Canton, Hong Kong and Shanghai. In the early 1840s the firm was a consignee of ships and supplied the foreign community in Canton with wines. The Shanghai branch was opened in 1847. Hugh Hamilton Lindsay, senior partner in the late 1840s, had earlier learned some Chinese and had conducted in 1832 a survey of some Chinese coastal ports for the East India Company in the ship *Lord Amherst*. By the early 1850s Lindsay, a close friend of S. G. Bonham, governor of Hong Kong, was influential in the discussion of the Chinese tariff question. See esp. *Canton Press*, 2 Oct. 1841 and 22 Oct. 1842, *Overland Register and Price Current* (Hong Kong), 30 Jan. 1847; Liang, *Shih-san hang*, 187; Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy*, 66-69, 380-6.

<sup>2</sup> Turner & Co.: a British firm in Hong Kong, Canton and Shanghai, with two senior partners in England, two in China, and a contingent of ten assistants. A trading and agency house, the firm was also a consignee of ships.

months from England and had beaten all the vessels she had sailed with. I was fearful now that Turners, to get a cargo in first, would charter her and leave me their vessel, a slower sailer; so I wrote down to Mr Murrow at Hong Kong to secure the *Magellan* if possible at reasonable price and, if he could find out that Turners were after her, to give a little more and do his best to get her. . . . He is a good judge of a vessel, has even built two out here after his own plans and one of them very fast. The only thing not quite satisfactory to me about the *Magellan* is that last year she only made a fair passage home, not quick. However, she made a very quick one out and has made a very good one out this year again; so that is two to one in her favour and no doubt the vessel has it in her. I must try to put the captain on his mettle in some way or other, as much will depend on her making a good voyage and getting in soon, seeing the number of ships going. She will be five or six days discharging, about three or four loading. I should think I will get her off about 5 or 6 September. . . .

Exchange is about the same as last month, a little worse for sellers if anything; Baring's credits at six months 4s. 1½d. to 4s. 2¼d., bank bills 4s. 1½d. at six months. But I don't know whether they have sold and hear that Bank of England bills at sight have been sold at 4s. 1d. The Americans have been going rather heavily into Ning Yongs<sup>1</sup> for the States which has caused a demand for dollars. Next month they may be selling their bills to go into the new greens – and if the greens come down early no doubt they will – so that exchange may very likely be about the same next month. I don't think it will be higher. I stated my rate for the National credits at 4s. 1d. and made every exertion to sell, as I will have a large quantity of tea to pay next month; however, I could only succeed in selling £2,000 at 4s. 1d. After that I had to make it a farthing better for the buyers and even at 4s. 1¼d., although I had many enquiries about the bills, I have only sold £2,200.<sup>2</sup>

You see how all the small amounts go first. They are easier got rid of than the large ones. If I sell any more, I will advise you of course before I close this.

I send you samples of all the cargo per this mail. I enclose particulars of them; as you will judge for yourselves I need say little

<sup>1</sup> Ning Yongs: a kind of Oolong.

<sup>2</sup> See table on p. 59.



about them. They were the cheapest I could get and think that with the present prices in England they all leave a margin. Next mail will give you invoices etc.

As to insurance it is impossible for me to compute anything near what the amount may be, from £20,000 to £25,000 I should think, but no doubt you will easily be able to protect it by making an arrangement with some good office which may know you.

I may also mention here that I am not quite decided yet whether I shall send the *Magellan* to Cork for orders or to the Clyde. However, I am of opinion it would be better to send her to Cork for orders, as the *Asia*, one of Jardine's vessels, has gone there. Besides another very small vessel, the *Chalco* is also loading to Cork for orders. I do not think either of them is going to the Clyde but as I cannot be sure I think the best plan will be to send her to Cork for orders, and then you can judge for yourselves which port may be best.

24/1173	1 Bill at	£500	
24/1174	1 Bill at	500	
24/1175	1 Bill at	500	
24/1188	1 Bill at	200	
24/1189	1 Bill at	200	
24/1192	1 Bill at	100	
		—	£2,000 at 4s. 1d.
24/1176 to 1179	4 Bills of	£500	£2,000
24/1190	1 Bill of	200	200
		—	£2,200 at 4s. 1½d.

Canton, 24 September 1849

I have received yours of 20 July, and am glad to see that you are all well. We have had the weather very hot here for some time, but now and for a few days past it has grown cool and pleasant and I hope we have fairly got rid of the hot weather for this year.

Well, the cargo is off now, and I think the ship will make a good passage. She has some very nice teas on board and I hope you will

get some good prices for them. I have consigned it to Messrs J. R. jr. & Co. so that you may appear all the more justly to give a help at the sale. If you should think of putting them in separate sales, I mean making two sales, I would advise you to put up the dear chop, no. 7, in the last one, because it, being a beautiful tea in appearance at least, may make the purchasers think the other fine chops worse than they really are; and they would suffer by being brought in comparison with it to a certain extent. In London, where they have so many kinds to compare with and guide them, it is a different thing, but in a place like the Clyde the chances are that they would rank it first class and deduct in proportion to the inferior appearance of all the rest. So should you happen to make two sales, I think it would be worth your while to keep this in mind. Now that the export of Congou is so large I dare say it would have been better to have shipped to London, like last year, in detached shipments; however, after the cargo is sold you will be able to judge whether it or the first shipments have done best.

I am glad John is going to call on Mrs Watson's (of Macao) mother. I got a letter up from the doctor the other day inquiring if I had good news by last mail, so I wrote him down that John was going to pay his respects to his wife's mother. The doctor's mother has been very poorly for some 'mails' and he is very anxious about her.

I feel highly flattered by Mr Richardson's opinion of my letter although, by the by, it was written only for your own perusal. I am sure I forget all that it contained. I did not know David<sup>1</sup> had been at home, that is twice he has been for my once, hardly fair!

Hamilton has gone home some time ago, in the vessel he came out in, the *Euphrates*, Captain Wilson - gone from Shanghai.

Next mail will bring me out valuations and perhaps sales of a good many of the purchases and I will anxiously expect it. All the vessels we shipped in seem to have got in at once. It is true, as you say, that I always prefer the Souchong flavour to the 'tarry'; however, this season it has been very difficult to get any Congous on the Souchong flavour. The taste in London being in favour of that kind did run up the price here so very high. . . . There is one in the cargo no doubt 'tarry'; the others were the freest from tar that I

<sup>1</sup> David Richardson.

could lay my hands on; but if they are very particular at home now, they may make some more of them on that kind. I hope they will do; if not, you must just stick to shipping to London when cheap teas offer a good investment.

Now I am afraid what I am going to tell you won't altogether please you but I don't think on considering the thing that you can be much displeas'd either. You know in your last you wrote me that you did not apportion me any interest in your account with Messrs J. R. & Co., and now I think, since I have had no interest in any of the shipments I have made for the last twelve months, you cannot object to let me invest what commissions I may have left over after paying my expenses on my own account. This I have no doubt you will think fair enough, but I should also like to draw on you against them. I am a little afraid this may not be altogether palatable, but I hope you won't think it using too great a liberty. When you come to consider that all my other accounts are fully remitted up, and, besides, that I don't think I will draw for more on you than you must have of funds belonging to me in your hands; and, besides these in your hands, you will have the tea, which with the money in your hands will be worth from double to threefold of the amount I draw for. Now I hope you won't consider me rash and speculative merely because I intend to draw on you, for if you will take the trouble to look into the transaction, you will find that I am within the limits of my 'tether'. What tempted me to draw was that Gunpowders looked very tempting for a little spec just after I had finished buying for the cargo, and I bought with the intention of drawing. However, now I am sorry they do not look so well, for some person seem'd to have taken the same idea and shipped a large quantity in the *China* just away, but still I think they will do. However, I won't say more than I did last year, 'that I am sure they won't lose', and should they do, why you must just debit me with the loss. But I hope it will rather be to put something to my credit.

The National Bank bills unsold are all in amounts of £1,000, so large that I cannot sell them. It is a mercy I did draw on you against my own shipments and also on J. R. & Co. for the balance of their account, as I have been able to sell these drafts which will enable me to put off the Chinamen for a little longer time. The teas have

been bought a long time and they are all waiting for their dollars. I hope I will be able to sell some of the bank credits before the mail goes, otherwise I will be in a bit of a dilemma. Be sure and never send out big amounts again, but I have explained all that to Mr Simson. I have offered them to both of the banks, Oriental<sup>1</sup> and Commercial,<sup>2</sup> but 4s. 2d. is all they can offer.

By the by, Mr Gray<sup>3</sup> is up here now for the Oriental Bank. You know his father I think. I had a call from him about the bills, he seems a very nice gentlemanly man. It is a pity he could not offer me a better rate for them, though; and I would have the pleasure of doing some business with him.

Remember me kindly to them all. I am going down to Macao as soon as the mail leaves, for I have had a pretty long spell in Canton now. I'll go down in the steamer; we have no less than two steamers here now for the use of the community, \$8 a trip or 33s., a little dearer than at home but nevertheless a great convenience. So adieu till next month.

William to Andrew Melrose and Company

Canton, 27 September 1849

I have received your favours of July and note their contents. I have to advise having sold of the National Bank credits, the following:

ER/1159	1 Bill for	£1,000 at 4s. 1¼d.
ER/1160	1 Bill for	£1,000 at 4s. 1¼d.
ER/1180	1 Bill for	£500 at 4s. 1d.
ER/1192-5	3 Bills for	£100 each or 300 at 4s. 1d.

As I have alluded to the sale of those bills in my private letters, I will merely mention that, had I had small amounts to sell, could have sold £6,000 at 4s. 1d.

<sup>1</sup> Oriental Bank, Hong Kong and Canton: was founded shortly after 1842 as a branch of the Bank of Western India, Calcutta and Ceylon. It obtained a charter in 1851.

<sup>2</sup> Commercial Bank: not identified. Apparently its existence was brief and similar to those which have been described as 'without capital or character'. Checkland, 'An English Merchant House', 180.

<sup>3</sup> Samuel Gray: officer authorized to sign on behalf of the Oriental Bank in 1849; acting manager in Hong Kong, Mar. 1852 and manager, Apr.

I have to advise also having drawn on you for the following amounts:

No. 35	£694 17s. 6d.	} at 4s. 3d. exchange at six months sight
No. 36	£735 5s. od.	
No. 37	£912 18s. 6d.	
No. 38	£39 18s. 3½d.	
		premium of insurance on <i>Monarch's</i> shipment

As the above drafts are drawn against some shipments I am making on my own account, and of which shipments I have surrendered the document, be kind enough to give them your acceptance and place the same to my debit. For No. 36, £735 5s., I have surrendered the bill of lading and policy of the *Monarch's* shipment; of the others you will have invoices and particulars next mail.

By this conveyance I send you bill of lading and invoice of some Congou shut out of the *Magellan* and shipped on board the *Sir H. Hardinge*, Captain McC. . . .<sup>1</sup> Be kind enough to protect it by insuring, with a liberty to touch and discharge a small portion of her cargo at the Cape; she leaves tomorrow. I have sent invoice of *Magellan* cargo with remarks regarding her to Messrs J. Richardson & Co., and to which letter must refer you for any information you may desire as my time is fully occupied this month. The *Magellan* sailed on 24th inst. I send you copies of invoice; also original invoice of *Monarch's* shipment.

William to Mr Simpson

Canton, 27 September 1849

You will see by my other letters that the *Magellan* has sailed some days ago. Invoice and other particulars you will find in my letter to the house.

I send you an account current for the joint account, that is our joint account, by this mail. You will observe by it that the last shipment of 151 half chests by the *John Bibby* has more than exhausted all the funds for that account. And as I have no funds left now excepting my own, I intend investing them on my own account, especially as I find I have no share in any of the teas that

<sup>1</sup> MS gives only these initials; not identified.

have gone against the last £18,000 and £20,000 invested. And as you must have in your hands some £2 or £3,000 of mine, I am going to take the liberty to draw against the shipments, and of which I have advised my father in my letter to him of this mail.

The National Bank credits left over unsold, with the draft on Messrs J. R. Co. of \$10,500, advised by this mail, will as nearly as I can calculate balance your joint account with Messrs J. R. & Co.

So the *Monarch's* shipment being the first to be paid for out of my own dollars and my drafts against them, I shall commence with it for the shipments on my own account. I have also bought about 5,000 boxes of Gunpowder, Common Canton at Tls 14½ to 15, which I intend shipping to the same account and drawing against; 140 half chests of the same at Tls 13, and 700 boxes of Caper at Tls 12. I have drawn this mail against part of these purchases and given up the documents, particulars of which you will find elsewhere. So I think you had better open another account if you have not done so already. I mean an account for my own shipments, so as not to mix them with the joint account - in case of getting into confusion.

I doubt the Souchong by the *Monarch* won't leave me much as I have had to sell the drafts against it at 4s. 3d., however I hope it won't lose. The operation in Gunpowders looked very well at one time, which was the reason of my purchasing so large quantity, but a good many people seemed all struck with the same idea, and now they have got the export above or larger than even last year at this time. Just after I had bought mine, I saw the cargo of one ship and she took no less than 300,000 lbs. Besides everybody has been buying a little and is waiting until the monsoon changes to ship them and save the ½% on the insurance. However, I feel sure they won't lose anything, if they don't gain much; and should they lose, why then you must just debit me with the loss; but I feel very sure they will clear themselves. It was very provoking to see the export increase so suddenly; had it not been for that, I am sure I would have made a good thing out of them.

You may remember I wrote you that I had bought 1,400 boxes Caper at Tls 12. I waited for two mails thinking you would send me out funds to ship them; however they never came, so I sold one half of them the other day at the same price I bought them, as it

was too large a chop to take on my own account and as there is such a large quantity gone that I am afraid that even at the low figure they will do but little. They were too common for the cargo; what has gone in the *Magellan* is all that much better. The remaining 700 will go on my account next month. Now do write me out as soon as you can what prospects you think there is for my shipments.

I am anxious to hear what you are likely to make out of the shipments that had just arrived as last mail left. *Blackfriar, Scotland, Hardinge, Walton*, etc. they seem to have got all in at once, and I hope will leave you a good profit. Confound that *Clifton*, but the longer she keeps out now the better.

In the account current for the joint account of A. M. & Co. and W. M., I have taken no notice of the premiums of insurance; if I had credited you with the premiums and bills I drew on you, I must of course have debited you with the same amount as insurance, which would just be as broad as it is long. I have, as you will observe, only debited you with everything I have really sent you or paid away for you, and credited only with what I have received from you.

For my own account, of course, I shall have to credit you with all the bills for premiums of insurance, as you will have to pay them on my account and likewise all my drafts against you, and on the other side will debit you with the amount of the invoices sent. I enclose you a sketch of it as far as it has gone and next mail will probably be able to give you the whole of it.

As soon as I can complete the sale of the National Bank credits of which (if I don't sell any more this mail) £10,000 remain, you will have an account current for your joint account with J. R. & Co. With the \$10,500 drawn for this month I think it will as nearly as possible balance the account.

You must remember that I wrote you to send out small amounts in sending the credits. It will I am afraid prove at least 2% loss on the £10,000 credits I have remaining unsold. They are all for amounts of £1,000 each; that being the case they are too large for remittances to India, and bills which answer the Indian market always command about ½d. to 1d. per dollar better rate than bills that are bought for the London market or as a remittance to London.

As soon as exchange operations commenced this month, I went

amongst my usual customers who regularly remit to India for opium sent on to them to sell. I offered the National Bank credits at 4s. 1d. and they said they would take to the amount of £6,000 provided the amounts would suit; however the moment they heard I had only £800 of small amounts left, they took the £800, and the £1,000 amounts they would not have at any price. By good luck I got off another £2,000 at 4s. 1½d. to a man who happens to have an agent in India and can make him divide the large amounts amongst his constituents. This was all I could sell for the Indian market; so having a large amount of dollars to pay I offered them to buyers as remittances to England but could not get a higher offer than 4s. 2d. So you see there is a clear penny difference betwixt bills which answer India and those that answer London. If my India friends won't take them next mail, I will be obliged to sell as remittances to London at 4s. 2d. or perhaps 4s. 2½d, as I will want the money. And had I not sold my drafts on you and Messrs J. R. & Co., I would have been obliged to have accepted 4s. 2d. this mail—very provoking, as small amounts would have brought 4s. 1d.

In remitting again, make the bulk of the Bills £100, £200 and £300 and a few £500's, and fifty's or one hundred and fifty if you please. You see, a chest of opium comes to about £100 and the merchants that give me such a good rate for your bills are receivers of consignments of one and two chests from different people to sell for them and remit the money, and from £100 to £200 is generally about their largest remittance.

William to Mr Simpson

Canton, 24 October 1849

I have yours of 15 August in which you seem to think that in my exchange operations I have not acted to the best of my knowledge for Messrs A. M. & Company's and Messrs J. R. & Company's interest. Your principal objection to what I have done is, selling the bills before the teas were shipped and losing, as you say, interest of money. When I did so, I acted to the best of my knowledge for the interest concerned, and I understood that you and Messrs J. R. & Co. gave me a discretionary power to sell at any time, providing I thought it better for their interest. Now as it so happens I have



acted wisely, and had I done as you wished me to do, the loss from the rise in exchange would have been far greater than the loss of interest if I had not sold your bills until this mail; which would have been the proper time to sell them according to your system of not selling until necessary to pay the Chinamen. I could not have got a better rate than 4s. 2d.; that would have caused according to my calculations nearly ten times the loss of interest you so much lament.

Your next objection is to my selling our own private bills at 4s. 1d. to 4s. 2d., while your bank bills I was fortunate enough to sell at 4s. Your objection to that operation arises solely from your ignorance of exchange operations out in China, but it is easily explained to you. Bills available as remittances to India always bring a penny to two pennies better rate than bills which only serve as remittances to London, and bills with documents are only available for the latter; that is the cause of the difference in the rate.

Your next objection is to my having sold your bank bills at 4s.  $\frac{1}{2}$ d., while six months bills and not bank bills were sold at the same rate, and that is easily answered. Even allowing your quotation of 4s.  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. to be correct, and which I very much doubt as they are not often to be relied on, 90 days sight bills here (and you have been advised so before both by me and Mr Edger) are not worth a farthing, say a little less than a farthing, more than six months bills. And besides Baring's credits at six months command quite as good a rate here as your bank bills and sometimes better. Now, if your quotation for six months bills at 4s.  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. is correct, I sold yours at from a farthing to a half farthing a worse rate, very likely; I cannot always get the best rate. Bills are bought and sold like any other article and rise and fall like other articles, in a single day or in an hour you may have the rate change 1d. to 2d. Last month I sold your bills at 4s. 1d.; Barings were sold at 4s.  $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. to  $2\frac{1}{2}$ d.; I cannot always get the best rate.

I have been uncommonly fortunate in selling your bills since I came out here, and have paid a great deal of attention to them and they have cost me no little anxiety. I have used a discretionary power in selling them and by good luck everything I have done I am sure I could not, had I to do it over again, do it better. Now it is rather hard to be blamed for a thing which I am sure has been done better than you had any title to expect. The best plan in future

would be, if you do not wish me to have a discretionary power, to give me instructions signed by Messrs A. M. & Co. jointly with J. R. & Co.; and I'll obey them to the letter though I should have to take 5s. 6d. per dollar. But if you do determine on continuing the discretionary power, you must not censor what I may do because it will be yourselves that are to blame then, in trusting me with it, and not me.

I have been through every hole and corner today trying to sell your bank credits at 4s. 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. but cannot get a bid. Exchange is higher and besides £1,000 amounts won't go off for India. I must sell £5,000 to £7,000 this mail and I fear will have to accept 4s. 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. if not worse.

25 October:

I have been running about all day again trying to get off some of your National Bank bills but cannot sell a shilling. By the by, I have just heard from a person on whose word I can implicitly rely that he bought last mail Baring's bills on London at 4s. 3d. and 4s. 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ d., and to some extent too. Now I bet you what you like they don't quote that rate in their circulats. You see what nonsense it is placing any reliance on those quotations. I have had an offer of 4s. 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. for £5,000 of yours, that is a great difference from 4s. 1d.; but exchange is higher this mail than last, and for those big amounts I cannot get an Indian buyer and I must sell 5,000 or 6,000, so of course must take what I can get. Everybody seems to think too that the rate will be worse for sellers next month.

26 October:

As the mail is despatched on the 28th at 5 o'clock, I went out today with a determination of selling, as I must have dollars; and after going through all the buyers I could only sell £2,000 at 4s. 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. I then went to the person who offered me 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. and got him down to 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. plus half a farthing or 2 $\frac{5}{8}$ d. As the Chinamen were grumbling about their dollars, it was better to take it; besides that it leaves me only £3,000 to sell next mail, and having fewer of them I may be able to get a better rate. But it is a thousand pities you sent such large amounts, because my being forced to sell your bills at 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. and 2 $\frac{5}{8}$ d. brings down their credit or quality, and even for small amounts after this I will experience great difficulty in getting them down to what they used to give.

You may depend upon it, that it is always worth one's while to take a pretty good rate even a month or two before the teas are shipped, because generally you get a better rate than you can get when you are forced to sell. You must know by your own experience, if you had a lot or two of tea to sell and were obliged to sell at whatever it would bring in a day or an afternoon, that it was not likely you could sell it so well as if you had a month or two to work it off. It is the same thing with bills. I worked off £10,000 of your £20,000 at say 4s. 1d. average, or near that, while had I kept them for the sake of saving you two months' interest or so, calculating money at 4% per annum, I would have saved you about £67. By keeping them and selling them at present rates, you would lose 1½d. per dollar or nearly 3%, £300!! So you see, as it happens, I not only at the time I sold acted for the best in selling the bills, but have saved you by doing so at least £200. So you should be cautious how you write letters about things you evidently don't understand. Well, so much for bills.

You will see by my letter to the firm that for the sums I have drawn on you this mail for the rest of the shipments on my own account, I have sold at 4s. 3½d., and I consider that a good rate, that is for my (or your as the case may be) private bills with documents (there are some for £360 at 4s. 3d. but they were sold last mail and not drawn for). However, I am very sure as good bills have been sold as high as 4s. 4d. to 4½d. You will see I have drawn on you for £4,000 or a little over for purchases on my own account. I did so because as near as I could guess you should have about that of mine in your hands before you require to pay the bills; but if not so much, you must charge me interest. I thought I was much better employing my time in investing my own funds than kicking my heels and doing nothing, for I had no dollars either of yours or Messrs J. R. & Company's to invest.

For the shipments I advise you of this mail, I had arranged to ship and draw for before I received your £5,000 Commercial credits. However, now I think your funds have arrived at a better time than if they had done so a month or two ago, as freights are lower and teas cheaper, and I do think I will be able to place them better than anything I have done yet.

I have bought for the account of the £5,000 sent out, and shipped

in the *Walter Morrice* sailed yesterday, 126 piculs of Gunpowder in boxes at Tls 13½, part chop and the same tea as that shipped for me (W/4 - 923 boxes) in the *Duke of Lancaster* at Tls 14½. I have also contracted for you for 3,500 small boxes - 18 lbs. net and handsomely painted at Tls 14. Taking the boxes and quality of tea together into consideration, I should say they are two to three taels cheaper than anything I have yet shipped; but I send you musters<sup>1</sup> of both and you can judge for yourselves. I have also great hopes of getting you some small painted boxes Scented Caper at Tls 12 and also of Scented Orange Pekoe about Tls 15 (in boxes) and perhaps some good Souchong at Tls 18. The Capers I know I can get but I am not sure whether I may give Tls 13 and get a little better quality. The Gunpowders and Capers I feel sure you will think cheap; but besides that I have engaged broken stowage to the extent of 2,000 boxes at £2 10s. and the refusal of all the rest in the *Euphrates*, a first rate ship and a very fast one. Besides I think I can get some more broken stowage in other vessels at same rate; freights are coming down and you can generally then get broken stowage.

I hope also to get a better rate for your small amounts than the £1,000; although now that I have accepted so high as 4s. 2½d. (the amounts being so large) it will be difficult to get it down again; but I have no doubt will be able to get 4s. 1½d. to 4s. 2d. I send you samples to Ewart's address - No. 4 is the Caper. I have contracted for 3,000 boxes at Tls 12, handsome boxes about 15 pounds to 16 net. I think I can get freight for all at £2 10s. Fear I am too late so a hasty adieu.

Canton, 26 October 1849

I have yours of August and am thankful to hear that you are all well. The very contemplation of the fact of my having to be an uncle (Uncle Will) makes me feel myself a much more responsible person and adds not a little to my dignity. However, I have some little things about business I should like to say first and after that some private news for you. . . .<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Muster: a sample of tea.

<sup>2</sup> Omitted passage refers to William's own-account trading and receipt of £5,000; see above, p. 69.

I am glad to think that some of the teas shipped for your joint [account] with Messrs J. R. & Co. are likely to do well. I have got out some of the valuations of the Congous, the old-fashioned strong kinds I see don't take at all. I had no idea that the taste in London had altered so much as it has. I wish the Congou valuations had come two months ago and they might have done had the *Clifton* made a good voyage. If they had, I would have been much more able to have picked out a better paying cargo than the one sent, for I could have just got the one kind as well as the other. We will see how it does now, but I am just afraid that with a large export and other things against it, that it won't do much.

I am afraid you will all come into my way of thinking, that cargoes don't suit our amount of funds and that small shipments do better. If we had £200,000 or £300,000 to invest, cargoes would be all very well; but with £20,000 to £40,000, I am afraid the best plan is to take advantage of what offers cheap during the whole year and not confine all the funds to a month or so and in one sort: Congou. I am almost angry with myself for shipping it; however it can't be helped now. Not that I think it will lose at all, but I perhaps might have done much better. However, they say there is nothing done that could not be done better, and at the beginning of this season I think I thought a cargo to the Clyde the best thing I could do.

Mr Simpson has written me rather an ill-natured letter about exchange operations, which is rather hard as I think I have been most lucky in my operations for you. The sellers of bills out here have generally a little bit of chat after the mail is despatched about their operations in exchange, and mine have generally surprised them (although I say it myself). Russell's partner who manages all Russell's exchange business and who does the largest business in exchange out here told me last mail or the mail before that, when I told him what rate I had sold at, it was not possible I could get such a rate. I answered, I could easily prove it. 'Well' he said, 'Mr Melrose, since you tell me yourself you have sold at that I am bound to believe you, but had any other person told me, I should have thought he was either saying what was not true or being wrongly informed'. And I am sure that all along I have been most lucky in my transactions for your bills so that I feel it very hard to be blamed

for what I have done. Even the last mail I sold your bills at 4s. 1d., and Baring's (quite as good as yours and sometimes better) were sold, I know as a fact, at 4s. 3½d!

But bills, like tea or anything else, by good luck or good management can be either well or badly sold. Well, I won't say I have managed well, but I will defy anybody to say I have not had good luck at least in selling your credits. What I did, I did for the best and as it happens I did right, as I cannot get 4s. 2¼d. for your bills now; but had it been the reverse and exchange gone down instead of up, Mr Simpson would have had apparently good grounds for complaint, and which circumstance would have made the complaint very annoying as I must have appeared in the wrong. But, as I have told him in my letter, I do not think that right; because if you leave me the bills to sell as my discretion may direct, it is understood that I am to do my best and sometimes, of course, I may be lucky and sometimes unlucky. But if I do my best, I am not to blame; and if you do not wish me to have a discretionary power to sell, give me instructions when and how to sell and I will do it though I should have to accept 5s. 6d. per dollar. So much for exchange! It is, I can assure you, very sharp work selling out here sometimes, and you require all your wits about you. Confound those £1,000 bills, I have been running about for three days to sell them and have not sold £1 yet. I hope and feel sure I will get a better rate for the £5,000 in small amounts.

A brother of Smith's,<sup>1</sup> Andrew knows him, and I saw him in Ewart's before I left, I asked him to dine with me and we had a long conversation about teas etc. He told me he met with David Richardson on the passage out and that he was a very nice fellow; of course I knew whom he meant. He said to me that David gave him a very high character of me as a judge of tea, which was very flattering. I promised to send him the samples of our cargo for his opinion next day, and did so; his characters are quite the same as mine. I explained to him that I was not aware of the great change that had taken place in the taste for Congou tea. He said it was a great pity I was not aware of it before I bought the cargo as all the chops I had bought to meet the new taste were capital teas and just the ones to sell. But he did not seem to like the old-fashioned

<sup>1</sup> H. H. Smith: see above, p. 30.

kinds I had bought; however, he said even they were well worth the money. He thinks a great deal of the Souchongs, [chop] No. 8 he thinks very fine.

26th: After breakfast.

I have just been tasting the Souchong. Really [chop] No. 8 improves in my opinion every day. I was trying it against some Tls 40-50 chop, but I make it for best; I think now it is as fine a Souchong as I ever tasted. You will have to be cautious how you sell; London is the place for it, I should think, and it might be worth your while perhaps to send some of it up. I think you have as fine a chop of Congou as any of this season and the finest chop of Souchong in the cargo.

I find I am late enough, I had a good deal more to say but must delay it till next mail. I think I have got something cheap for your £5,000.

William to Andrew Melrose and Company

Canton, 28 October 1849

The last steamer is just starting for Hong Kong with the mail; my letters have been despatched some time. As I forgot to mention in them that I think it would be better for you to open a policy for the £5,000 to be shipped in ship or ships, I do so now. The 600 boxes per *Morrice* I have advised you of; but for what remains to be sent, as it may go before I can advise you per next mail, you had better, to make sure, open a policy, say, for the remainder of the teas to be shipped on account of the £5,000 sent out, after deducting the 600 per *Morrice*. A supplementary mail is to be made up tomorrow by which I may address Mr Simpson further. Mr A. Melrose's private letter, I intend sending by it, being too late for the boats tonight. In haste.

William to Mr Simpson

Canton, 29 October 1849

There is a steamer to be despatched this afternoon to catch the mail at Hong Kong if possible, and I take the opportunity of sending you a few lines by it. . . .<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For substance of passage omitted here, see above letter.

I have made some more purchases since last night, say 1,000 boxes Gunpowder at Tls 13 and if it turns out to muster, well made tea, round leaf, better than any of the musters sent by about Tls 2. The Capers, I advised of having bought the 3,000, are in small handsome boxes; you have a sample [of] them. However, the [tea-man]<sup>1</sup> promises to make them a little truer looking in face. He has this moment sent me in a sample. I have just tasted it; it is really good clean scented tea. He guarantees that all the 3,000 will be as good and he is a man I have done a good deal of business with before.

I have also nearly settled for, you may almost say settled, 1,200 boxes of more Gunpowder at Tls 11½! I wish now that I had not been in such a hurry investing on my own account. I would have got my Gunpowders and Capers at least 1d. to 1½d. per lb. cheaper; the boxes yours are in (3,500 Gunpowder and 3,000 Caper) are worth 1d. more per lb., leaving out of the question the better quality of the tea. I could also, I think, buy the same chop of Souchong (English chop name) *tsuen kee*, sent last year in the *Marian* and brought 1s. 10d., at about Tls 19 to 20 I think, but I fear my hands are full.

I cannot help feeling sorry, when I see many cheap parcels, that I have sent so much Congou. I must just leave you to explain to your partners Messrs J. R. & Co. that cargoes do not suit our amount of funds. If we had to remit about £200,000 or £300,000, then we could not help ourselves, as Congou is the only description in which we could remit or invest to such a large extent, and were we, as we would be forced to send that kind, sending it in cargoes to the 'outports' would perhaps often be the best way we could send it. But as our funds are not so large and during a whole year could very well be invested in all and any different kinds, the chances are much more. However, perhaps I am saying too much against cargoes, because any year and perhaps at certain times of the year, Congou may be much depressed and really be the best kind to send; and if sold at good prices at an outport might pay well. But this year it is quite the reverse. You were quite right in what you wrote me that you supposed there would be competition and higher prices, and I think the best plan now is never to buy when there is competition. The competition is always now at the be-

<sup>1</sup> Teaman: a Chinese supplier of tea.



ginning of the season and at the end of it, as I see now, many kinds depressed.

I had no idea the taste for tar was carried so far as it is at home; what used to be called true Pekoe flavour they make tarry now. I only wish I had known sooner, and I really wish I had known that the kinds like [chop nos.] 34 and 45 were in good favour. I could just as easily have bought more of them instead of those heavy kinds like [chop nos.] 35 and 36. Another thing I very much regret is that the *Clifton* did not get in a month or two sooner. I would have got out valuations of her teas a month or two sooner, which would have been valuable information to me and in the cargo of the *Magellan* might have made a difference; but it can't be helped now. However, I must close as Chinamen have been bothering me all day long about teas and dollars and am late enough.

Canton, 27 November 1849

I have yours of 21st September before me. I am glad to see that you are all so well and enjoying yourselves—John at Dunoon, Andrew at Shrewsbury, Aggie too I believe, James at Pendreich and Eliza in Edinburgh, 'a here away, there away' but Willie farer away than any of you: 'here awa' there awa' wandering Willie'.

I am sorry the mail did not get in before your letter left as I should like much to have seen your ideas of what had been done. I cannot help feeling very anxious about the Congous, so much has gone. However, the export in comparison with last year is decreasing now rather rapidly and daresay at the end of the season won't show much excess over last year. All the other purchases I have made I have no fears for.

You are going to have another vessel to the Clyde and one to Leith and one to Bristol. It was a good thing we got off ours before any of them. Lindsays had a cargo all ready to ship to the Clyde just at the time ours went; but the vessel they were waiting for to put the cargo in has been lost, otherwise she would have been in and filled just about the time the *Magellan* started. Now I believe they are sending her cargo in the *Queen*. I heard from the captain of a ship that Lindsays do not intend sending the *Queen* to the Clyde and that it is only a ruse on their part; but that I very much doubt

as I know their tea taster intimately and he told me she was going to the Clyde.

I have got nearly through all my work for this season, so I am going to take a spell to Macao and like Andrew have a little shooting. Next mail will bring me out valuations of some of the Congous and I wait anxiously for it. Everybody this year seemed to think that the sooner they could get off their purchases it would be the better, and that there would be no chance at the end of the season or about this time. But I wish I had waited and, instead of sending a cargo, sent all sorts as I did last year. I think we would generally find it to our advantage just to stick to little parcels of any kinds that may be beneath their value or likely to turn out profitable. However, you will be better able to judge than I am because you will soon be able to tell the result both of the cargo and of the separate shipments of all sorts, and it will be a good guide for you in future. It is all very well for Jardines and Lindsays shipping cargoes, who have three or four shiploads of Congou to send off every year, but I question if it is our best plan. However, we will see; perhaps it will turn out better than I expect. Getting into the Clyde before any other vessel is much in its favour, and if you can hoist them up a bit, may do pretty well.

Gray of the Bank here, a son of Gray in Edinburgh, has been very attentive to me lately. He seems a very nice fellow. Dunlop,<sup>1</sup> the distiller's son, was manager up here before Gray came but we never visited or saw one another. Dunlop has now gone up to Shanghai. I like Gray better than Dunlop. He was telling me he had been four years in the National Bank.

I think you will think the purchases for the £5,000 lately sent cheap, and I hope will leave us a profit.

You have not sent out your 'old face', as you call it, yet. I was expecting it this mail. By way of example and encouragement I send you one, or a funny face, of an obscure individual who came into existence I believe in some house on the South Bridge and, if I recollect rightly, in a house opposite a certain tea merchant's

<sup>1</sup> Archibald Dunlop: accounting department, Oriental Bank, 1846; manager at Canton, 1849. Died Oct. 1851 at the age of thirty in Hong Kong, having suffered for some time 'the effects of the climate'. His father, George, of 30 Mitchell Street, Leith, was a distiller.

shop in that street. I forget the name at present but you will have no difficulty in finding him out; for he was, and I believe is still, very celebrated and famous for his dealings in the leaf. I think 83 was the number of the house, and opposite which the obscure individual, whose physiognomy I send, was born. As I never saw him myself (excepting dimly and darkly as in a glass), I cannot say whether it bears any resemblance to him or not, but perhaps you will be able to find out some people who have seen him and learn whether it is like or not.

I could get nothing else to say and have been obliged to fill up your letter with the nonsense you have just read. However, it is better than sending away to you a staring, cold, blank sheet, as I would have been necessitated to do. Kind remembrance to them all, and hope this will find you all well, not forgetting our Glasgow friends.

ps. I have got a nasty crab steel pen; hope you may be able to read this. The obscure individual's portrait was taken in the town of his birth before he left to enlighten the East.

Canton, 24 December 1849

I have yours of October and am thankful to see that you are all well. I am glad to hear that Helen is doing well although she has taken the liberty of making me an uncle without getting my consent. I have written her a long letter on the subject. I have told her that none of your letters mentioned whether the young one is male or female, and that I am greatly distressed at not being certain whether I am uncle to a nephew or a niece; and the only reason I can guess for my letters not mentioning the same is that, I suppose, the infant was so young when my letters were sent away that it was quite impossible to distinguish to which of the sexes it laid claim.<sup>1</sup>

You say you hope that I have got a good cheap cargo on the way. That there is one on the way is certain but whether you may think it cheap or not I do not know. However, you must not blame me this year if the Congous don't pay as I have only obeyed your own instructions; and your best plan, if they do not pay, is just send

<sup>1</sup> Andrew Melrose Craig, born 4 Oct. 1849.

out some more bills and let me do with them what I like. But perhaps you are right and the cargo may do better than anything else might have done.

I am afraid that from the assortment you will think I have had a hankering after the tarry flavour, but the fact is I was not aware that so great a prejudice existed as really does against the tarry flavour in England. What they used to call strong Pekoe flavour they call tarry now, and in fact everything excepting Souchong or a sort of flowery Pekoe flavour; and some of those strong Pekoe flavoured teas came down so low in price from what I had ever seen them that I thought it was a pity to lose them. I thought the safest plan would be to take about a half of each kind as I did; but I wish now I had taken all on the Souchong kind, as I see clearly that they are the most saleable. However, I did not know that then, having heard of few sales of any teas I knew the characters of. I think now I know the taste in England to a nicety: what is wanted is a full rich tea, something like the [chop] H, I think in the *Aberfoyle*, on the flowery Pekoe character, or fine Hong Moi.<sup>1</sup> I wish I had known this sooner though. But it cannot be helped now; and what have gone, if they do not do so well as those kinds would have done, are still good value at the prices bought.

Exchange this mail is going up at a great rate, fully 1d. to 1½d. dearer. I am very glad most of our bills have been sold before this month; but I have still some to sell – great scarcity of money, I cannot get an offer for them. I wish I had sold them all last month at 4s. 2½d.; but you see to save one month's interest we will lose 1d. or 1½d. per dollar, equal to 2 to 3 per cent. I myself think the best plan is to sell largely when exchange is low. You certainly may lose a month or two [month's] interest but the low rate generally more than compensates you.

Young Smith, of whom I spoke in my last letter to you, tells me he came out overland for a certain part of the journey with David Richardson, and he says they often had some talk about China. He says David told him he believed there was only one man in China that knew tea perfectly and that was William Melrose, if he ever happened to have heard of such a person. Smith told him he knew William Melrose very well and that although he had no

<sup>1</sup> Hong Moi, or Hung Mei: a kind of black tea.

doubt he was a good judge of the leaf, still he thought there were many in China who knew tea perfectly. I was highly flattered by David's good opinion, although coming from Smith, himself a tea taster, gave me a good laugh. We will see what like the portrait is.

I wonder that you could sit down to get six teeth taken out. I think I would have said, one at a time gentlemen. I hope the new set will be of use to you.

I think I wrote you that I had got into a new house. I am very comfortable and independent, I keep as quiet as I like, and get in a friend to dine with me now and then when in the humour. Having little to do here now, I am going down to Macao for some time and get the sea air. It is a nice healthy place and fine long walks and rides to be had.

Rothwell has just been in to see me; he says exchange is going higher still, he says the Americans cannot for good paper get 4s. 5d., and that bills on the Treasury of England at thirty days sight are being sold at 4s. 4d. I have offered ours at 4s. 3½d. but doubt I must come up. The Bank here is drawing at 4s. 4d. per dollar, at least they say so, but their rate is always lower than any other body's. I was lucky last month in getting ½d. less than the Bank but this month there are so few buyers it would be difficult to sell. I trust I will be able to place them for the Indian market; if not, I will be in a dilemma and have to take 4s. 4½d. to 4¾d. for them for England. 28th:

The Bank yesterday raised their rate to 4s. 5d! So I was in the wrong box, not selling at 4s. 4d. – very unlucky. Can't have good luck, always. Hope this will find you all well.

William to Mr Simpson

Canton, 26 December 1849

I have yours of October. I see you have received the first box of musters. I am glad you seem pleased with the teas, and especially that the dear one (chop no. 7) both by you and Ewart is made very fine. I was just a little afraid you might not make it so fine as I did because it is of a different class from what two or three seasons ago was considered number one quality. It is a little on the Hong

Moi Pekoe, or rather flowery Pekoe flavour, which seems to be the kind which pays best now. I wish I had been aware of this sooner; [chops] no. 5 and no. 14 are both of that kind, and I have hopes that they will pay well.

There was a neighbour chop to no. 5 much the same sort of tea, which I was within one mace<sup>1</sup> of settling when another person got it. I am sorry now I did not get it, but at that time I did not feel sure that sort of Congou would sell well, and rather preferred the strong Pekoe flavoured old fashioned kinds at a low figure. Now I wish I had gone more on the new fashioned kinds: 'live and learn'. I'll know better next time. However, our old fashioned kinds are good value at the money and if the market does not become very much depressed like what it did when the *Glenmore* and *Flora MacDonald* cargoes were sold at Leith, I have no great fears for them.

Taylor<sup>2</sup> has made a fine blow about the chinaware; I am sorry so much of it is broken. You must have had a good deal of trouble with them and so had I in the buying of them. Next mail will bring me news of their being sold, I hope.

Money is uncommonly scarce this month. I have not sold a dollar's worth of your bills yet, excepting \$3,000 at 4s. 5½d. secured by [chop] A/3 (1,000 boxes); and I am just afraid the buyer may not stick to his bargain as I hear plenty clean bills on Barings etc. are at 5½d. It was a kind of conditional agreement but I don't think he can back out now. As for your bank bills, I might have sold some yesterday at 4s. 4d. but stuck out for 3½d. and then 3¾d., and by that time the parties had supplied themselves elsewhere. I felt very much inclined to take 4s. 4d. when offered, but heard the Bank was drawing at that and thought your ninety day bills should bring more. Now I have offered them to all I know at 4s. 4d. but cannot get a bid. I won't regulate my operations by the Bank here again. Very often they are very indifferent about selling; instead of saying at once they are not sellers, they say a rate which nobody will buy at, and people who try to regulate their sales by the Bank's

<sup>1</sup> Mace: a unit of Chinese currency, one-tenth of a tael.

<sup>2</sup> J. J. Taylor: of Edinburgh, general merchant and wine agent; supplied A. M. & Co. with tea in 1839-40 through J. Duncan & Co. Account of J. Duncan, A.M.A., Town Ledger, 1838-47.

rate find they can't sell either. If I find money tight and many sellers, I'll sell at once; if I find money plenty, I'll try to get a low rate.

Confound the Bank! All the Indian buyers are supplied now. I dare say for England I might get 4s. 5d., but won't take it if I can help it. The worst of it is, I am afraid it will be higher next month. I wish I had sold more last month; I felt sure it would go up this month, but then had it not gone up and if I had sold, you would have been displeased at the bills being sold before the shipments were made. But this is not good policy. Besides, you should recollect that if the bills are sold for India, they take at least three months to go home, and if for England, two months; so that you may just as well sell them for India a month previous to shipment as for a remittance to England after the shipment has gone. I am owing \$31,000 and only \$11,000 (including the \$3,000 above mentioned) to pay it with, and the Chinamen are so scarce of money they are at me every day for it.

They say now that the Bank have raised their rate to 4s. 5d. Catch me paying attention to other people's rates here after this. I'll sell just at what they will fetch and other people may quote their rates at whatever it may please them to call them. You will see it will be up to 4s. 6d. or 4s. 7d. before the mail goes.

I have just received a note from an Indian house informing me that the Bank's rate now is raised to 4s. 5d. and making me an offer of 4s. 5d. for the £2,000 - money to be paid on 15th of January. I'll go out and make inquiries and see the parties.

I have been out; it is true enough, the Bank's rate now is 4s. 5d. I called on the manager of the Commercial Bank here (another bank) and asked him what he could offer for your ninety day bills. He said he did not want to buy, that he was not a buyer and advised to keep my bills until after China New Year (middle of February). I told him I wanted a few dollars. 'Well, if you must sell, sell at once', he said, 'for my opinion is, it will be up to 4s. 6d. or 7d. before this steamer goes and next month I think to a higher rate than that.' Well, you see I have been bitten by waiting already as I might have sold yesterday at 4s. 4d. I immediately went to the Indian house and found they were very independent and said if I did not close now, tomorrow they would be able to buy at 4s. 6d. and I have closed with them for £2,000 at 4s. 5d. I may perhaps

be able to get rid of a few hundreds more at 4s. 4½d. as now I have enough dollars to put me off for a month or two and will not sell any more at 4s. 5d. this month at any rate, although it be hard work to get the Chinamen pacified.

Now I should like to know what rate circulars quote this month. It only shows what folly it is depending on their quotations; people sell bills like anything else at what they will bring. If you look at quotations and insist upon me getting a better rate for your ninety day bills than the lowest quotation for six months bills, why, very often I must lose my market as you see I have done this month.

I am going down to Macao after the mail goes. If I don't sell any more this mail, there will be £2,000 left unsold. I think perhaps I might be able to manage to keep £1,000 until after the China New Year so that next month I will only sell £1,000. Now, to come from Macao and go down again costs me £5 (½%) and as Hallam can sell them nearly as well as I can, or as well, I think I will leave £1,000 with them or Hallam for sale next month. I have been due Russells £1,000 or \$5,000 for the last three months, having overdrawn my cash account with them to pay the Chinamen; and I fear must be indebted to them for the same accommodation this month, that is, four months' interest on £1,000. I am indebted to them (I don't think they will charge it) and I would rather that they would take the £1,000 of bills as security, because I don't like the idea of being liable to them for the money. However, we will see. Perhaps it would be better to sell.

28th:

I did not like trusting to next month as it may be higher next month and I want the dollars, so I sold £700 at 4s. 5d. and £300 at 4s. 4¾d. The other £1,000 I will keep till after New Year (I hear the rate for good private bills is 4s. 7d.). That is £3,000 I have sold this month of the bank bills.

You<sup>1</sup> should get a long price for that [chop] no. 8 Souchong; it is much finer than what I thought it was when I bought it, but now I am a much better judge of Souchongs than I was as I have been paying a great deal of attention to Souchongs lately, merely to make myself a good judge of them. Very few people know much

<sup>1</sup> The following may be part of a letter written in Nov. to Simpson; if so, the above is incomplete; see below, p. 84.



about Souchong; they know a good one from a middling one, and a middling one from a common one, but no more. I am practising hard to make myself a good judge of them as they are a tea evidently coming into taste again in England, and I may have an advantage over my neighbours here if I can steal a march on them. If Ewart does not make it fine now, after all this palaver of mine, you'll be having a laugh in your sleeve at me. But I don't care, I'll only taste them all, 'Perseverance etc.'. Three tea tasters here make [it] very fine (and one of them is, I may say, a good judge of Souchong but he is a foreigner and fancy teas are his forte); I make it much higher flavoured than any chop going home, but it is on the Ning Yong Oolong flavour. Some say that is the finest description of Souchong and some again say the full rich is the finest; be that as it may, it is very strong and very high flavoured. I fear the Clyde may not be so good a market as London for it. You will have in the cargo, if it be any consolation, as fine a chop of Congou and Souchong as any gone this year.

By the by, how do you keep my account at home. I suppose you debit me with the remittance in pounds sterling first and make it into dollars as I send you word of the bills being sold and carry the amount of the invoices to my credit, for instance:

## WILLIAM MELROSE

<i>Debit</i>		<i>Credit</i>	
To		By	
Bills £20,000		amount of invoice	\$80,000
January - sold			
£5,000 at 4s.	\$20,000		
February - sold			
£5,000 at 4s.	\$20,000		
March - £5,000			
at 4s.	\$20,000		
April - sold			
£5,000 at 4s.	\$20,000		
	<hr/>		<hr/>
	£20,000 =		\$80,000

Should a balance of dollars remain over, it can easily be made into pounds at the average rate of exchange.

The *Magellan* has made the best passage of all the vessels down to Java Head, which is half the battle; great hopes now of her being in soon, long before you get this. She passed Anjer 22 October.

Pity exchange has gone up, but the low freights will well compensate for it. Say freight at £2 10s., gives a saving of  $\frac{3}{4}$ d. over a £5 freight; and 4d. in the exchange makes  $\frac{1}{2}$ d., so we are about as well as we would be at 4s. exchange and £4 10s. or £4 freight. Fortune of war! It was well I sold the documented bills early, I could not get better than 4s. 7d. now.



Macao, 26 January 1850

THE LETTERS HAVE COME TO HAND rather late this month; this is the 26th (half past two o'clock) and I have this moment received your letters. As I am at Macao and have to trust to a sailing vessel taking my letters to Hong Kong to be posted there, it will be necessary to send off tonight anything I wish to be perfectly sure of being in good time; and they must be off by half past four o'clock before which hour I have to dine with Seare. So that you will observe I have but little time to write you. However, I will take the opportunity to let you know that I have received yours and Mr Simpson's letters and also £5,000 National Bank credits for our 'joint account', also Ewart's letter with valuations of the *Magellan's* cargo etc. I send you enclosed duplicate invoices of our late shipments, with second copies of bills of lading. Tomorrow or even next day I dare say will be in time for the mail, and Mr Simpson, Ewart, etc. I will write tomorrow.

Mounsey tells me in his letter (I have scarcely had time to read it) that he saw you in Edinburgh some time ago and that you were looking well, which I am very thankful for and very glad to hear. You seem not very sure that I may keep my health here, or that I am well; and I don't wonder at your doing so, seeing that I was so unfortunate before. But 'experience teaches fools', and now I take much more care of myself than I did in those days and live very differently; and had I done so before, have no doubt would just have been as well then as I am now. I have been out now again about a year and a half and have never so much as had a headache or taken anything in the shape of physic. I feel even better than I did when at home, and if you want any proof of it I daresay I can get you a medical certificate of the fact because my old friend Dr Watson, the last time I arrived down from Canton, said he quite envied me, I was looking in such good health; and Seare seconded his assertion. And now that we have here two or three

months of bracing weather to come yet, I hope to get even better if possible.

All last month here it has been very cold. We feel the cold here more than you do at home, I think, because when it is cold here there is always a strong cold wind blowing. I know I can't sleep unless I have two good blankets and never think of moving out without a pea coat. Now at home I never use more than one blanket. But be that as it may, I am glad we are having such fine weather, as it sets one's nerves in order to stand the summer's heat.

I have been down here for nearly a month now. I am very fond of Macao, not so much for the place itself, but because the time passes so pleasantly from being every day either with the doctor's family or Seare's, and where I am quite as much at home as if I really were one of themselves.

I agree with you in thinking that not much good will be done this year, that is with Congous. I do not, I am sorry to say, expect much from the *Magellan's* cargo; and I fear that I myself am to blame in not selecting kinds more adapted to the prevailing taste. But I had no idea the time I purchased that the aversion to the tarry kinds went so far as it really does. They call at home now everything tarry that is not on Souchong flavour, but I should have been more wary of those kinds. However, what I did I did for the best, and what I did wrong I did out of ignorance. However, should you get out this year with a whole skin, I would not be intimidated from trying it again next year if Messrs J. R. & Co. are not discouraged. I don't think people will pay such wild prices next year, as I am sure many of the Congous purchased this year will leave a heavy loss: 1s. 9d. to 9½d. may be had for a few, but not for one third of all bought at Tls 30 to 31. Besides, if teas don't go moderate, I am determined I would not buy. It is great nonsense buying Congou at Tls 28 and 30 when you might be buying, very likely, other kinds that would leave a margin on home quotation. But I think next year I will be able to pick out kinds of Congou more suited to the present taste at home, and I wish I had known that sooner.

I am much obliged for your promise to honour the drafts I have drawn for tea on my own account, and also very glad to think you approve of my having done so. I hope the teas will leave me a

little profit. By the by, when they are all sold, if you have no objection, I should like Mr Simpson to see what balance there may be at my credit and remit it to me, because money here is much more valuable than at home. I can get at least 12% interest for it here, besides, in opium etc. could turn it over well. So if you think it right, I would have it out. We will see what you think about it. Not another minute to spare. In haste.

ps. Most of the houses draw against documents out here; it may not look so needy as you seem to think. Only known houses, Jardines etc., can do otherwise. One-half past 4 o'clock

Macao, 24 February 1850

You see I am still down here. Exchange was still high last month, and as I had nothing particular to do except sell £1,000 of bills, I thought I would wait down here and see if the rate of exchange in Canton would be any lower this month. I must sell them next month, as I fear the Chinamen will think they just waited long enough; but £1,000 is no great matter. It is quite cold down here yet, we have had beautiful weather. I hope it will last for some months yet.

I received your December letter some days ago and the seconds of the £5,000 all right. I don't think we need be in any hurry buying, a great deal of tea has gone home. I do not think, though, at the end of this season that any more, at least not much more, will have gone than went last year. Mr Simpson says the consumption has increased in England 2,000,000 pounds. If that is the case, and no more leaves here than last year, it may keep prices firm.

I had hoped to hear of your having sold all the first shipments by the *Aden* and *Bibby*. I am glad you have got off half of the dearest chop at any rate; the Tls 26 one, as Ewart makes nearly as good as the other, will surely be safe enough. There must be heavy losses on the new Congous; our two chops were, I think, the cheapest bought (I mean about lowest price) last season, made very quick passages and still won't realize 1s. 6d. — a very bare trade. I am glad to think you have no fear for the cargo; I hope Ewarts will make the tea better when they see the stock than what they did from the samples. How lucky I have been with the curiosities,

a much better trade than new Congous. I suppose my good fortune will tempt me to make another attempt and perhaps lose all I have made on them, as a good many people have done when they have once been lucky.

I hear James is going to Liverpool. It will do him good. He will have the *Euphrates* and *Duke of Lancaster* to try his hand on.

I hope to hear of the *Magellan's* arrival by next month. You will know all about it by this time. I suppose the sale is over; in two months more I may hear.

Hallam had been a little poorly I hear. I don't know whether he is all right again or not. He was at Hong Kong some days ago, I suppose for a change. His stomach has not been the thing for some months I think. Great changes have taken place in Russell's house; I think three partners went out last month and three new ones taken in. I rather think Hallam expected to be taken in but I believe it is against the rules of the house to take in an Englishman. I have no doubt had he been a Yankee he would have been in long ago.

I see it was just John's birthday when you wrote, 35; mine is on 17 March, not far off 33. I must make money quick or I'll be getting bald soon. I have done pretty well lately, and as you say we have great reason to be thankful, being all so well.

I still live with my friend Seare here, paying numerous visits and eating numerous dinners at the doctor's. And we are all well and enjoying this beautiful weather. Leaving this place to go up to Canton puts me often in mind of leaving Pendreich to go into Edinburgh after a month's holiday. To have this off in good time I must finish; the account and Mr Simpson's letter took me longer than I expected. In haste.

William to Mr Simpson

Macao, 25 February 1850

I wrote you yesterday and sent it off to Hong Kong last night to make sure of being in time. This may still be in time and I write merely to communicate to you an idea that came into my head this morning.

I sent up to Canton to enquire what quantity of Canton Gun-powders had left or been sold for the last two months, and I got

word down this morning that very little has been sold in January and February, say about 3,000 boxes. This I expected because although a large quantity of Gunpowder has gone, it is all of the dearer description. They are so low at home just now and the export of Gunpowder appears so large that I don't think much Canton kind will be sent off for the next two or three months. Now I know that the consumption runs mostly in England on the Canton kind because they have taken the place of Twankays; and before they came into repute the consumption of good and true Gunpowder was not a fourth of what it is now. We'll say then for two months almost nothing has gone, and if no more goes for the next three months, that is five months. Now the consumption of that kind is say 200,000 lbs. a month or say 180,000 lbs., 900,000 lbs. in five months; and shipped about May, they would make a long passage. They would be getting scarce to say the least, and I think would surely be saleable. I won't calculate on a rise but we'll just say they will be saleable. Well, I think they could be bought here at about Tls 11 to 13, and I think freights would be low and exchange not high; and if they brought present quotations would pay well, that is supposing there is little shipped for the next three months. Besides, by that time I would have heard how our other shipments of this kind had done.

Of your funds not invested I think there remains about £4,000 to £4,500. Should I take some of them for a spec in curios, say £700 or £800, it would leave about £3,500 or £3,800 to invest in Gunpowder. Should our shipments already made turn out well and you think my idea correct, perhaps you would like to invest a little more than that in them. And I merely mentioned it to you in case. However, I am afraid I will have been too long in writing you. Let's see, this will be home the end of April, could not have remittance out before June, and it is likely I think you will have some out, before that. However you may think of it. In haste, dinner on the table; 25th, half past 3 o'clock.

Canton, 28 March 1850

I have yours of 21 January. I am glad to see that you are well. I came up here in the beginning of the month and have been very

busy since. I have been buying some more curiosities and some more Canton Gunpowders. I think it would be a pity as long as I am out here not to take advantage of it and buy those little things, I mean curiosities, because unless there is someone out here to pick them up cheap etc. they might not do.

We got news of the rise that has taken place in common teas about the beginning of the month; a steamer happened to be starting for China and brought on the news. I bought a few Gunpowders and Capers when I heard of them, but not much, as I thought the rise had all taken place from an expectation of the duty coming off. However, the mail from England showed that the rise was as much caused by easiness of money and speculation as anything else, and that being the case, I thought a few Gunpowders would be very safe, as they are selling in England at 1s. 3d. to 4d. and here I was buying them at 9½d. And the curiosities leave all a margin of 50% so that I don't think there can be much fear of loss at any rate.

I am very well, never was better, and in good spirits about the teas. Our common Gunpowders and Capers look well and the *Magellan* has made a good passage and arrived at a good time. I hope next month will bring out sales of a good part of the cargo. Green teas this year I think most of them will pay well, and I fear next year for greens won't be a good one as the price will be too high. The export for last year and this year too is very light, not equal to the consumption and, as speculation has begun, greens will be the favourite kind of tea to speculate in I should think.

As nearly as I can calculate, the state of the case is this: the export this year up to this time of green is about 6,000,000 lbs. and little more to be had either here or at Shanghai – say 6,800,000 total export. Total stock in London and Liverpool is 7,500,000 lbs., consumption for 1849 say 9,800,000 or 10,000,000.

Say:

Present stock in England	7,500,000
Total export this year	6,800,000
	<hr/>
	14,300,000
Deduct consumption say as 1849	9,800,000
	<hr/>
	4,500,000 lbs.



leaves only 4,500,000 of stock before the next new greens can arrive in England. So you may either sell or hold or speculate, but I don't think greens will go down much before next new season's teas arrive, and even then I daresay next year's teas will cost a high figure; but it is always best to sell and get a profit and let the market go as it likes afterwards. I merely mention what I think so that you need not sacrifice by being in a hurry to sell for, after the shipments making now, little green can arrive until beginning of 1851.

Hallam has been rather poorly but he is getting all right again. He was in here the other day and looked well enough and seemed in good spirits. I am glad James has gone to Liverpool, it will do him good. You say you have had a cold winter; we have had rather a severe one here too. It has been cold up to about two days ago; now it is rather warm, but it seems unsettled and we will have a change to cool again soon. I am anxious to get the visage you mentioned and hope to receive it per next mail. I am very sorry to hear of Mr Alexander's<sup>1</sup> death.

I am very comfortable here. Thinking the teas would leave a little, I have gone to the expense of getting my place all matted with red flowered matting and it looks very nice and comfortable. My windows look out on the Canton River where there are crowds of boats passing up and down every minute. And in the hong I live there is always lots of tea weighing off, marking etc., so that it is very different from the close shut-in house I was in before in the factories; and besides that, being a little out of the way (about three minutes walk from the factories) I can keep as quiet as I like, which answers me well. I got a start the other day. I heard some Americans intended taking the next door (the one house is part of the other) as a billiard room, which I did not relish; however, I got it put a stop to. I would rather take it and pay the rent than be bothered with them. They would be there at all hours half seas over and making a terrible noise. The Chinaman who has the letting of the hong (I do business with him) would not give it without my consent. Scant of room - hope you are all well, in haste.

<sup>1</sup> Alexander: not identified.

Canton, 19 April 1850

You will see I have begun to write you early this month, but the mail leaves here on the 22nd and I am afraid to delay as I fear my time betwixt this and that will be fully occupied. I received your letters this morning at 7 o'clock. I was desperately sleepy when my servant brought them into my bedroom, and although last night I was feverishly anxious about the mail coming in, and looking out of my window (which commands a look of the river, a thing which few houses out here do) every minute, yet, when they came in the morning, I felt my anxiety at rest, and after glancing at yours merely to see that you were well, and opening Ewart's to see the price of Congou and Gunpowder, I quietly put all the rest down and went to bed for an hour, dressed, and breakfasted, and then sat down to read them all in quiet and good earnest. So you see I am beginning to take things coolly out here. However, I must say that when I saw you were well and the teas were little or no lower, I felt very little compunction about going to take another nap as I felt pretty certain there was no very great calamity in store for me.

I have now read all the letters and am thankful that you are all so well. I have one from Helen and trust from what she says that her little one may be all well soon. I have a letter from John, James, (Andrew the lazy rascal never writes) and Eliza besides, and am happy to see that they are all in so good spirits.

James seems well pleased with Liverpool. He wants me to advise him what would be best to do when he leaves Liverpool. It is rather a difficult question but there is plenty of time to think about it. He should be there at least two years if he wants to get a good knowledge of teas; and he should pay great attention to the imports and consumption etc., for . . . more depends on that than being a judge of tea, and the great thing is experience. I know when I was in Jamieson's house, if I had had my own way I might have ruined myself once or twice over merely from not having experience enough. And many a time now I think it was lucky you sent me out with no liberty to trade until my time was out. You should give him a few pounds to make a spec with on his own account, tell him to buy the kind he thinks will be the scarcest in a short time, to compare the London and Liverpool stocks and look well to the shipments from China.

Hallam came to see me yesterday. He is all right again and looking well. He said he thought I was looking well, very well I suppose, because he added 'in fact, I don't think I have ever seen you looking better'. So I believe, as I feel well and have not taken a dose of physic since I came out, that I must be in a tolerably good state of preservation.

I am glad to hear the *Magellan* has sold so well. It was a lucky thing for us that the easiness of money and speculation raised the prices or we might have been not in quite so good a position. We must be cautious next year unless the consumption is great or price is low. I have a large quantity of Gunpowder to ship yet. I am afraid perhaps too much but still the price is low, 9d. to 10d. in boxes, and green teas look well yet. One great thing is they can't lose much, and I hope and think in spite of the large quantity gone will leave a profit.

I had hoped to hear of some of my shipments being sold. John mentions the *Monarch's* Souchong has been sold at a good price. I hope it is correct because I have no mention made of it in any of my other letters. The *Magellan's* cargo has gone off well, I only feel a little disappointed about my fine Souchong. I had a sort of affection for it, and thought it might make a better figure in the world; however, I am glad you at least appreciate it.

I am beginning to have a more favourable opinion of cargoes now than I had. You have certainly got as good prices as you would have got in London; but, more than that, they are all sold, which is a great thing – nothing like the ready money trade. I daresay if you give me any encouragement I may send another; and as I am now better acquainted with the kinds of Congou in vogue, may perhaps select one more saleable and profitable than the *Magellan*. However, I should like to see exchange lower or tea cheaper first. Exchange should come down soon; the Americans are keeping it up at present, having bought largely of greens and having kept back from selling their bills, every month expecting the rate to be better. Now when there is no help for it, they have been forced into the market and raised the rate.

I hope the portrait may come by next mail. I am glad you think you have so good a remembrance of me at the top of your bed. I will take a run to Macao after I get the *Dulius* teas etc. on board; I don't [need] one, but prevention is better than cure.

By the by, Hallam gets out some capital beer here from Baird,<sup>1</sup> Edinburgh. Do you think it would be worth Mr Baird's trouble to send me say 80 dozen of the same beer as Hallam gets and 20 dozen porter? I daresay 80 would be too much, say 70 of beer and 20 of porter. If Mr Baird has any arrangement about shipping it to Hallam, and not like to send to another, of course I would not interfere; but you can assure him it is only for my own use and not with an idea to sell it. It is almost my only beverage here and if good is wholesome and if bad very unhealthy. Now sometimes I cannot get it good, and to prevent that would like a good stock by me. Should anything happen that I could not use it, it would always be worth its money. That quantity would last me a year at least. By the by, I am not sure if it would keep so long, but Mr Baird will know. If not, he might send as much as he thought would keep until finished at the rate say of three bottles per day for self and friends – if worthwhile to take in hand so small an order. I have nothing else to say. Hope this will find you well. Our letters did not arrive till the 20th.

William to Mr Simpson

Canton, 20 April 1850

I have yours of February. I am glad to see that the *Magellan's* cargo has gone off so well. Thompson<sup>2</sup> seems to have made a queer mistake about [chop nos.] 7 and 14; however, as you say, the *Hardinge's* will test it. I have bought a few more Capers since I last addressed you – about 700 boxes at Tls 13. I almost wish now I had not bought so much, we must have about 11,000 to 12,000 boxes to ship and exchange, which we all expected would go down, is still higher this mail, Bank drawing at 4s. 6d., Company's bills at sight 225 rupees for \$100. Now the rupee is costing in England 2s., so that those who are selling Company's paper must be laying down their dollar rather high, say 225 rupees at 2s. or 450s. for \$100 – exactly 4s. 6d. per dollar – and these are at sight.

<sup>1</sup> V. C. Baird: wine merchant and purveyor of spirits to the Queen, 63 Princes Street, Edinburgh.

<sup>2</sup> William J. Thompson & Co: tea brokers, London; associated with William Connal, Glasgow broker. See below, pp. 97, 101.

You speak in your letter of perhaps in future remitting in different ways from Bank bills. There is one thing I would like you to keep in mind, that is that bills nearly at sight or ten to twenty or thirty days sight sell much better in proportion to their date than three months bills. Bills at sight may bring  $\frac{3}{4}$ d. to 1d. better than six months bills, and three months bills bring about  $\frac{1}{4}$ d. better than six months bills. Another thing, if you can buy rupees at 1s. 9d. to 1s. 10d., you are pretty sure to lay your dollar down low here, as you can generally sell at 218 to 220 rupees for \$100. But perhaps your bank credits at 4s.  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. or so, taking interest saved into consideration, may be as good. Only the worst of it is, one can never depend on getting so good a rate as 4s. to 4s.  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. and if rupees were to be had at 1s. 9d., you would at least be pretty certain your dollar would not be laid down much above 4s., if not below it.

I find it won't do to buy the teas, ship them and then sell the bills, as it is quite impossible to tell what exchange may be. And when the teas are bought and shipped, you must sell; and your anxiety to sell makes you not only sell at high rate yourself but gets the rate up for everybody. I am beginning to think the best plan is just to advertise the bills for sale every mail and whether we have tea bought against them or not, if a good offer is given, to accept it to a moderate amount. That would always keep us in funds and not force us into the market. Besides, at any time the exchange should come below its average rate, say 4s. 3d. to 4s. 4d., I would sell pretty freely. However, it is a queer business altogether and a mere lottery and I believe selling plenty when the rate is low is the sure way.

I have sold today £800 at 4s.  $5\frac{3}{4}$ d., a good sale. The bank out here is drawing at 4s. 6d. but that is no criterion. They make the rate to suit themselves. Last month they fixed their rate at 4s.  $3\frac{1}{2}$ d!! and 4s.  $5\frac{1}{2}$ d. was given largely for as good bills as theirs. Of course they sold nothing. I cannot exactly see through their tactics, but I know that generally when I have ruled my rate by theirs that I have been in the wrong box. And I fear am so again, because today, when I heard their rate was 4s. 6d., I would not accept less than  $5\frac{3}{4}$ d. for ours though offered 4s. 6d. in two instances. Now I can't get 4s. 6d. for them. I fear they call their rate one thing and sell at another rather than lose a customer.

One consolation is that freights are still low, but it (exchange) will make our Gunpowders cost more than I imagined. Surely they can't lose much and I am not afraid of them. Twankays are scarce and nothing exported this year. Besides, the export of green will be I think short of last year and that was two million short of the consumption. I am in no hurry to ship them. I think the later they get in the better, as the stock with you will be getting barer and barer until the beginning of 1851. Besides that, exchange may in a month or two get lower. I have engaged freight for about 4,000 to 5,000 boxes per *Dulius* to Liverpool. Now that I see exchange is so high I might have kept them for some time yet, which I might easily have done, the teas being scarcely ready. As to the others for which I have not engaged freight, I may not be in any great hurry to ship them. I should like to see exchange lower first.

I may as well say here too that I have engaged freight in the *Dulius* for Liverpool for the curiosities. By the by, you had better get insurance done on the curiosities: say on joint account per *Dulius* invoice amount \$3,400 or \$3,600; on W. Melrose's account, invoice amount \$3,400. Of course you will insure the joint account parcel for what profit you please. Mine please insure for me at 50% on invoice amount and at 5s. per dollar. They are not worth the trouble if they don't bring that.

There is a lot of funny things this time. By the by I bought for joint account a pair of very large jars, well painted four to five feet high for \$55 - very cheap. I am in search of a pair for my own account but can't get anything like them under \$95. I bought two handsome screens yesterday, one for each account, \$85.00 each, 'Japoon' they call them. They appear like smooth ebony inlaid with mother of pearl representing figures etc. They are cheap, \$100 to \$110 being low for them. I have no idea how they may take. I think them handsome and rare. Six folds make one screen, each fold about six to seven feet high and two broad. I think the lanterns will take, if not common at home they should take. There are figures in them, or rather on them, which keep moving and another lot that keep running around. You should at the sale put one in some place and light it. There are about six small cups of oil into which put a wick and light it, the smoke ascending makes the figures revolve etc. I have also ordered some model boats, wood, rather

dear, but I want to see how they will take, lots of camphor wood trunks, 36 in each parcel. I have also bought two or three sets of men's and women's dresses, some gaudy but handsome glass paintings (and some common), large paintings with red and blue grounds, lacquered ware (not much of it). I think if you expose them well to public view they cannot fail to attract attention.

How is it Ewart did not get the cargo? He would not like it after charactering the samples. I have a letter from Maccaughey last mail in which he said he heard Jardines were tired of sending tea to Leith and that it might be a good opening for us; perhaps he knows if the cargoes go into the Clyde that Thompson would get them. I suppose it is Connal's<sup>1</sup> influence, as his son was in Thompson's.

21st

Well, I have been through all the community to get off some bills and cannot get 4s. 6d. from anybody. Yesterday I might have sold £2,500 at 4s. 6d. but would not accept worse than 5½d. because the Bank was drawing at 4s. 6d. for six months bills. So you see that comes from being guided by other people's rates and not taking what was offered me.

How to account for the Bank selling at 4s. 6d. and some of the oldest hands out here refusing Scotch bank bills ninety days sight at same rate I cannot make out. I suppose it may result from this, the Bank fix their rate and then either sell or not as they have applications; but with me and other people who have teas to pay we must sell or crack our credit, and often the only way to do so is to tempt a buyer to take them by offering a little better rate. This is especially the case if you want to sell to a pretty good amount. Look at Russells: last mail the Bank fixed their rate at 4s. 3½d., Russells had a good deal to sell and wanted dollars and sold their Barings endorsed by themselves, reckoned here as good as any bank bills, at 4s. 5d. to 5½d! and of course the Bank sold nothing. You may

<sup>1</sup> William Connal: b. 1790 in Stirling - d. 25 Aug. 1856, broker and commission merchant in Glasgow. In 1806 entered the firm of Findlay Duff & Co., colonial and general merchants of Glasgow, concentrated on the business of sugar, and was admitted partner in 1812. In 1828 he organized William Connal & Co. In 1834 he managed the first consignment of tea imported into Glasgow, and remained one of the leading brokers in the trade, handling the sale of teas imported by William to the Clyde. With A. M. & Co., Connal maintained a range of transactions between 1844 and 1854, the annual totals varying around £10,000. *100 Glasgow Men*, i, 87-90; *AMA*, Sales Ledger 'O', Wholesale, 1841-54.

now and then sell a few hundreds better than the Bank but seldom to any extent. And buyers are very shy birds everywhere and the Bank always of course pitches the rate at the best for themselves and worse for buyers. So when you offer at the Bank's rate, they turn up their noses at it because they all think themselves clever enough to get a better rate than the Bank's rate, and if you are obstinate and won't sell, you are generally, as I am now, left in the lurch. I will try to get 4s. 6½. or 6½d. tomorrow but doubt it. The sellers are so numerous.

9 o'clock :

Finished dinner; confound the exchange, it had almost run away with my appetite. It is worth ½d. or 1% at any time to get the thing finished and have your mind at rest.

As to the Congous per *Magellan*, you say [chop] no. 2 is your favourite; Ewart also makes it good and so does Thompson. It only shows what differences exist about the qualities of tea. One or two people here laughed at me when I bought it and have ever since asked me with a sneer what the 'malty burnt one', as they call it, had sold for. Of course I keep them in the same opinion still; the worse they think of it the better, as we may get something of the same kind all the cheaper next time. But I must say it has improved on the passage, as it had a very high burnt flavour when bought which was objectionable, and if I could be sure that flavour would leave as it has done in the chop in question, I would pick up a good many of the same sort next year. But there is the rub! But it is likely they may go dearer this year as other people must have found that they answered as well as me; we'll see. They seem to be a new kind at home; both Thompson and a Liverpool circular particularly mention them and that favourably.

I am glad [chop] nos. 2, 5, 7, and 14 are considered the best; it shows to me that at long and last I have found out the kinds wanted. If you will refer to a letter I sent Messrs J. R. & Co. you will see that I specified exactly those numbers as being the most saleable, for by the time I wrote that letter I had news of the *Clifton's* and other kinds and began to know the taste at home. The Monings<sup>1</sup> I see have gone quite out of taste (unless very fine)

<sup>1</sup> Moning: a medium priced kind of Congou, manufactured in the district of that name near the Poyang Lake in the province of Kiangsi.



and the Woopack,<sup>1</sup> as it is now called come into favour. [Chop] nos. 2, 5, 7 and 14 are all Woopack, all the rest Moning. I think the Monings myself the best tea by far, but my business is to buy the kinds that will pay best. I fear the Woopacks won't keep their ground for a long time. Doctors differ; I should just like to compare Ewart's and Thompson's valuations of [chop nos.] 7 and 14.

I am disappointed about [chop] no. 8, Souchong. In my opinion and in the opinion of three or four good judges it was the finest chop of the season. I think so still and [it] well may be, when your broker at home values a tea at 1s. 8d. and sells for 1s. 4d. ([chop] no. 14) and another at 1s. 4d. and sells at 1s. 8d. [chop] no. 7!!! The cargo altogether, as times go, has done well, and cargoes to the outports are worth more consideration than I thought. The teas seem so much more saleable, a great thing in my opinion.

Only think – page 9, my eye what a yarn! I cannot find any of the injunctions you mention regarding dividing the chops in your letters; however will try to remember it next time. I should have paid more attention to your remarks about the tarry flavour, but until I was quite aware of what the people in England called tarry, I could not tell which might be called tarry and which not. [Chop] no. 1 was the only one I made tarry, but now I know what is meant by tarry and will avoid them; however, one of the tarry ones, [chop] no. 3, seems to have paid better than any of the rest.

Now for my complaints – they are not grievous. All I want is that you would send me out full accounts of valuations and sales. I have none of my Souchong per *Monarch* or of Mr Schaw's per ditto, or of the *Walton's* or *Hardinge*; and unless John by mere chance had mentioned about the *Monarch* I would have been quite in the dark. It is of great value to me to have correct characters and prices of all I have sent or may send, and I would advise you, on a separate sheet from your letter, to give me full advices about them, as I have sometimes difficulty in picking out of your letter the valuations and sales, and sometimes don't get them at all. Besides, any remarks about their suitability etc. will always be acceptable.

Your advice about the loss of the ship does not seem quite correct; the *Alecto* you mentioned as lost, would appear from all the circulars to have arrived all right in Liverpool, and as to the 501,000 lbs.

<sup>1</sup> Woopack or Hopack: a medium priced kind of Congou.

Gunpowder lost, I can't make it much more than a fourth of that amount. The stock of Gunpowder will be large as the export is large; my hope and anchor is that the total green export will be moderate, Young Hyson especially, and no Twankay or very little, so I don't see what can be had but Canton Gunpowder, because the consumption of cheap and common green is large. Two or three years ago (see *China Mail*) export of Twankay was three million; now what is to supply its place this year? Nothing I can see but Canton Gunpowder. Maybe right, maybe wrong, Tls 12 to 13 is no great price. I only hope they won't take a dislike to the tea powder and rice in some of them, but I don't think they will, as they taste well and many must have been sold before you sent off your last letters and not a word of complaint about them.

My Liverpool circular says: 'we notice this year a new peculiar tea say middling Congou very strong, rough and pungent, full burnt malty Pekoe or black leaf Pekoe flavour, curled wiry high dried black leaf, and have realized 1s. 5d. to 1s. 7d., but we think in large quantities this price would not be supported' – very like your favourite [chop] no. 2. If you had 1s. 6d. for it now, it would have been a nice thing. Liverpool seems to have been a good market for middling kinds; 1s. 4d. for all [chop] no. 3 is not a bad price and leaves £1 per chest. What a pity it will be if exchange and freight rule high next season, now that I have got my eyes open to the kinds wanted.

The total green to the end of this month (April) shows a decrease of 530,000 lbs. I hope before end of June that [it] will still show a greater decrease, and I daresay it will as there is nothing in the market but Canton tea at a dear price and exchange is high. But if the Chinamen can't sell, they will lower the price, I fear. Still I have no doubt the export will be considerably under the consumption, say two million, besides two million short last year. Gunpowder shows an increase of 820,000, less say 120,000 lost, equals 700,000 lbs. overplus. Ours is to add to that and what else may be shipped before July; ours will be 250,000 lbs., guess other shipments at same, 250,000 lbs. Now say to end of April 700,000 lbs., add 500,000 lbs. for ours and other people's makes 1,200,000 lbs., from which of course we must deduct what [was] left last year in May and June, say 253,700 lbs., will equal 946,300 lbs., will leave

at end of June nearly 1,000,000 increase. Will the short supply of Twankay and Young Hyson balance that? I hope so, if not they have a good way to come down before they come to 10½d. which would well clear us.

If I had known they were going to ship so much green in March, I would have gone into Capers instead. They appear more safe, but the export of green was so short when I bought that it tempted, and I have no money left now to cut any capers with in the perfumery line, as I will have to keep about £2,000 of bank bills for the teas not going per *Dulius*.

I will have to draw next month against the documents per *Dulius* and as you see our joint account funds are over remitted, or will be when the tea is shipped, to the extent of £3,000 to £4,000. If you think the teas are going to pay, you might send out a few more thousands to keep the pot of that account boiling.

Please order, through Connal, Thompson to send me one of his circulars every mail – very useful, full advices, stock, arrivals and everything in them. In sending out credits, by the by, you may send out a few large amounts, sometimes they are wanted. In £20,000, say two or three £1,000s and five or six £500s. In remitting about £5,000, it would be better to let £500 be the largest, three or four of them, no more, say about four at most, that would be £2,000.

I am afraid exchange will rule high, the speculation at home is beginning to be felt out here and money wanted, rupees up to 2s. to 2s. ½d. Should the price come down, however, to about 1s. 9d. to 10d. [it may] be worth your while considering the matter. Invoices of tea and curios per next mail. I think the curios will do; don't know of anything having gone since our last parcel, and I always put on a long face when anybody asks me how they paid, at which they laugh and think they were too knowing to send any such trash.

Well, I have sold £1,000 at [4s.] 6½d., a good rate now. Bills at sight have brought the same and had I not by good luck got hold of the right party, would have had to take [4s.] 7d. – all through being too greedy at first. The tarry chops have all brought 1s. 4d. If we could get them at Tls 18 next year, they should do. Of course if the others are to be had at a tael or two dearer, they would



be the best bargain. In case the others should go dear, 1s. 4d. would be a good price for a Tls 18 tea. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Canton, 22 May 1850

I have yours of March and am glad at least to see that you are all well. Since my sojourn in China this last time I cannot recollect of a month that I have written in such low spirits as I fear I must write this month. Your business letters bring me intelligence that all the Canton Gunpowders I have bought may turn out unsaleable. I hope not, but still it would be a terrible thing. I have been counting up all the profits we have made, commissions and everything, and should they turn out unsaleable, we would be worse than when we began. However, surely it won't turn out so bad as all that. If they all do it was not my fault, because the last purchases I made I made altogether on the faith of advices received from yourselves and Messrs Ewart & Co. As for those which I shipped on my own account in November, I am quite willing to take all the blame and all the loss that may be sustained by them, and also quite willing to pay half the loss and take all the blame of the first £5,000 you sent out and which I invested in the same tea, because both of those I invested solely from my own ideas. But as for the second £5,000 you sent out and against which I advised having made purchases two months ago, those purchases I assure you were made entirely on receiving your letters and Messrs Ewart's.

I went down to Macao and stayed two months, determined that I would buy no more until I heard of both you and Ewart getting the samples I sent home, and getting your opinion and theirs as to buying any more of them. Well, your letters stated that we were going to make a great deal of money out of what I had sent, and that you hoped I had shipped 260,000 lbs. more in the month of January. Ewart gave me valuations giving at least 60 to 70% profit, told me they had seen the samples and that their market had a very firm aspect for all low priced green tea, and that if the exports from here did not exceed the consumption of 1849, I might depend on the same prices ruling all the year through.

Well both you and Ewart had had the samples a whole month

<sup>1</sup> Part of ms torn out; letter incomplete.

beside you, surely sufficient time to examine them; and of course I thought, on receiving such advices, that there was nothing for me but to go into the market and buy all I could at or near the same price. And that I did, and I don't blame myself; to have acted otherwise would have been altogether too cautious. You may remember I wrote you that I would not buy any more until I got out your ideas of what I had done.

However, it may not turn out so bad as may be anticipated. I have got the Chinamen to take back about 850 boxes and Hallam bought 400 off me. I think I will be able to get about 1,000 to 1,500 given back besides those, so that will bring down the number. However, in the present state of things I won't ship more than 5,000 to 6,000 boxes; as for the others, I will rather leave them here and try to get rid of them the best way I can. California market may take a few and perhaps the Chinamen may take some back at a discount of one or two taels. However, if they are going to turn out unsaleable, it would be folly to ship them and incur all the expenses, so for the remainder I will wait and see how things are going to do. One thing in their favour may be this, the advices received out here this mail will terrify people from shipping any more, and as there will be soon very few or none shipped you may get rid of them to mix with other kinds, because they are true tea but only 'small tea' made into shape.

What a pity it will be if anything should happen now; especially when we were doing so well before, every chop leaving a little and sometimes a good deal, and after I have gone into such a nice cool house and keeping my health so well. However, you have yourselves to blame entirely for the last purchases; and if all the former ones pay themselves, I think I am little to blame, though of course will be sorry for, and must suffer, the loss. There is many a slip betwixt the cup and the lip. We may and I hope will get out a little better than all this.

I will take precious good care next time to have everything in my favour and believe nobody before I ship largely of any one kind. I had an idea all along that something would turn up against them; for I have always observed that when I thought a thing was sure to do uncommonly well, it very often turned out all smoke. However, the people here were all shaking hands with me and

saying I had made a fortune, and especially after it was known out here that all the *Magellan's* cargo had gone off. Some people (tea tasters) offered me £5,000 profit on the Gunpowders, all said I would make 50% on them. What a pity it will be if after it has been thought we were doing so well, a cloud should come over us. But let the worst come to the worst, I think we shall still have enough of profit to pay all the loss. Better say nothing to Richardsons about it, as it might make them lose confidence, and if they trust me with anything this year, I will be doubly anxious to make it pay and I think I will. . . .

So you lost the law plea.<sup>1</sup> You say it is a good thing that the teas have been paying. I hope next year to make you as much as £3,000 out of Congous and Souchongs. I know now what is wanted. I have been well, some people say getting fat. However, a few more letters like your last would soon make me thin. I am glad to hear that you were all well, for after all that is the greatest blessing.

William to Andrew Melrose and Company

Canton, 19 June 1850

I beg to acknowledge receipt of your letters of April with their enclosures:

For joint account of yourselves and Messrs J. R. & Co.	£30,000
For joint account of yourselves and Messrs R. Schaw & Co.	£10,000
For account of William Melrose	£3,000
	<hr/>
Total	£43,000

<sup>1</sup> The case of *A. M. & Co. v Robert Hastie & Co.*, merchants in Glasgow, and Duncan Ferguson & Co., agents in Greenock, involved Melrose's claim for the delivery of 591 bags of sugar from defendants. In June 1843 Melrose purchased the sugar from Hastie through J. Bowie & Co., brokers. After Melrose had made part payment to the brokers, the original owner of the sugar sold the goods to the second defendant and the brokers went bankrupt. Thereupon, the defendants refused delivery and Melrose instigated litigation. The case lasted from 1847 to 1854 ending with a loss to Melrose amounting to several thousand pounds sterling. *Edinburgh Advertiser*, 22 Mar. 1850; *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, 25 Mar. 1850; AMA, State of Accounts between the late Andrew Melrose of Glencorse and Messrs A. M. & Co., 1855, fos. 45-47.

I wrote to you last month that I would make a shipment per *Lancastrian*. I now beg to hand you bill of lading and invoice for the same, also duplicate invoice of *Dulius* shipment of teas, and second copy of *Dulius* bill of lading for curiosities, also second copy of a bill of lading for some small boxes etc. per *Earl of Chester* shipped on my own account.

You will observe I have shipped fewer boxes per *Lancastrian* than I intended when I last addressed you; since that time, as you will see from my private letter to Mr Simpson, a good many of the boxes have been disposed of in a different manner. There still remain a few thousand which I will keep for a little until I hear further from you.

On other side you will find particulars of National Bank credits sold this month for joint account A. M. & Co. & Wm. M.

5 bills of £300 each at 4s. 7d.	£1,500
1 bill of £100 at 4s. 7d.	[£100]
1 bill of £100 at 4s. 6¾d.	[£100]
Total	£1,700

£1,100 remain of the last £5,000 remitted on our joint account. For the boxes bought and unshipped the amount would not be sufficient to pay for them; and if you have not remitted any funds for that account since the £5,000, I hope soon after receipt of this you will be good enough to send out as much as enable me to clear them off, say £1,000. This will prevent me drawing on you for the amount at an unfavourable exchange compared with the rates your bank credits fetch, and also enable me to make shipments of them to any other quarter of the world should they turn out unsaleable in England.

The new Congos are down, but nothing has yet been done. My private letters contain my ideas about them. Assuring you that all the commissions and instructions mentioned in your letters will have every attention. . . .

Canton, 20 June 1850

I have yours of 22 April and I am glad to see that you are all so well. Many thanks for the portrait you have sent out. It is an excellent

one and as like you as life. I got a start when I opened the lid. I showed it to young Smith the other day when he came to see me, he said he could not tell whether it was like or not as he did not remember your face; but he said, 'there is a look about that eye as if it knew devilish well what the price of Congou should be'.

I spent a very restless month from the time I sent away my last letters until I got yours of April. I am glad to see you have got off so many Gunpowders. Surely what had arrived before your last letter left will also go off, and from both Mr Simpson's and Ewart's letters I have great hopes that they will. As for the rest we must just get through with them the best way we can. We can't expect profits without some losses. I am going to send samples of some of the boxes I have not shipped yet to Manila, to the friends you lately recommended, Constable Wood & Co.<sup>1</sup> Can be no harm in hearing their opinion of them. I will be glad to get rid of them at cost or a little below that. You will see from my letter to Mr Simpson that I have got rid of a good many at a small sacrifice, for reasons I have mentioned in my letter to him. I have little doubt but that you will approve of what I have done, but whether or not, I can only say I have acted for best, both for your own interest and mine.

I feel highly gratified by the confidence you place in me in remitting so large an amount of funds, and I need not say that I will try to merit it by using every endeavour to invest them well for you. The new Congous are down and I have been busy tasting. I don't think people will be in a great hurry to open the market this year. Exchange is high and fine Congou in little repute at home, and people seem very careless about what price they might go at.

Hallam says the market won't open for a month and is going down to Macao. I am sorry he has been poorly again and is so now; I don't think he has been quite well for the last eight or nine months. I am afraid he did not take a long enough stay at home. He was complaining last November but appeared to have got all right again. I had a long crack with him today; he is thin and looks sick, but appeared in as good spirits as ever.

It is getting hot out here now, however we have reason to be thankful, as we have had scarcely any hot weather before this for

<sup>1</sup> Constable Wood & Co.; not identified.



the last nine months; even on the 8th or 9th of this month a northerly wind set in and it felt quite cold. We have had a cold winter and cool spring, but of course must expect a month or two hot weather now.

I think I wrote you that I had got into a China house, formerly occupied by Jardines (Mounsey was in it), fronting the river, and I am well pleased with it; it is worth any money in this hot weather. I never go into the houses in the factories but I wonder how it was possible for me to get through the summer before when I was in Jamieson's. I can't bear to stay half an hour in them now, and the place I have got feels so cool when I get home that I am almost afraid the change might give me a cold. I have got it all matted over to keep it from the sun in the day, and in the evenings when they do not get a breath of wind in their hot bedrooms in the factories, I have a fine breeze here all night, enough to blow all the lamps out, so that I rarely feel the least oppression from the heat. Before, I remember, it used to be in the old factories quite 'wearing out', as they say. I think it must be much healthier; I know I have been very well in it at all events.

I have read all the speeches about Liberty of Speech, and capital speeches they are. The Provost<sup>1</sup> and Law seem to have made a sad mistake. One would have thought the very name *public* meeting would have shown that it was free to all to speak.<sup>2</sup> If they only wanted their own friends to speak they should have made it a

<sup>1</sup> Sir William Johnston of Kirkhitt, Kt., Lord Provost of Edinburgh 1848-51.

<sup>2</sup> The controversy arose out of a public meeting in Edinburgh on 8 Apr. 1850, organized under the auspices of the Lord Provost to oppose a Bill proposed in the House of Commons to legalize marriage with a deceased wife's sister. Before the meeting, W. C. Sleigh, a London barrister, and Thomas Russell, an Edinburgh ironmonger, requested permission to speak against the purpose of the meeting. When the Lord Provost granted them only the right to attend but not to speak, large placards were circulated several hours before the meeting that called on men of Edinburgh to 'thwart the attempt to check freedom of discussion'. At the meeting the disruption instigated by Sleigh and his followers was so great that they were removed by the police. At the subsequent trial on 10 Apr., at which Bailie Law was the presiding judge, the Lord Provost chief witness, and Sleigh his own counsel, there was much legal wrangling 'frequently interrupted by applause and marks of disapprobation' and the disrupters were fined. On the evening after the trial another public meeting was held at the Brighton Street Church in support of Sleigh and Russell and for several days afterwards the controversy was continued among writers of letters to editors of local newspapers. *Scotsman*, 10, 13 Apr. 1850; *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, 11, 15, 18 Apr. 1850.

private or selected meeting, *called* it so, and then they might have insisted on what they liked. I was glad to see other people came forward so willingly to show their disapprobation. Dr Renton's letter is a very pithy one. Hoping this may find you all well.

William to Mr Simpson

Canton, 17 July 1850

I have received your May letters with their enclosures of the seconds of the £43,000 remitted per previous mail. Nothing has been done yet in Congou and no appearance of anything going to be done for some time. The mail leaves on the 21st or 22nd from this; and though rather early to begin to write, as I have nothing much to do, having seen most of the teas, I may as well let you know what I have been doing.

Since my last to you, I have got clear of 1,500 more of the boxes of Gunpowder, which has eased my mind considerably; so I must now have got clear of 5,550 altogether. The loss will be less than I anticipated, say from \$700 to \$800, which no doubt you will at once see, from exchange having gone up since they were bought, is in reality no loss at all. To sell bills against them now at the high rate would make them cost at least all the apparent loss more than they would have done at the rate they were purchased at. And although it must appear on the wrong side of our joint account, still it is only an imaginary loss after all.

But be that as it may, I have no doubt you are only too glad to think I have got so well out of so many of them, and I am beginning to think with you now, that they may not, as you say in yours of 24th, ruin us altogether after all the fright we have both got. When I look back on the number I have got rid of, I can scarcely believe I have got off so many, especially if you take into consideration the great distaste which prevails against these teas out here. They are out here unsaleable. People are so warned against them in their letters from England that I could buy them now at Tls 7 to 8, so you may easily guess the labour and anxiety I have had before I could get them off from Tls 11 to 13½!! But thank goodness they are gone (if they don't kick and come back again). I would not go through the same bother and trouble again for the commission

on two cargoes, and I can say with a clear conscience that I have not forced any man to take back an ounce against his will. All has been fair and above board. I have dealt with the same Chinamen for a good many years and they have given me a good deal of help in this scrape to their own loss. (About 1,800 boxes remain which I will try to ship as broken stowage at £2 10s.) I have got a taste of buying unsaleable teas which I will remember for some time.

The rate of exchange is not fixed yet. It was the opinion of most people during the month that it would be worse this month; but as no sales of Congou have taken place and none likely for some weeks, there cannot be very many bills offering and it should be better for sellers. We will see. Should it come down this month and the market open before next mail goes, the pressure of bills in the market may send it up again and it might be better to sell a few in anticipation at a good rate.

I cannot see the force of your argument about Murrow's account. You admit you corresponded with him but as you never saw him you say you have no legal claim on him. You may never have seen Jardine & Co. or Russell & Co. but still I should think transactions carried on with them by correspondence quite binding and legal. You further say your only legal claim is upon me because I introduced him to you. If you have any promise of mine that I would be security for any losses you might sustain both by him and by me, of course you have a claim on me for all; but I had no idea of being responsible for more than my own share. I have lost about £1,500 or more with him already and I certainly wish Jamieson How & Co. had never introduced me. Other people had introductions to him and have lost too. You accepted the bills and took charge of the goods from him (Murrow) and in my opinion your only legal course would be to come on him for the whole and he comes on me for my share and which, he being in my debt, I would not require to pay; so that legally speaking I am not bound to pay a farthing, and business is business and friendship friendship. But of course I consider myself in honour bound to pay my own share, but no more. Or, as I hate disagreements, I have no objection to settle it by paying my own half or share and half of Murrow's share of loss besides, with the understanding, should ever Murrow pay it, you pay me

back. But if this won't do, then leave it to arbitration, or I will be quite content to let Robinson<sup>1</sup> the writer decide it, providing you agree to the same. State the case yourselves and show him correspondence.

20 July:

Exchange is about the same as last month. I sold £100 of our joint account National to pay house rent etc. at 4s. 7d. That leaves exactly now £1,000 of the last £5,000 (National joint account) unsold, and there still remain 1,850 boxes of Gunpowder and Capers to ship and pay for out of it. They will amount to above \$6,000 so that I have not enough to pay for them; must draw for the balance I suppose and get the account up to the last £10,000 (or two £5,000s) squared off. It is lucky I have been able to get taken back so many; otherwise, not having bank bills to pay for them, I would have been forced to draw on you for the whole 5,500 boxes, and bills with documents would not have fetched a better rate than 4s. 8½d. - 6 to 7% higher than when the teas were bought. So look at it in whatever light you can, there must have been a loss on them: ship them, and you pay 6% more to get the dollars to pay for them; sell them here, and buyers would say, we must have them 6% cheaper as exchange is just to that extent more unfavourable than when you bought. So we have got rid of teas in reality at cost which might have turned out unsaleable at home and are now next to unsaleable here. Had I to do it over again, I am sure I could not get them off at two or three times the loss. I only hope none of them will be for repudiating them; but I don't think they can as I have made it as secure as possible.

By the by, don't forget to give me always a distinct note of characters of teas, remarks etc., especially sales; half an hour on the day you post your letter would do it. You may easily imagine how anxious a person out here is to know at first glance what sales have been made during the month. You did not mention in your last what prices the *Euphrates'* Gunpowders and Capers brought. I think I can make out from your letter that the Capers sold at 10½d., but can't be sure, and the only mention you make of the Gunpowder is to say that Littledale had advised of the sale of 'the last 150 *Euphrates* at 1s. ¾d.'; but as to what the others brought I am

<sup>1</sup> Robinson: not identified.

in the dark. As for the others which went to London on joint account, you say 200 of [chop mark] A/2 per *Charlotte Jane* had sold at 1s.  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. and that you had accepted an offer for 2,650 boxes Gunpowder at 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. — that accounted for 2,850 boxes, but there were another 1,000 of which I have no advice except from Maccaughey. I have no doubt you imagined that it would be of little value to me to know the particulars, or you would have sent them; but I assure you there is nothing I would like to know better, and I like to note down in my Invoice Book what each chop has fetched (so many chests of mark so and so, sold at so and so).

There are still 1,800 of these confounded boxes to ship yet. I had reckless and desperate thoughts at one time, after receiving your ideas of them and before I had got clear of so many, of sending some to California, Sydney, etc. But now since you have got off such a lot and I have got off a good many, I think the best way will be to ship the remainder and let them take their chance. Low priced common greens cannot be plentiful when they arrive. The consumption of green under 1s. a pound in Britain must be six or seven million and no Twankay has gone this year and not much common young Hyson; a great deal of Gunpowder certainly but then a good deal or most of it costs above 1s., 1s. 2d. to 1s. 4d. and upwards.

I cannot see what all along could have made you so anxious to have common Congou shipped. You could not expect a farthing profit on them. Your quotations for common until the rise [in prices] in January was 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. to 9d.; now the lowest out of condition stuff you could get here was bringing Tls 12, exchange 4s. 5d., before any was to be had at that price; so they would have cost 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. to 10d. and brought 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ ! Now I think Canton Gunpowders, bad as they are, much better than that, and on an average what has sold must pay well, and as soon as news of the rise in January came out here, common Congous rose. They wanted as high as Tls 16 for some common and it is well known all the common Congous bought at that time will in all probability leave serious loss. Even your own London circulars have all some remark in about the imprudence of having bought Congous on the January advices. Wetmores out here shipped a cargo of them costing Tls 15 and upwards I hear, exchange 4s. 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ d., and may now expect 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. for them and a nice loss that will be.

Nothing as yet done here in Congou. I never saw the foreigners so firm. Some of the chops are fine flavoured and as you guess few tarry amongst them. It is a wonder they have not tempted some weak but passionate judge of the leaf to surrender to their charms; but all the blandishments and lures they have laid out have proved quite unavailing, and the 'smellums', as they are elegantly called out here, have shown more stoicism than I ever thought they were possessed of. But at Shanghai the virgin leaf has either had more potent charms or, from the effects of the colder climate or some other cause not yet ascertained, the power of resistance on the part of the 'smellums' has been much less than down in this more enervating latitude, and (cracky! what a long letter you are in for again!) *mirabile dictu!* [they] have taken for better and for worse 50 chops, and which, from the samples I have seen of them, I doubt will be difficult of digestion.

The best of the chops settled up there costs Tls 23 or 23½ – the others from Tls 14½ to 22. The Tls 23 one has a good leaf but not much else to recommend it and can't hold a candle to the good chops down here, and would be ranked down here as second to third class in taste. One chop, I believe, has sold at Tls 14½ and some five or six at Tls 15½, good common Congou. I have not tasted them but got a glance of them in Turner's tea room and they appeared to me light and perhaps in liquor rather flavoury kinds – blackish and reddish leaves, Souchong kind, little burnt.

I heard from the person who had got the samples and advices down that Lindsay & Co. had bought those cheap priced ones (the Tls 15½ ones) for shipment to the Clyde. I have this moment written to that party to ask him if he thought dependence was to be placed on what he told me about the chops bought being for the Clyde and his answer says 'our Shanghai folks advise: "the *Nonpareil* about 250 tons will be loaded by Lindsay & Co. for the Clyde on owner's account"'. And I daresay it is true. The five or six chops I saw as having been bought by Lindsay there would fill a 250 ton vessel, and unless large supplies are left unsold out of the *Sappho* and *Queen*, not much I should think could be feared from the *Nonpareil*. They don't appear to me the tea for Scotland unless the taste has greatly changed, which may be the case; but I should

think a blackish wiry leaf without tar, of course, but with strength or on the Hong Moi kind, more suitable than those fresh light flavoured kinds of Lindsays.

It is the opinion of everybody here that the Shanghai teas are dear at present exchange – Tls 15½ must cost 1s.; and it is the opinion that better tea in London and Liverpool can be bought than them for much less. Tls 23½ will cost nearly 1s. 5d.; rather high for a second class Congou. Your last advices of the very low price for fine Congou has done much good here. Offers were out last month of Tls 24 and 25 until your letters were received, and now no one talks of more than Tls 23; but competition will raise it higher than that I should think. At Shanghai the mail from England had not arrived, and it is expected that blackish leaf will immediately begin to look rather blue on receipt of your May letters there.

I am beginning to think Scented Orange Pekoes, if had cheap, might pay. Up to 31 December [1849], say from 1 July to 31 December, 1,786,000 lbs. had gone to England. Now, all the ships up to 31 December, that is all the ships that sailed betwixt 1 July and 31 December, are in, and consequently all the Orange Pekoe they contained is also in, and your stocks do not appear in England any larger but much about the same as the year before. Now, for the next seven months after 31 December, or from 31 December to say 1 August [1850] – or to be safe, say six months, 1 January to 1 June – only 664,000 lbs. has left. So one would naturally suppose if in six months 1,786,000 lbs. arrives in England and must be consumed, as no excess of stock is seen, and if only 664,000 lbs. goes in for the next six months, and the consumption averages the same, that the stock must fall off exactly the difference betwixt 1,786,000 lbs. and 664,000 lbs. – say 1,122,000 lbs., if my calculation is correct. You can see per *China Mail*: export to 31 December 1,786,000 lbs., and the total export for the year [1 July 1849–1 July 1850] is, say, 2,450,000 lbs., or 1,786,000 for the first six months and 664,000 for the next. The 1,786,000 is all in and yet your stock in London is only about 23,000 over last year at the same time. Good about Tls 17, and common about Tls 15, should be safe, they would leave a margin and besides have the chance of rising in price, much better than a chance of falling. I'll think

about it. I should like to get the balances on the old accounts remitted.

Mr Maccaughey wrote me some time ago that he had heard that Jardines were tired of sending tea to Leith and it looks as if it were true from their sending the *Sappho* to the Clyde. So in event of my sending a cargo to Cork, should the Clyde be full, Leith might still be open.

By the time this reaches you, you will have got in all the prompts on my account and you might if you have time give me a jotting of how the account looks. You advised me before of £2,006 share of profit carried to it on shipments up to the *Prouse*. There are I think some small shipments more before the Gunpowders commence. I suppose you won't be able to square up the joint until all the Gunpowders are shipped and all the bills in and paid against them, which won't be for some time. I am trying to get them off as broken stowage. As soon as I can, I will ship them and draw for whatever small balance may be due, give you a note of all charges against them and then you can square off the account to the end of the last £5,000 on joint account.

Many thanks to Mrs Simpson for her kind offers of help for the sale [of the] curios. I don't think you can do better than address my letters to Messrs Jamieson Edger & Co. as they always forward them immediately to Canton for me, and even should anything happen to prevent them receiving them, they would easily find me, as they would come to Canton and anybody in Canton would know where to send them.

22nd July:

I have nothing to add and daresay you think I have said quite enough. Exchange keeps very firm, is, I hear, rather higher than yesterday. Bank rate 4s. 7d.; first rate credits Barings 4s. 8d. I hear, and difficult of sale. I am afraid should the market open and there be many anxious sellers it will go higher; but we must buy cheap and take our chance. People would surely now rather [remit] in bills at 4s. 8d. than buy tea, unless very cheap. How would it do to send out a few boxes of dollars? But I doubt it would do, interest, freight, insurance etc. would make them cost too high, besides you would require to get the 'Spanish Carolus'<sup>1</sup> which may be

<sup>1</sup> Spanish Carolus: a silver dollar coin widely circulated in China.



difficult to be had. It is a blessing so many of the Gunpowders have been got rid of, on both sides. I send you duplicate of part of my last month's letter and now conclude, hoping you are all well.

Canton, 22 July 1850

I received yours of May early this month, on the 11th. I was sorry to hear that you had been out of sorts, but as both Mr Simpson and Eliza assure me that it was nothing serious, I trust you got quite well again soon after you wrote. I wonder you never try a little black sugar<sup>1</sup> in the forenoon. I know people laugh at me for recommending it and especially the doctors, but I don't mind that as I know, whatever effect it may have on other people, it always has a very renovating effect on me. I tried it first in George Street when I used to be weighing myself every day and to my great astonishment at a week's end found myself eight or nine pounds heavier, and I repeated the experiment once or twice with the same result. Twice in China I tried it and it had the same effect.

The last time was when on board the steamer going home and under the surgeon's charge. I left China as thin as anyone could be reduced to, almost, but had great hopes the sea air would soon make me all right. However, I got nearly down to Singapore without knowing any difference on myself, desperately thin and yellow and weak, as you may guess I was after lying in bed a whole summer and one of the hottest I can remember. I began to get impatient at not getting better and said to the doctor, if I could only lay hold of some black sugar I would soon show you a different man; at which of course he laughed, but said it was a simple thing and if I could get it I might humour myself by eating it as I thought it would do me good. Well, we arrived at Singapore and I being under his charge went on shore with him and by chance the first store we visited had a glass bottle full of fine 'Solazzi'.<sup>2</sup> I very soon bought up the whole stock, at which he had another laugh and advised me to buy a stick only. I said to him, now if in seven

<sup>1</sup> Black sugar was the name commonly used in Scotland for Spanish juice or Spanish liquorice. It was a hard black stick, five or six inches long, made of a black inspissated extract obtained from boiling and pressing liquorice roots.

<sup>2</sup> Solazzi, also Liquorice, Corigliano, etc., a brand of Italian liquorice juice, celebrated for generations in Britain. It was made of the pure juice of the liquorice plant with the addition of a little gummy matter to give the stick its polish.

days you see a great difference on me, will you believe that it is from the black sugar. He said, Oh yes. In seven days after, I was quite out of his hands save for dressing my ear, and could scarcely get my clothes to button to the astonishment of both him and the other passengers. I always keep some of it beside me so that should I get down I may apply to it. I used to take from about a third to half stick every forenoon, but it must be in the open air with a little exercise. So much for black sugar, which I daresay you will have a good laugh at too, as being a whim of mine. If it is, it is a feeding one.

I am thankful to observe you have got off so many of the Gunpowders. I have been enabled, as you will see from Mr Simpson's letter, to get off a good many too; although apparently at a loss, it is in reality no loss as exchange has risen so much since they were bought that, either to have shipped them or sold them, there must have been the difference in exchange for us to lose from its turning against us. But had the loss been three times what it is, I would rather have borne it than shipped tea that might have turned out unsaleable, increased by charges, especially when I had bought so many of them as 1,100 to 1,200 boxes. It has been hard work for me to get them off as nobody will look at them here now at any price.

I have had an anxious time of it for the last two months. When the January mail came out with news of the rise in Gunpowder, everybody I met used to be congratulating me on my good fortune; some would be saying I would find I had made a fortune a month or two hence; others offered me 30 to 50% profit on them. Two months after that, out came your letters saying you had never thought of looking at the samples, but that now they had arrived you had found out that it was likely they might turn unsaleable. Here was a change! The very people who had congratulated me before now seemed to ask if, instead of making a fortune, I would not be altogether ruined. I often thought of your Bohea speculation long ago and thought that there might be a way out of the wood after all. I have got a terrible fright, I am even afraid now some of the people at home may be trying to repudiate them, as Mr Simpson wrote me the mail before last one buyer wanted to do so. However, if we get out scathless excepting the fright, I will be content enough.

The fright will do good if Shakespeare is right when he says 'sweet are the uses of adversity',<sup>1</sup> and at least it will make me look well before I buy very common tea again.

I will have the room made all comfortable for you before you arrive and I hope you will find it cool. I went into Turner's tea room the other day to see some of the Shanghai samples but it was terribly hot; the sun was coming right down the skylight. I looked at two or three of them but said it was so hot I could not stay in it any longer. Their tea taster said, you're quite right, young Thorburn<sup>2</sup> when he was in here one day got a stroke of the sun and had to get his head blistered afterwards, so I took good care not to go back again. But when Thorburn was in, the shade was not drawn so it must have been much hotter than when I was in. But my house is cool in comparison and a fine breeze generally through it all day. Although it is but a poor China one, and not very big, yet it is as comfortable as any of the factory ones and more than most of them, and that is the great thing out here. I can get no more to say. I have just a line to write to Eliza and then send them all off. Hoping you are well.

William to Andrew Melrose and Company

Canton, 22 July 1850

I have your letters of May and beg to acknowledge receipt of seconds of the bills received last month to the amount of £43,000.

I have little to advise this mail. The market here still remains unopened although about 380 chops are down. Exchange keeps high and that, with the low prices for fine Congou at home, makes foreigners very cautious in their offers. About fifty chops however have been settled at Shanghai, for further particulars about which I beg to refer you to my letter to Mr Simpson. I have to advise having sold no. 25/193 one bill of £100 National on joint account A. M. & Co. and W. M. at 4s. 7d. — no purchase to advise. I enclose duplicate invoice of *Lancastrian's* shipment and also second copy bill of lading for same.

<sup>1</sup> *As You Like It*, Act II, scene i, 12.

<sup>2</sup> Thorburn returned to China with his wife on 8 July 1851 from Southampton; below, p. 167.

William to Mr Simpson

[c. 21 August 1850]

*Old Account*

Messrs A. M. &amp; Co. and Messrs J. R. &amp; Co. jointly

DR 1850 August

To shipment of 180 boxes (O.G.) per <i>Superb</i>	\$1,067.89
Insurance on same, £8 18s. 6d. at 5s. 4d.	33.47

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\$1,101.36

CR 1850 August

By old balance \$1,011.30By interest from 1 Dec. to 1 Aug. at 8% 53.92By insurance on (O.G.) 180 boxes per *Superb* 33.47By allowance to balance up account 2.76

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\$1,101.36*New Account*

1850 August

DR

To shipment per *Superb*  
\$9,636.50

To insurance on same \$302.38

CR

By drew for insurance on  
shipment per *Superb*  
£80 12s. 8d. at 5s. 4d. \$302.38  
By Union Bank credits

I send you above a sketch of your account and J. R. & Co. to prevent any confusion. In another letter I send you particulars of *Superb's* shipment. I send samples of all the purchases. [Chop] no. 4, 900 half chests Scented Orange Pekoe I have engaged tonnage for in the *Forfarshire*, a fast vessel now loading. Of those per *Superb* the invoices etc. will give you all particulars.

The market opened here a few days ago at Tls 24½ for second class Congou. I had selected about ten chops as first class, full Pekoe Souchong flavour, and immediately offered Tls 25 for a good many of them, which I thought quite high enough to be safe, but they went off quickly at Tls 25½ to 26 and 26½. When I found that was the case, I offered for (sample no. 1 canister) the half chests bought Tls 25¾ and after great difficulty got it, from so many offers being

made for it. The Chinaman from whom I have bought it, I know, pays Tls 26 to the teaman for it; they often do this at the beginning of the season merely to get a name. I make it as fine in liquor as any chop this year, full, rich, Pekoe Souchong; but in leaf not so good. By the time I got this one settled they were nearly all gone and those that were left they wanted a higher price for – Tls 26 to 27 – which was altogether beyond my ideas, Tls 25 being the highest I thought safe (half chests of course worth a little more).

However, there was one, the worst of the ten chops I had selected as first class, for which they inclined to be more reasonable. I offered Tls 24½ for it and got it (sample no. 2 canister). It is nice flavoured tea and strong, tastes nearly as well as any of them, but in leaf is rather inferior for a first class tea. The really fine teas this year are nearly all of an inferior leaf. I only make three or four chops really fine in leaf and liquor; a great many of the fine wiry-leaved chops are, if not tarry, verging on it, and I was afraid to touch them, besides they do not taste so well as the Pekoe Souchong ones. So I thought it better to sacrifice leaf and take the best tasted ones. I am afraid you will think the Tls 24½ one dear but it was the only one I could get anything reasonable of the good ones left. There is one or two left yet which might now be settled cheaper, say Tls 25, but then exchange has gone up so much that it makes them in reality no cheaper. Tls 23 would be safe for them now as exchange has gone up and as I have already got two chops. I will watch them but won't be tempted if not reasonable, because there is always a risk of high priced tea. You may make them fine but tastes differ, and if not made fine when they arrive, there is £1 a chest loss at once.

Sample no. 3 canister I only settled about ten minutes ago at Tls 18½; good black leaf, strong, and a little Pekoe flavour, little burnt, say cost 1s. 2d. This is safer kind of tea to buy than those Tls 25 and 26 ones. I think it cheap. There are so many chops just verging on the tarry it is difficult to tell what may be called tarry at home. I don't think no. 3 is in the least tarry. It has a little burnt Pekoe flavour, perhaps a little smoky. Beside a Souchong or Pekoe Souchong tea, a real true Pekoe flavoured tea appears tarry; and a real Pekoe flavour, again, beside a tarry Congou appears nearly Pekoe Souchong flavour. And this year, being warned so strongly

against tar and there being so few real Pekoe Souchong flavour, I find it rather difficult navigating and am very timorous in buying anything not of Souchong kind, and I think there are many [chops] true Pekoe flavour I am afraid to touch.

I bought the two high priced chops in case it might be advisable to send a cargo to the Clyde; and as all your letters recommend that a few fine should make a portion of the cargo, I thought it better to secure two chops before they had all gone. Of course you know it is always impossible in this market to buy fine and common or even middling at the same time. At the opening of the market the price of kinds of Congou is high, and as the season gets older the price gets lower until nothing but very common is left in it. So the only plan to get a cargo of different qualities is to buy your fine and keep it until the price comes down low enough to buy the rest. This year, as the market has been longer of opening than it has for many years, prices will come down more rapidly as there are so many chops in the market – in fact you may say all the crop. I think as we have now three chops I had better wait and see if I can make up a cargo, and if not, I must just ship them in detail. We cannot lose much by shipping them in detail this year as two vessels have been loaded: one an American clipper, the *Oriental*, expected to make the passage in three to four months at months freight by her £6(!); and another considered very fast, the *Astarte*, is loading at £5.

I will try now, I think, to get a small cargo off quickly if possible. I don't think much good can be done by waiting this year. Every house out here has had orders to look out for teas about 1s. to 1s. 4d., and I think there will be such a competition for those kinds this year that the chances are prices will be kept up too high to admit of getting any of them to pay. You see, none of the large houses here have begun to buy yet: Russells doing nothing yet, Lindsays nothing, Jardine a little and Dent very little. No doubt as soon as prices come down a little, all of those houses will be ready to open out and perhaps the good and fine kinds, for which there has been less competition, may turn out the best bargains; but on the other hand, the quotations at home give so little encouragement to send good that it seems precarious, especially at this high exchange. Must think about it, and take advantage of circumstances.

What with selling bills and examining chops and Chinamen coming in, I cannot settle down to write you as fully as I could wish. You will observe that I have sold a large quantity of bills: £4,500 National at 4s. 7½d., £500 Union at 4s. 7½d., £6,000 Union at 4s. 8¼d. The £4,500 National and £500 Union were bought by a Parsee as a remittance for opium. He did not know the 'Union' and it was with great difficulty I got him to take the £500. (Parsees are always limited to certain paper.) I hope they will get acquainted with the Union by and by and sometimes give me a good rate.

The Bank this time pitched its rate at 4s. 7½d., nominal I suppose; at least at so bad a rate as to show they had no wish to draw but were buyers, which was the case. Bank of England notes at sight were done largely at 4s. 7d. to 7¼d. and Baring's credits at 4s. 8¾d., and some at anything they could get. The Bank rate here is no criterion, but it does us good sometimes for when they don't want to draw or sell they fix their rate so low as deter people from buying, or, if they do buy, buy at a very dear rate. Now it sometimes happens that Parsees want my bills and they regulate their rate sometimes by the Bank (if other Bank paper is not in the market). This time it answered me well with the Nationals. The Bank pitching its rate so low and the Parsee, wanting them, offered me at once ¼d. less for the three months interest (they say interest at home now is 2½% - at that rate three months sight bills are little more than half-a-farthing better than six months sight).

[August 1850]:<sup>1</sup>

With the Unions I was not so lucky. I offered them everywhere and circulated them, but could not get a bid of 4s. 8d. At last at the eleventh hour the Bank took them at 8¼d. I sold £6,000 to pay up to all bought on your account joint with J. R. & Co., as you advise me to sell as soon after purchasing as possible. Sample no. 3 canister Congou I only bought about an hour ago, and sent in to the Bank to see if they would take £2,000 more but they would not. I asked the manager of the other what he could offer for them and he made an offer 8¾d(!) which of course I did not take.

I got by good luck the Chinamen to take back 250 boxes of the imitation Capers, and the 100 boxes in *Superb* are all that are to go. I have also got rid of 268 boxes of Gunpowder, the Tls II chop

<sup>1</sup> Handwriting indicates this to be Andrew Melrose's own note.

(500 in *Dulius* [chop] A/8), terrible trash. So now there only remains 320 to be shipped and I am in hopes of getting it in the *Somnauth* at £2 10s. per ton. So out of all the 12,000 cattie, by perseverance and hard work I have got off 6,500 boxes of tea out here quite unsaleable; I can hardly believe it when I look back on the 12,000. It only shows what it is to have one out here who has an interest in what is going on; no other body I am sure would have taken the trouble.

I am sure I must have forgot to tell you something, but you must excuse it if I have as I am in a confounded hurry this mail.

William to Mr Simpson

Canton, 21 August 1850

Bill of lading and policies via Southampton.

You will see by the accompanying documents that I have made a shipment per *Superb* to Liverpool: one invoice, account Messrs J. R. & Co. and yourselves; one invoice, account of R. Schaw, Esq. and yourselves; and two small ones to balance up the old account. You will find the amount of premium due on each invoice stated at the foot. So you had better carry it into your books at once that there may be no mistake. The small invoice to balance up Mr Schaw's account I have sent to him. It is insured along with the shipment on your account and his; his share of premium is 11s. 11d. or \$2.33, which amount to prevent confusion I have requested him to pay you. I have sent an invoice of 180 boxes ([chop mark] O. G.) to balance up your old account jointly with Messrs J. R. & Co. Six boxes of the same mark you will observe are in the invoice of shipments on your account (new) jointly with Messrs J. R. & Co. I marked rather more than was wanted to balance up the old account, and the six boxes more than required I have included in invoice on account of A. M. & Co. and J. R. & Co. new account.

I have also made a shipment on our own joint account in her [*Superb*] of 12,000 boxes. They are insured in the Canton office here and I have given a bill on you at six months for the premium on them and your and Mr Schaw's shipment, and another bill for premium on shipment J. R. & Co. and A. M. & Co.:



Draft no. 49 at six months £89 11s. 2d. in Union Office, or premium on 180 boxes for old account A. M. & Co. and J. R. & Co.	£8 18s. 6d.
premium on 656 packages for new account A. M. & Co. and J. R. & Co.	80 12s. 8d.
	<hr/>
	£89 11s. 2d.
Draft no. 50, £108 5s. 1d. premium on Mr Schaw's 12 boxes	£0 11s. 11d.
premium on 615 packages 'L' on joint R. S. and A. M. & Co.	68 2s. 6d.
premium on 1,200 boxes 'A' on account A. M. & Co. and W. M.	39 10s. 8d.
	<hr/>
	£108 5s. 1d.

The boxes of Orange Pekoe in all the invoices are all the same chop, bought at Tls 25, fine, almost curious; marks L2 and G2 are also the same chop, good wiry blackish, and well scented; and marks L3 and G3 the same chop, wiry blackish, even leaf, high burnt kind of flavour and strong, something like [chop] no. 2 *Magellan* but not so fine. I send samples, and will be happy to hear your opinion.

I have nothing more to say regarding this shipment except that I hear she (*Superb*) has cargo to deliver at the Cape, and which was not told me when I engaged the tonnage. I wrote to Jardine on the subject and send you the correspondence. Freight per *Superb* £3 10s. (it is now £4). Had I known the market was going to open so soon I might have kept the teas for a faster vessel, but it was uncertain.

Canton, 22 August 1850

I have yours of June and am glad to see you are so well again. What with Chinamen coming in, tasting, and selling bills, I have left myself no time to write you and am in terror of being shut out. You must just be contented with a short letter. Mr Simpson's will

give you all the news. I can merely say I am very well, never was better and as busy as I can be. Kind remembrance to all of them and hope this may find them all well.

Canton, 25 September 1850

I have yours of 22nd of July and I am glad to see that you appear all so well and in such good spirits. I have been very busy since the last mail went, and bought a large quantity of tea and have sent off a ship to Cork for orders. I had bought all the cargo before your July letters arrived bringing better advices from England and I got the teas cheaper on that account; but to counterbalance that advantage exchange has gone up terribly – up to 4s. 10d. and expected to be higher before the mail goes, which is unfortunate. It has gone regularly up every mail for the last eight months. I have sold about £14,000 already this month and hardly know whether I should sell more or not; it may be lower next mail, and, as it has advanced so regularly every month, it may go to 5s. Money is very scarce.

Samples go to your address by Southampton. I don't think you will have to complain much of tar this time, in one chop perhaps. I think the most of them will please you as they are mostly on the rich full flavour, something like the sorts you used to like long long ago; and the taste now at home has come I think around again as it were to what it was then, as it does in the fashions and everything else. So you will be able to recommend them with a clear conscience.

Some other body has sent over a cargo to the same place, but I have no doubt yours will be in long before it as the other ship is I think a very slow one. They kept it desperately quiet, in fact the vessel was 'circulated' through the community here for London(!) and in six or seven days afterwards a circular was sent round saying she was off for Glasgow. Now I don't think they ever could have really intended sending her to London, as they must have known from so many fine vessels loading here that they could not, I should think, have got a ton for her. Her name is the *James Watt* (no steamer), the name of your one is the *Naomi*. Andrew who is a great classic may be able to tell you what the name means, I cannot.

She is a good vessel from all I can learn, not so fast as the *Magellan* of course but I believe a good sailer. She was the best to be had at any rate, and we are so far lucky in getting her as I believe the same party who has chartered the *James Watt* would have taken her if disengaged; at least I know he applied to the same house for a vessel of much the same sort, which was engaged for London. I had great hopes of the cargo at first, especially when I got your letters bringing such good advices, but the rate of exchange and so many vessels going to Cork have rather damped my courage.

You are rather hard on me about the Gunpowders and the gunpowder plot; however, I won't blow up about it. By hook and by crook and hard work I have got rid of from 6,000 to 7,000 boxes of them, and as exchange has gone up so much, I am glad I have done so. 'We may I see be happy yet.' I am glad you think all the purchases have turned out so well. We must take care, though, and look out for a reverse, which you say may soon happen.

I think I can see from people out here that they think we have been doing well; and I think they have an idea that we have been much more fortunate than we really have, which they are quite at liberty to think, especially as I thought some of them sneered a little at me at first, as if I had come out to buy one or two chops a year, and that perhaps very badly. Within the last two years the sneer has amazingly softened down; and I might, I think, if I like, now indulge in a sneer at some of them. Of course this is betwixt ourselves.

Easy has soon followed Helen's example and I am glad they are both so well and both the young ones.

You enquire about the converts to Christianity in China. I am afraid there are very few sincere ones. There are a good many said to be Christians (Catholics) up at the north. I may be speaking rashly but I would not trust much to their belief in it. I don't think they can understand it. The basis of the Christian religion is affection and love, and I think the Chinamen have so little of those feelings and put so little value on them that it must take a long time to make them understand the principal feature in our religion: Our Saviour making a voluntary sacrifice of himself for love. I think a 'nigger' a much more hopeful subject for conversion than a

'Celestial'. The nigger has some heart and feeling about him, though not very strong; but the Chinaman is very apathetic to anything like fine feeling, and you must give him a new heart before you can make much of him, I think.<sup>1</sup>

William to Andrew Melrose and Company

Canton, 27 September, 1850

I beg to advise having sold the following bank bills:

To be placed to credit of Messrs A. M. & Co. and R. Schaw Esq.,  
£3,000 as under:

NATIONAL:	25/1357	300	} £500 at 4s. 8½d.
	25/1365	200	
	25/1358		} £1,500 either at 4s. 8¾d. or 9d., uncertain until the mail goes
	25/1366-69	4 bills of 200	
	25/1376-79	4 bills of 100	
	25/1359 and 1360	2 bills of 300	} £1,000 at 4s. 9½d
	25/1370 and 1371	2 bills of 200	

Sold on account Messrs J. R. & Co. & A. M. & Co. as under:

COMMERCIAL:	40/1	500	} 1,000	} £4,500 at 4s. 8½d. to 9d.
	40/2	500		
	40/13	300	} 900	} Not fixed until mail goes, being settled by bank rate.
	40/14	300		
	40/15	300		
	40/28-35	8 bills of 200	1,600	
	40/43-52	10 bills of 100	1,000	
	40/16 and 17	2 bills of 300	600	} £1,000 at 4s. 9½d.
	40/36 and 37	2 bills of 200	400	
	40/3-6	4 bills of 500		} £2,000 at 4s. 10d.

<sup>1</sup> The last part of this letter is apparently lost.

UNION: 8-10	3 of 500	1,500	} £5,000 at 4s. 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ d.
20-24	5 of 300	1,500	
32-38	7 of 200	1,400	
44-49	6 of 100	600	
11-12	2 of 500	1,000	} £3,000 at 4s. 10d.
25-27	3 of 300	900	
41-42	2 of 200	400	
51-57	7 of 100	700	
39-40	2 of 200	400	£400 at 4s. 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ d.
50	1 of 100	100	£100 at 4s. 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ d.

I beg also to advise having drawn on you for No. 58 — £12 7s. 6d. at 4s. 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. at 90 days sight, a/c Messrs J. R. & Co. and A. M. & Co. I have drawn the following on Messrs J. R. & Co. for insurance premiums on *Naomi*:

54	£162 14s. 8d. or at 5s. 4d.	\$ 610.25	in favour Amicable.
55	£311 1s. 7d. or at 5s. 4d.	\$1,166.55	in favour Union.
56	£192 0s. 11d. or at 5s. 4d.	\$ 720.17	in favour Bombay Insurance Society.
57	£267 15s. 9d. or at 5s. 4d.	\$1,004.20	in favour Canton Office.

All the above on account Messrs A. M. & Co. & J. R. & Co.

53	£9 7s. 9d. premium on A/14, 117 half chests Orange Pekoe per <i>Eliza and Hester</i> , account Messrs A. M. & Co. and R. S., Esq.
59	£7 10s. 0d. premium on 232 boxes per <i>Somnauth</i> , account A. M. & Co. and W. M.

Invoice next mail.

I have to advise having purchased on account yourselves and Mr Schaw;

330 chests Congou at Tls 16 $\frac{1}{2}$ , sample marked I/7
340 chests Congou at Tls 16 $\frac{1}{2}$ , sample marked 8
100 half chests Souchong at Tls 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ , sample marked 9

The other samples in the box are all marked as in the invoice, the three sent last mail of course are not sent by this conveyance:

Canister marked no. 1 last mail is no. 4 Invoice (Tls 25 $\frac{3}{4}$ )

Canister marked no. 2 last mail is no. 3 Invoice (Tls 24 $\frac{1}{2}$ )

Canister marked no. 3 last mail is no. 1 Invoice (Tls 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ )

I think you have quite enough now in the insurance offices out here. You had better open a policy to the extent of £8,000-10,000, in ship or ships consigned to your address. I have got tonnage in the *Mary Sparks* a clipper for Liverpool for 35-40 tons at £3 3s. od. and intend shipping some of yours and Mr Schaw's by her. Be sure you open a policy for them, as I will not insure here, say 8,000 to 10,000, and advise me of it. I hope Mr Schaw is pleased with what has been done. Give my kind respects and say am sorry could not, from a mistake I made, find time to advise him.

PS. I send duplicate invoices and documents of shipments per *Superb* and originals of *Eliza & Hester Orange Pekoe*. It is the same chop as A/14 *Naomi* and was shut out.

PPS. Also original documents of 232 boxes per *Somnauth* and 900 half chests per *Forfarshire*, documents via Southampton.

Canton, 27 October 1850

I have yours of August and am glad to see you are all well. The steamer goes in a little time and I have so many invoices to make out and different things to do that I have not left much time to write you. I bought as much and rather more than your funds will cover after I received your letters. I think for teas at home the prospect is rather good, short stocks and large deliveries. You say you hope I have not been too cautious; so you will be glad to hear by last month that I had sent off such a lot.

Prices have risen one to two taels since your last advices came out, and they will now keep firm all the season here, I should think, as it is likely we will have good advices from your side for at least some months to come. I would not be afraid in the least of black teas this year in England. The crop here in China is less than last year or will be, I should think. We can't tell exactly yet but I think there is little doubt but that it will be a few millions short

in Congou. Now your stock at home is decreasing also, and the deliveries are increasing largely by last advices, so that about the end of 1851 or the autumn the stock must be small.

I notice all you say about the division of profits and share. I am very glad the balance sheet showed so much in your favour at all events and hope the good luck will continue; but as Byron says 'there is a tide in the affairs of men'<sup>1</sup> and we must try to leave off just at the beginning of the 'ebb', if possible, for an ebb is sure to come some time after a flood tide. As soon as I can see any symptoms of it taking place, I am going to break all my tasting cups and go home. I have not yet forgotten 1847 and will be on the look out, but it is a difficult thing to tell.

I think I understood all along Andrew was to have a share but how much I don't know. Both John and he seem well pleased with what is turned up to them; they both write so and both in their own ways of expressing it. John says, we should be thankful for the way Providence has prospered us in outward circumstances. And Andrew says he has much more than he expected and it is the first he has made and that he will take 'devilish' good care of it.

Hallam was very sick a little ago and Russells advised [him] to go home in one of their clippers via America, which he has done. He sailed two or three days ago. I am glad to say he had nearly recovered before he started and went off in pretty good health.

Kindly remember me to all of them and acknowledge for me Aunty Bell's letter which I am sorry I have not time to reply to.

William to Andrew Melrose and Company

Canton, 27 October 1850

I beg to advise having drawn on you against a shipment made to your consignment per *Bangalore* to London and of which I have sent invoice along with the others: C 5, 6 and 7 of 1,237 packages. The bills of lading and policy for this shipment have been given up as security against the draft:

Account, Messrs A. M. & Co. joint with Messrs J. R. & Co.

No. 60 £2,208 14s. 2d. or at 5s. 1d. \$8,690

No. 66 £99 7s. 11d. or at 5s. 1d. \$ 391.07

No. 66 is drawn for insurance on the shipment.

<sup>1</sup> The quotation should be from Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, Act IV, scene iii, 271.

I have made a few purchases since last mail all of which I send invoices and samples. I beg to advise having sold the following credits:

NATIONAL BANK, A. M. & Co. and R. S.:

E25/1352-4	3 bills of £500 say	£1,500 at 4s. 11½d.
E25/1361-3	3 bills of 300 say	900 at 4s. 11d.
E25/1372-3	2 bills of 200 say	400 at 4s. 11d.
E25/1381-2	2 bills of 100 say	200 at 4s. 11d.
E25/1380	1 bill of 100 say	100 at 4s. 11d.
E25/1364	1 bill of 300 say	300 at 4s. 11d.
E25/1374	1 bill of 200 say	200 at 4s. 11d.
E25/1383-4	2 bills of 100 say	200 at 4s. 11d.

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£3,800

COMMERCIAL, A. M. & Co. and J. R. & Co.:

40/10-12	3 bills of £500	£1,500 at 4s. 11¾d.
40/20-23	4 bills of 400	1,200 at 4s. 11¾d.
40/40	1 bill of 200	200 at 4s. 11¾d.
40/53	1 bill of 100	100 at 4s. 11¾d.
40/ 7-9	3 bills of 500	1,500 at 4s. 11½d.
40/18-19	2 bills of 300	600 at 4s. 11½d.
40/38-39	2 bills of 200	400 at 4s. 11½d.

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£5,500

I advised last mail to open a policy for £8,000 to £10,000. You will therefore protect by insurance the shipments made since last month on your account jointly with Mr Schaw - *Mary Sparks, Euphrates* and *Bangalore*. The shipment per *Bangalore* on your account jointly with Messrs J. R. & Co. you will observe is insured here.

A/18: 31 chests on account of A. M. & Co. and W. M. you will also require to insure.

I beg to advise having also drawn on you for no. 65 at ten days sight: £29 os. od. at 4s. 11d. \$117.96 on account of Messrs A. M. & Co. and Messrs J. R. & Co.

I have also drawn on Ewarts for £1 12s. for a friend with which you can debit my private account. Ewart will debit you. Duplicates



of last month's papers go via Southampton. Bills of lading & invoice of new shipments via Marseilles.

Macao, 26 November 1850

I have yours of September and am glad to see that you are all well. You will see by this that I am at Macao. The cold weather has just set in. We have had it warm until a day or two ago, but as it has been long of setting in I hope we will now have a good tack of it. I have not been down here before since February, nine months, so that I think myself entitled to a trip for some time if nothing of great importance is to be done in Canton. Both Dr Watson and Seare said they thought I was looking better when I came down than when I went up, so my stay up there cannot have done me much harm at least.

I see you accompanied Helen up to Shrewsbury. I hope Sam and she are keeping well. I am glad you got my letter before you left as you would see the cholera had been limited to the case of the Governor. The poor Portuguese here have been very unlucky lately. You may remember about seventeen months ago the Governor who was here then was murdered by the Chinese. A new one was sent out and some vessels of war. The new one had hardly been here a month until he died of cholera, and only some days ago one of their frigates blew up, the magazine having exploded, and about 200(!) people killed.

Another partner has come out here for Jamieson's house and I believe Mr Edger is going either up to Shanghai or home. It is reported that he has been a loser of a good large amount lately from trusting too much in the hands of his comprador (who takes charge of the money). They say \$40,000; however, those reports must be taken with caution, but I believe there is going to be a change in the house.<sup>1</sup>

I see you expected my last letters would advise some purchases. My next for three months running would take advices of pretty large ones, samples of all which you will have seen long before you get this, and I hope you will be pleased with them. I see you intended

<sup>1</sup> The change took place on 31 Dec. 1850 when Jamieson Edger & Co. was dissolved and replaced by Jamieson Gifford & Co. *China Mail*, 2 Jan. 1851.

sending out £5,000 had I invested some part of the funds previously sent. My next letters would take account of a good deal being invested, so I will expect the £5,000 by next mail or next again, and should anything appear cheap here in the meantime, I will buy it in anticipation of it coming.

I will try to get another Chinese *Bible* and some of that fancy tea you wrote for last mail.

I will take a trip up to Canton next month and see what is doing, but I don't think I will stay long. Exchange is very high this month so that if I buy anything I won't ship it for some months, when there may be a chance of the exchange being lower.

Rothwell who took my place in Jamieson's goes home by this mail. He wanted a letter of introduction so I gave him one to Andrew. He is to call on James at Liverpool. Nothing new; today it is quite cold and cloudy. I have got down some samples of Souchong from Canton and am examining them. Kind remembrances to all.

ps. Dr Watson's friends are going to stay in Buccleugh Place, Edinburgh. Aggie should give them a call. Stedman I think is the name; they are I should think nice quiet people.

William to Mr Simpson

Macao, 26 November 1850

I have yours of September. You seem very much disappointed that no common Congou has been shipped, but after all I suppose you will have made more out of the Gunpowders and Capers than you would even had common Congou been shipped. The purchases of common Congou made here in March and April will leave a little profit but nothing to speak of. There is nothing to be had now here under Tls 14½ and 15, which at 5s. is far too dear; and as I have said before, you never can buy common Congou here at a margin on the home prices. To buy it is generally buying altogether on speculation of a rise and that can be done much better in England than here. You can get common Congou all the year round in England but it is only at the end of the season here it is to be had.

You will see I am at Macao this month. There are still about £2,000 of the bank bills to sell yet, but as exchange keeps up to

such an exorbitant rate I think the longer we can put off selling the better. Surely there must be more chance of it going down than up.

The tea shipped will very nearly amount, as far as I can calculate, to all the funds remitted. I will send account current and balance up the accounts as soon as I sell the remaining £2,000. By the by, in advising last month Commercial [credits] sold, [nos.] 40/20-23 should be four bills of £300 instead of £400 as stated. I hope you are sending me out an account current of my own account up to the end of the [chop mark] W shipments; the profit on the [chop mark] A's can be carried in after the *Somnauth's* are sold.

I note what you say about the £5,000. My August letters would take you advice of good deal being bought, so I will expect the £5,000 next mail; but if not next, certainly next again as my September letters would advise you of nearly all being invested. And on that faith I will make purchases against it should anything appear cheap. I think the best plan at present is to buy anything worth having and hold here for a few months before shipping as, for one thing, black teas shipped in a month or two after this will arrive at a much better time than those shipped off now. About 27,000,000 lbs. of Congou has left within the last four months, and teas shipped now or for a month to come will arrive at a time when the stock of black will be much heavier than it can be in a few months afterwards. As I do not think the export of black can be large this year and as the bulk of it has gone, the shipment some months after this must be much smaller than those going now. Another thing, exchange, being so very high, is more likely to come down than go up, and by waiting a month or two [we] might have the advantage of that.

I am looking after some Souchong. I have been holding off, waiting for them coming down in price for some time, but they are now beginning to move off about Tls 18 to 21 for passable; so if I want any I must buy now. I have got down here samples of nearly all in the market, and one of the Canton brokers has come down with them to make some settlements with me if he can, so it is likely I may have some purchases to advise by next mail.

You say Scented Orange Pekoes are not wanted, fine Congou being plenty and cheap. But Ewart says they are in great request

and the price advanced  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. to 1d., which I am glad of, as those on the way I hope will leave a profit and because it bears out the idea I took of them some months ago. I felt sure common greens would be up with you about the end of the year. It is a pity those bought were so very common; however, I hope those in *Dulius* and *Lancastrian* will bring some profit. Must close up.

ps. I received per last mail a box of samples from Ewart and Co. of greens which will be of use.

Macao, 27 December 1850

I have yours of 22 October and am glad to see that you are well. The weather here for the last month has been very cold which is a most agreeable change. I am glad to see by your letters that you think what has been done will do well and that you hoped I had not been too cautious; my September and October letters would soon relieve any anxiety you may have had on that score. It is perhaps lucky now I did so much as you think they are going to do well. Many people here who were afraid to buy at so high an exchange as 4s. 8d. and 4s. 10d. held off waiting for a better rate or cheaper prices, and they are now in the wrong box for exchange has gone higher and teas are dearer considerably.

I have received the £5,000 all right and have bought some four or five chops of Souchong against it, from Tls 19 to 20 $\frac{1}{2}$  which is a cheap price for Souchong. Congous are too dear to buy at present and Souchongs have been much neglected this year. I have sent samples of them to Ewart & Co.

I am glad to see that there are hopes of me by and by having a 'learned brother'.<sup>1</sup> I am much obliged to him for his letter which, by the by, was quite in the flippant lawyer style and gives much promise of his attaining excellence in the same some day. Many thanks for the newspaper, I get it regularly.

I am going up to Canton tomorrow morning in the steamer. I am staying here as usual at Mr Seare's which is much like a home to me and now and then take my dinner with the doctor. I dined with him yesterday and the parson of Hong Kong who is staying there at present. Everything in England seems to be going on flourishingly.

<sup>1</sup> The brother was David Melrose.

The Exhibition in '51 will I daresay make a bustling year of it and help to increase the consumption of tea. The consumption of it lately has been increasing greatly, I suppose from the cheap rates people have been able to obtain it at. We will most likely for the next two years to come have large exports from here if the consumption goes on as it does and then, should anything check the consumption, high prices perhaps or potato disease, we would have bad times again, which we must be on the lookout for.

There is nothing new to give you. I hope this will find you all well. I am glad to say I am quite strong, the cold weather has such a bracing effect. I am better than when I was at home, but that may be from my not having entirely recovered from the effects of the illness I had in China when I was at home. Hoping next mail to hear that you have been pleased with what my September letters will have advised having done for you.

William to Mr Simpson

Macao, 27 December 1850

I have your October letters and have also received firsts of £5,000 of Commercial Bank to hand all safe.

I have to advise having purchased against the £5,000 just received for joint account the following, of which I sent samples to Ewart:

YING LAN <sup>1</sup>	100 and odd chests Souchong at Tls 19½ B1 Canister (1s. 3½d.) <sup>2</sup>
FUEY KEE	200 and odd chests of Souchong at Tls 20½ B2 Canister (1s. 4½d.)
NE LAN	200 and odd chests of Souchong at Tls 19 B3 Canister (1s. 3¼d.)
GINEE LEE	200 and odd chests of Souchong at Tls 21.7 B4 Canister (1s. 5¼d.)
MAN TIE	200 and odd chests of Souchong at Tls 19½ B5 Canister (1s. 3½d.)

<sup>1</sup> This and the following are proper names, used to designate the various chops of tea.

<sup>2</sup> All quotations of price in parentheses were written in another handwriting, presumably that of Andrew Melrose.

These I will ship by and by. You had better open a policy for them in ship or ships. Insure for what profit you please; perhaps you had better insure for a little more than the £5,000 in case I may draw on you for £1,000 more or so. The teas are bought with the option of shipping them after China new year (February) and I have not made up my mind whether I will ship them now or keep them until after that time. The only reason for keeping them until then, or at least the principal reason for keeping them, is the chance of exchange coming down, and besides that, there appears little or no benefit to be had from shipping them immediately after such a large quantity of tea has gone.

In your last letter to me you say that it is bad policy not to ship as [you] always have the power at least to sell should the teas be in England. That is very true, but then you must recollect there is interest going on and warehouse rent, the *Aden's* Congous to wit. Now I think when there appears no chance of a better market for them, it is better to keep them here where no warehouse rent or interest is incurred, but more especially so when there is a chance of saving 2d. or 3d. per dollar in the exchange. However, I have not made up my mind whether to ship or not yet. Freight are very low, which is one inducement – £2 I believe.

I have just received a letter from Canton and Souchongs are going off at some taels above what I had offered for some of them, so that we are perhaps fortunate in having got what we have before last mail came in. Congous are now far too dear to do anything in, about ten chops of 'Sin Shune Ky' (mixed Souchong kind) Congous have been settled at Tls 16. I think true Souchong, though not fine, at Tls 19 much cheaper in proportion than them.

You seem still very much disappointed that you have had no common Congous shipped to you, however I have no doubt you have bought largely of them at home when they were at 8½d.; and if you had held them until the date of your last letter, as I have no doubt you have done from the great faith you had in them rising, you must have made a good deal of money in them, which will be some consolation. You have great opportunities of speculating that way at home, and at home is the proper place to do it, where you can buy and sell at any time or minute you please. As for shipping tea from China merely on speculation of a rise it would be folly,

since it could be done so much easier at home. I am sorry they never were to be had here at a margin on home prices or I would have bought; but they always rise here to exactly the price they are at home and, not being my business to buy on speculation, of course I could not touch them, not without breaking orders at least, as you and Messrs J. R. & Co. jointly gave me strict injunctions to ship nothing on the chance of it rising.

As to Murrow's affair, I am glad to think you are of opinion it can be so easily adjusted. As to the commission on the joint [account] which you wish to have my ideas on,  $2\frac{1}{2}\%$  is the highest charge made by merchants for taking charge of goods and allowing parties to draw on them against the shipments and many do it for less; however, I have no objection of course to give the  $2\frac{1}{2}\%$  on my share of the joint and on my own shipments. As to your losing by working off the teas sent on joint account, you must put against that the number of piculs of Gunpowder I had to work off at Tls 11 to 12 which could have been easily bought at Tls 7 to 8. No one unless they had a joint interest in the shipments would have done it, and of course you having a joint interest do your best also to make a good out-turn.

I am going up to Canton tomorrow; the mail to England will have been despatched before that. At mail time the Chinamen expect the dollars, so as I did not wish to sell your £2,000 bills just yet, I thought it would be better to be out of Canton. I have just heard exchange this month is 5s. to 5s. 1d. I am afraid I won't be able to hold out after next month, but I will try, as it may come down after China new year; 5s. 1d. is such a terrible rate, I think we are justified in thinking that every month there is at least more chance of it coming down than going up.

I will get valuations of the first box of samples sent per next mail and also hope to hear of the *Dulius*. There will be good deal of low Congous sent home this year, I should think, from the high prices given and next most likely more.



William to Mr Simpson

Canton, 23 January 1851

A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU after all your troubles. I am glad to see by your November letters that you are well pleased with what I have done; but at the same time I must say if I had not acted so promptly I expect you would have shown me very little mercy, and very few out here I assure you had the courage or sense or whatever you may call it to buy at the time I did. I could not even find one congenial spirit and all seemed to think that I was playing a rash game; 'but all is well that ends well' both here and at home.

So you make [sample no.] 2 canister or say [chop] no. 4 *Naomi* better than [sample] no. 3 canister or [chop] no. 3 *Naomi*. It is strange but only yesterday I made my servant infuse them, as I use to do, without knowing which was which and tried them and made [sample] no. 3 the far best although I never did that before. The reason is, I think, no. 3 had always more flavour than no. 4, but it was a Hong Moi Ankoï sort of flavour belonging more to a second class Congou than to a first, while no. 4 was the true rich Pekoe Souchong although not so much flavour as no. 3. But since shipment all that Hong Moi sort of flavour of no. 3 seems to have mellowed down into Pekoe Souchong; otherwise I could not yesterday have picked it out as the finest, a thing I never did before. Ewart makes it very fine 'delicate Pekoe Souchong'. [Chop] L/10 had a great smack of the same flavour and I hope it may turn out as well. [Chop] no. 2 per *Naomi* had perhaps too much of it, and also [chop] G/7, but I have now great hopes of them and indeed ever since I heard that kind of tea was in vogue have had a good opinion of them.

It is a sad business about the insurance but I am sure I could not help it. Had they only advised me a policy at home had been opened for £30,000, it would have saved me a great deal of anxiety.



Someone was guilty of great neglect in not advising me of it. Surely it was important enough information for me, the shipper of the tea, to be advised of. It should have been the second thing I was advised of. I could not send off a cargo of tea to the mercy of the waves upon the bare supposition that it was insured at home because the *Magellan* was insured at home. I had advice of the *Magellan's* but not a word regarding the adventure in question. To have delayed shipping would have been to have directly broken their instructions, as I had positive orders to act promptly, and they might have come on me for loss of profit by detention etc. To have shipped on the faith that a policy was opened would have been rash in the extreme and, in event of loss of the vessel and not being insured at home, might have made myself liable to the whole loss. It is very provoking, when you have done your best and that well and better than 70% of other people out here did, to get no thanks for it but to be censured for not following instructions which never were mentioned.

Mr Schaw seems no better. From Ewart's valuations his teas must pay handsomely; I only wish they were on my own account. And all the thanks I get is to be told that he says instructions have not been obeyed, not a word from him to say he is pleased with the purchases although they must pay him 30%, and vexed because a cargo did not go to Leith!! Send a cargo to Leith because he had £5,000 in the adventure!! Had I sent a cargo to Leith I must have drawn considerably on his funds; and had that cargo turned out unprofitable, he would just be the first to turn round and say I had no orders to draw on his funds and put the whole loss to my debit. If people when they have good fortune are so ungrateful, what would they be when they have bad? But if they make any work about their funds or orders, I would be very independent of them. With what I have out here of my own and what you have at home of mine drawn against and made triple, I could ship two cargoes on my own account; and if you were to double that by way of joint account, it would be more than enough and much pleasanter for me to pocket 25% profit than be grumbled at because I get their 5%. But instructions will be instructions with me after this, and if they don't turn out well I am not to blame.

Messrs J. R. & Co. have written me by last mail that they wish me

to buy 'fair drinkable Congou' for them to be laid down at 10d. to 10½d. to the extent of £5,000 – [money] to be sent positively by next mail (bank being shut could not get it when their letter left) – which I suppose are the funds you mentioned that they may be likely or thought they might send out. Their orders are to ship to London or Liverpool, preferring the latter. Perhaps they did not mean me to mention it to you. If so, but I should think not, better say nothing about my having told you so. But I am afraid the £5,000 will have to lie over until they send other instructions as no 'fair drinkable Congou' can be had at 10½d. Tls 13 to 14 is the lowest, exchange upwards of 5s., freight low at £2. Tls 12½ is, I make, about 10½d., but for 'fair drinkable' you would have to pay Tls 14 at least. And unless they send out instructions to invest in odds and ends in event of no Congou at 10½d. to be had, I cannot of course do so as the instructions are definite and strictly specify Congou at 10d. to 10½d. However they may by next mail alter them.

I have also received your £5,000 account of A. M. & Co. and W. M. for which many thanks. I am glad Congous and exchange are too dear to admit of sending the cargo which you have proposed, but indeed your former £5,000 being all invested would make it impossible to send a cargo at any rate. I dare say you may be quite right in thinking common Congous are going to keep up but still they may come down again to 8d. or 9d. when the bulk of the export gets in. I will rather keep on the lookout for odds and ends; everything is up here now and exchange getting higher and higher both here and in India.

The Gunpowders by the *Lancastrian* must pay well and also the *Dulius*. It is all very well now you talking about never turning back from the plough, now when you know they would have paid well; I wonder whose letters made me look back from the plough! I was looking over some of your old letters the other day and could not help laughing at what you said about the Gunpowders then and now: that they were rubbish, dirt, and would be quite unsaleable, not even tea dust and gum, but not tea at all, that the loss on them might be fearful to contemplate, that you were just afraid I would buy more of them after getting your letters, that one spec of that kind was quite enough but to try a second was a mad thing, and so on. And now, when they pay a profit, you: Oh why did you put

your hand to the plough and turn back!! If you take the credit of predicting the rise in common Congou, I am determined to have the credit of foretelling the rise in common Gunpowder and Orange Pekoe, so that we are 'baith desperate clever chaps'.

You seem to think I should have got a chop at about Tls 14 in the *Naomi*. You seem to forget that no common Congou is to be had in the beginning of the season and often not at the end of it either. The Chinamen all want the same price at the beginning of the season; and it is not until the price comes gradually down by all the best, good, and middling being bought up that you can get Congou at a low price. It is lucky for you and Mr Schaw you did not send out positive orders for common Congou. Had you done so, I would have had to have waited until a little ago and bought them after news of the rise at home had been received and exchange dearer. That chop at Tls 17½ you mention, bought at the beginning of the season, is Canton-made-Congou or otherwise could not have got it at or under Tls 24.

Exchange is now up to 5s. 4d. I am afraid if it does not come down in a month or two that we won't make much out of the Souchongs. However, now that it is up to such a pitch, I would rather wait a little longer; teas getting in about September will have a better chance than those getting in in March or April. Some say the rate of exchange won't come down and others say they expect it will fall about March or April, but nobody knows anything about it. I don't think I will ship any more now until after the February mail leaves, and then they cannot claim the dollars sooner than March when I hope the rate will be better.

I have bought a chop of Scented Orange Pekoe, 300 half chests at Tls 17.2, rather common, similar to that per *Bangalore*. I will put 50 of these to Mr Schaw's account to balance up the account, which will just about do it, the rest on our joint. It is better than what can be had now; the news of them being in demand has made them a little dearer. I am afraid we won't make much of the joint this year; those who had the first shipments, when both tea and exchange were reasonable, have got all the luck.

I intended to be at Macao this month (China new year) to be out of the way of the Chinamen dunning me for dollars, but your funds and Messrs J. R. & Company's orders coming out have kept

me here, so I have been obliged to sell a few hundreds to please them. I wish I had sold all before I went to Macao at all. However, it does not make much difference as I could not sell more than I did in the month of October, and ever since then it has been nearly as bad as it is now.

Your account [joint with] Messrs J. R. & Co. is over-remitted from about \$2,500 to \$2,700. I could not well avoid this as it is impossible to tell what a chop of tea is to cost exactly and, besides, the rate of exchange going up has made the dollars run short. I make the balance at their debit, calculating that all their bills were sold, would still be about \$2,700; so the only plan would be to draw on you for the balance, but nobody here will take my bill without documents unless perhaps an intimate friend who knows us well. However, this month two or three friends applied to me for small private bills, one of them a doctor just returned from California; and as I wanted the dollars, it was much better to draw the private bills when I had the chance, for it is ten to one I might not be able to sell our private bills afterwards. I sold two small ones at ten days sight at 5s. 2½d. and one at thirty days sight at 5s. 3d., which is a good rate as things go, better bills have been done at 5s. 4d. I have had to sell some of your Commercial £600 at 5s. 3d. – could not get anything better. This will I think be enough to put me off paying any more till March when I hope the rate will be better. It is lucky I sold out so many of the bills when the rate was better for I was once thinking of keeping a good deal more back as everyone thought the rate would come down. Indigo and cotton I hear are paying well in India and people buying and drawing largely and the rate is rising there too.

I don't think I will ship the Souchongs now until beginning of March and then I won't require to draw for them until the March mail. If I decide so, I must go down to Macao about the end of this month or the Chinamen will be pressing me to ship to get their dollars.

About the £3,000 you sent out on my own account some time ago, I would rather keep it separate than send it on the joint as you propose. There must be enough now of mine at home to pay up my share on the joint and the £3,000 will be little enough. I will soon find some way of turning it over – opium, rhubarb, cassia, silk.

I hope to hear your ideas of the samples of the cargo next mail and something about those curios.

28 January 1851.

Canton, 28 January 1851

I have yours of 22 November and am glad to see that you are all well. I am glad the new Congous seem to please you; I thought they would exactly answer your taste. I have received all right your £5,000 but no chance of sending you another cargo; both tea and exchange are too dear for that, so you cannot calculate on me yet packing up and saying adieu to China.

Everything looks well at home and bids fair for the cargo doing well; but it is questionable if prices will keep up and it is better to be always on the safe side. I don't think any of the chops in the *Naomi* would lose even if the market came down to its old rates, but I would not like to buy out here now upon the supposition that prices were going to continue as high as they were by your last advices. Money is easy with you and speculation no doubt will go on which may keep them up, but there is little else to do so.

The low stock of tea in England, being caused greatly by the market opening here much later than usual, will be well compensated by the extra quantity that went in the months after it did open. However, the consumption is certainly increasing, which is the best sign of all. But I am afraid we won't have many so good years as we have had. Money is easy at home and people abroad are all in good spirits and getting a little reckless; in India it is said cotton and indigo have been paying very well. I will see what can be done 'in odds and ends' for the £5,000 but won't buy unless they appear at very safe prices, and exchange is so high at present that to endeavour to do so is almost nonsense. But I may pick up a chop or two.

I suppose the *Naomi* will be in about this time and you have all got your noses in the tea chests. I think the cargo will please although I have not heard about any excepting the two fine and one other, [chop] no. 1 (different class from the others); but I felt sure as soon as I saw by your letters that [chop] nos. 2, 7, 14 of the *Magellan* were the kinds wanted, I could pick out some chops to suit you. And I had a capital chance of doing so because almost nobody out

here thought it safe to give the price for them, so I had nearly the market for those kinds to myself. They are called Woopack Congous out here, and all the Congous in her are Woopack except [chops] no. 1 and no. 7 which are called out here Moning.

An old friend of mine, a doctor, has just come up from California. He has gathered there about \$12,000 or £3,000. He has been away about a year and a half. Amongst the many who went from China he is the only one (or nearly so) who has made anything. No other one who has returned at least has made anything and all nearly lost every farthing they were worth. The way he made his was in buying land which was afterwards chosen as a site for a new city, Sacramento. He bought it for a trifle and sold it for \$13,000. He says it is of no use trying to make anything by digging, the expenses are more than you get in gold; and as for sending goods down there for sale, the charges eat up nearly the whole amount. His name is Wilson, he goes home by the *Hugh Walker* on the 4th February. He wanted a bill from me for \$2,000 worth of gold he brought up with him and, as I saw 'your account with J. R. & Co.' was over-remitted, I gave him one. It was a good chance for me because nobody (in business) will take our bills out here without documents as security, so I very likely would have had to let it lie over had he not wanted it.

A Mr Man<sup>1</sup> (as good and nice a man as you could wish to know) also goes home by this mail. They may both call on you as old friends of mine. Man also has got a little bill on you for £52 or so, and he wanted more but I could not give it to him; so you see what credit I have out here, but that is only among old friends, and I might wait a year before such would apply again.

William to Andrew Melrose and Company

Canton, 28 January 1851

I have your letters of 23 November '50 and have to acknowledge receipt of £5,000 National Bank of Scotland bills safely to hand; last month I requested you to open a policy for the £5,000 Com-

<sup>1</sup> James Lawrence Man: a partner of Benjamin Seare & Co. from Feb. 1846, left for Southampton 30 Jan. 1851. *China Mail*, 19 Feb. 1846 and 30 Jan. 1851; *CR*, xviii (1849), 3.

mercials sent per October mail – please open a policy for this £5,000 also which I have just received.

I have to advise having drawn on you for:

No. 68	£52 1s. 8d. at 10 days sight at 5s. 2½d.	\$200
No. 69	£30 os. od. at 10 days sight at 5s. 2½d. in favour A. McShane Esq. <sup>1</sup>	\$115.20
No. 70	£525 18s. 9d. at 30 days sight at 5s 3d. in favour R. Wilson Esq. <sup>2</sup>	\$2,003.57

Also sold Commercial Bank bills:

40/24 and 25 2 bills of £300 each £600 at 5s. 3d. \$2,285.70.

All the above I have put to the credit of Messrs A. M. & Co. and J. R. & Co., the bills being drawn for that account.

I also received the seconds of the £5,000 Commercials per this mail, the first of which were received by me the mail before. For other advices I beg to refer you to my letter to Mr Simpson.

Canton, 24 February 1851

I have yours of 21 December 1850 and am glad to see that you are all well. I and some of my friends here had a good laugh at the paragraphs in the newspapers about the curiosities.<sup>3</sup> One came in to enquire of me what kind of things I had been sending as he had been written out about them. It was a capital puff whoever blew it especially about the paintings and 'the Dutch-like finish'!!! I am glad they went off so well and I think now we had better let well

<sup>1</sup> A. McShane: not identified.

<sup>2</sup> Dr R. Wilson: his arrival at Hong Kong from Loo Kong was announced in *China Mail*, 15 Mar. 1849; see also above, p. 144.

<sup>3</sup> Curiosities consisted of an assortment of novelty and decorative goods and included, among others, vases and other Chinawares, ginger, cabinets, tables and writing desks, Mandarin and ladies' dresses, tortoiseshell combs, China ink [in dry sticks], chessmen, ivory ball, glass paintings, grass cloth, handkerchiefs, lamps, gongs, images, birds, insects, folding screens, lacquered wares, work boxes, tea-pots, baskets, rice paper drawings, paper hangings, fans, backgammon boards, crossbows, etc. The newspaper paragraphs refer to the advertisement of T. & H. Littledale & Co., Liverpool, in *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, 12 Dec. 1850. Similar advertisements of William Connal & Co. in *Glasgow Herald*, 17-31 May 1852.

alone. Mr Simpson I see had been both to Liverpool and London and only got home in time to answer my December letter.

The seconds of the last £5,000 Nationals did not come last mail, I suppose for want of time to send them after his return from London, and no doubt they will be out next mail (January). I hope they have not miscarried, but I should think they have merely been forgotten.

I saw, when I was at Macao, in one of the London newspapers, Law's advertisement of his establishment in London, but I forget the locality. I hope he may be successful and Easy quite a London belle when I get home, with a lot of young belles round her. I don't think I'll give her time though to have many more. She has one already; we'll say another or maybe two.

What a stir is making about the Exhibition! People are even talking about going all the way from here to see it. I hope it will make a brisk year and work off the large quantity of tea that is going home, a great deal gone this year for the time. I am afraid we are beginning to overdo it again. I don't fear this year as it will be a brisk year and you have begun the year with a low stock, and even next year, with the brisk trade you will have in 1851 and the low stock you began with, cannot, even if they send a great deal from this [side], be a bad year I think. But if they go on long at this rate, unless they have a great consumption, they will be sure of a stroke of apoplexy some day.

The weather has been very cold here for a month back. I feel it much more here than I did when I was at home. It nips me up and makes me look as blue about the nose and as sharp as a razor, but I always take a cold shower bath every morning and very often go down the river with a gun although I am rather a poor hand at it. But it is good exercise and I take the gun with me for the 'look of the thing', as the countryman said in London when he was put into a sedan chair with the bottom out by mistake; he did not see that the sedan was much better than walking unless for the 'look of the thing'.

By the by, Shepard in Bateson's in Liverpool,<sup>1</sup> whom I knew out

<sup>1</sup> John Shepard: assistant in Holliday Wise & Co., Hong Kong and Canton, in 1846, and a broker in James Bateson Sons & Co., brokers, Liverpool, from 1849 onward.



here long ago, writes me to ask you to let him send you samples when you are buying. Andrew knows him. He is very attentive in sending me Bateson's circular always. If you can properly, perhaps you might now and then see what he has to offer. Hoping this will find you all well; remember me kindly to my aunts, not forgetting Aunt Nellie.

William to Andrew Melrose and Company

Canton, 25 February 1851

I have received yours of December and am glad to see that the curiosities are nearly all sold. I have very little to advise this month having made no purchases on our account.

The seconds of the last £5,000 Nationals on our joint account have not come to hand; I hope they have not miscarried but that you have only forgotten to send them away last (December) mail. If they have miscarried, I am afraid it will be difficult to sell the firsts here without them, and one of the managers of the Bank says he thinks nobody would buy them. In that case should they not come next month, I will conclude that they have miscarried, and expect that you will send off fresh ones immediately on receipt of this, which please do, as I may, in event of seeing anything cheap, purchase on the faith of them being sent out here by the April mail from England. And should I have shipped the tea and they not come, it might be awkward, but I hope to get them next mail.

I have to advise having drawn on you for £35 2s. 6d. at ten days sight at 4s. 11½d. in favour J. L. Man, account Messrs A. M. & Co. joint with J. R. & Co. Exchange better this month. Hope to advise some shipments next mail.

Canton, 26 March 1851

I have yours of 22 January and am glad to see that you are all well. It was a stupid mistake about the Marseilles letters. I usually send my letters to Mr Edger and he pays the postage at Hong Kong and forwards them for me. But this time I was at Macao staying at Seare's; he was sending his, he said, by the Portuguese post boat, a safe opportunity and sure to catch the mail. I sent mine with his per post boat and of course nobody paying the postage for Marseilles,

they were sent by Southampton. I wonder the postmaster did not send them by Marseilles, though, and send me a note of the expense because I know him and he must have known that it was a mistake. But of course that was not his business and very likely his clerk would despatch them and he know nothing about them.

I sent him down a note last month enquiring about the seconds of the bills which, as they did not arrive as advised, I thought might be in the post office. However, he sent me directly a very polite note saying that it was quite impossible that any letter to a name so familiar to every person in his office could miscarry or be neglected to be forwarded. So you see I am well known at the post office at any rate. He is an old Edinburgh hand and was in the Edinburgh Post Office. His name is Hyland<sup>1</sup> but he is not a Highland man for all that; not even a Scotchman, I believe an Irishman. I am afraid that my next month's letters would go in the same way and put you to the same inconvenience. I am sure I forget whether they went by the Macao post boat or to Mr Edger; however, if they don't arrive by the Marseilles, you will know they are coming by the Southampton.

I should like to see your new coach. You will be whirling by the like of me when I get home as if I were not worth your while.

27th [March]:

The mail goes tomorrow night, but I hired a boat to go out for a day or two on the river or perhaps to Macao, and engaged to start this evening, thinking I would be through all my work. But I made a mistake, what with getting bills of lading signed, selling bills, invoicing, and settling with Chinamen, I have not got my dinner yet, 10 o'clock; but it is my own fault and does not happen often.

I have Aggie's letter for which I am obliged and also for the package to my address per *Maggie*. Kind remembrance to all.

P.S. I suppose Hallam will be at home ere you get this. Kind remembrance to him; tell him Mr Forbes<sup>2</sup> is out again from the U.S. In haste.

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Hyland, postmaster, Hong Kong. In 1851 the post office included, besides the postmaster, one chief clerk and three other clerks plus a clerk in charge at Canton. *CR*, xx (1851), 13; *China Mail*, 13 Sept. 1849.

<sup>2</sup> Paul S. Forbes: partner of Russell & Co. and U.S. Consul at Canton, 1843-48, was not listed among foreign residents in China for the years 1849-50. *CR*, xv (1846), 7; xvi (1847), 6; xix (1850), 7; xx (1851), 5; Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy*, 210.

William to Mr Simpson

Canton, 27 March 1851

I have yours of January and note its contents. No *Superb* I see. A superb passage she is making and no doubt. It would be a blessing if she would go down now that she is so well insured. There is a report here that the *Naomi* arrived at Cork on 24th January and has been ordered to Liverpool. She may have arrived but that she has been ordered to Liverpool I don't believe. The seconds of the £5,000 Nationals I have received to my relief all right.

You will see by the invoices I have made you considerable shipments this month. Confound that exchange! After holding out for months it is not a bit better and proves what the wise man said long ago that 'all is humbug and vexation of spirit'.<sup>1</sup> Everybody thought it was coming down this month. Rupees before the mail came in were selling at 225 while the mail before the rate was 236! Sycee Silver also rose 5% and opium about \$90.00 per chest, and the low advices from England, added to all these symptoms of a falling exchange, made all of us positive that it would be down to about 4s. 8d. to 4s. 10d. But as I have said before, 'all is humbug etc.' and exchange opened just as high as last month, bank rate 5s. and cannot sell at that. Those reckless chaps in India are giving about 2s. 3d. for a rupee, so that English bills even at 5s. don't pay so well as Company's paper at 225 rupees per \$100. At that rate other people, sellers of Company's paper, are laying down their dollar here at 4s. 8d. while we are paying 5s. They certainly have the advantage of us unless you count a high rate for interest, the rupee in England costing I hear 2s. 1d. (India on England 2s. 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ d.)

I made sure the rate was coming down and shipped all our Sou-chongs and even made a further purchase of 355 chests fine Congou at Tls 21 and am much disappointed. However, I am not disappointed at keeping back shipping so long as I think they will arrive at a better time than if they had been shipped some months before. The Congou I have bought at Tls 21 is a first class Congou. I had offered Tls 24 for it at the beginning of the season but the

<sup>1</sup> Meaning 'all is nonsense'; W. G. Smith, *Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs* (Oxford, 1935), 38.

Chinaman would not sell. I made it better than [chop] no. 2 *Naomi* and preferred to it. Surely at Tls 21 it must be safe, freight £2 5s. and as you will see 30s.(1) per *Harbeck* to Liverpool. It was the neighbour chop of 'Long Soey', one of the first arrivals in England this year, sold at 1s. 10d. I have tried them together and believe what the Chinaman says that they are all one 'mixing' as I make no difference. And although we can't calculate on 1s. 10d., still it leaves a good margin. The fact of the Chinaman holding it so long shows it cost him pretty high as he thought he was entitled to first class price.

I certainly looked for lower advices this month but not nearly so bad as have been received; and, as the stock is seven million lbs. short, I can't account for it in any way but from speculators letting go on the market all they had hoarded up and giving the market, from their doing so, an artificial firmness. If that is the case, teas will come to their proper price according to stocks and imports. And I scarcely think with your light stocks at home, even in face of the large export, [teas] can come lower than your advices by last mail quote them. Everyone out here was taken 'aback' by the news. They calculated on the light stock at home keeping up prices and some of them looked on their fortunes as being in a fair way of being safely delivered. But as I have said before, 'it is all in my eye and Betty Martin (or Elizabeth Martin, I forget which) and vexation of spirit'.<sup>1</sup> Nobody will look at tea now out here unless as they look at a red hot iron. . . . In a month or six weeks some odds and ends may be had very cheap but not sooner, that is, if bad advices continue coming out, because the Chinamen to use a classical expression 'are not to be done' and wait for another mail or two with a great deal of coolness. However, if anything is to be had, as it were, just for the picking up off the street, I won't forget I have £3,400 of your Nationals yet, and if to be had on even better terms than that, may not forget that I can draw on you against it. But nothing more from me unless, to use an elegant expression, 'dirt-cheap'.

I send you bills of lading this mail of the shipments. I would have given you invoices of all of them but am going outside, perhaps to

<sup>1</sup> The saying, meaning 'nonsense', should read 'All my eye and Betty Martin'. Eric Partridge, *Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English* (London, 1963), i, 9.

Macao for a change, having been here three months scarcely out of the house (I think once); and as you have seen musters and got the prices, you cannot be particular about invoices. [The chop marked] L/12, 45 half chests per *Harbeck* is on account of A. M. & Co. and Mr Schaw and will nearly balance his account. I sold £1,400 left out of the £15,000 Commercial yesterday at 5s. ½d. to balance up your account joint with J. R. & Co. and would send you account current now, only I am in a hurry to be off.

I engaged a boat and did not think I had half as much writing to get through. Yours in a deuce of a hurry.

Macao, 18 April 1851

I have yours of 22 February and am glad to learn from it that you are all well. I am glad the cargo<sup>1</sup> has gone off at such good prices. The prices appear to me to be better than the *Magellan's* but I am afraid had the teas gone to London or Liverpool they would not have brought so much, or had the *James Watt* or *Ann McLean* got in before her. But it is all well that ends well. I only wish you have as good prices for all the rest of the shipments. Congous of the good and middling kinds seem uncommonly low with you, 1d. to 2d. at least cheaper than they were about the same time as last year. The most of those kinds bought this season will either lose or leave very little profit, I am afraid. With so small a stock at home, it is strange they should be so very cheap.

I wrote you last month from Canton that I intended going down here, and I started the same night I wrote or rather next morning at 2 o'clock. I thought I would be able to get through my work and letters by 9 or 10 o'clock that night easily but I found I was wrong. It took me until two in the morning without sitting down, except about ten minutes to eat a chop, and even then I found I had to leave some things over and send away the bills of lading in such a hurry that I forgot to endorse them, I think. It was a fair wind for Macao and I was afraid to lose it, or would not have hurried myself; besides I had promised to pay the boat people \$14.00, go or not go. But I did not repent it afterwards as I had a fine passage down and arrived here next night about 8 or 9.

I see Lord John's resignation but I think it likely, from what the

<sup>1</sup> The tea per *Naomi*.

papers say, that he may take office again.<sup>1</sup> There seem to be few people at present that the nation has confidence enough in, to put in Lord John's place.

I am staying as usual at Mr Seare's. He is talking of going home with his family in a year or so. He arrived in China September '42 and I in October '42. He has never been home but has always had good health. He came out here for Hyde Lenox & Co.<sup>2</sup> but had some disagreement with them and left them after being about four years in their business. His leaving was entirely the fault of Hyde, L. & Co. They did some very shabby trick to say the least of it (Mr Maccaughey knows all about it); and poor Mr Seare, being their agent out here at the time, has got his name mixed up a little in the affair although he had nothing to do with it, one of the partners being in China at the time it was done and taking all the management of the matter in his own hands. I think Seare left them in consequence. He is himself the last man that would do anything dishonourable and it is only a pity he ever had anything to do with the aforesaid house. I am glad I had nothing to do with them. You may remember I was thinking of coming out here and joining a young man, Cooper,<sup>3</sup> to open a house here under their auspices.

There is a great deal of tea gone this year, I am afraid too much; and unless the Exhibition helps a lot of it away or the consumption greatly increases there will be low prices.

The weather here just now is beautiful; dry and bright, with a

<sup>1</sup> Lord John Russell, Prime Minister, resigned in Feb. 1851 but quickly returned to office over Palmerston's failure to show diplomatic despatches to the Queen.

<sup>2</sup> Hyde Lenox & Co.: merchants, London, owners of the ships *Hashemy* and *William Hyde* in the East India trade. The company imported raw cotton, lead, opium and pepper to China from India, and exported rhubarb, silk and tea from China to England. Besides using the agency of J. M. & Co. in Canton, the firm in 1833 had Fletcher Alexander & Co. as their agent. In 1842-3 [Samuel?] Hyde travelled between Bombay and Canton, exporting goods and remitting credit from India to China and hence to London through J. M. & Co. From Feb. 1843 onward, much of Mr Hyde's activities was transferred to Benjamin Seare in Canton. The individual transactions amounted to as much as \$79,000 in Dec. 1842 but more frequently between \$16,000 and \$18,000 thereafter. J. Lenox to J. M. & Co., 11 June and 17 July, 1833, JMA, Corr. In: London, B1/159, fos. 956, 1028; Smith, Hyde, Lenox to J. M. & Co., 5 Aug., 17 Oct., 3 Nov. 1835, *ibid.* B1/162, fos. 2052, 2108, 2125; J. M. & Co. to Hyde Lenox & Co., 5 Sept., 8 Nov., 5 Dec. 1842, 10 Jan., 10 Feb., 8 Apr. 1843, JMA, Europe Letter Book, B6/iv, fos. 57, 135-6, 158, 240-1, 322-3, 439. The correspondence ceased after the end of 1843.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew Cooper, Hong Kong. CR, xiv (1845), 3.

nice breeze, such kind of weather that makes it almost impossible to get out of spirits. It is certainly a very fine climate this (Macao) for six months out of the twelve, and the other six although rather hot to be pleasant are seldom oppressively hot. Old Chinnery the artist who has been here for about twenty-five to thirty years says it is the finest climate in the world, and he may say so with reason as he has always had good health. He was about as long in India before he came here, and might have made a large fortune as he was clever and greatly taken notice of by the nobs there, governor generals and so on, but he was extravagant. He is now about seventy or seventy-five, I think, and paints beautifully yet but he is very frail. For my part, although I am very well, I must say I would rather prefer England to half-a-dozen Macaos, or even Scotland at a pinch; it is very pleasant here but it is too relaxing.

21st [April]:

Nothing to add. I hope this will find you all well. I see there is a steamer now plies betwixt China and Manila. It is a fine place people say and has a good many Spanish inhabitants. I sometimes think I would like to take a trip down and see it if I have nothing to do, so don't be alarmed if you should get a letter from there; but I don't think it likely. Kind remembrance to all.

William to Mr Simpson

Macao, 21 April 1851

I have yours of February and note their contents. I sent you by another letter bills of lading for our shipments on joint account and invoices, also statement of your account jointly with Mr Schaw, which I have balanced off, as you will see, by giving credit for \$16.25 and which you will have to give me credit for in my private account.

Your account jointly with Messrs J. R & Company shows a balance in my favour of \$300. I will delay balancing or squaring it until I see whether I can get some compensation for the damage you mention on [chop] no. 4 per *Naomi*, and of course should I recover anything it will go to credit of that account. You should have sent out certificates of the damage from the dock company. The tea was not Canton packed as you seem to suppose, but true country packages. They never pack first class Congou in Canton. It is strange,

though, that the overland muster was so much better than the stock, but tea generally improves in canister. I know many people here have given up sending tea samples home just for that reason and put no dependence on valuations of overland samples. Ewart will tell you the same.

I am sorry you think the purchases for your account and Schaw's will not do much good; for my own part I would rather have had them than any of the rest of the purchases. Chops 7 and 8 I thought better at the money than almost any of the *Naomi's*.

Confound that *Superb* – had it not been for her making such an awful passage, her shipment would have paid well. I don't think there is any fear about the policy. As your shipment joint with J. R. & Co. has been re-insured, of course that is all right; the other two shipments, ours and yours joint with Schaw's, are both insured in the Canton office, Jardine's own office, so they must have known well enough she was going into the Cape. Besides, the policies are made out with liberty to touch, stay and trade at all intermediate ports, and I cannot understand why Messrs J. R. & Co make out that the *Superb* had no liberty to stay at the Cape granted in the policy, because if I recollect rightly it was particularly mentioned in the policy. However, I don't see any cause to suppose she is lost yet. Many good vessels take six months and start in a better season without going into the Cape to stay; look at the *W. Morrice* and *Gresham* last year for instance.

I have sent your letter to Murrow but he has made no reply as yet. I wish I had my own from him, some \$3,000 to \$4,000 if I recollect rightly. He has no insurance office here now, he has joined one Stephenson in partnership at Hong Kong. What they do I do not know. He is always at law with somebody or other and is known to be the most litigious character in China. He will most likely write you himself. . . .<sup>1</sup>

I do not know what to think about next year. Tea must either come down or exchange, or the price go up at home, which is not likely looking at the awful quantity gone. The only redeeming feature is the light stock. I had expected valuations of the box of Souchongs per this mail as the Southampton mail was in the 20th.

I will be glad to receive the statement of the account current

<sup>1</sup> The passage omitted refers to *Naomi* cargo; see above, p. 151.



which you promise to send when the *Superb* and *Somnauth* are sold off. Of course you will alter item for loss on Oolongs from £826 18s. 4d. to £413 9s. 2d., because you cannot keep all the amount now at my debit on the plea that I am to receive half from Murrow, when you have applied for yourselves direct; or put all to my debit and claim another half from him. No more that I recollect. Hoping this may find you and all your family well.

William to Andrew Melrose and Company

Macao, 21 April 1851

I have the pleasure to send you per this mail invoices of shipments advised last mail and bills of lading for the same.

Please to notice I made a mistake last month in advising the sale of bank bills: No. 26/167 for £100, National Bank, was omitted to be advised as sold (on account A. M. & Co. and W. M. jointly); the amount of Nationals sold last mail was therefore £1,600 and not £1,500 as advised, leaving still £3,400 Nationals on joint account for sale, the only bank bills left unsold (excepting £2,700 on my own account) of all sent out by you this season.

I have to acknowledge your favour of February and am glad to learn the *Naomi* has given you satisfaction.

ps. I send herewith account current of A. M. & Co. jointly with R. Schaw account. I have given credit for £4 1s. 3d. at 5s. or \$16.25 to balance up the account, therefore be good enough to give me credit for that amount in my private account with you. Last month I gave you an order on Messrs J. R. & Co. for £3 16s. to balance an account of theirs with me and to put same to my credit. I therefore have debited you with, say: £3 16s. to be received from Messrs J. R. & Co. on my account, and £4 1s. 3d. put to credit of account of A. M. & Co. and R. Schaw jointly to balance up that account.

pps. I do not hear what exchange is this month.

William to Andrew Melrose and Company

Canton, 21 May 1851

I have your letters of March. Exchange you will observe has come down very suddenly. It was very unfortunate that I did not hold your bills for another month, but the teas were shipped and the

conditions they were purchased on were cash after shipment. And even had the Chinaman been willing to the payment of them being delayed for some time longer, I would have had to pay interest at the rate of 1% per month; and it is doubtful if he would have had the payment delayed even on those terms, so that even had the rate come down in the usual way of  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. or 1d. at a time, the interest to be paid would amount to nearly all the difference that fall would be in our favour. But a fall from 5s. to 4s. 8d. was a thing quite unlooked for by all parties here.

I have carried to the credit of your account joint with Messrs J. R. & Co. the sum of \$600 allowed as compensation for damage on [chop] no. 4 half chests per *Naomi*. A balance of \$300 is now left in your favour in consequence on that account, which I shall remit as soon as I can see anything that I think may make a good remittance.

I beg to advise having sold the following National Banks:

Account A. M. & Co. and W. M.

26/168 1 bill of £100

26/164 1 bill of £200

£300

leaving £3,100 unsold.

Private account W. Melrose

25/1385-7 3 bills of £500 £1,500

25/1392-3 2 bills of £100 200

£1,700

leaving £1,000 unsold.

For further advices please refer to my private letters.

PS. I understand you have an open policy for the last £5,000 sent on our joint account. I know I wrote you to open one, and also that you have one for the \$300 worth that I intend to remit for your account joint J. R. & Co., balance of that account.

William to Mr Simpson

Canton, 21 May 1851

I have yours of 22 March etc., with a statement of proceeds of the *Dulius'* curiosities. They certainly leave a good deal less than I

thought they would from your former calculation. But I am not greatly disappointed as they still leave a good profit, and [I] made allowances for your first statement in case the news was 'our guide to be true'. In case I forget I will just say here that I have been trying to get compensation for the articles missing.

You say you have put \$20.80 or £4 15s. 4d. to my debit as that amount is overcharged in the invoice or, as you say, extended wrong. On looking at my invoice book I find the amount extended just the same as you state them to be in the invoice sent, and appear quite correct, except

M 86.87 where, as you say, I have charged 12 sets of sieves at 80 cents instead of 11 sets - overcharge 80 cents - which is right.

You say M 85 is charged in the invoice \$64.00 and should be \$63.00 and I see by the list of what you say was in it that I have omitted to specify two caps at 50 cents or \$1.00 which makes that all right. Add two caps at 50 cents to \$63.00 and you have \$64.00.

M 135 you say is extended \$140.00 and should be \$122.00 (difference \$18.00). You also specify the articles the box contains and I see where the discrepancy is: the one set of chessmen you specify as charged \$2.00 should be \$20.00, making exactly the \$18.00 difference.

So you will see that the only item which should really go to my debit is 80 cents for the set of sieves, that really being a mistake in the extension; the others were not mistakes in the extension, the amounts being extended properly but from the articles not being properly specified, the mistake occurred. So much for that!

I have got \$24.00 compensation for the missing packages in M parcel. I cannot get more, the camphor wood trunks etc. the Chinamen won't allow at all and swear they were shipped. The \$24.00 are allowed for the fans and images and the hat and cap which they say might have been forgotten. In M 31, as you mentioned, I have charged 12 pairs of jars too many and of course must allow you for them. It should have been in the invoice 24 jars at \$1.50 per pair, and not 24 pairs as wrongly stated and extended. This being the case, you will require to rub out the £4 15s. 4d. you have put to my debit already and put instead of it, say:

overcharge on sieve 80 cents,  
allowance by the Chinamen \$24.00,

12 pairs of jars at \$1.50 (M 30), overcharge in invoice \$18.00, total £42.80 at 4s. 7d. (rate at time of shipment) or £9 16s. 2d. Perhaps it would save scrapping or ambiguity to credit me with the £4 15s. 4d. and debit me with the £9 16s. 2d.

As for my own parcel, the N shipment, I only recovered for the fans and images as in the M parcel; and I halved that amount with him (the Chinaman) as there is no saying but the things may be stolen or lost and it is hardly fair, unless one is quite positive, to put all to his account. But of course you don't put anything to my debit for what I recovered of my own, as all you had to do with it was to sell and put proceeds, whatever it might be or said to be, at my credit.

You will see exchange is now considerably lower; how very unfortunate I was in not holding on another month because last month it came down to 4s. 8½d. to 9d. I was very much annoyed when I heard it had come down, especially after I had held out so long – from November, nearly six months! I might have held on another month but the teas being then shipped, I would have had to pay 1% interest and no one seemed to have the slightest hope of it coming down. So I did not feel inclined to make the high rate worse by paying interest, but it cannot be helped now. If we could always tell what was going to happen, we could all soon make fortunes.

Many people here seem rather well pleased with the prices they have been getting at home for their Congous in London and Liverpool. I cannot understand it, they quote 1s. 4d. and 1s. 5d. and 3½d. Ours must either be badly bought or undervalued; and I am sure I thought Schaw's Congous, the two half chops nos. 7 and 8, the cheapest purchases I had seen made in Canton and so did every other taster who came into my tea room. I am afraid the Liverpool market has not much stamina in it. I certainly think whoever bought them got them very cheap at 1s. 1½d. I see the rest of the *Dulius* Gunpowders have gone off at 9d. What a pity you did not tell them to force sales at the time you sold the 50 boxes at 1s. Surely they could have got rid of them at a little reduction.

I hear the *Superb* is in at last although your letters don't mention it. I suppose she arrived after you had despatched. There can be no mistake about your being able to recover for sea damage, as (if you

read the policy) you will see she is given liberty to touch, stay and trade at the Cape in the Canton office's policy, and, in the Union office's, to touch and stay which is surely enough. No, I see I am wrong with the Union office. I have just referred to a policy and I see it only gives the vessel liberty to stay at the Cape for assistance, provisions, etc. but nothing said about trading; however the Canton office does, I am almost certain. I know one or two shippers in the *Superb* who did not even know she was going to the Cape until I told them. Now it would have gone very hard with them had they insured in the Union and the vessel gone down and no recovery to be had. Most vessels intending to discharge at the Cape keep that fact as quiet as possible.

You will observe I have sold for our joint account £300 Nationals at 4s. 7½d. as the account was over-remitted to that amount and more. I sold them to a Chinaman this time; I owed him the money and he took them in preference to dollars, to avoid comprador's squeezes as he said. He gave me a good rate for them. I sold him £1,700 of my own too, at same rate.

Now that exchange has come down I don't see anything worth buying. People seem to be going too much ahead again. As soon as last mail came in all the Congous remaining were bought up. I was thinking of buying some Scented Orange Pekoe if cheap, as the consumption of it seems greatly increasing, but someone settled about 5,000 packages of it at dear rates when I was thinking about it - Tls 18 for common and Tls 20 to 22 for fair passable. I see nothing to buy, the export is tremendous and unless things were very cheap it would be folly buying. There is still a large quantity of true greens left unbought this year and nobody seems inclined to give much for them. I will keep my eye on some of them. The export of green is less than last year, while black is about eight millions more; but then America may play the deuce with the green tea market at home as she might send over to England as much as would swamp it.

The Chinaman has agreed to allow \$600 on [chop] no. 4 half chests *Naomi* after a great deal of haggling and a very long face. If he had known I had no certificate, I would not have got a cent. That now will leave \$300 at the credit of your account joint J. R. & Co. I will see if I can pick up anything to remit it in and balance

off. [Chop] no. 16 *Naomi* which you think so cheap was bought at Tls 18½ but, not being equal to muster, Tls 2½ deducted.

I see Messrs J. R. & Co. did not say anything to you about the £5,000 and I hope you have kept it quite quiet that I told you so, as it would be very unbusinesslike to have told other people what they had entrusted to me.

Bank bills are now laying down the dollar cheaper than Company rupees. They come to nearly 4s. 10d. while even drawing on England against documents is only 4s. 9d., but it is likely they will become assimilated soon. I notice what you say about going too far in a trade I may know nothing about, but I am cautious; you know I never buy on speculation. I know of nothing else to say.

Canton, 22 May 1851

I have yours of 22 March and am glad to see that you are all well. I am glad Hallam has arrived in such good health. I read the paragraph about your law plea;<sup>1</sup> that is the second time you have lost it since I have been out here. The majority of the judges seem against you, which I should think was a bad feature in the case; and yet it is very hard after you have paid for the sugars and got their delivery order that you should lose them. I suppose it will be an expensive proceeding carrying the case before the House of Lords and you would require to be pretty sure of carrying it through before you fixed on trying it.

I see the high exchange is terrifying you at home, but you will see it has come down here again and came down 4d. to 5d. in one month, which nobody expected. I don't recollect of ever seeing either so great a rise or fall in so short a time. I was very much disappointed, when I heard of it, that I did not keep our bills for a month longer after keeping them so long; but I had promised the Chinaman to ship and pay in February (after China New Year) and after that I thought I would wait no longer. But I got another month after that and did not ship till March, and had made up my mind if it did not come down by that time to wait no longer. Besides, I would have had to pay interest. Another month and I

<sup>1</sup> Above, p. 104, n. 1.

might have sold at 4s. 8½d., a difference of 8% or £400, £200 each, but we never can tell what is going to happen and when we act for the best must take our chance of good and bad luck.

I observe what you say about my going home and Andrew taking a turn out here. I will think about it. I don't think I will stay much longer. I want to stay just as long as there is an appearance of things paying and to be off if possible before losing times come on. It just goes by fits and starts that way in the China trade, you may depend on it. It is not a regular trade in which you may count by caution and experience on making so much a year. In good years everything pays and in bad years everything loses; and those who make money in the China trade are those who do nothing at all as soon as they see bad times coming on and go into it again when things have seen their worst and just beginning to mend, just as we have done this time. We commenced just at the proper time, a month or two too late perhaps; had we commenced a year or two before, in 1846 and '47 I am afraid we would have lost a great deal more than we have gained since 1848.

There is no trade so dangerous as the China trade, I think, without a good many years experience. Look at the number of new houses started here and at Shanghai a few years ago with mighty great ideas of what they were to do and what they were to make. They did not last long, the best of them. I do not forget getting over the fingers myself in '46 and '47; Murrow's failure, \$3,000; \$1,000 Oolongs or greens sent to America; Oolongs at home, £400; lost on *Aberfoyle*, £300 to £400; *Wanderer*, £100; and so on - nearly £2,000, on my small operations then, of dead loss, which makes me remember it is a great deal easier to lose than win. The question is, when is the proper time to hold on for a bit. We may be very sagaciously looking out for bad times and, before we know where we are, find ourselves in the middle of them like stupid asses.

There has been a fearful export last year and a very high exchange, but teas were very cheap here and a small stock and great consumption at home which will likely help to keep things straight for a time yet. But we can't have a small stock every time at the beginning of the year, and perhaps not always so large a consumption, and all we can do is to observe and throw up our tools for a time as soon as times look threatening and that may not be far off. I think it would

be a pity to spoil the effect I intend those very sage and philosophic remarks to produce by saying any more until next month by which time they will have been well digested. So with kind regards to all and several, I am my Father your affectionate son.

Macao, 20 June 1851

I have yours of April and am glad to see you are all well. I have got the £30,000 all right and observe all that has been arranged regarding the two cargoes. I feel very much obliged for what you have done for me as I am sure you did it entirely to benefit me and I feel very grateful to you for it. But at the same time, to tell the plain truth, I do not feel very much pleased with the arrangement because they put me down for a third share, and thereby secure my best endeavours, of course, to make the venture profitable. I am made liable in case of a loss to the amount of about £4,000 (taking two cargoes) and all they pay me for this is  $2\frac{1}{2}\%$ , about enough to pay my expenses out here. And besides that [they] tie me down with positive limits and instructions so that I must act and take a share too, even if I thought there was to be a heavy loss, so that all I get by the adventure is a little more than will pay my expenses out here and a third share, which may turn out a profit and may turn out a loss.

Let them try Russells or Jardines or any other house and just see if they would take a share in their shipments for  $2\frac{1}{2}\%$ . I don't think they would do it if they were to pay them  $7\%$ . Houses out here won't take shares in the purchases; and [they refuse orders] over and over again rather than take a share in them, even if the people at home leave the purchases to their own discretion and pay them a full commission. Wetmore's<sup>1</sup> tea taster told me the other day that they might make their business three times what it was if the house here would consent to take shares in the orders they receive, but that they make a point of never doing so. Seare, with whom I am living here and who came out for Hyde Lenox and Co., tells me they might have had one of the largest commission houses in China if they would have taken an interest in the consignments out and

<sup>1</sup> Wetmore & Co.: an agency house in Canton with three partners and seven assistants in 1846. *CR*, xv (1846), 8.



home, but that they would not think of it. And look at Jamieson & Co., they will hardly take an order at all and far less take a share in it.

I don't mean to say from all this that I have any objection to take a share in the selections but I do not see that it is any reason for reducing the commission, in fact, to take the custom of other houses, rather the reverse; and the party here, if it is understood he is to take a share, should always have a discretionary power left him. You might have sent me orders to buy what appeared to me to leave an evident loss, and I must have taken a share in it as I had no alternative, the orders being positive. However, I have written Richardson that they must allow me another percent for negotiating the bills, which is always customary to charge, and I do not think that they can refuse. I have also written them that I do not wish a share in the Shanghai cargo as a share in the other two is quite enough of responsibility for a man of my means, but that I will be glad to do it for them at 4% and give it every attention as they will have had three cargoes if they take it this year. I cannot think what could make you think they were ordering from Jardines, unless that they might [wish to] have the first of the Glasgow market and might be afraid to trust to me in case I had an order from you too. However, they are welcome to try Jardines if they like; and I don't think they will get them to take a share in their selections, at least for 2½% commission.

How things will turn out next year it is quite impossible to say. Your stock in London and Liverpool was, by last advices, four millions more than last year at the same time but that may be from it arriving sooner than the year before. But at all events the export from this is nearly six millions more of Congou alone. Most people seem to think we will have low prices, especially the brokers at home; but I think it will be a busy year with you, and good teas I don't think can go much lower. I only hope the consumption will go on well and then there will be no fear. I would not again take a share for me in any orders except they are left entirely to my own discretion and never under 4% commission. The responsibility and troubles are fully worth that, but still I would prefer doing it on the old terms of 5% and no share.

I must write Mr Simpson etc. tomorrow. The steamer is advertised to start a day earlier than usual and I have just little enough time

to get through yours and Richardson's today. However, I have no doubt tomorrow will be good time and only send yours and Richardson's today to be quite positive of being in time. I have written in a great hurry and may have said more than I should about that commission business; but, be that as it may, I feel very much obliged to you for the interest you have taken in getting me the business, but must say I thought it rather near of them after their teas having paid them so well. If they are determined to have a low commission charged, let them send out their funds entirely by themselves, and I will invest them for them as low as any house in China will do and pay them as much attention; but I cannot afford to take a share in them, incur a responsibility and give their orders every attention for a lower rate than any house here charges.

I am sorry to hear Law has been ill. Remember me kindly to him and Easy. I hope this will find you all well. In haste.

Macao, 21 June 1851

Yesterday was the last safe day, so I sent you off a letter last night but have no doubt this will still be in time. By the by, in future you had better address my letters merely to William Melrose, Canton. Mr Edger having left the house, the new people won't take charge of them, very shabby of them. The person at Hong Kong now in charge of their business is called Donaldson;<sup>1</sup> he is not a partner, the only partner out here is a Mr Gifford<sup>2</sup> who resides in Canton. I called on him and asked him if he would take charge of my letters as formerly and he very willingly assented. I therefore thought no more about it and wrote this time to Mr Donaldson at Hong Kong to send my letters over here by steamer. He did not answer my note but sent my letters to Mr Edger with a note telling him he could not be troubled with them and so on. I send you his note and Mr Edger's note to me, a very kind one. If you address them Canton, they are sure to find me; the post office will send them there direct. I wrote to the postmaster of Hong Kong a few days ago about some letters I thought missing; but he wrote to tell

<sup>1</sup> P. Donaldson of Jamieson Gifford & Co., Hong Kong. *CR*, xx (1851), 5.

<sup>2</sup> Alexander Gifford, the attorney who acted for Jamieson Gifford & Co. in 1851. *China Mail*, 2 Jan. 1851; *CR*, xx (1851), 6.

me it was impossible any letter could be mislaid if it was addressed to me, a name familiar to everyone in his office. So you see they know where to find me.

I wrote you in a great hurry yesterday and may have spoken or written more hastily than I intended, which you might think rather strange of me after the trouble you have taken and care and so on. I can only repeat that I am greatly obliged for what you have done and have no doubt you have made an excellent arrangement and one which I think will turn out very profitable for me, as I think the cargoes will arrive at a good time and be bought here cheaply. But still it is a bad precedent to establish, cutting down the commission one-half in consequence of the share, because although it has every chance apparently of turning out well, still it might have been the reverse. I will do all I can about keeping a good chop for Leith, but I am very strictly bound down and told to look to them only for instructions. Hoping this will find you all well.

William to Mr Simpson

Macao, 21 June 1851

I have your various letters and their enclosures and the £30,000 all right. The steamer starts a day earlier than usual this month, which I only knew yesterday, the last safe day for sending letters away. That being the case I found I had just little enough time to write Messrs J. R. & Co. and my father, but I have no doubt this will be still in time.

I see all that you have been about and hope it may all turn out well and think it will, as I dare say the cargoes will arrive at a good time; for although the export from here is enormous, more than two thirds of it had arrived by your last advices and were in stock. No doubt your stock was four millions more than last year (in April), but then most of the export was in and only about half to arrive for the six months after April. Of what did arrive for the six months before April, the stock should begin to decrease; and I think before the new Congous of this year arrive your stock will be reduced about eight millions, and, if the Exhibition gives the consumption a spur, perhaps more.

All the clippers this year are away up to Shanghai, so that we

will likely have lower prices here than there. Up there this year there is the *Oriental*, *Abergeldy*, *Reindeer*, *Magellan*, *Countess of Seafield*, *Stornoway*, etc., all sure to be off with the new Congous.

It is quite a new plan cutting down the commission because a share is to be taken, and is generally the reverse. You make sure that nothing will be bought that is not likely to pay at all events, and a share in a bad spec may amount to more loss than all that has been gained by commission for years. But the best way to decide those things is to take the custom. You could not get any respectable house or person to take a share in orders at  $2\frac{1}{2}\%$ . I dare say you might find some who had nothing to lose who would not mind trying it, and some perhaps who would do it at  $2\frac{1}{2}\%$  and no share, and plenty for all they would care about it. If you give an order to them for 'black leaf strong' at a certain limit, if it can't be got, their tea taster may easily make a 'blackish leaf' into a 'black leaf strong' (all brokers have different characters), ship it off, pocket  $2\frac{1}{2}\%$ , little trouble, no responsibility. As for people supposing that they have got a hold on people here by sending out limits, it is great folly. To be sure, they very often keep them from doing what they think and feel to be right but seldom can keep them from transgressing limits to suit their own purposes if necessary. Just take your own last orders for instance; there is no character stated to any kind of tea you have ordered, except one chop 'first class'. I might send you anything I liked.

You acknowledge by your last letters to me (April) that you have received mine of 25 February. Therefore your latest information from China at the time you wrote out your orders was up to 25 February, and you sent out positive instructions to a person out here who has information four months later than yourselves, 25 June. Who should be best able to judge? As far as regards information, I am just four months ahead of you, enough to turn the aspect of the best of seasons into the blackest; but should the export have been 80,000,000 (it must be, as it is more than you thought), I must have acted and no alternative. Do not put me down again for a share in such orders. It is all very well this time as I think it will all turn out well, but next time you may tell me to ruin myself whether I will or not. Surely if one takes a share he should have a vote; but it is all right this time and I am quite satisfied.

ps. Excuse haste. Murrow has gone down two months ago to Batavia, quite broken up and not thought to be able to return. Perhaps it is well for him as the Oriental Bank are bringing an action against him, which they lost before owing to some flaw but which they will likely win this time – amount is said to be \$50,000. . . .

Canton, 20 July 1851

Yours of 21 May came to hand some days ago. I am very sorry indeed to hear of the death of poor William Law. I was taken by surprise as I had not heard that he was even unwell;<sup>1</sup> it must be a great trial for poor Easy. I am glad to hear that Helen was getting well again.

I came up here almost immediately after I sent away your letters of last month from Macao, but there has been nothing for me to do since except to look on. I am afraid it won't be a very good year this: there is so much tea gone, and everything at home seems so dull; and, in spite of all that, people here have been shipping away pretty well. Captain Robertson, your friend, started a few days ago with a cargo for London in the *Stornoway*, Jardine's clipper; and a large American vessel, the *Surprise*, is engaged full and to be off in a short time; and at Shanghai by last advices they had settled 71 chops of Congou. I see by the paper that Thorburn and his wife have arrived. No doubt you heard of his marriage long ago. I believe she is a daughter of his partner Hargreaves.<sup>2</sup>

A good many people have gone up to Shanghai from here; and many of the large houses here, who have agents there, are leaving it to the agents there to purchase for them. They must have made large profits on the low Congous from there last year and I suppose they are all going to try it again, but it may be overdone. It is very seldom a chance like it comes twice. Some of the common teas they sent too I hear were terrible trash and, had not common tea kept up so wonderfully at home, would very likely have been worth about 2d. per lb. Exchange too is getting up again, now 4s. 10d.,

<sup>1</sup> But cf. above, p. 164.

<sup>2</sup> Hargreaves: the firm was known in 1845 as Platt Hargreaves & Co., Shanghai; its partners included Joseph Hargreaves, Manchester, and George Hargreaves, Liverpool. *China Mail*, 24 July 1845; above, p. 17, n. 2.

and people generally think that it is going to be quite as high as last year.

We would require very low prices indeed to make things pay; and for my own part I would almost have been inclined to do little this year, since we have done pretty well for three former years and have seen how things were going to turn out at home. But there is no saying; things turn out very different from what we generally imagine, and one good feature is that everybody here is in low spirits about tea mostly, [which] may help to keep down prices and also the export. At Shanghai they seem to be in good feather, and some of the higher priced Congous I have seen of their settlements are dearer than here. I would not like to have a share in them.

You had better hold the Souchongs until at least March if you cannot sell at a profit before then, because they are sure to be wanted. The crop of Congou this year being the tarriest I ever saw, they will require a great deal of Souchong to mix with them; and no doubt clean teas of last year and Souchongs will be in much better demand when the tarry Congous get home. And home they must go, for there seems nothing else with the exception of about 40 or 50 chops; but there are only about 230 chops down yet. What is to come may not be so bad but the chances are that they will be worse. Some chops of fine have been taken by Jardines etc., and no price named, which is a good thing as, after they get away, people, knowing that they will have no chance of getting any of their purchases home first, will not be inclined to give anything like a high price. I would not be surprised should people begin with the commoner kinds this year. The market cannot be said to be fairly opened yet although a few chops have been shipped. No doubt they will go at or within your limits so I am on the lookout for a cargo. But how entirely to avoid tarry is a difficult matter.

Rothwell arrived last mail from his trip home. He is just looking the very same, no difference. He tells me I look as well as ever he saw me, and as he has been away eight or nine months and I have known him since 1839, he should know. Kind remembrance to Easy and all the rest.

ps. I am sorry I have forgotten about the curious kinds of tea and will look to it immediately.

William to Mr Simpson

Canton, 21 July 1851

I have yours of 17th and 21st May. I started for this place soon after I despatched your last month's letters from Macao but have done nothing yet. The market is not open here yet, that is properly opened. Jardines secured some good chops and have shipped them per *Stornoway*, three or four chops, price not yet fixed but to be fixed after the market opens. The *Stornoway* you will see takes but little Congou, I think about 150,000 lbs. only. There is a large American vessel, the *Surprise*, loading and engaged full at £6, a fine vessel; but she is not getting on so fast as was expected. People when they saw last month's mail (May) seemed to cool down considerably, and I hear many of those who have engaged tonnage would have no objection to get rid of it.

Two chops said to be of second class have been settled for her at Tls 22. The chops have not been on the market so I can't say anything about their value or quality. Another chop has been settled for her at some say Tls 23 and some Tls 24½. I have seen it and it is no great shakes in my opinion. I don't make it first class. This chop may be said to have opened the market, as it was the first settled of new tea; but nobody has followed the example of the buyer and it is to be hoped that they are waiting for lower prices. It is a good thing an offer I made was not accepted. Having your orders to buy (at Tls 23 at 5s.), I offered, as it was my duty to do, to the extent of my limits but it was refused; and afterwards seeing there was no great demand, I did not renew the offer, seeing there was no hurry and a likelihood of getting one cheaper. But when the market first opened I had no choice but to give my bid, as they might have all been bought up in an hour; and having your positive instructions to buy if at that price, I had no right to run the risk of losing my chance of making a purchase by waiting for a lower price. I hope we may get them cheaper now; after the *Surprise* has gone and *Stornoway*, surely there can be no great desire to ship fine. But on the other hand the fine chops this year are very few and that may lead to competition.

At Shanghai they are going ahead, 71 chops by last advice settled from Tls 15 to 21½. I have seen some of the samples; the high priced

appear to me very dear, nothing but tarry Pekoe flavour, not nearly so good as ours per *Aden* to Liverpool and far more tarry. I do not think they have any fine up there this year, but I will see samples and prices tomorrow and will be able to tell you more about it. I hear some of the Congous they shipped from there last year were awful trash. If low Congous come down at home and any of that low stuff get in after, it will leave a balance on the wrong side. A good many people have gone up from here to Shanghai this year and a great many ships. They must have made good profits last year which is sending them all up there and it must all have been made on low Congou.

If the consumption goes on at home still upon common it may be as much wanted as ever, in proportion to the fine kinds I mean. But there is this to be remembered, the Chinese can give you any quantity of common and soon supply to excess any demand for it; but of fine the quantity to be had is generally limited. This year there appears to be a great scarcity of fine; and if fine are not going out of consumption altogether, they will most likely rally before the end of next year or about the middle. Fine last year was in excess and that may have had the effect of making them more depressed, but no doubt the taste at home is greatly altered too. There are very few fine chops of Congou this year, not over a dozen, a few second class and all the rest as tarry as you could wish. If you hold the Souchongs they will come in very well yet. About 230 chops of Congou are down and nearly all tarry; and if those that are to come are as bad, and the chances are that they will be, a good two thirds of the Congou export will be tarry, say 25,000,000 pounds. Now one million or so of Souchong will hardly be known amongst it. Just think, every chop of Congou is nearly 600 to 800 chests and the most of those tarry, some of them bitter with tar. What are a few chops of (150 to 200 chests) Souchong to mix with them!

I am afraid there will be but little life in the tea market all this year. However, by your last advices you had the greatest part of the large export in, and now the stock should begin to come down. My only hope is that we may get out worse and worse advices every mail and keep down the export. Last year this time we were getting them out better and better; news of low stock at home, rise



in common Congou, etc., which news we have to thank for the immense export of this year. I hope this year we may just have the reverse, but it does not look much like it at Shanghai. They seem to think 'pluck' will have it; I am afraid it will be overdone there this year . . . but we will soon see.

Exchange still keeps up, 4s. 10d., and most are of the opinion that it is going higher. I notice what you say about selling the bills first in case exchange may rise after the teas are bought; but it is just six of the one and half a dozen of the other because you may sell your bills first and then tea may get up, and it is more subject to fluctuation than exchange is. A tael on a Tls 16 Congou makes a difference of 6%, a thing which frequently takes place, and sometimes double that, say 12%. In exchange there is seldom that change in a month; besides you must remember the risk of keeping dollars here. The Bank won't take them and all you have to depend on is some 'secured' Chinaman, generally safe certainly, but still accidents will happen; a fire may take place and the mob plunder your treasury and a row may take place and you have to cut your lucky and leave all. You seem to think business can be done here with as much ease and security as in London or Edinburgh.

As for travelling, you must think our accommodation in that respect beats all railways. In one of your last you told me that I should have gone to Shanghai to buy a few chops of Congou which were not to be had in Canton and were to be had there, and that I was not justified in not going, no more than you would be if you got an order for a hogshead of London porter and did not go to London to execute the order in event of it not being obtainable in Edinburgh. So you compare a voyage to Shanghai to a ride in the railway coach to London – a voyage of 800 miles along the most dangerous coast in the world where, if you do happen to be wrecked and escape drowning, you are sure at least of being killed. Read about the crews of the *Nerbudda* and the *Ann* and others. Read the *China Mail* about six weeks back only, about the crew of the *Larpen*<sup>1</sup> on her way to Shanghai – only two men saved out of the whole crew, although all escaped shipwreck to be shot in the water, or beheaded on shore. And this you compare to starting after a comfortable supper and bottle of ale with your head well wrapped

<sup>1</sup> *Larpen*: see report of its wreckage in *China Mail*, 5 June 1851.

up, all ready for a nap in a railway carriage with seats as soft as a feather bed. I am afraid you will find a trip to the north an *autre chose* or in English 'another pair of shoes', against the monsoon especially. The American man-of-war *Marion* got on shore just about the same place as the *Larpent* but luckily got off again at high water; there were about 2,000 natives all ready for them as soon as they would land. Betwixt Amoy and Formosa the currents are so strong that 'sights' are not of much use. You never know which way you are going and in a dark night you go plump on shore when you think you are distant about twenty or thirty miles. Look at the case of the *Reynard* man-of-war lost about a month ago on the Pratas shoal.<sup>1</sup> No power of foresight could have saved her, and she was going there on purpose to pick up a crew lost from the *Velocipede*.<sup>2</sup> It is those confounded currents that do it. Well may Jack say he likes nothing better than plenty sea room.

I wonder they do not have steamers from Hong Kong to Shanghai. They have taken off the one that used to ply<sup>3</sup> and no word of another to be put on. Surely they will have one soon; the opium trade itself would pay a steamer. I hear we will soon have a new company in the field. By last advices all the shares had been bought, I believe. It will be a good thing, make passage cheaper and make them more civil.

22nd [July]:

I have just tasted the Shanghai musters, 8 chops of Congou: 2 at Tls 19½, broken, mixed, blackish and brown leaf, rather smoky and tarry flavour (I would not give Tls 15 for them); the others are bought at Tls 15, 15.1 and 15½, light brown Souchong kinds with very little in them, you may call rather strong, rather burnt, or fresh. Your 16 taeler by the *Naomi* looks first class Congou beside any of them.

I cannot get a Shanghai circular anywhere. I have just seen

<sup>1</sup> Pratas: an island about 150 miles southeast of Hong Kong and 225 miles southwest of the southern tip of Taiwan. The shoals are extended over a wide area around the island.

<sup>2</sup> *Velocipede*: see report of its wreckage in *China Mail*, 29 May 1851.

<sup>3</sup> *Lady Mary Wood*, a 533 ton paddle steamer belonging to the P. & O., started a regular service between Hong Kong and Shanghai in Mar. 1850. Due to a dispute over the payment of customs duties, the service was discontinued in Feb. 1851. The steamer sustained the mail service by the transportation of contraband opium as indicated here. Morse, *International Relations*, i, 343-4; Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy*, 364, n. f.

Lindsay's tea taster. They have the *Oriental* at Shanghai and are large buyers but are buying nothing down here this year. He is disappointed with the Shanghai purchases and makes them, taking all things into consideration, two to three taels dearer than last year. Reiss'<sup>1</sup> taster, large buyers too, in comparing them with last year's, makes them about as dear. I am convinced middling and good this year will go cheaper here and am glad you did not fix for first cargoes from Shanghai as all I have seen are either tarry or light Souchong. How one may do later in the season, 'no can savez', of common, I mean. If you send out limits and descriptions for a Shanghai cargo, keep in mind that there is some awfully low trash which comes under the denomination of Congou and might prove un-saleable in bad times, so you had better limit me to 'good ordinary Congou' or but middling and then there will be no fear. Don't forget. In haste.

ps. I cannot get even 100 boxes to square up J. R. & Co. and A. M. & Company's account. All fancy teas are so dear. If I cannot before next mail will remit the balance in paper.

William to Mr Simpson

Canton, 21 August 1851

I have your three letters of June, containing the order for Thompson of Hill's.<sup>2</sup> As you say, it is more bother than it is intrinsically worth; but as it is for an old friend and a supporter of your sales, it does not matter. However, in future if you send any of the same sort, it may be as well to have it understood that I cannot be made liable for false packing or missing packages as I cannot run any such risks for other people's shipments which bring me little or nothing. And besides, it would be better to send out their funds direct; otherwise it may lead to confusion. This time, as regards that, it is all right as I have a few spare dollars here and, having nothing to do with them, can invest them in the parcel ordered and you can put the invoice amount to the credit of my private account; but supposing I had no dollars of my own here, you could not have expected me to sell my own bills at 4s. 9d. to ship curios

<sup>1</sup> Reiss & Co. : an agency house and despatcher of ships, Canton.

<sup>2</sup> George Hill & Co., Edinburgh.

to Mr Thompson, and to take it off our joint account funds or J. R. & Company's would never do. Now don't think I am cross about it, but only it may be better in future to keep in mind these things.

Most of the things are bought and would have been shipped to Liverpool before this had it been possible to get them ready. However, I hope to get them off in the *Aden* for that port in a few days, so you had better insure them in ship or ships. You speak in your letter of getting them home before Christmas. They would require to be off immediately to do that; and as for waiting for a cargo to the Scotch ports, it would be nonsense as it is very uncertain to say when one may go, and more than certain that none will be there in December.

I have this last mail received orders from Messrs J. R. & Co. to reduce the limit of exchange from 5s. to 4s. 6d. or to buy what parcels I may think can leave a profit on the prices in England at the time they wrote. Before I got their last letter I had, in accordance with previous instructions, bought a chop of first class at Tls 23, rather cheap as things went, most chops of same quality going at Tls 24 to 25. I may say I have done nothing since. I have great hopes, though, of getting your old chop no. 4 *Naomi* half chests at Tls 20½. I make it first class and offered first class price for it at the opening of the market, but the man would not sell it and I was obliged (having instructions) to buy another chop in case they might all be bought up. Now, all the first class having gone and nobody wanting it, I have no doubt I will get it at second class price. I think I may be able to pick up another good tea at about Tls 18 (to answer the Tls 19 one ordered at 4s. 6d. now), that would make three chops, but after that all is darkness. I may get them (the other chops) at the limits and I may not; and if I cannot get them, what am I to do with those bought?

The orders sent out reach over half a season – from the beginning to the middle; my orders are to buy so much fine, common, and middling. Now you know well enough that fine and common, or rather high priced and low priced teas, are never to be had here at the same time. I may buy the fine, which I have got orders to do, at the limits given, and when I want to buy the common, it may not be possible to get it at the limits given; and on the other hand, should

I not buy the fine until I can ascertain whether I can get the common at the limits given, all the fine by that time is out of the market and of course not to be bought. You may see from this the propriety of having a discretionary power out here, to a certain extent. I don't advocate leaving everything to parties out here; but to be certain of having orders executed well it is almost necessary to do so to some degree. For instance, take your last order for a cargo to the Clyde; were I to stick to the letter of your instructions I could not execute it. I might say no teas are to be had at such prices. I can buy some at the limits given but I cannot buy all; and as it is a cargo, you want of course all or none. And at no time of the year here could such an order be executed because fine and common are never to be bought at the same time. You may say I should buy the fine when it is to be had and then buy the common when it is to be had. That is very true, but then suppose I had bought the fine and the common was not to be had? You might say, Oh, now you have bought the fine and you may keep it; our orders to you were to buy an assortment of all kinds, and if you could not do it, you should have let it alone. An order to buy an assortment means it is to be bought if possible, but not to take a lot now and wait until another can be got. You may wait a couple of years.

Exchange you will see is a little more favourable this month. I have sold some at 4s. 8½d. I did not care much about selling any after receiving such low advices; but as I am sure to be picking up some chop or other rather cheap, it was as well to take so good an offer as 4s. 8½d. I know Scotch bank bills at sixty days sight have been sold at 4s. 9d. and 4s. 9¼d. and it is generally thought it will go higher. But that is all chance. However, I think, had we not had very low advices last mail to stop purchases, the rate would certainly have been 4s. 10d.

The Shanghai purchases by everybody here are considered dear, especially the higher priced ones. Last mail took them at Shanghai all aback and it is said stopped purchases nearly altogether; that is the only hope I have for this season. I have no doubt we will get tea cheap enough if a continuation of low advices comes out; and if cheap, most likely little will go because that shows there are few buyers. They seem mad at Shanghai altogether and have been

paying £6 10s. (!) freight to get home soon common tarry Congous at Tls 19½, value 1s. 1d., cost 1s. 4d.

I would still advise you to hold the Souchongs. The crop of them this year is very bad, neither flavour nor body in them, weak poor things, and little or none I should think would be shipped in the face of such advices. So I am not without hope that last year's, when the smoky Congous get home, will be in more request.

I have nothing else to say. By the by, in sending out those bank bills, a chartered bank like the National has a preference amongst all the Parsee buyers and sometimes would bring ½d. more. I have no doubt I will be able to get the chops for the Clyde cargo from Tls 23 down to 17, but when I may be able to get the Tls 14 or 15 at 4s. 6d., I cannot say. However, we must take our chance; and as I have now the Tls 23 one bought, it is better to go on. One cargo amongst three of us cannot do much harm. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Gold has been found out at Sydney and a little excitement getting up about it here. About 350 chops down here and about 100 settled at Shanghai. The last news from there was that news by last mail from England had stopped purchases, and that what had been bought there was dear. A vessel is expected every hour when we shall have further accounts. I have squared off the account joint with you and J. R. & Co. by giving you an order on my own private account. I send account current which hope you will find correct. In haste.

Canton, 22 August 1851

I have yours of 20 June and am glad to see by this mail that you are all well. We had it awfully hot here for about a week. I never felt anything like it in my experience of China and I have just received a letter from Seare at Macao who says it has been quite as bad there, and although he has been out here since '42 (he arrived a month before me), he cannot recollect anything like it. It did not last long, for which we were thankful. Rain came down in torrents for about two days and it has been cool since, but it was trying when it did last. The old doctor here, who was seldom sick, and his wife were both knocked up, not bad but quite 'done-up'. I felt it rather

<sup>1</sup> Passage omitted refers to weather as described below.

disagreeable and felt an 'awfu drouth' but in other respects was quite well.

I don't know what to make of this season's operations at all; I feel at my wits' ends about it. However, I think I will surely get one cargo off out of the three contemplated. I think we will get it cheap and, as we have all a share, it cannot ruin us. Things at home certainly look very black by last month's advices. Richardsons sent me word last month to reduce the limits to 4s. 6d. instead of 5s., or leaving it to myself to buy anything that I thought might leave a profit. I hope the low advices will keep down shipments and I think at present they appear to be doing so to a certain extent.

You will see in the papers that two steamers ran against one another betwixt Singapore and China,<sup>1</sup> plenty room in the sea for the two of them you would think. One went down on the spot and some people lost their lives, one passenger a friend of the doctor's, a Dr Briscoe,<sup>2</sup> a very nice man they say. The other steamer put back to Singapore to repair and afterwards came on here with the news. Her cargo, the one that put back, was mostly opium and being damaged the captain of her took it upon himself to sell in Singapore. The shippers have since made a claim on the insurance offices for difference of price from that which it would have brought in China; but the offices refused to pay it. They say the captain had no business to sell it, and I believe they are right. The shippers of course then came on the captain and it is reported today that he has 'bolted'; it is rather hard case after doing his best and nearly losing his life, but he should have known better. The other steamer which went down had a good deal of treasure on board.

I have applied to three or four Chinamen for the curious kinds of tea you wrote for but none of them seem to be able to get it. I will try it again. I suppose it is to be had at the north only.

People here talk so much of the Exhibition that I wonder none of your letters mention it; I thought to hear you had all seen it. I am glad to hear you are all well. Many thanks to Aggie for letter - been busy tasting or would have written. In haste.

<sup>1</sup> The collision on 22 July 1851 was reported to have occurred near Mt Formosa between the P. & O. steamer *Pacha*, which was sunk, and another steamer, *Erin*. CR, xx (1851), 558.

<sup>2</sup> Possibly the name was misspelled for Dr Brice of Whampoa listed among residents in 1849-51. CR, xviii (1849), 3; xx (1851), 4.

William to Messrs James Richardson and Company

Canton, 26 September 1851

I have received yours of July. I wrote you last mail advising purchases of 4 chops of Congou. I have now to advise that the one costing Tls 17 was not to be had, another party having got the teaman's chop [seal] on receipt, before the broker who settled with me had time to see him. The chop was settled with me on condition he could get the teaman's chop [seal]. I have since settled other 4 chops and the quantity of Orange Pekoe ordered, making in all 7 chops of Congou, 250 half chests Orange Pekoe, and 500 boxes of the same. The prices are as follows :

w'wo Congou at Tls 23, first class  
 TWOING EE Congou at Tls 20½ (half chests), first class  
 BOONG WO Congou at Tls 18¾, nearly first class  
 SOEY LAN Congou at Tls 15.7, black leaf, strong, a little Hung Moi kind  
 QUI HING Congou at Tls 15.7, black leaf, strong, but a little tarry  
 FOKE CHUM Congou at Tls 17¾, black leaf, strong, second class Congou  
 TSOW LAN Orange Pekoe at Tls 17 (250 half chests), good Orange Pekoe  
 CHUN HEONY Congou at Tls 21½ (500 boxes), fine Pekoe  
 TIFAT at Tls 17.7 Congou, Pekoe flavour

You will no doubt think that the proportion of lower cost Congous is less than you might have expected ; but the reason of this is that the only ship I could find ready to start was so small as not to admit of taking some of the lower priced kinds which I fully calculated on being able to purchase before the others were shipped and which, had I been able to get a vessel of the dimensions wanted, no doubt I would have got readily as medium Congous are now cheaper and also the lower grades. Some very common say 'good ordinary sound' have been sold at Tls 12½, but little of that kind in the market at present.

I expected to have got the *Naomi*, as I knew she had been laid on for Liverpool and taken off the berth again from there being no



cargo offering for her, so I made sure of getting her at a low figure; and as soon as I had enough purchased to enable me to make her an offer and promise to despatch her quickly, I did so. But unfortunately she had been engaged only a day or so previous by another party and it is rumoured for the Clyde. This being the case I immediately wrote to Hong Kong to Mr Murrow to secure the fastest vessel he could get and to send her up immediately. After some days correspondence we fixed on the *Auguste and Bertha*, 298 tons. Mr Murrow, who is allowed to be about the best judge of ships here, says she is fast and sure to beat the *Naomi* considerably; and as the *Naomi* was loading and, from what I hear, very probably going to the Clyde, I thought the best plan was to get her despatched as soon as possible. She is now in Whampoa and will begin to load on the 29th certain. The *Naomi* is not loaded yet and I hope to be able to get the *Auguste and Bertha* off, as she is small, as soon as the *Naomi*, which may perhaps induce them to alter her destination.

I have quite as much bought as will fill the *Auguste and Bertha*. You will perhaps be disappointed at her being so small, but there was no course to pursue unless to wait for a month. For my own part, I think her quite large enough for this year, as the *Herald* has sailed, I see, for Leith on 26 August and will most probably arrive at Leith about the same time as our vessel at Clyde; and should the *Naomi* be destined to the Clyde also, no doubt our vessel will be quite big enough as it is not at all likely it will be a very profitable concern. I have this moment received a note from Hong Kong telling me that the *Naomi* is arrived there loaded from Whampoa and sails on Monday. I will push off the *Auguste and Bertha* as soon as possible.

We were I am afraid rather late in operating this year; your limits at first were too low to admit of anything being done more speedily. However, we have done little as yet, a small cargo amongst three cannot lose each a very great deal, but I hope better luck. The teas are cheaper than I ever saw them, taking quality into consideration. I am sorry that one of the chops is tarry. I was attacked with a severe cold and slight fever which completely put an end to my tasting for ten days; other people were buying on all sides and fearful that I might let all the best go, I began tasting I am afraid rather early and before I was quite better, as I made the chop quite clean at the time I purchased it.

I have purchased some curiosities, ginger, matting, grass cloth, handkerchiefs etc., which I think will leave a much better profit than tea. I have taken the liberty of doing so as, having had a good deal of experience in those things since I came out here, I can get the articles at the lowest possible figure, and things that I know are generally saleable. I send samples of the chops not sent before: [nos.] 3, 5, 6, 7. I hear the *Herald* is loaded with coarse Moning Congou, about Tls 15 or 16 I suppose, but have not heard the price. That description of Congou is generally tarry. The *Auguste and Bertha* is a Hamburg vessel and new.

Exchange began this month about 4s. 9d. to 9½d.; however, on news coming down from Shanghai of large shipments from that port and of a high rate of exchange ruling there, 4s. 11d. to 5s. 1d., it rose here to about 4s. 11d. to 11½d., and bills offering by everyone. I sold:

2,500 Commercial at 4s. 9d.	
2,400 Commercial at 4s. 10d.	
4,600 Union at 4s. 10½d.	
500 Union at 4s. 9½d.	
total	£10,000

which I think will be enough to pay all shipments and purchases.

It is the opinion here that the Shanghai purchases this year are much dearer than the Canton ones; besides exchange is against them, being higher. Teas here are coming down in price; some have been sold as low as Tls 12½. That was after all our purchases had been made; but even had I been in a position to purchase two or three chops more, I don't think I would have bought the Tls 12½ kinds as at present exchange they would leave a loss on present prices by last advices. I send you survey report on *Auguste and Bertha*.

William to Mr Simpson

Canton, 24 September 1851

On the other side you have invoice of Messrs Hill & Co. curios. The *Aden* was quite full and could not take a package. I engaged tonnage for the parcel therefore in the *Euphrates*. She is a fast vessel and will get away directly. The shipment has been on board some

days. You will observe I have not deducted the discount 2%. These orders take so much time and attention that I think I am quite entitled to keep it, or charge 7% and deduct 2%; but as it is only on some of the articles I could get a discount, and on some I cannot get it (the articles being bought at the lowest prices), I think it better and save trouble to charge 5% and just keep what discount I can get. You will see some of the things are much cheaper. I have thought it better to tell you this as I cannot afford to take off discount in future.

p.s. Please put amount of invoice to credit of my private account, £136 5s. 3d. I have debited you with same.

William to Mr Simpson

Canton, 27 September 1851

I have little or nothing to say this mail. The copy of the letter to Messrs J. R. & Co. will explain to you all that has been done and it is of no use writing the same over again. The vessel we have got is small but I am afraid will be quite big enough. Teas are cheap certainly but they are going ahead in the export greatly. Unless it falls off considerably after this, I think I will lie on my oars for a while. Had I known so much was going, I think it is very likely I would have done nothing at all. However, I have taken the opportunity this time of a vessel going to Glasgow to send some curios, ginger, etc. As it is a very populous city and the things bought are very cheap and only those which are most saleable, I think they will do well. There is not much of them, not half sent to Liverpool last time, so that if teas don't pay and they do, we may square it someway.

You don't seem to think of sending anything on our joint account now; I suppose you think that I have quite enough here. But those funds here tied down with those instructions are of little use; in the first place tied down so low that other people are in the field long before us, and before I get out liberty to do anything, it is too late. You cannot expect a cargo off first and give low limits; it's a great chance at least. But these are not the funds, I meant something for ourselves. I cannot do anything with them but for cargoes, or return them, or hold them over. However, as it is, I am not sorry that

there is little out on our account, for there is nothing to do with it; but it might have been different. Should I see anything good to be done, I may write to get some of my own out but at present don't see anything. I am busy with the cargo and will be for some few days. These nick-nacks take up time and bother too, but I won't delay an hour for them – send what's ready, nothing else.

Canton, 27 September 1851

I received yours of July early in the month and am glad to see that you are all well, but I am sorry to hear [of] Alock Flint's<sup>1</sup> death. As you say he must have suffered a good deal from sickness.

For the last month here this place has been not very wholesome. The season is just beginning to change and we have such sudden changes from very hot weather to cool, and the reverse, that few people here could undergo it. I got a very bad cold accompanied by slight fever which hung about me for eight or ten days; and nearly everybody in Canton has had some attack of the same sort, nothing at all serious, only a very bad cold which was difficult to get rid of. But I have got rid of mine a fortnight ago and am all right again.

You will see from the copy of the letter I have sent to the house all that I have done since last month. You will see that the *Herald* is off for Leith from Shanghai loaded by Thorburn (Hargreaves & Co.), I hear. The *Naomi* too you will see is off from Whampoa; I am told she is going to the Clyde, loaded by Fletcher and Co.<sup>2</sup>, I suppose, the same parties who gave her a cargo out to China this last time. I am in hopes that our little Dutchman will be in before her yet. The Captain of the *Naomi* has got his family with him and they say that is not a sign of pushing on as he may like to take things comfortable. He told me he did not intend coming back here again. He was anxious for me to give him another charter but I did not wish to mention anything to anybody until I was able to make an offer and I could not do so until teas began to come down in price. As soon as I had about half of the cargo bought I applied to him but

<sup>1</sup> Alexander Flint: farmer, South Melville Mains, Lasswade, husband of A. M.'s sister-in-law, Jane Dickson.

<sup>2</sup> Fletcher & Co: successor to Fletcher Alexander & Co., Canton, of the 1830s, and Fletcher Larkins & Co. of the 1840s. First appeared under the present style in 1846. *CR*, xiv (1846), 4.

he had just been engaged a day or two before. I weighed off a chop yesterday for her (our ship) and am busy loading her and packing up a few nick-nacks which if teas go down may help to pay any loss. I have nothing more to say – everything going here as usual.

William to Mr Simpson

Canton, 27 October 1851

I have yours of August. Meantime I will tell you what has been done since last month. The *Auguste and Bertha* sailed on the 4th for your port (Clyde). The *Naomi* was off six days before her, according to all accounts to the same place; but I hope still that we shall be first in.

The *Auguste and Bertha* carries very little, as you will see, by no less than nearly two chops being shut out of her and having been shipped in the *Juliet*. I am sorry the most part of the half chests of Congou, same chop as no. 4 *Naomi* last year, have been shut out. This was the second last chop sent down; but I was assured by the captain and consignees that she would take in all of it and some more, so for sake of despatch I sent down no. 2, another chop, to fill her up and to send what she could not take to some other ship. Next day I was astonished to hear that, in place of requiring the last chop shipped, she could only take in 415 half chests of the former chop sent down, so that nearly two chops have been shut out and shipped in the *Juliet* to London at £2 10s.; part of [chop] no. 4 and all no. 2 (see invoices). I am sorry no. 4 has been nearly all shut out but it was unavoidable. I was in a great hurry to get her off, as you may imagine, after I knew the *Naomi* had gone, and loaded her in three days. [Chop] no. 4 could not be got ready some way or other although I gave strict orders to have it ready; and as I was assured there would be plenty of room for it and more, for the sake of saving time I shipped the others. It cannot be helped now; but as it only cost Tls 20½ this year and was known as a good chop last year, it is a pity it is not in the cargo.

My idea was, as soon as I heard the *Herald* was off for Leith with common Congou and the *Naomi* to the Clyde with about the same kinds, to get in soon a few (four or five) good chops in the *Auguste and Bertha* if possible, as there would be little to compete with them

even if one of the others had got in first. However, as it is, there are still some good chops in her and she only takes five.

She also takes about 120 packages of curios and some 60 boxes of ginger. I don't know what you may think of making this investment. I have merely done so to make the cargo leave a better result; and had I not been anxious to do so, I would rather have eschewed the labour. I send you the invoices. You will see I have got some of the things very cheap – basins and all etc., for them at \$3.50, but only a few. I am sorry none of the usual punch bowls could be got in time and I have tried two sets of large and handsome. Should there turn out any mistakes in the invoices of the curios, give me full particulars of marks, etc., as sometimes the Chinamen make mistakes in giving the numbers they put on the boxes, or I make a mistake in getting them from them, as a good many of them cannot speak English like Dr Johnson altogether. I have just found out a mistake now from a man giving wrong numbers, which, although all is there that he has charged for, would have led you to believe that there had been plundering. So you must have a little mercy with those things.

Exchange keeps high. I could not get better than 4s. 11d. for the balance unsold and a pretty good rate too, six months clean bills having been done at 5s. 1d. – I know the buyer and no doubt about it. The Shanghai rate of exchange has been keeping it up here; it is still high up there.

The export too is large. People are getting into a way here of not returning or circulating the cargoes and it is difficult to say what it is exactly, but I believe larger than last year. You say in my June letter that I mentioned I had an idea that a cargo would arrive at a good time. I did, I remember; however, afterwards I found out I had made a mistake of two or three million in my calculations which made things appear more favourable. Yet the stock at the beginning of last year was very light, and although the export last season was very large the stock may not at the end of this year be so very large as expected. However, at the rate they are going on now, or rather have been (now we are quiet here), and at this exchange, I think it much better to pause a little and see how things are going to turn. If it is clear as much will go as did last year, I think we had better do no more. If they are all going to pause

from the low advices from your side and the quantity shipped, high exchange, etc., I may go on.

Bad as things look, had there not been two vessels sent to the outports besides our own, I might have tried a cheap cargo for Leith; but in the face of such an export, heavy stock at home, high exchange and low advices, and no less than three vessels off for Leith and Glasgow already, I think it much better to wait and see how things are going to turn. Messrs J. R. & Co. say that two vessels arriving together, one at Leith and one at Clyde, would ruin the whole venture. Now, as there will be three to arrive, I don't think they will care much about our second going, and besides, even if one cargo was sent, another was not to be sent until two months or so afterwards. Now if one cargo supplies the two ports for two months, three must glut them and serve them six months. However, two of the cargoes are small and would only make one big one, but still too much; so I think there can be no harm at least in waiting a little to see.

You tell me the Canton Insurance Office has escaped a payment of – I cannot make out the amount as it is put in and rubbed out again; however, I can make out that you have put some £68 to my debit in consequence. You say the mistake is mine and I must get it from the office here; and you don't take the trouble to tell me what the mistake is, which policy, or anything else; £68 is not so easily made nowadays but it appears very easy to put it to my account. I wish you would let me know in your next what the mistake is, with all particulars, that I may recover [it] if possible.

I have just seen dates from Shanghai to the 18th October. After the arrival, they say, of July mail [from England] there, prices of common Congou advanced  $\frac{1}{2}$  a tael to a tael, and 'nothing however low or broken in leaf, could be purchased under Tls 12 to 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ , since then prices have continued firm', exchange 4s. 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. to 5s. and 5s. 1d. (much same rate as here, this month, rather better by a shade), 320 chops Congou settled to date (18 October), two vessels loaded, and eight loading for London and Liverpool. They cannot give the amount of export as people up there, as down here, have been keeping their circulars back; however, it is clear there will be no dearth of tea in England this year. Tls 12 $\frac{1}{2}$  at 5s. for common rubbish, freight at £3 5s. to £3 10s. and advancing will cost 11d.

at least, if common Congous keep up they may fetch 9½d. to 9¾d.(!) They also say their market contains a large quantity of inferior tea. Stock 120 chops, low Moning Tls 14 to 15½ and so on. I don't think I have any other matters to advise.

Half past 3 o'clock: Canton, 28 October 1851

The steamer goes at 4, so you see I have little time to write you. She goes earlier than usual. I calculated on having at least an hour to write you after luncheon, but I have not had time to take any yet and I am getting very hungry.

You know the Dunlops of Edinburgh. There was one out here in the bank, Andrew knows him well enough, 'Archie'; he was manager in the Bank here. He died at Hong Kong a few days ago. I believe he burst a blood vessel in his stomach, and soon after got delirious and died. It will be a melancholy mail this for his poor mother. Gray of the Bank came in to see if I had an Edinburgh directory, so as to find Dunlop's friends, but I had not one. However, he was saying he was the only one, he believed, who helped his poor mother, and that he always did so, and that she would greatly feel his loss.

You will see by my letter to Mr Simpson all that has been done since last month.

There goes the steamer's bell – so I'll close. Fine cold dry weather for the last two weeks making everybody look well; it's such a change. I'm as well as can be and very hungry, so adieu. I will drink all your healths in a glass of Bass' Beer in about two minutes.

James Richardson and Company to William

Glasgow, 22 October 1851

We duly received your favor of 23 July and 22 August. Immediately on receipt of the former we wrote Messrs Palmer McKillop Dent and Co. about the insurance per *Superb* and we beg to enclose their reply, which we have no doubt will enable you to recover. Dent and Co. cannot well refuse to pay you after this distinct recognition of your claim by their London friends, and it appears very clear that the whole affair must be arranged at your end.

We are much pleased with your August advices, as you are sure



to do better by delay this crop. If you have made up a cargo for Leith in accordance with our limits it is well; if no good come of it, we hardly think much loss can arise.

Messrs A. M. & Co. calculate that at the prices you would likely pay for the two cargoes for Clyde and Leith you would have a balance of rather above £10,000 of the joint account credits on hand, and that this sum, added to £2 or £3,000 you will have of theirs, would about pay a small cargo of low priced teas on receipt of this. We have arranged with them, if agreeable to you to go into the transaction on the same footing as the Clyde and Leith cargoes, to instruct you to send a third cargo to Cork for orders with a view to Clyde, provided you can send really good sound teas of fair quality in Congous to stand not exceeding 9d. per lb. laid down here every charge paid, or in other words teas costing Tls 11 to 13 as in quality, with an exchange at 4s. 8d. and freight at £3. We would however make this third cargo contingent on the amount of your exports during the present season; if they have been less than usual, we would advise the shipment, if they have been equal to last season, or in excess, then you will not ship at all, but hold over the balance of the credits for another year.

Should the exports be so moderate as to encourage you to ship, you need not be told that our only safety is having really good sound teas at prices which should not exceed 9d. to 10d. per pound as in quality.

We have sold our Souchongs per *Anna Maria* at 11d. (!!) but we are holding the lot per *Inca* for better times. The Orange Pekoes are valued now 9d. to 10d. so you see we have made a pretty mess of our first venture on our own account.

The present state of our tea market should enable you to buy very cheap; if it does not, then we are better to have none.

Canton, 26 November 1851

I received yours of September and am glad to see that you and all the rest keep so well. I am just on the point of starting for Macao – half past eleven o'clock at night and the house all in a biz. I have not been out of this for five full months; so a trip won't do me any harm, and as for business I think the less we do at present the better.

I have left your letter as usual till the last, and am quite done up. You would wonder how much writing one has to get through here before a mail is despatched. I am sure I have done nothing else but write for the last three days. What I get to write about I don't know, but with you at home it is different. At mail time you have only one letter, where[as] out here you have at least about a dozen, and not only that, but everything has to be copied. Of bills of lading you require to make out four copies, one for the captain and three for yourself; and if you draw a bill, you must give the first, second, and third, so that to one out here the writing is about tripled, and yet when you look at what you have done it appears nothing.

I have done nothing more with regard to the cargoes and I think I have done quite enough; and I don't think J. R. & Co. will be disappointed at my having done so little, taking into consideration what exchange has gone to, and your heavy stocks and our heavy exports. Other two vessels have also left (besides ours and the *Naomi*) for the Clyde, the *North Star* and the *James Scott*. The *North Star* is an Aberdeen clipper, but is no great sailor; she did not leave until at least 26 days after our little craft and although Turners say she is sure to be in first, I am not at all afraid of her. I am more afraid of the *James Scott* and *Naomi*. I see the former does not carry much for her tonnage and is likely a good sailor. However, there is one thing to be said: our vessel takes good and fine Congou and I am sure all the others are only good and middling, or not even that, so that even if they get in first I don't think they will interfere with her very much.

You will see I have done a little on our joint account. I think in spite of the bad accounts that they are safe enough; but had your mail come in sooner with the bad accounts, I don't think I would have touched them. Exchange has gone up to 5s. 2d. to 5s. 3½d. and that, with the low news from home, nearly stopped shipments here. I would not wonder but in a few months Canton teas will be offering for half nothing and very likely the export stopped to some extent; so I think you had better send out a few thousands on our joint account. It would be a pity not to have any here if good opportunities offered, and all I have had is gone. I won't touch anything unless very safe. I have lost money last year and a burned child dreads the fire. Only I should not like not to have the oppor-

tunity to make it up should a chance occur. I should have answered John's and Andrew's and Aunty Bell's letter this mail. You must apologise for me. I have written Richardson, Ewart, Mrs Ronaldson,<sup>1</sup> S. Craig, A. M. & Co., A. Melrose, and Mr Simpson, etc.

William to Andrew Melrose and Company

Canton, 26 November 1851

I have your favours of September. I have to advise having sold the following bank bills:

NATIONAL BANK, on joint account A. M. & Co. & W. M.:

26/153	1 bill	£500	} at 4s. 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ d.
26/154	1 bill	500	
26/155	1 bill	500	
26/159	1 bill	300	
26/169	1 bill	100	
26/160	1 bill	300	} at 5s.
26/161	1 bill	300	
26/170	1 bill	100	
26/171	1 bill	100	} at 5s.
26/165	1 bill	200	
26/166	1 bill	200	
		<hr/>	
		£3,100	

All the bills remitted on this account are now sold, these being the last.

NATIONAL, on account W. Melrose

25/1389	1 bill	£300	} at 4s. 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ d.
25/1390	1 bill	300	
25/1391	1 bill	300	at 5s.
25/1394	1 bill	100	at 4s. 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ d.
		<hr/>	
		£1,000	

<sup>1</sup> Catherine, née Richardson, 25 May 1819–15 Feb. 1900, daughter of James Richardson, married Alexander Ronaldson.

This £1,000 is the last of the £3,000 remitted on my private account.

The above £1,000 on my private account I was obliged to sell or send home to be renewed, as the two years to which they are limited expires on 16 April '52, so I must either have sold them now or some time before China new year when the probability is I would have got a worse rate. The £3,100 on account our joint account I have sold to pay for some purchases I have made for you, see invoice of the same.

I have also to advise having drawn on you for:

No. 80	£15	at 4s. 10½d.
No. 81	£34 7s. 6d.	at 5s., insurance premium
No. 82	£554 2s. 4½d.	at 5s. 2d.

to balance up our joint account, statement of which I send you. I also send you an order on my private account for £37 18s. 6d. to balance up your account jointly with J. R. & Co. and myself; please place same to debit of my private account and to the credit of the other. For part of the shipment per *T. Campbell* you will observe I have sent bill of lading consignable to order, and blank endorsed, with policy also for the same in the Canton office. I did this as it might have been necessary to give up those documents as security for the draft I have drawn on you to balance the account. However, I met with a party willing to take your draft without any documented security (and for double the amount if required) so, as I know you have an objection to drawing on the documents, I closed with him at once.

The invoice of *T. Campbell's* shipments will show you the purchases. They are all Gunpowder, true tea without any spurious or lie in them. I was tempted to make this purchase as I saw the lowest quotation in boxes 1s. 2d. or 1s. 4d.; and as little appeared to be doing in Canton here, I thought it more than probable that exchange would fall. Besides, the consumption of Gunpowder seems increasing so much, being nearly a half of the total green used in England, that I thought it probable they would go to a brisk market. However, since last mail arrived with such very low advices and exchange still more unfavourable, I almost wish I had not meddled with them; at the same time I have no fears for them, as not much of

that kind has been going lately, and they are always a saleable tea and do not cost a high figure. I had also bought 1,000 boxes Scented Orange Pekoe, but I have seen a muster of the stock and as they do not turn out quite equal to the original muster, I have no doubt I will be able to reject them. I have balanced up all my accounts and don't think of doing any more until there is an appearance of better times.

William to Mr Simpson

Canton, 27 November 1851

I have received yours of 22 September and I am sorry to see so low a state of things with you at home. We never get into such low spirits here some way or other. The export this year is bigger than ever it was in its days and exchange as high as ever it has been, but there are no low spirits on this side the sea (not the grave), no terrification out here. We leave all that to you at home. No doubt you have put us all down long ago for either 'brave lads, or fit for Morningside';<sup>1</sup> and I am afraid you will think that I am one of them, the latter class, Morningsides, 'clean wud',<sup>2</sup> wanting twopence of the shilling, etc. However, I will bear your sarcastic rebukes with calm dignity. You may fire away at me with the last Gunpowder shipped as hard as you like. They were bought before your stupid, low prices came out and before exchange took such a flight; and you know I could not do otherwise than ship after they were bought because 'he who putteth his hand to the plough' etc., so you see I could not get out of it. However, they are all true tea, and a good deal of spurious has been going lately; so I think they may be in want of some pretty tolerable. They are common of course, at Tls 14½ one cannot expect anything else.

News came down yesterday from Shanghai: exchange, 5s. 2d. to 5s. 3½d.; Bank, 5s. 1d.; Bank of England Post Bills at sight, 4s. 11½d. to 5s.; a great deal of business done at 5s. 2d. to 3½d.; Tls 11½ the lowest quotation for low quality (Congou). I think I am just as well down here this year.

<sup>1</sup> Morningside, the area where the Royal Edinburgh Lunatic Asylum was located. The institution was particularly known for its publication of a monthly journal, *The Morningside Mirror*, from 1845, written and printed by inmates but sold to the public at a penny an issue. William Mair, *Historic Morningside* (London, 1947), 24-25.

<sup>2</sup> Colloquialism meaning, in the present case, 'lacking in common sense'.

You will see I have done nothing with the funds J. R. & Co. have a share in, and I am very glad that I have done nothing with them because until some change takes place I think the less done the better. Shipments from this are nearly stopped but at Shanghai they are going on still. However, it may be and it is not unlikely that such advices and such a rate of exchange will greatly stop shipments and bring down prices here. In case, you had better send out a few thousand for our joint account. Fancy kinds may in some months be knocking about at half nothing and perhaps the export may diminish. Your funds with J. R. & Co. of course are of no use in that respect, but at any rate I should like a few out for ourselves to see if I can make up the losses of last year. A good many of the dollars which you sent me on my private account would certainly have been better in your hands as many of them have taken unto themselves the wings of the morning. But we must not despair. However, you may depend on it, I won't touch anything after this unless I see pretty clearly that it can't lose.

I had 1,000 boxes of Orange Pekoe bought too, but after your low advices came out, I think I have got rid of them with a little management. A great deal of Scented Orange Pekoe has gone they say. I bought the Gunpowders and it with the idea of paying one third now and two thirds some months afterwards; but after I saw exchange going to such a rate and knowing I would have to pay 1% per month for the money, I thought it better to square off and lie on my oars until better times.

There is a set of chess for Mrs Simpson in a box per *Auguste and Bertha*. Mr Craig of Shrewsbury has the bill of lading for the box and will give you the set out of the box for Mrs S[impson]. Please remember me in that quarter and beg her acceptance of the same.

James Richardson and Company to William

Glasgow, 21 November 1851

Enclosed you have duplicate of our letter of 22 ulto. by last mail, and we are since favoured with yours of 26 September. We notice the charter of the *Auguste and Bertha* but you do not tell us the rate of freight. The vessel may be a good one, and may deliver her

cargo in sound condition, but we confess we are somewhat afraid of a vessel from so outlandish a country, and as a rule it would be wise to adhere to prime A-1 British ships.

We must just hope the best for her cargo; markets are not encouraging on this side, and if the combined shipments from Canton and Shanghai come up to, or exceed, last year's, there is no hope for improvement. Had this Caffre War<sup>1</sup> not broken out and continued to look so serious, we might have hoped for a reduction in the duty, but any surplus in revenue that may appear will be swallowed up in this expensive contest.

We are at a loss to know what you are likely to do with the order for a cargo for Leith. We can only hope that if you did meet with tea so cheap as to enable you to [ship?] it that you would send her to Cork for orders as the *Herald* will supply Leith for a season.

You will now have found out, we expect, that you have benefited by delay, and that it was well you were limited, and thereby prevented from going ahead earlier in high figures.

On consulting with Messrs A. M. & Co. regarding the order for a third cargo contained in our letter now enclosed, we find that we are of one mind as to the absolute necessity of exercising caution, and that you should only ship provided you can lay tea down at very low prices. We hardly expect you to buy good sound Congou under ten to twelve taels, but even at these figures loss would result at an exchange of 4s. 9d. to 4s. 10d. with a £3 freight and we have decided on recommending you to hold over the funds unless you can come in at these prices for the Congous at an exchange of 4s. 6d. to 4s. 8d. at the very utmost, and that too for teas very decidedly better than those now selling in London at 7½d. to 8d. per pound.

The object of all concerned is to make a little money, and unless this can be done we had better delay altogether. Very much will depend on your exports as already described; without a falling off present low prices must continue.

Send us an account current of last season's transactions. We are badly in want of it; send accounts current regularly every season.

<sup>1</sup> Caffre War: Kaffir War of 1850-3, over the province of Kaffraria in South Africa.

Macao, 25 December 1851

I have yours of 20 October and see that you are all well. I came down here just after I had despatched last mail and have been here about three weeks. I forgot all about writing my letters until today and a little one to Andrew is all I have got finished yet. I will send off his and yours tonight to be sure of being in good time; the others I will send tomorrow and no doubt they will be in good time too.

I have got J. R. & Co.'s letter etc. and am glad you seem all pleased with what had been done so far as you knew. Next month would take you news of more having been done. I am still glad that I have done nothing else to speak of this season as I don't think anything almost will pay and no doubt there will be heavy losses on most of the shipments. The export is still heavy and much over last year's, big as that was, so that we can't look for any rise at home in prices but rather the reverse, and nearly every kind is losing at your prices now. The Shanghai people did well last year but I am afraid this year will take off some of their profits.

I have had long walks on shooting excursions and to get the fresh air nearly every day since I came down here. There are some nice views and very pretty spots about the country here, but it is very barren and hilly. The Chinamen, very civil and social, about a dozen, came around me yesterday when I was taking a snack of cold beef and were great friends; the most of them took some bread and seemed to like it very well. One of them found out a little bottle of brandy I had and they all took a sip.

Poor Dr Watson here has had a good deal of sickness lately but is getting round again. He had first some slight attack of liver which however laid him up. He was scarcely well rid of that until he got a bad cold with slight inflammation of the lungs which has kept him confined for nearly a month.

I hope Aunty Nellie likes her new quarters, and that you and Aunty Bell and her enjoyed your dinner and champagne. This is Christmas day and in an hour we will have a little of that beverage ourselves. I am staying at Mr Seare's as usual and two of his old acquaintances are coming, so we will be quiet and comfortable which I like best as I hate those big parties. The weather is not so cold as it was last year but I hope we will have some of it soon. It has been cold but milder than usual.



I hope this finds all of you well. Kind remembrances to all and many thanks to Eliza for her long letter; if I have time to answer it tomorrow I will.

William to Mr Simpson

Macao, 26 December 1851

I have yours of October and am glad to see you are pleased with what I have done in August. You seem to think the half chests a good purchase as it was liked last year, and I am very sorry it could not be sent to the Clyde but there was no help for it; however, I hope you will be able to work off some of it at the Clyde at a good price although it has gone to London.

You still seem to think that I must be shipping all that your funds could buy. I rather wonder at that. I would have thought that the immense export of '50 and '51 would have made you desire as little to be done as possible; but I suppose you calculated on the bad advices checking the export from here and also on exchange being more favourable, as you say you quite differed from what I wrote you in August and that you would not be surprised to see it down to 4s. 6d. I don't know what it is this month but most likely quite as high as last, and our export you will see is much larger than last year so that at present I think we had better hold our hands a little. However, although the export was 64,000,000 lbs. last year, the consumption is greatly increasing. I see the deliveries up to 16 October have increased for London and Liverpool alone 2,700,000 lbs., so we may say 3,500,000 for the United Kingdom for the year, which would make the consumption 60,000,000 for this year and leave only about 4,000,000 of excess. So if the low advices coming out every mail and the high exchange here stop the exports a little, we may get things into a healthy state yet. We should remember too that the export commenced earlier by about a month this year, so that makes it appear larger than last year at the same time. They may stop shipping a month earlier and bad advices may stop them sending the same quantity; and if that is the case and the export of this year by and by appears to be a good deal less than last year, with a consumption of 60,000,000 at home, things might rally. But with the immense export of last year and the quantities they are

sending, it would be madness to ship until we can see how this year's export is going to turn out.

I am glad that you have got so good a price for the *Harbeck's* Congou: rs. 2½d., if I read it right – but some parts of your letter I can't make out. The paper is so thin and one line being written sometimes right opposite the one on the other side. I think you should hold the Souchongs; a good many very tarry Congous have been shipped lately and are still shipping. They have been left to the last, the most of them. So to give the Souchongs a good chance you had better wait till all the tarry teas get home. Little or no Souchong is going this year and they are a poor lot; so I would not wonder but they may take a rise by and by.

I would like [you], if you would take the trouble, to send me out now a copy of my account with you. I sold £1,000 of the credits you sent me out on my private account last month, which makes now the whole of the £3,000 you sent me sold. So as soon as you have the last £1,000 put to my debit, which I suppose will be ere you get this, you had better give me a statement of my account. If possible include profit and losses on joint account up to those confounded Souchongs and things I sent you per *Harbeck* and the ships that I shipped in at that time, on up to the end of the Gun-powders . . .<sup>1</sup> so that I could know exactly how things stood up to that point of our operations. It is all gain in the joint account up to that, and then I suppose begin the losses. You need not send it unless you can make it up to that point as I would rather wait.

I cannot see how you make out that I am quite free and unfettered when Messrs J. R. & Company's letter contains positive instructions and besides tell me to look to their letter alone for how to act, and you also tell me that J. R. & Co. will give instructions what to do. However, I am very glad to think you do not really consider me so, but it is a funny kind of position to be placed in. I am not to disregard your suggestions and yet act to the best of my judgement; my judgement may be quite the opposite of your suggestion. Your suggestion may be to ship; my judgement that it would be wrong; if I am not to disregard your suggestion I must ship.

I have no doubt that you see what is going on at your end as well

<sup>1</sup> Passage omitted for awkwardness of expression and repetition of substance immediately before.

as I do what is going at this; but I have the advantage in having two months later information in China, and if you base your views on your advices from China at all, you may say four months later. By your last advices you only knew what was doing here up to August; and if you send instructions based on your news from China, you would have to guess what was to take place up to December when I know all that has been done. I can see by your letters of October that you had not the slightest idea exchange would rise, or that the export would be bigger than last year, in fact quite the reverse as you predict a fall in both. Now had you sent instructions based upon these ideas, you would have been rather far out unless I had the power to alter your suggestions. The more suggestions you can give me the better. All that is wanted is the power to alter them now and then when things may turn out quite contrary to what you could expect, as they are very likely to do in a lapse of four months.

I have not got the matter arranged yet about the insurance; however, I have little doubt that I will recover. As you advised me before that you had put the amount to my debit, of course I recover now for my own account and do not place the sum to credit of your account joint with J. R. & Co. No more to say.

James Richardson and Company to William

Via Overland: Glasgow, 22 December 1851

We enclose duplicate of our letter by last mail and we have since received your favour of 28 October with all the documents of the *Juliet* and *Auguste and Bertha*.

We are truly glad to see the sensible, cautious way you are acting and we are now hopeful that exchange and the prices of teas would keep up, so as to prevent you from shipping a chest more than now advised; nothing but loss can come of tea shipments this season we think. With your large exports from China and the heavy stock here, there is a dead certainty of low prices.

On consulting with our friends in Edinburgh we have decided on cancelling all orders for tea that you may hold for the joint account venture, and as the banks are getting anxious about the credits it may be well to return the whole (first of exchange by one mail and second and third by the next following mail). The banks

seem to dread the possibility of the bills being stolen from you, and it would facilitate matters again were they returned.

Messrs A. M. & Co. suggest, and we concur in the suggestion, that it is just possible teas may be entirely neglected about the time you receive this and that there may be a possibility of buying teas on terms hitherto unknown. Should this be the case you might send a chop or two of good tea on joint account to London or Liverpool, but you will understand that it is only to be done if something really astonishing can be picked up; say, good teas to stand not over 6d. to 8d. per pound. Failing this, just wind up the joint account venture for this season and live in hope of next year.

If the shipments per *Auguste and Bertha* and *Juliet* are not followed by others, we may all congratulate ourselves on the escape we have made. The *Mandarin* from Shanghai has arrived in Clyde and the same parties are sending another cargo from same port to Clyde. The *Mandarin's* teas we hear privately are poor and valued at 9d. to 1s. chiefly the former.

The *Naomi* comes to Clyde for certain to James Ewing & Co. so we know of four cargoes to Clyde and there may be more.



William to Mr Simpson

Macao, 21 January 1852

I HAVE YOURS of 13 and 20 November and see you have seen the first batch of samples and am glad that you are pleased with them so far. And I am glad you think with me about the size of the vessel – that she is quite big enough with exchange at 4s. 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. No doubt when you see what exchange has advanced to lately, you will be thankful that no Leith cargo or any other has been purchased; and as J. R. & Company's last letter (November) now recommends the limits of good common Congou 'at 10 to 12 taels at exchange of 4s. 6d. to 8d. at the utmost', they are no doubt well pleased that I did not operate at an exchange of 5s. to 5s. 2d. in much higher priced tea.

You seem sorry you did not have the Tls 12 $\frac{1}{2}$  Congou which I mentioned in my September letter as being in the market here at that; but I think you are much better without it as it was very common, open leaf, Fokien kind. You should bear in mind when you see low Congous quoted, the lowest quotation is generally very low stuff; and you evidently think that you should have good clean common Congou at that. You say, J. R. & Co. say to you, 'what do you think of limits now?' You might have replied that they were dangerous as a cargo had been ordered to Leith and the *Herald* off long before she could leave; and no doubt had exchange not risen, a cargo would certainly have gone to Leith because instructions are of no avail unless they are to be obeyed, and better send none unless such is the understanding. However, it is hard to say whether the limits delayed me or not; but as it is it is lucky, as had I waited longer exchange would have been worse.

I see by all the circulars that clean Canton Gunpowders are still much wanted in boxes and perhaps our last spec may clear a little;

if not this will be a miserable year. No business – no profit – and losses on those Souchongs; but I have little fear for them if you hold them. Everything is in their favour. I hope the Gunpowders will do; but who knows what may be to arrive before them as no account of the export is kept now. But I don't think there can be much and they may arrive at a good time. I know little was doing in them at the time they were bought and the consumption at home goes on well. If I had more of our joint account funds here, I think I would have bought a few Canton Imperials in boxes. I see lowest quotations in half chests at 1s. 2d. and I don't think anybody has been paying attention to them out here. When you have heard of all our funds on joint account being invested, I have no doubt you will have made another remittance. No doubt, as you say, from the great overstock at home, the trade is precarious at present. Still it is better to have some beside me as those on account of J. R. & Co. and ourselves are of little use or no use at all for odds and ends.

Messrs J. R. & Co. seem afraid of the vessel, but I don't think there is much cause for fear as I think the captain was a careful sort of man and I think he prided himself greatly in always delivering his cargo well and in good order.

I expect the Shanghai people will lose greatly this year. I know a great many of their orders and bills came down to Canton to be negotiated and sold at 5s. and upwards. Those who paid £6 for the *Oriental* must look rather foolish I should think, especially considering she only took second class teas and not home until long after the other clippers. I am very thankful, seeing how things are going, that I have done so little this year; but I know how soon one bad year knocks down all the profits of two or three good ones.

Your bad accounts may bring better times soon. However, I am afraid the Clyde will be overdone this year, at least four vessels besides one to Leith, so that not much hope remains now of doing any good there with one to follow all those this year. One after they had all been in for five or six months might do, but that would bring us to a new season. Messrs J. R. & Co. write for account current of last season's operations. I have never sent them one, thinking you would give them a copy; perhaps

you would be good enough to do so, as I have not my books down here.

Macao, 22 January 1852

I have yours of November and am glad you are all so far well and hope my little niece is better long before you receive this. You had just received word that I had had a smart attack, as you call it, and are expecting me in the spring, you say. I am sorry this turns out such a poor year or perhaps I would have obeyed your mandate, but I don't think I will stay very much longer. However, I have been very well lately, not a cold or headache since the last in September. The weather has been very cold for the last month. They had ice in small quantities in Canton and it was down below 40° here; and I have been making the most of it, being out nearly every day for long walks of ten and twelve miles, that is going and coming – a great change indeed from Canton.

Your last accounts are very gloomy and I think I am far better down here than in Canton buying Congou to leave a loss and swallow up all we have made. I am afraid the Dutchman is not going to get very soon home. I saw in the Anjer<sup>1</sup> shipping list last night that he had only passed that place on 26 November, which is no great passage so far, rather slow I should think. I am afraid there is nothing to be made this year, but if we do not lose we must be content. I am afraid a good many people are in for it and that well. Perhaps after China New Year exchange may come down and the bad accounts may stop shipments, when perhaps some good may be done. But I am afraid too much is gone already and too much at home for much good to be done.

Dr Watson who (I think I wrote you before) was very sick, he is now all right again. I am just going to take my dinner with them. Seare is in Canton where they have got up an amateur theatre and he is a great actor. Murray's two sons<sup>2</sup> (of Edinburgh theatre) also take parts and one is a capital actor.

<sup>1</sup> Anjer: a port at the Java side of the Sunda Strait.

<sup>2</sup> H. Murray was among the residents at Canton in 1849 whereas Charles W. Murray arrived in 1850. In June 1852 the formation of Weave Murray & Co, was announced. CR, xix (1850), 7; xx (1851), 8; Weave Murray & Co. to J. M. & Co., 1 June 1852, JMA, Corr. Local, Canton, B2/18, fo. 2314. For the father, see below, p. 210, n. 1.

I saw in the *Scotsman* what you pointed out about Mr Usher's<sup>1</sup> steam plough. We shall soon not require horses at all, I think, except for riding.

Some French missionaries, who have been for a long time up in the north of China where they heard no news from Europe, came down to Canton some time ago. They called upon the doctor there and after talking for some time he told them about the revolution in France, Louis Napoleon being President and so on, at which they opened their eyes. He went on telling them some other wonders and wound up with telegraph rope from England to France, at which they burst out laughing and told him that although they had been away for so long, they were not to be gulled and would not for a long time think anything else than that the doctor was joking them. I believe he had to show them some of the newspapers to convince them.

Messrs J. R. & Company's letter I see wishes the third cargo's limits reduced, but there is no second gone and not much hope of either second or third going I think. You will have plenty in the Clyde and Leith too this year I suppose, and I dare say buy cheaper there than I can here. I have nothing more to say I think excepting that I hope this finds you all well.

Macao, 24 February 1852

I have yours of 22 December (John's birthday). I am afraid I forgot to drink his health. I am glad Easy's baby is all right again and that you are all so well.

I have sent home all the funds except £6,400 which I have kept in case things may improve and tea to be had at very low prices; and it is not unlikely that they may come very low as your accounts will be worse and worse every mail I should think. Besides, exchange seems coming down. I have a letter from Seare in Canton.

<sup>1</sup> James Usher: an Edinburgh brewer, had displayed his invention in the Exhibition of 1851 without attracting much attention. The plough was successfully demonstrated in Nov. 1851 at the farm of Mr Moffat at Bangholm. The initial cost of the machine was calculated at £350 and its operating cost about 3s. per acre, comparing favourably with 10s. for a horse plough. The engine was constructed as a locomotive and could be attached to a threshing machine. *Scotsman*, 15 Nov. 1851; Lord Willoughby de Eresley, *Ploughing by Steam* (London, 1856).



He says he expects the rate to be about 4s. 7d. if not lower, and £6,400 is not a great deal to retain out of £60,000. What were negotiated in September and October will be paid before this can reach you, so that the banks cannot be very uneasy about £6,400 betwixt them. This does not look well for your going into it next year, but perhaps you are right. However, it is a long time till then, and [you] may have time to have fresh credits out; but you would require to look sharp as these won't be home until April and that is the month to be sending out. I would not be without funds at the beginning of next season if possible because as there must be heavy losses on this year's transactions, less may be done next year and I think at a low rate of exchange. At all events I hope you will send some on joint account if not sent previous to your receiving this. There can be no harm in having it here as I need not invest unless everything looks well.

The *Herald* for Leith will not be much opposition to you; the poor captain and officers were murdered by the crew, principally Manila men; after that they scuttled the vessel and she is, of course, totally lost. I will send you the newspaper account of it.<sup>1</sup> Were it not for the loss of life, we might be glad of it rather than otherwise and, I suppose, so might the shippers as, if they are well insured, they have gone to a good market. I did not know the captain; his poor wife must have suffered dreadfully. I hope they will hang all those Manila men, cold-blooded rascals they must be.

I am glad you are all so well pleased with my doing so little; but had things turned out better, it might have been the other way. I should think the Shanghai people must be getting well over the fingers this year with their low trash of Congou and their high-priced tarry ones at £6 freight, and I hope it will take a little of this speculation out of them for the future. I only wish it had been a little more severe and it might save them from trying the same thing again and losing for themselves and other people too.

Mr Seare was down here for a week or so but has gone up again. They are going to have some more plays up there and cannot do without him as he is a great hand at them.

I have been very well and could only wish I had more to do;

<sup>1</sup> A full report of the mutiny was published in *China Mail*, 6 May 1852; see also below, p. 207.

however, better do nothing than make losses. I am just going to my dinner to Dr Watson's at half past two and it is nearly that now, so I will say adieu hoping this will find you all well.

ps. Seare writes exchange from all he can learn is about 4s. 7d. and may be lower.

William to Mr Simpson

Macao, 25 February 1852

I have all your letters of December. I hope you will get the valuations you mention for the chops per *Auguste and Bertha*. I may tell you at once the *Herald* is lost off Anjer, the crew having risen on the captain and officers and murdered them and afterwards destroyed the vessel. It is very strange how Mr Schaw has an idea that she was lost, because it is impossible any report of her being lost could have reached England at the date of your last letters (December). I don't suppose she was lost, and even then how were people in England to get news from Anjer so quickly.

I have sent you home, according to request, all the credits except £6,400 which I will keep in the event of prices and exchange coming very low indeed. I have a letter from Canton of the 22nd which says it is expected to come down to 4s. 7d. or perhaps lower this mail. I suppose you intend to be out of it next year, as you have sent for the bills; but that I think would be a pity, I mean to be without funds out here, because very often the worst times at home are the best to buy out here. And there could be no harm in having some out here to take advantage of any favourable opportunity; and should none occur, why I could just send home the funds again and no harm done.

It may be likely too that not so many cargoes may leave for the Clyde as have done this year, but you will be the best judges of that. If they pay this year, it is most likely you may have as many; but if they don't, we shall likely have it to ourselves again. I know Lindsays tried some years ago, I think it was the *Queen* they sent; but from their own people I heard they lost largely and I don't think have sent any since or likely to do. Now next year, who knows, we might have the port nearly to ourselves and get good Congou at Tls 12 to 13 at about 4s. I think exchange will be down.

Be sure and advise me and try to find out whether the *Naomi* and other cargoes have paid or not so that I may judge if much may be going to the Scotch ports from this.

I suppose it is not likely you will give any of the sales of the other cargoes much of a help. If the *Mandarin's* cargo is withdrawn from your port, you may not have a great deal too much as the *Herald* is lost.

I am sorry my letter of October seems to have annoyed you so much, in which you say I mention £68 having been put to my debit for an error in some policy of insurance. However, if the amount is not to my debit it is all right and I am glad of it. I have not your letter here but I have little doubt it states what I mentioned. I rather think, as you say, you must have been referring to the policy per *Superb* where Liverpool instead of London was filled in; and instead of saying Palmer McKillop & Co.<sup>1</sup> were trying to escape the payment etc., you have said Matheson & Co.; and knowing there were policies in Canton (Matheson) I had thought of course it was [in] one of theirs that another mistake had been found. It was Palmer McKillop & Co. who would not pay the premium back; and I suppose you have said in your letter Matheson & Co. which made me think they had a claim too. However, if you have only one amount at my debit for error in policy, it is all right and I am glad it is. By the by, I wrote you last mail that I had recovered from Dent's; but of course I do not credit you with it, as I recover on my own account for you have put the amount to my debit in private account. Don't forget my account current.

Macao, 26 March 1852

You will see that we are nearly at the end of the month and still no steamer has arrived with the mail, so that I have no letters from you this month. Something must have gone wrong with the steamer.

<sup>1</sup> Palmer McKillop & Co.: one of the major London acceptance houses in the India, China and America trade especially after 1834, and agent for the Union Insurance Co., Canton. In 1836 the company supported, in conjunction with Baring Brothers and Fletcher Alexander & Co., an unsuccessful scheme to form a Bank of India. Greenberg, *British Trade*, 36; James Richardson to Palmer McKillop & Co., 28 Oct. 1850, *AMA*, Misc. Material relating to China Trade; McLellan, 'Banking in India and China', pt. I, 54.

I hope that no lives may be lost. I have been here since I last wrote you but am thinking of going up to Canton in a day or so. Exchange is coming down and I may be able to do some little for my own account. I don't suppose I can do anything for the J. R. & Co. account and of course can do nothing on our joint account as I have no dollars. Opium has taken a start lately, and money might have been made in it. Nothing new here, we are all wondering where the mail is.

I expect Seare and his family down from Canton per steamer. They have had a long stay in Canton, nearly three months. Mr Seare has got an appointment in Canton, or rather an engagement, with my fellow passenger around the Cape ten years ago. I am glad of it, as he was doing nothing here and has been idle for a long time, having parted from the house he came out for, Hyde Lenox & Co., some years ago. They used him badly.

Mrs Watson gave the doctor another son a day or two ago,<sup>1</sup> which makes four out here and two at home. This is bad paper but I cannot lay my hands on any better. I hope the mail will turn up soon and that I may hear that you are all well. I am very well as usual. Kind remembrances to Andrew and the rest.

PS. I wish the Seares would arrive and let me get my dinner, it is nearly four o'clock.

Macao, 18 April 1852

I have your letters this month of both January and February. They came together, the January mail having broken down as no doubt you have heard of long ago. I had intended to go up to Canton, but your letters are all so much against any business being done that I think I may be in no hurry. The *Naomi* must have made a good passage and the *Auguste and Bertha* is making a slow one. Had I taken the *Naomi*, I would have known by this the results of the shipment; it was a pity I lost her.

Andrew's and John's January letters advised me strongly to take a run home and I daresay they are right. I wish I had known five months ago how things were going to turn out; had I done so I think I would have been in England now. I am in an undecided

<sup>1</sup> The birth was announced to have taken place on 22 Mar. *China Mail*, 25 Mar. 1852.

state at present. It is getting near next season again but it may not be worthwhile waiting for it. I must think about it. It is strange but I feel about as reluctant to leave China as I did to leave home about four years ago, and more so, because I recollect when I left home I looked forward to the day I would be starting home as a bright one; and now when I have it in my power, you may say, it looks anything but bright.

I am a little surprised to hear that Hallam is going into a tea-broker's. It was confidently reported here that he was going into Barings, and if I mistake not he told me so himself, and that he would have very good pay. An American friend of his told me £1,000 a year, and when I told him I thought he was a good deal above the mark, he said he was sure he was right; £1,000 per annum is not so easily picked up nowadays. I am afraid he did not lay by very much. He spent a great deal I hear on the education of his family, that is, more a great deal than was necessary, but that is an amiable failing.

I was glad to hear that you are all so well after being without news for two months. Louis Napoleon seems to know how to handle the reins; I hope his intentions are not warlike.

You are rather hard on me in your February letter, saying that I should have mentioned how many birds I killed when out on a shooting excursion. When I am very successful, I like to say how many; but if otherwise, I think it much better to leave it to imagination.

Richardsons seem highly delighted at my having done so little this year. Hoping this finds you well.

rs. I send this by early boat to be sure of being in time. I am in a good state of preservation.

Macao, 20 May 1852

You will see I am still here yet. I have yours of 22 March and I am glad to see that you are all well. I was disappointed not to hear of the *Auguste and Bertha* being in. She must be a regular 'clumbungie'. I see you have heard of the *Herald's* loss, it was a terrible affair; some of the Manila men were executed at Hong Kong a little while ago. I suppose her cargo would pay better by being lost

than had it arrived. No word of any of the ships in which we have anything, so that there is very little in your letters.

I am sorry Davie has been going over his tether; but I should think you have, as the Yankees say, 'fixed' him now. If he has a taste for anything such as music or drawing you should encourage him in it. It would employ his leisure hours and be a great pleasure and amusement to him, and be useful to him all his life as a resource when he had leisure time on his hands; and it would make him independent of seeking company or cards or any of these things to spend his time. I will try and write him a few lines. The doctor out here draws and sketches very well and has rather a literary turn altogether. Seare again is fond of music and reading etc.; and the consequence is they have always plenty of resources to amuse themselves with, while many others out here who have no such taste are miserable if they have not other people coming to see them or not out themselves seeing other people, and a wet day to them is terrible. There were two or three down here the other day who for want of something else to do sat down after breakfast to cards and played till 11 or 12 at night.

It is getting very hot here now, but it is time; it is getting near June and I suppose you are even having it hot at home. We may be thankful we have had so cold a winter and spring. It is only a few days ago that we had to take to our light clothing. Strachan came over from Hong Kong a few days ago and paid us a visit at Seare's. He must have been a long time out in China now and never been home but looks strong as ever.

Poor Murrow does not seem to get round. I am afraid he is breaking up. It has been a dull year this; however, those who have done least have to congratulate themselves. I am getting tired of staying down here so long but better than being in Canton. Old Chinnery, an artist who has been about thirty years in Macao, says it is the finest climate in the world. I have made quite a friend of him lately. He is now eighty years of age and [has] been about fifty years in Calcutta and China, very clever, and might have made an immense fortune with his brush but like most geniuses could not keep it. He has a capital memory and is full of anecdotes and stories of Indian life and of England sixty years ago, and has mixed with the best society in Calcutta and altogether he is very amusing.

Nobody ever thought of having a party here at one time without asking Chinnery. He remembers and has stories about the old times in China for thirty years back. I got a picture or two from him to copy and painted a head (my own) and sent them to him for instructions and he was very kind. I am short of paper – kind remembrance and hope you are well.

Canton, 19 June 1852

I have received yours of 21 April and am glad to see that you are all well. The loss of R. Christie<sup>1</sup> must be a sad blow to his father.

I came up here only yesterday night in case I might be able to do any business but have done nothing. None of the new Congous are down yet and exchange is as high as 4s. 8½d., so I don't think I will sell any bills this month. Most people think, though, that it will go higher; it has done so for the last two years. However, it is better, I think, to see how teas are likely to go before selling any of the bills. I had once a thought of selling about as much as would just buy one chop of fine on our joint account out of the £5,000 just received by last mail because should the rate go higher, say up to 4s. 10d. to 4s. 11d., it would keep down the price of the new Congous; and at 4s. 8½d. and a low price for the tea it might do, at least it would be better than 4s. 11d. Perhaps if I get a good offer I may change my mind and sell some yet before the mail goes; but I do not think [so] as I am afraid that the first class new Congous will fetch pretty high prices, as all the tea circulars mention that first class is getting scarce at home.

What a clipper that *Auguste and Bertha* must be! However, I don't think she will have done us any harm by staying out so long, provided she does not damage her cargo. What a pity that *Juliet's* half chests turned out so badly; 1s. 5d. would have left us a good profit on Tls 20½, a great thing in such bad times. I hope they may get their valuations for the whole chest by the same vessel.

I am very sorry for Mr Robertson<sup>2</sup> and as you say we should be

<sup>1</sup> Robert, son of John Christie, a fellow apprentice of A. M. Mui, 'Andrew Melrose', 31.

<sup>2</sup> Robertson; not identified.

thankful for the health we enjoy. Poor old Mr Chinnery of whom I wrote to you last mail died soon after I sent off your letter; his age was bordering on eighty. I have just had a call from Gray of the Bank; he tells me he is going home in five months. Ripley, who took a trip home some time ago, has come out again by last mail. Kind remembrance to all.

Canton, 20 July 1852

I have yours of 21 May and am glad to see that you are all well and that the *Auguste and Bertha* is in at last. People here are laughing and saying she has made the best passage of the season, meaning that she has arrived at the best time. The new Congous are down and some fine teas amongst them, Tls 24 and 25 and 26 $\frac{3}{4}$  (one chop brought) has been the price, exchange 4s. 11d. to 5s. It will lay them down about 1s. 8d. in England. Exchange was known to be high before the market opened, as news came down from Shanghai shortly after last mail left that exchange there was 4s. 10d. to 5s. 1d., which soon set it up here.

I was sorry to hear of Murray's<sup>1</sup> death. I read the account in the newspaper which you sent me out. His son, who has been a long time away from England, only left to go home for a trip last mail. He was the son by his first wife, at least I think he was the eldest. There is a younger son out here in the same house. The one just gone home is very much liked out here. They had some amateur theatrical here lately at which he shone and pleased everybody (and so did Seare). I was sorry to hear that he and his father were not on speaking terms when he left, but whether it is true or not I cannot say. Poor Mr Hutchison<sup>2</sup> was as you say taken suddenly off.

<sup>1</sup> William Henry Murray, 1790-1852: actor-manager of the Theatre Royal, Edinburgh, 1815-51, especially known for his part in *Rob Roy* (1819)-Walter Scott 'was actually electrified by the truth, spirit and humour' of the role. *Scotsman*, 29 Oct. 1851; DNB; William Scott Douglas, *Modern Athenians . . . Original Portraits of Memorable Citizens of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh, 1882), 170-2.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas H. Hutchison: of Hutchison & Co., wine, spirits and tea merchants of 11 Bernard Street, Leith, exporters of wines and spirits primarily to New South Wales, owners of the *Isabella*. Hutchison & Co. to J. M. & Co., 23 Nov. 1833, JMA, Corr. In: GB, B1/134, fo. 253.



I have received the first of £33,000 all right but do not see much opportunity of doing much good with them yet. You say we will soon be getting the hot weather again; we have it now. It has been very hot for some time, very thirsty weather. We have got plenty of ice, however, which is a great comfort. You can form no idea in England what a luxury a glass of iced soda water or fine pale beer is; you want the thermometer at 90° before you can appreciate it.

I see Hallam has joined Carlisle & Co.<sup>1</sup> I got a circular from him last mail. He never writes to anybody out here that I know of.

Jardines have sent off the *Stornoway*; your old friend, Captain Robertson of the *John o'Gaunt* before, commands her. Lindsay & Co. have sent off the American clipper *Surprise* some days after her and Turners have loaded the *Chrysolite* for Liverpool. Russells are loading the greatest clipper of them all yet – the *Challenge*, allowed by everybody to be something extraordinary. It is a pity she is so large – 2,000 tons. Kindly remember me to all.

William to Andrew Melrose and Company

Canton, 20 July 1852

I have to advise having purchased for our joint account:

1188 boxes clean common Canton Gunpowder at 10 taels amount  
\$2,589.79 (no. 1 – 300, no. 2 – 300, no. 3 – 300, no. 4 – 288:  
1188 boxes)

and also that I have sold against that purchase the following credits:

COMMERCIAL BANK

42/1	£500	} £600 at 4s. 11d.
42/19	100	

The above purchase is shipped on board the *Challenge* to London. You will have the goodness to protect the same by insurance; and, if not already done, please open a policy for the remainder of the last £5,000 sent – say £4,400 unsold.

<sup>1</sup> Carlisle Capel Norbury and Hallam of 1 Dunster Court, Mincing Lane, London, tea and coffee brokers. Account of Carlisle Capel & Co., A.M.A., Country Sales Ledger, Wholesale, 1854-69.

William to Mr Simpson

Canton, 22 August 1852

I have your letters of June and am glad you have got so much of the *Auguste and Bertha's* cargo off. You will see by my letters what I have been about here for the last month. There is very little doing here this season but perhaps they are making up for it at Shanghai. There will be no steamer down from there for a day or two. It is a good thing she did not come in before this, as the news by her would most likely have set up exchange, a large quantity of silk and tea having been purchased.

I will pay attention to Hill's order when I have time; at present and before this my time has been too much occupied to pay attention to it. Their order cannot go in the *Magellan*, as I have quite enough bought to fill her when I get some 10/c boxes of Scented Orange Pekoe for stowage; and should I take it into my head to ship some curios, I may have to shut out some of our own teas. I do not think they can expect we are going to take the bother of such little orders and also give them room in our own ship chartered expressly for ourselves.

Richardsons say that another spec in curios to Glasgow would turn out a failure. You do not say so and seem if anything rather favourable to it. I think myself that there could be no fear of loss at any rate, seeing the last paid so well; however, the *Magellan* will take a week or ten days to get ready and load and I will think about it. But I could not have time to get them and Hill's also; and besides, even should I buy none for ourselves, I have plenty of tea bought to fill the ship so that in any case I will not send their order in the *Magellan*.

I am almost beginning to think this may be a good year for good blackish leaf kinds, as few have come here this year and they are beginning to look up at home; and at Shanghai they have very little fine this year and few good.

I see the Gunpowders are all sold off, and Souchongs. I hope you will balance up the joint account and my private account up to that point and begin a new account with the *Challenge's* shipment. It will make things so much more clear. I think the *Magellan* should be home about Christmas or New Year; it might be a good time

to send a few nick-nacks. I think everything I have to say you will find in my letter to the firm, so I need say no more here.

Canton, 22 August 1852

I suppose you and Andrew and the rest are just having a glass of wine negus or gin toddy and some French prunes or figs or raisins and almonds before going to bed. It is a quarter past three here and I suppose it is about one-quarter past ten at night with you. I have been, I may almost say, laid up with boils; but the doctor says they are healthy. That may be; I know they were a great bother. I had to keep moist applications to them night and day and take nothing but water and arrowroot (my favourite as you may remember in London). However, I am all right again and have been for some days excepting one or two here and there.

I read Mr Cameron's<sup>1</sup> letter to Davie; he must be a sensible good-hearted man from his letter, and I am glad to see he has so high an opinion of Davie and quite agree with him. You will see what a good opinion they have of your son out here also by the address of a letter sent to me which I enclose to you. I showed the letter and address to the doctor and his wife at which they laughed heartily and have called me 'his reverence' ever since. I am great friends with both the doctor and his wife here and also with the doctor and his wife at Macao; I suppose their most intimate and oldest friend in China, so you may depend on it I will be taken good care of.

I have chartered the *Magellan* and bought a cargo for her, for which I think, taking everything into consideration, the prospects are tolerably good. I got her cheap, £2 15s., and am obliged to Murrow for it to a great degree. He is always nibbling among ships and knows the rate of freight to a nicety. There were a good many small ships offering, but a demand had got up for them all at once, and three or four were chartered in a day at much higher rates than £2 15s. He sent me word to fix immediately before the rise got

<sup>1</sup> Possibly the father of William Cameron who was seeking a post in one of the leading London tea brokerage firms at the recommendation of A. M. in 1851. William Cameron to A. M., 19 Sept. 1851, AMA, Misc. Letters to A. M., 1845-52.

known. The Captain of the *Magellan* happened to be in Canton, so I went and after a hot bargain got him to take £2 15s. I have been very busy for the last month and will be now until I get the *Magellan* off. I think everything I have done you will find in my letters to the house. Glad to see you are all well. Kind remembrances to Andrew and the rest.

William to Andrew Melrose and Company

Canton, 22 August 1852

Since my last to you I have to advise having purchased on our joint account:

L 1-3 1012 boxes fair common Canton Gunpowder at Tls 11.  
G 1-4 1000 boxes fair common Canton Imperial at Tls 14.

The above along with 1-4 advised last mail are shipped per *Challenge*, sailed August 5th. I enclose you bill of lading and invoice for the same. I have also to advise purchase of:

L 2	250	} { 521 boxes good clean Gunpowder at Tls 11½, shipped per <i>Mary Sparkes</i> to Liverpool not yet sailed.
L 3	271	
L 4	250	} { 500 boxes of the same chop at Tls 11½, freight engaged for same in the <i>Invincible</i> at £2, American clipper.
L 5	250	

The Gunpowder are all fair common and clean, except perhaps F1-4 at 10 taels which is rather low in appearance but quite free from lie tea. The Imperial should leave a good margin as I see lowest quotation 1s. 2d. in half chests. You will see by my other letter that I have sold at 4s. 10½d. some of the Commercial Bank credits against these purchases.

You will of course insure these purchases.

Duplicate list of credits sold, 18 August 1852, and advised by mail of 22 August

## UNION BANK

on account Clyde cargo

13-16	4 bills of each	£500	£2,000	
25-28	4 bills of each	300	1,200	
34-40	7 bills of each	200	1,400	
50	1 bill of	100	100	
51-56	6 bills of each	500	3,000	
67-76	10 bills of each	300	3,000	£6,100 at 4s. 10 $\frac{3}{4}$ d.
79-89	11 bills of each	200	2,200	7,500 at 4s. 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.
91-97	7 bills of each	100	700	
			<hr/>	
			£13,600	£13,600

## COMMERCIAL BANK

on account Clyde cargo

41/ 8-10	3 bills each	£500	£1,500	
41/70-73	4 bills each	300	1,200	
41/84-85	2 bills each	100	200	
41/94-96	3 bills each	200	600	
			<hr/>	
			£3,500	at 4s. 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.

On Joint Account A. M. &amp; Co. and W. M.

## COMMERCIAL BANK

42/2-4	3 bills each	£500	£1,500	
42/5-7	3 bills each	300	900	
42/15	1 bill	100	100	
			<hr/>	
			£2,500	at 4s. 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.

William to Mr Simpson

Canton, 24 September 1852

I have yours of July with accounts current for which I am obliged. The *Magellan* sailed on 2 September and I have done nothing in the leaf since.

Now, having told you all that is new, I want to draw your attention to an item in my private account. You have debited my private account with damage on [chop] no. 4 *Naomi* £145 10s. I got \$600 allowance for damage, but I carried it to the credit of your 'account joint J. R. & Co.' and remitted it in full, so you cannot

mean to make me pay it twice. I suppose you have put the amount to the debit of my private account instead of the debit of your 'account joint J. R. & Co.'. It was recovered on that account and remitted on that account; and if you have carried the remittance to credit side, it would require to have been put to the debit before, or a balance must remain of \$600 at the credit side. If that is the case, perhaps you mean to carry that balance to credit of my private account. At all events you must carry it to my credit somewhere, as it is both paid and put to my debit and appears nowhere that I can see to my credit. In recovering in future would it not be better to debit me in the account recovered for and credit me in it when remitted and not debit my private account at all.

I see you have also carried loss on Gunpowders resold £171 2s. 10d to credit of my private account. I cannot see why I should be credited with it. I debited our joint account with it and paid it out of the bills sent by you. I cannot see why you have credited me with it unless you have done so to make up for having debited our joint account with it. But I cannot see either why it should be put to debit of joint account. The loss was paid out of the bills I sold; and if all the bills are put to the debit of our account and the proceeds of the teas sent put against them, that of course would show exactly what profit was to be divided. I don't think it is right to deduct it out of the profits, as neither you nor I paid it, over and above the bank bills; and of course the profit should be exactly what remains after deducting all expenses. The expense of this loss, £171 2s. 10d., has been paid out of the bank credits and so much less tea sent in consequence; so there can be no use in debiting our joint account with it to find out the profit. It is just this: had there been no loss on the Gunpowder, I would have sent you £171 2s. 10d. worth more of tea and we would have had that [much] more to divide. But as I took it out of the bills to pay for it, it just leaves us that [much] less to divide. . . . If you put it to the debit of the account you make us pay it twice over, at least you make me pay my share twice over. Of course it must be clear to you: to get a proper estimate of the profits, all that is paid must be taken on the one side and all the net proceeds on the other; the loss was paid here out of our bills, and if you put it to the debit again it is paid twice. But of course you will see that at a glance, and I suppose I am only

putting off my time saying so much about it. I think to make things square, you should take away from my debit the damage on Naomi's [chop] no. 4, and take away from my credit the loss on Gunpowders we sold, and also take away that sum from the debit to our joint account, to let the profits be divided fairly. Let me know.

I have sent you copy of the *Magellan's* invoice. She sailed on the 2nd. You will see I have gone into curios again. I have stuck to the kinds you recommended and hope they will do well. You will find in [parcel] F/7 a set of chess for you; there are two sets in the box at \$5.80, only one set charged in invoice, other set being yours. By the by, I see you charge me £5 for error in chinaware 23 June 1852; please let me know what it is for, most likely some mistake in the extension, and very likely, as I generally pay exactly to the Chinamen what the amount of the invoice is, [it] only requires a little explanation to save me my £5. Something I have put down \$20, I suppose, and extended 40 when 40 is the proper charge. You should have mercy on me in these long invoices of curios; £5 takes away half the commission and most likely only a mistake. You will see all that has been done by the documents. Tea scarce and dear now, and nothing to be done.

ps. There is no saying what kind of year this is going to turn out. Only about half of the Congous have as yet come to market and the Chinamen say the crop is short. Of course they always say so, but still it would appear there is some truth in it this year; although only about half the quantity of tea is down that there was last year, the chops are coming in as slowly as if it were the end of the season. However, they may come down in a lump by and by; but it is very strange what can keep them, considering they could get good prices for them. Last October about ten million pounds left Canton. At present there is only about two million pounds new Congou in the market; and unless they come down quickly we must have short export in October.

William to Andrew Melrose and Company

Canton, 26 September 1852

I enclose invoice and bill of lading of Messrs Hill & Company's curios, amount of which I have carried to your debit; have the

goodness to credit me with the same. There was no vessel loading for Liverpool; so I engaged tonnage in the *Invincible*, an American clipper, the only vessel likely to be in about Christmas. She sailed 17 September and should at all events be in before next year begins. The camphor wood trunks were forgotten although I ordered them; but I hope that will not be a great disappointment. Everything was got as good and as cheap as I could find in the shops and hope will give Messrs H. & Co. satisfaction.

PS. Insurance I imagine you effect at home; they are not insured here.

Canton, 27 September 1852

9 o'clock p.m.; steamer goes at ten

I have left your letter again to the last, however you may say you certainly have the latest advices. The *Magellan* sailed on the 2nd. The market has risen a good deal since her teas were bought owing to reports of there going to be a short crop; only about one-half of the usual quantity has come to market and the tea [is] coming down very slowly.

[Chop] no. 1 per *Magellan* I hope will please you; it is a very cheap and capital tea. Wetmore's tea taster has spoken to me about [it] one or twice. (He was in Styan's<sup>1</sup> and a very nice fellow, has been out here for about seven or eight years.) He makes it regular first class and no mistake, he says. I am in hopes the cargo will pay this year; a good deal of tea has gone and will be arriving when she gets home, but perhaps we may have a short export for the next month or two and the news of that may keep your market brisk. If not, or if the export falls off, it might be well to hold on a little until the market got clearer. There is plenty time to think about it. However, good and fine teas cannot go down with you this year. They are getting scarce at home and not many here. If still cheap with you, you may make a spec on my account if you please and keep them for a few months. It should be fine Congou and cheap about 1s. 4d. to 5d. – but just please yourself.

I have received Davie's letter. I could not imagine who it was from [at] first. He is getting quite the lawyer's hand and writes well in

<sup>1</sup> T. W. & T. Styan & Co.: tea and colonial brokers, 12 Little Tower Street, London.



other respects too. I have also received Andrew's and must answer both next mail. I have had so many invoices and different things to write up this mail that they have taken up most of my time.

I dine at the doctor's here nearly every day now at 4 o'clock. They are very nice people (don't confound them with the Macao doctor and his spouse) and it is much better than dining alone. I have not got quite rid of the boils yet, but very nearly; and I should be thankful, for excepting the boils which they say are healthy, I have not had a headache since last year about this time when I was loading that celebrated clipper the *Auguste and Bertha*. Her long passage was a fortunate one, though; she would have lost if she had made a quick passage. Kind remembrances to all and hoping you are all well.

William to Mr Simpson

Canton, 26 October 1852

I have yours of August. I have done nothing this month and have very little to say. Teas keep dear, exchange today 4s. 9½d. to 4s. 10d. There is a large business doing in teas at Shanghai; Jardines are buying largely, I hear, exchange 5s. 1½d. to 2½d. Congous here are scarce; so few have come down and they come down so slowly and are still bringing good prices, better prices a great deal than could be had in London for them. By the Chamber of Commerce's statement the export is less by about 1,500,000 pounds; last month it showed a decrease of about 3,000,000. However, estimates differ out here, some people make two or three millions difference one way or the other.

I am afraid there is not much more to be done this season, at least at Canton; and from samples I have seen of purchases at Shanghai, they seem dear and especially with exchange at 5s. 2d. People out here are expecting to get 1s. 10d. to 2s. for their fine chops this year when they get home. I am afraid it will only be a few which bring that.

I will remember what you say with regard to marking the chests in future. I thought if merely a different mark it was quite sufficient. Everything here is dull, at least as far as buying teas is concerned. About 40 chops settled during the month at, in my opinion, a

penny to twopence dearer than you can buy in England, exchange at 4s. 10d.

I have a mind to go to Shanghai. Teas seem to be coming there fast enough but exchange is fearful, 5s. 1½d. to 2½d. I had almost started for home this mail but thought better of it. However, I see no good to be done at present and am quite undecided as to what I will do; remaining in Canton is of no use for eight months to come. Every kind of tea seems to be over-exported and there is not a fancy kind you could touch with the least likelihood of a profit. What it is to come to I don't know. I don't remember anything else to say. Kind remembrances to Mrs Simpson etc.

Canton, 28 October 1852

I have yours of August with a copy of a document regarding the purchase of Glencorse.<sup>1</sup> I should think you must have got it at a bargain. I remember well of John Gilbert<sup>2</sup> being full of stories about old Child<sup>3</sup> of Glencorse, going at six in the morning with his white head and 'mucking' the byres and so on. £20,000 I think and am almost sure was what John always said it cost him; if so, and improved as I hear he (Mr Child) improved it by draining and so on, it must indeed be cheap at £13,500.

I had very nearly been off this mail to see it. Indeed I did not make up my mind until only a few hours ago, and now I almost wish I had gone by this mail. I might have been home in the beginning of '53 and have either stayed four months and been out again in time for the next tea season or stayed at home altogether. There is nothing to be done here in tea at present and most likely I will either go to Shanghai or take a run home. At all events, I am determined to be off after I buy your next new season's cargo, if not before that. I

<sup>1</sup> Glencorse: an estate near Penicuik. The estate included a mansion, a cottage, two farm cottages and a farm. A. M. never lived in it but rented out the different parts, receiving a total of about £546 a year in rent. AMA, State of Accounts between the late A. M. of Glencorse and Messrs A. M. & Co., 20-27; John Small, *The Castles and Mansions of the Lothians* (2 vols. Edinburgh, 1883), i, alphabetical listing.

<sup>2</sup> John Gilbert: listed as resident in Hong Kong until 1849. CR, xviii (1848), 5, and xix (1850), 5.

<sup>3</sup> William Child: china and cut-glass warehouse, Edinburgh, resident at Glencorse Cottage, Glencorse; dealt in china ware manufactured by Messrs Rose & Co., Coalport. A. S. Craig to A. M., 16 Sept. 1853, AMA.

am quite undecided at present. I have written Sam and also Davie in answer to his letter, which if all his own composition and ideas is really very good and promises well for him to succeed in anything, be it lawyer or anything else.

I have little news to give you. The only thing interesting here was an attack by pirates made on a boat at the Bogue in which were four young men of our community who had gone down there shooting. They were boarded by thirty pirates when at anchor and at dinner. Mr Dent, a young Mr Anderson from Edinburgh, McGregor a Glasgow man, and a Mr Oakley were of the party.<sup>1</sup> As soon as the cry of pirates was raised, young Anderson seized a gun and looked out, saw a pirate lighting a fire pot to throw at them and shot him dead on the spot. The row then commenced; fire pots were thrown in numbers, spears and so on. But the four foreigners stood firm with their double barrels and shot coolly the most conspicuous in the row. The pirates were not to be intimidated; they stood firm throwing their spears and making rushes forward until no less than eight of them were shot dead and lastly their leader, when they went away swearing they would soon be back again. The four had a lucky escape. I sometimes used to go to the same place to shoot or take change of air, but I always came up to Whampoa and anchored among the ships for the night.

Hong Kong, 27 November 1852

I have yours of September and am glad to see that you are all so well. After last mail left I went to Macao and stayed a week and then came over here and have been here since. I am living at Murrow's house here; and as there are four of us living together, it is a nice change from Canton and more lively. I had half a mind to go up to Shanghai or to go home altogether; and had I not had about £20,000 of your bank bills not invested, I think it is most probable I would have gone. But I thought if exchange came down or better times came round, I might be sorry for leaving; yet I

<sup>1</sup> Dent: not identified; G. Anderson, R. McGregor and Horace Oakley. The incident took place off Tiger Island at the Bogue, the mouth of the Pearl River. *CR*, xx (1851), 3-8; *China Mail*, 21 Oct. 1852; Morse, *International Relations*, i, map of the Canton river, facing 144.

think I would have done just as well to have gone, as people have got into their heads a notion that there is going to be a short crop of tea this year and the price keeps up in consequence. Besides exchange keeps up to 4s. 10d. so that I am afraid nothing more can be done this season.

There may be some truth in the report of a short crop. I know that Jardines firmly believe in it. Mr Edger told me so the other day and it was Jardine himself who told him, confidentially. The Chamber's of Commerce list of export has just arrived. I see they make the export this year five million less than last year up to this time; that should make tea a little firmer with you. But if the *Magellan's* cargo is all sold before news of a falling off in the export reaches home, it won't do us any good; and I should think it is sure to be so before this mail arrives. However, it is to be hoped the rumour of a short crop some months ago has made importers firm and that you have disposed of the cargo at a profit. They are cheap in comparison to anything you could purchase now.

A fortune might have been made easily in shipping rice to California a few months ago. The price of rice there has risen to fifty cents a pound (!!) and is bought here at about two to three cents, about forty-six cents profit on three. Murrow had shipped 3,000 piculs of it in the *M. McIntyre*, say 399,000 pounds weight; that at forty cents profit per pound would have given him \$159,000 profit or in pounds sterling at 5s. a dollar, £40,000 (nearly). But lo and behold, just as he thought it was within his reach, the ship came back again to Hong Kong after being months out and everybody expecting to hear of her arrival at California. It was a hard blow for him, poor chap, however, he has still about two thousand piculs on the way which may turn up trumps, but whether all his own or not I cannot say.

I saw Mr Cameron's letter to Davie. I am glad Davie seems to please him so much. Kind remembrance to all.

William to Mr Simpson

Hong Kong, 28 November 1852

I have yours of September. I have done nothing since last mail. Teas keep up and so does exchange. The *Magellan's* cargo would

sell now at a good profit in Canton, so it may be as well to let well alone if that should turn out well. I notice what you say about trying to recover on [chop] no. 4 half chests Congou. I will do what I can but you should have sent out 'certificates'.

There is still a belief that the crop this year will be short and it would look like it. According to the Chamber of Commerce export list, the export is about 5,000,000 pounds less, say 34,924,000 against 39,797,000 last year. A steamer may be down before the mail goes, from Shanghai, and she may bring late shipments from Shanghai which would perhaps swell up this year's export to nearly last year's; but that would not be a fair comparison as it would take in later shipments from Shanghai than last year's export at this time did. Take the shipments up to date from Canton and those from Shanghai up to same date as were taken last year at this time, and no doubt a great falling off would appear; however, it may all be made up before the end of the season but I do not think it is likely. The number of chops arrived at Canton is 170 less than last year; more may be going to Shanghai in consequence, but it appears they are short there at present too.

I suppose the *Magellan's* are all off by this time, so that it will make but little difference to us whether there is a short export or not. If there is a short crop sent from this, this season, and teas rise at home, it may send up the price here next year; and most likely next year we will have a large crop and export too.

I hear a schooner has just come in from Shanghai, not the steamer expected; however, we may have tolerably late dates being a fair monsoon down and I will wait to hear what news she brings before I write any more.

29th [November]:

The steamer came in last night from Shanghai. Only 30 chops of Congou remain there unsold, 'chiefly of inferior quality and held at high rates, say Tls 10½ for lowest to Tls 12½ for good ordinary Sin Chune . . .<sup>1</sup> How kinds'. Three or four chops remain, a third class Moning for which Tls 14 to 15 is wanted; exchange high, 'clean credit 5s. 1½d. - credit with documents 5s. 2d - freight £3 5s.'; not much to be done up there at present I think. This goes to the post office immediately.

<sup>1</sup> The third word of this name torn from the paper.

Messrs J. R. & Company's letter I posted yesterday. It is not worth writing them another to give them the Shanghai news as you can do so if you are writing to them. The post office is only open from 9 to 10 today, steamer goes at 2.

P.S. The steamer brings news of about six more cargoes having left Shanghai but then she brings advices up to the 22 November which is later than we had at this time last year.

P.P.S. 17,400,000 lbs. Shanghai export to 22 November.

Hong Kong, 27 December 1852

I have yours of October. I am sorry to see that Andrew has had so bad an attack of influenza and hope he has got all right again. I see you have got advice about the *Magellan* and am glad it seems to give you all satisfaction.

I have been down here for the last month and dined with Mr and Mrs Edger on Christmas day and have an invitation for every Sunday. Mrs Edger has proposed your health twice after dinner, always mentioning 'a very kind letter' which it appears you had sent them when I left sick. I dined with them last night again, being Sunday. They told me beforehand that a Mr Wardrope,<sup>1</sup> who came out here to superintend the shipment of coolies, I think to Cuba for the Spanish government, would dine with us. I could hear he was a Scotchman by his speaking at once, but never fancied we would know the same friends at home so intimately as it turned out we did. He asked me after dinner if I knew the Richardsons of Glasgow; he seemed to be very well acquainted with all the members of the family. He told me that he had shipped as many as nine cargoes of sugar for them in a year, from Cuba I think. So we got pretty intimate, and I promised to give him a note of introduction to you if he should go to Edinburgh. He goes home by this mail of 28 December, that is tomorrow, I hear.

Good teas are coming down to Canton yet and people are beginning to think that the short crop is all humbug. I saw musters of a good many chops, but they are dear and exchange is gone up to 5s. 1d., I hear. Murrow is down here up to the ears in business

<sup>1</sup> R. Wardrope arrived at Hong Kong in June and departed for Southampton on 28 Dec. 1852. *China Mail*, 10 June and 30 Dec.

as usual (I don't think I ever saw him idle except at meals or so). He is despatching a ship and a lot of coolies for California; I saw them all, about 160 of them ranked up.

Your old acquaintance Gilbert<sup>1</sup> goes home by this mail; they say he has done very well and made a good deal of money. I have been quite well except a slight cold I got at an amateur theatre they had here, sitting opposite an open window; but it is nearly all gone. Kindly remember me to Andrew and the rest.

William to Mr Simpson

Hong Kong, 27 December 1852

I have your letters of October and see you would have liked to have another cargo besides the *Magellan's* and more especially since a rise has taken place on your side. It might have been better to have shipped one now things look better at home, but who was to know that prices would improve. Even had we shipped one, the tea would have cost Tls 2 dearer than the *Magellan's* on an average, from the noise made about the short crop. Had I gone into the market for two cargoes at first, no doubt they would both have done well; but I question if, after the rise took place, it would have been worth our while buying one.

You say I must have been dreaming when I saw Imperial (Canton) quoted at 1s. 2d. and that it must have been 'country'. In Ewart's last it is quoted, Imperial Canton 1s. 3d., and in other circulars it is mentioned 'Canton' also. I hope they will do. Mounsey writes he thinks they will do very well.

Some good Congous, contrary to everybody's expectation, have been coming to market at Canton. I got musters down here of a good many chops, some good strong tea amongst them for which they want Tls 17½ to 18 and was just going to start up to Canton to see if any of them might be had cheaper and worthwhile shipping; but I hear today exchange is up to 5s. 1d. which, even supposing I could get the best of them at Tls 15-16 (of which no chance), would make them quite dear enough. However, I think I will go up and have a look about me, [even] should I do nothing. I have

<sup>1</sup> W. Gilbert, Canton, was listed among residents from 1848; CR, xvii (1848), 5.

some \$2-3,000 on our joint lying idle which I sold at 4s. 10d. thinking that I saw something to invest it in and that the rate would be sure to be worse when I required it; but instead of that, it came to 9½d. However, 4s. 10d. is much better than 5s. 1d.

There is no news from Shanghai since last mail left. People are beginning to think now that the short crop is going to turn out all nonsense. However, I think the export still keeps light, which is a good sign; but if we get out good accounts every mail from your side, it may soon get it big enough.

Gilbert your old friend goes home by this mail; they say he has done very well and put him down for £10,000.

Nothing new here, except that we are to have two mails a month instead of one as before. One will leave on the 28th and another on the 11th - so I will write you again by 11 January.





1853-1855



Hong Kong, 10 January 1853

A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU! We are to have two mails every month now, one to leave on the 11th and one on the 28th. Had your letters of November arrived as they might have done by this time, you would have got answers to them by this mail, which would have been quick work – getting answers to letters you sent away only three months previous. A steamer from Calcutta came in today; she brings news from England to 8 November, but no letters. I see that some of the *Surprise's* teas had sold at 2s. 1d.; that must pay well. I hope Andrew has got quite rid of his attack of influenza.

News came down from Shanghai to 3 or 4 January. It appears they have no confidence in the short crop up there. No less than seven to eight million pounds of tea, it is said, are lying at Shanghai waiting shipment to England, so that if the crop is a little short in Canton it is amply made up by the excess at Shanghai. I think I will go up to Canton tomorrow or next day. Exchange is so high I don't think anything can be done; it is up to 5s. to 5s. 1d. in Canton and 5s. 2d. at Shanghai. I took my Sunday's dinner again at Mr Edger's last night.

I think I told you in my last that Murrow had bought Jamieson Edger & Company's old house and godowns. It is a capially built place and was built when Murrow was in their house, and I suppose very likely built under his directions as Mr Edger had not come to China at the time it was commenced. It cost about \$33,000 and Murrow bought it the other day for \$3,000!! That may show you the depreciation of property in some parts of Hong Kong. Jamiesons found that they had no use for it and were obliged to pay some \$3,000 per year to government for ground rent; and being an out of the way place nobody would rent it, so they had to sell it at what it would fetch. As Murrow was in want of a house and godown, it was a capital purchase for him.

I fell the other day and hurt my wrist a little and writing I feel makes it a little sore. It is a mere trifle, but I must write Richardson and Ewart, and as I have nothing to say to Mr Simpson will delay writing him till next mail.

p.s. Kind remembrance to all of them.

Canton, 24 January 1853

I have yours of 22 November and am glad to see that Andrew is quite out of danger and that the rest of you are all well. From your letter I must have been writing to you to make a spec for me. I cannot recollect now what I wrote about it; however, if you have done so, I will have every confidence in it.

We had news out here by the mail via Calcutta bringing dates to 8 November of the new Congous fetching 1s. 10d. to 2s. 2d. and of more common kinds selling at 1s. 8d. People here were quite elated with the news and rushed into the market for more Congous, and some chops were sold at Tls 18 to 19, of much worse quality than ours in the *Magellan* at Tls 15¼. However, when the real mail of 24 November came in, the buyers at these high prices looked rather blue, finding that the advices by the 24 November mail were much duller than those by the 8th had led them to expect they would be. There is scarcely any tea left here to buy now. Of Congous only a few chops remain, say eight or nine, and very few more expected to arrive. But I believe at Shanghai they have still a good many and that there is not likely to be much shortness in the supply.

The prospects for the *Magellan* at present look bright, but there is many a slip between the cup and the lip. You will know by this time how her cargo has turned out I dare say. I think it will leave a pretty good profit but not so much as many people here are calculating their profits to be on this season's Congou. A large quantity will arrive about the same time as the *Magellan's* and many good chops amongst it, which will make prices more moderate.

There is scarcely anything to buy here now. The market is nearly bare of every kind except Canton teas. You see I am up to the old house in Canton again. I dine at Dr Kenny's every day. I got your last letter when at their house and read aloud to them what you said about being glad to see the Canton doctor and I were on such good

terms, and Mrs Kenny said it was very kind of you. She is a nice kind body and quite a lady. I sent Mrs Edger two half chests of tea the other day, one Oolong the other Flowery Pekoe, and got a note from her of thanks saying it was delicious; and Murrow's partner at Hong Kong I sent a chest of Souchong to and three casks of beer as I had been staying with him for a long time at Hong Kong. There is no news here which could interest you. I got a painting done from your daguerrotype portrait but it is not first rate; the one you sent is very good and much admired. Kind remembrances to all.

William to Mr Simpson

Canton, 26 January 1853

I have yours of November, and am glad to see that you think there is a good prospect of the *Magellan's* cargo paying. I hope the price of tea will keep up until she gets in and I dare say the news going home about a short crop will help to keep the price up. The mail you would receive in January would take news to you of a 5,000,000 pounds decrease which, if she does not arrive much before then, might help them off. I don't think she will get in before the middle of January as I see she made rather a long passage to Anjer.

You do not give me the London valuations. You say your own are always nearer the mark than they. However, I would like to get the London ones if it were for no more than to know what such teas were selling at in London. You mention valuations by G. S.; I suppose you mean your son George but I cannot tell. You say G. S. values no. 500, 1s. 8d. to 10d.; [no.] 1, 1s. 6d. to 8d. etc. I suppose you mean no. 500 for no. 2 which is 500 chests. If that is the case, it is made better tea than no. 1 by 2d.; and I should rather think it should be quite the reverse and no. 1 be 2d. better than it. No I see I am making a mistake; on looking to your letter again, I see no. 2 is valued amongst the rest at 1s. 10d., so I suppose it cannot be the no. 500. So what it is I cannot divine. I only hope you may get these valuations for them. I see no. 4, too, valued at 1s. 8d. to 10d. It is good flavoured tea but I fear won't bring anything like that.

As for your own valuations, all I have got from you is to say that you had got samples of the *Chrysolite's* teas, 'which sold at 1s. 10½d. and after at 1s. 11½d. I made two better and sent my ideas to J. R.

One chop, 1s. 10d.; two, 1d. to 2d. less; two, 1d. to 2d. less again; two, 1d. to 2d. less again; and seven, 1s. 2d., tallying much with the London valuations'. So says your letter but what value of the different chops to arrive at from: two, 1d. to 2d. less, and two, 1d. to 2d. less again, and so on, I cannot tell, so that I have no valuations at all. You make no. 2 a fine tea, I should think from your letter, as you say you made it better than the *Chrysolite's*. It is a nice tea but not at all equal to any of the *Chrysolite's*. I mean her fine Congous not the other kind she took; but it must be the fine ones you mean, as you say they were sold at 1s. 10½d. to 11½d. . . .<sup>1</sup>

I have taken it into my head, seeing there was no tea to be had, to buy some fine Scented Orange Pekoe in boxes. I had about \$2,000 of your bills sold at 4s. 10½d. and not invested, so had better send it in that kind or there will be nothing else to be had until next season. However, I may send you a little more than the \$2,000 amount. Considering much less Scented Orange Pekoe has gone this year than last and that all other teas seem much dearer both here and with you, I think they will most likely take a rise – I mean good and fine. Say lay them down about 1s. 3d. to 1s. 4d. in boxes, they will rise here as no flower can be had now for a month or two and most of the leaf will be made into Congou, there being a scarcity of it. The Chinamen seem to think this as many of them are keeping back their chops and won't put them on the market, thinking that from their scarcity by and by a higher price will be obtained. I will most likely send you some particulars of shipments by the 11th February mail.

Exchange is 5s.; freight, £3. Most likely exchange will come down a little after New Year, that is 8 February with the Chinese. There is nothing to buy here so I cannot see what is to keep up the rate, unless they keep it up at Shanghai. I may ship and take credit for a month or two until the rate falls.

Canton, 9 February 1853

I wrote you by the 28 January mail and have little to say this time. The Calcutta steamer came in here a few days ago with news from England to 8 December, and I see it is proposed to take 4½d. off the

<sup>1</sup> Substance of passage on tea prices omitted here is discussed above, p. 228.

duty the first year and 2d. every following one until it comes to 1s. I am in hopes that it will give our common Gunpowders in the *Challenge* etc. a lift; if it raises them even 1d., it will be a great deal on an Tls 11 tea. There is a good prospect for the *Magellan* this year.

You will see I have been buying some Orange Pekoes. There will be nothing else to be done in tea soon after this till next season, as nearly every kind is bought up; and I thought it better to take our chance of a little, as the crop may turn out short, and the duty coming off may keep your market brisker. It is a good thing we got one cargo at least this year, and I had my doubts of even sending it when I saw Thompson's valuations of far better tea than I could buy at the money valued at 1s.

I think I will take a run down to Hong Kong tomorrow or next day, am anxious to get my next letter and see what effect the duty coming off is to have. Will write again on the 28th from Hong Kong.

William to Mr Simpson

Canton, 9 February 1853

I am out of post paper and am obliged to use this half sheet of foolscap; however, it matters little as I have very little to write this opportunity, having answered your 24 November letters by the mail which left here the 28th January.

I have given a bill on you for £50 in favour Dr Kenny; please pay and put the same to the debit of our 'joint account'.

The Calcutta mail arrived some days ago bringing advices from England to 8 December, twelve days later than your last letter. It brought news of a rise in teas in consequence of a proposed reduction in the duty of 4½d. and 2d. every year after until it reached 1s. It did not make much excitement here in the market at first; but I hear there has been a good deal done since, and the price of nearly all the few kinds left a tael to two dearer. The 1,000 boxes Orange Pekoe which you will see among the purchases I bought as soon as I heard the news. I was after it before at Tls 14 but could not get it. All the other chops were bought before the news arrived. Perhaps you may think them rather dear as things go, but I think they must be safe

enough. I do not think so much has gone this year as last, and by the time they get home they should be dearer.

There is nothing else I could see in the market worth buying. In fact it is bare of every kind except Canton tea, and it will be sure to go up after the New Year, so that I made up my mind to keep the funds over until next season or buy what I have done. And I think it just as well to take the chance as there may be a short export and what with the duty coming off and an increasing consumption you will most likely have a brisker market than at present.

I sold at 4s. 11d. I thought better to do that than hold. It has gone up to 5s. 5d. at Shanghai and this news from England may send it higher. However, the rate here in Canton has not been much ruled this month by the Shanghai. Canton drafts (drafts on Canton) at Shanghai have been selling there at 14 to 15% premium. Some people think it will come down after New Year, and some are positive that it will go up; so 4s. 11d. being very little worse than the rate all the year through, it was better to take it and be done with it.

I will ship as soon as a ship is laid on. Expecting the mail of 24 December every day now. I hope the duty coming off would give our Gunpowders a lift.

William to Mr Simpson

Canton, 22 February 1853

I have yours of December. I am glad you have such good prospects for the *Magellan* and am sorry that you are so much disappointed with the Gunpowders. You mentioned that in event of my making a bad shipment again you must just put it to my own account; as such would be unfair, of course I cannot agree to it. The profits and losses of our joint account must be fairly divided and the purchases left to me here. My interest in them must always be a guarantee that I think them cheap; and as each has an equal share, one has just as good a right as the other to give instructions so that neither have a right to give instructions. All that can be done is to depend on the interest each has to make him do his best. I might as well give you instructions to hold or sell, but I suppose you would consider you had a right to do as you please. That is the understand-

ing on which I have always invested the funds on our joint account and the only understanding on which I can invest them for the future. But should such be contrary to your views, nothing would be easier than to give me instructions regarding your own half and leave me to do with the other as I pleased. Divide the amount you send in two, one for you and one for me; give me orders about your portion and I will obey any instructions in Canton you may send. But if the funds are to be on joint account, then the purchases must be left to me. Nothing can be fairer than that. You can either take a half share of what I must consider good value or get whatever you please to order bought for your own share.

You say you gave me instructions to buy fine Congou with the £5,000 on joint account. Even allowing that instructions were consistent with the joint account, which is impossible, I cannot find any instructions to invest in fine Congou. Your letter accompanying the credits 19 April 1852 says, you did not expect the credits would be ready in time, which made you close your letter containing them rather abruptly, in which 'We mentioned that if we had been aware that the buyers of [chop] no. 4 *Juliet* were to refuse the tea, we would not have sent this sum. We confess we were surprised when they announced the sale at the price, and we fear we may not get out at cost, seeing there is sixteen million, etc. . . .' Now you must allow telling me you were surprised at so high a price, as 1s. 5d. for first class Congou in half chests was no great encouragement to buy fine. You say in the same afterwards that you think fine tea will be scarce and advise no shipment of common. At the same time you say if they (new Congou) open at Tls 20 to 22, there cannot be much loss providing exchange is 4s. 4d. to 4s. 6d. Now you know no fine Congous were to be had at Tls 20 to 22 at 4s. 4d. to 4s. 6d.

You seem much disappointed at not having another cargo, and so I am too now; as for the injunctions you say you have dinned in my ears in your every letter and especially in one of July, I can find nothing but injunctions to buy providing first class was to be had at a certain limit, at which it was not obtainable, so that your injunctions, loud and oft repeated as they may have been, could not be followed. And it would appear that when you were aware of how things had gone here, you quite agreed in what had been done - as

much as to say you would have done the same yourself. In your September letter you say, 'These fine chops at Tls 24 and 26 may pay the importer, but we would not like to run the risk of losing 6d. per pound for the chance of a penny'. Now of course we see we were both wrong. But how often have you told me never to buy at a high exchange, so I may have bought nothing this season according to that. So we may be thankful, taking all things into consideration, that we had one cargo likely to do.

Canton, 23 February 1853

I have yours of December and am glad to see that you are all well and that Andrew was quite recovered. I see Helen has added another nephew<sup>1</sup> to my responsibilities and I hope she and the child are well. I wrote you by the 11th from Hong Kong and have little to say by this mail. I see the ministers have had to resign.<sup>2</sup> I had hoped that the news of the reduction would have made our Gunpowders something higher but it seems to have had no effect on them. Good and fine Congous seem to be most benefited by it.

8 o'clock :

I have just come back from dinner at Dr Kenny's, and I intend starting for Hong Kong tonight in one of the steamers as there is nothing to do here. The wind has set in from the north again and it is quite cold; my fingers now I write are quite benumbed. We have had a cold winter; sometimes the thermometer has been down to nearly freezing. Very cold for the thin blooded people here but I like it. I took a cold shower bath in the very coldest mornings; sometimes I thought it did me no good, I felt a little chilled afterwards, but generally I felt it did well with me, having a fine glow of warmth all over me as soon as I put on my clothes.

These are strange times what with the rebels here and the duty coming off at home; there is no saying what may take place. There seems little doubt now but the rebels or patriots are a formidable

<sup>1</sup> Robert Alexander Craig, 25 Nov. 1852-20 Mar. 1920. Register of Births, St Chad, Shrewsbury, 1852; Downer Family Record.

<sup>2</sup> The ministers under Edward Stanley, Earl of Derby, and Disraeli formed a minority government in Feb. 1852; widely known by the nickname, the 'Who? Who? Cabinet', it was brought down in Nov. of the same year.



body,<sup>1</sup> and Chinamen who laughed at them as fools before now appear to think they are very dangerous. I suppose you know that many years ago the Chinese were conquered by the Tartars; and the very tail they wear, and of which now they are so tenacious, is a badge of victory on the part of the Tartars and a mark of degradation to the Chinamen, the Tartars having insisted on their wearing a tail and shaving their heads after their conquest. Since then their rulers have been Tartars. Now they are trying to upset the Tartar rule and put a real Chinaman on the throne, and they are gaining ground. Seu, the governor of Canton, who went to fight them with the imperial forces has been taken and put to death;<sup>2</sup> and from all accounts the Emperor is doing all he can and raising money in every way possible to conquer them. It is reported that he is going to admit opium at a duty to raise money; besides, they say Howqua<sup>3</sup> has a copy of an imperial chop or order making it illegal to send any teas to Shanghai for the future and all to go to Canton. This is to get the duties properly paid, there being a great deal of smuggling at Shanghai and little at Canton. But in a place like this, where newspapers are not quite so authentic as *The Times*, we can place not much reliance on such reports! But no doubt, from all accounts the rebels are making great progress and many think will interfere with the tea crop for next year. There has been a good deal said this year about a short crop, laid to the account of the rebels, and a good many believe in it, yet: 'can see can sabez' as the Chinamen say.

Hoping this finds you all well, and wishing myself a pleasant passage.

<sup>1</sup> Rebels: the Taiping Rebellion, below, p. 238, n. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Seu (modern transliteration, Hsu, Kuang-chin) c. 1785-1858, Imperial Commissioner and Governor-General of Kuangtung and Kuangsi provinces, 1848-52, a learned and well-trusted official. In the winter of 1851-52 Hsu was in another part of Kuangtung suppressing the rebellion but, instead of being captured, he captured two of the rebel leaders. In Sept. 1852 he was appointed Governor-General of Hupek and Hunan provinces. *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period, 1644-1912*, ed. A. W. Hummel, (2 vols. Washington, D.C., 1943), i, 320; Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy*, 276-7; Costin, *Great Britain and China, 151-2, 157*.

<sup>3</sup> Howqua, the official name, used by foreigners in China, of the descendant of probably the most famous among the hong-merchants before 1842. The Chinese, Wu Ch'ung-yueh who should be designated Howqua IV, was in 1853 no longer a merchant but an official. Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy*, esp. 249-50.

William to Mr Simpson

Canton, 23 February 1853

I wrote you yesterday and have little to say in addition. I am a little afraid this new ministry<sup>1</sup> will not take off the duty but make out some new budget of their own. The *Magellan* I suppose will be sold off before the budget comes out, at least I think it will be wise to do so. There is no ship to be had here. The *Anna* is an old vessel. The *Scotland* was put on the berth and in an hour or two fully engaged. I hope some good American vessel will be put on soon and let me get shipped off those Orange Pekoes. How they may do, I cannot say, but think taking all things into account that the prospects for them are good.

What this rebellion in China may do in a year or so nobody knows, no doubt now it is getting very serious. Seu, the governor of Canton, has been taken by the rebels and put to a lingering death. The city of the district of Woopack where the fine Congous come from has been taken, and the Chinamen say the place is in such a commotion that no teas will be had from there this next season. But I suppose there are plenty other quarters they can come from.

I have got \$350 for damage on [chop] no. 4 *Magellan* and I had hard work to get it without certificates, and could not have forced payment. It was purchased from a different man last time than the time before; and he would not believe that it could be damaged as, hearing it had been out of condition on arrival the time before, he had paid particular attention to it. I have carried the same \$350 to credit of account joint A. M. & Co., J. R. & Co. and W. M.; so do not put it to debit of my private account this time as I will account for it in the J. R. & Co. joint account and either remit it in tea or a bill. I sent musters of the Orange Pekoe to Wiltshire Public Tea Taster to compare with sales he had. Out [of] all but the Tls 15 one, he wrote back, 1s. 6d. to 8d. should be the value according to his sales, and charactered them 'nice scented and well bought teas'. I wish I could get ship room. However, they cannot make any more until about June; so the longer they are here, they will be getting scarcer at home.

<sup>1</sup> The new ministry was that of Lord Aberdeen, a coalition of Whigs and Peelites.

Hong Kong, 11 March 1853

I wrote you on the 23rd from Canton and have nothing to add to it but that I started down here for a trip and have been here since. The only news is about some pirates which were taken yesterday by our man-of-war steamer the *Hermes*. She captured five junks and brought home about seventy people. I went off to see the junks yesterday. They were not made like those large trading junks but were narrower and better built for sailing altogether. I saw lots of shot holes in them; they appear to have been well peppered. They made an attempt some days ago to attack the *Nymph* coming from Shanghai with \$200,000 but she sailed too quickly for them; as soon as she came to Hong Kong, she reported what she had seen of the pirates and immediately a steamer was sent out after them. One of the officers of the steamer dined at Murrow's yesterday and he said the pirates fought well; and although not a life was lost amongst the steamer's men, that it was owing to good luck as a good many of the pirates' shots came near them and struck them in the bow and in the paddle box. One junk would not give up but fought it out to the last although asked to give up the fight, so they had to sink her.

I am waiting anxiously for next mail, it will bring news to 24 January. I hope to hear of the *Magellan's* arrival. Next season I am afraid will be a ticklish one, people are quite prepared to see Congous go at Tls 35. I hope this will find all well. Kind remembrances to Andrew and all the rest.

Canton, 26 March 1853

I have yours of January and am glad to see that you are all well. I was just asked a few hours ago by a Mr Scot<sup>1</sup> (a Scotsman) if I had bought Glencorse; I told him you had. He said he had heard it was bought by Mr Melrose who had made money in Hong Kong. What a pity the *Magellan* is not in. I am afraid teas will come down before her cargo is sold. I came up from Hong Kong yesterday in the steamer. I feel tonight I am catching a cold, it has turned quite warm with a cool wind blowing.

<sup>1</sup> Scot; not identified.

We have had some stirring news from Shanghai. It is said that the Chinese authorities have sent to the English government for succour; at all events Bonham<sup>1</sup> with three war steamers has gone to the north (Shanghai). The rebels it appears have got to Nanking and were most likely to take it very soon.<sup>2</sup> I believe Nanking is a stronghold of the Empire and if once they get it, they may at once go to Peking. Business is quite stopped at Shanghai, opium and other things unsaleable and not a dollar to be had, people making all their money into gold and ready to run; when or where it will end nobody knows. I saw a passenger from Shanghai per steamer *Ganges* which left only a few days ago and came down in sixty hours! He thinks the rebels will go to Peking and that there will be a change of dynasty.

There has been a rumpus in Canton too: the French wanted to put up a flagstaff in the garden, and the community here resisted it, saying they had no business to have a flag in the garden at all. After some bother, about fifty French 'jacks' were sent up from the French frigate at Whampoa and [they] dug a hole and put up the flag in spite of them.<sup>3</sup> Hoping you are all well.

William to Mr Simpson

Canton, 26 March 1853

I have yours of January and am disappointed at the *Magellan* not having arrived. I see [chop] no. 2 Congou (part in the *Invincible*) is valued at 1s. 4d. to 5d., not quite 1s. 10d. as you seemed to think at

<sup>1</sup> Sir Samuel George Bonham, 1803-62; Governor (of Hong Kong), Commander-in-chief, Vice-Admiral, Plenipotentiary, and Chief Superintendent of Trade, 1848-54; father, a captain of an East Indiaman. Bonham had been resident councillor of Singapore, 1830, and governor of the Incorporated Settlements of Prince of Wales Island, Singapore and Malacca, 1837. Studied Chinese language and customs; a man known to Palmerston for his 'practical common sense'. His policy toward China has been characterized as 'practical, cautious and devoted to the interests of British trade'. *CR*, xx (1851), 11; Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy*, 276-7; Costin, *Great Britain and China*, 134.

<sup>2</sup> The Taiping rebels occupied Nanking on 19 Mar. 1853. Bonham, having reached Shanghai on 21 Mar., decided on a policy of neutrality in the conflict. One result of his visit was to have laid a basis for co-operation between the British and the American communities in Shanghai that was eventually to develop into the International Settlement. Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy*, 402-3.

<sup>3</sup> After the flagstaff was installed, its rigging was cut on several occasions. For protection the French stationed sentries at the post. One evening two Britishers, while

one time; however, even at that it pays well. I am just afraid good Congous will be down before the *Magellan* arrives as so many of them must be pouring in. As for the short crop, it is all fudge. The export is larger than last year at present and bids fair to be larger at the end of the season also. I see you have got rid of some of the Gunpowders at 10d. which is very low for clean tea; however, it leaves a little profit. . . .<sup>1</sup>

All business is stopped at Shanghai; no sales can be made of anything and not a dollar can be obtained, exchange some say 5s. 3d. and some 6s. In Canton it has risen since the news came down to 4s. 11d. to 5s., Company's paper risen 6 rupees per \$100.

The *Flora McDonald* sailed yesterday with our teas. Many people think the tea operations will be interfered with by the rebels and few teas come down next year. But that does not come well after the noise about a short crop this year turning out all stuff. What a pity the *Magellan* keeps out. I hope to hear of her by the next mail, expected now every day with news to 8 February.

ps. Of course you have insured *Flora McDonald's* teas.

Canton, 9 April 1853<sup>2</sup>

I expected to hear from you by the 8th February mail from England and which arrived here on 11th instant, but I suppose you had not heard anything about it or surely you would have written to let me know that the *Magellan* had arrived. I was in doubt whether she had arrived or not. There was no news of her in any of the circulars; however, I happened to see her name amongst the arrivals in the *Straits Times*. I knew Jardine's tea taster would know, so I asked if the *Foam* had gone round to Glasgow and if the *Magellan* had arrived. He told me the *Magellan* was in and her teas advertised for sale on the 18th. I hope the sale will take place before the budget comes out as I have not much faith now in the duty coming off.

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walking in the Garden, were seized by the French marines and taken off to a man-of-war 14 miles from Canton. Their release was secured only after considerable protest from Harry Parkes, then British acting-consul at Canton. Stanley Lane-Poole, *Sir Harry Parkes in China* (London, 1901), 118-21.

<sup>1</sup> Passage omitted here is discussed above, p. 238.

<sup>2</sup> The date for this as for the following letter should be 19 Apr.; see first sentence.

I wrote you in my last that I felt I was catching a bad cold. I was right. I caught a tartar. It is just going away now but for the last fourteen days I have been stupid with it. A good thing I had no tea to taste as I could not have told tea from tobacco. I hope this will find you all well.

PS. If no duty comes off tea, we will have very low prices. Your stock at home is bigger than ever it was, and our export from here will be bigger than ever it has been, so they say. It is 62,300,000 already and many ships to go yet. High prices will be given here for good tea and will bring low ones at home. It will be a difficult season to manage – Tls 34 and 35 are now talked of for fine Congou coming.

William to Mr Simpson

Canton, 9 April 1853

I have nothing from you by the 8th of February mail from England which arrived here on 11th instant. I can only suppose that you did not know a mail was going or you certainly would have advised me about the *Magellan*. I must have patience until the 24th of February comes in, still I cannot help being anxious to hear how her teas are valued as I have nothing about them that I can rely on. [Chop] no. 2 by her, according to one of your letters, was worth 1s. 10d., and by your last I see Ewart only values it at 1s. 4d. to 5d.; and of the others, of course, I have not the least idea what they are worth and would like to see at any time the London valuations. This time I have no valuations at all, at least none that I can understand; however, a few days more will enlighten me.

Exchange, 5s.  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. to 1d. Nothing doing at Shanghai. The export is now four or five million above last year's in spite of the short crop. If no duty comes off, what with your heavy stock at home and a 70,000,000 pound export, I can see nothing but low prices to come.

William to Andrew Melrose and Company

Penang, 4 May 1853

I have come down to this place from China by the mail steamer and am on my way home, as I think a change may do me a little good; and I think next season will be a speculative and dangerous

one, when we take into consideration that high prices must rule here, that the export instead of being short is the largest ever known and your stock in London also the largest yet known, and that at the opening of the season high advices will be received from our side and that the Canton merchants are very speculative. I cannot see how any good can be done in the beginning of the season at least, so can do little harm and may do much good by being away for a few months. I will write you more fully privately from Ceylon or some of the other places I touch at, as I can post a letter at any of them. I have booked my passage to Alexandria.

I have sent the unsold bills to Messrs J. R. & Co. I posted them at Singapore via Southampton and I have written them from here via Marseilles. I sold [bill no.] 41/14 Commercial £500 on my own account, so put that to my debit, as it belonged to account joint J. R. & Co. I have also recovered \$350 at 4s. 11d., £86 os. 10d., for damage on [chop] no. 4 *Auguste and Bertha*. I have kept it, so put it to my debit too; that will have to be divided amongst the three of us, as the account of *Auguste and Bertha* is wound up. You will have a third to put to my credit as my share. Will write you from Ceylon, as I can post the letter anywhere along the line, just as well as I could do in Hong Kong. I merely write this in case anything might happen to prevent me sending you a letter from some of the other places (in case I forget, or miss the post). I am well and enjoying the voyage.

Bill no. 41/14 Commercial £500 I told you before I have sold.

William to Andrew Melrose and Company

Alexandria, 11 June 1853

I wrote you from Penang that I was on my way home. We arrived at this place today and I have taken my passage per the Austrian Lloyd's<sup>1</sup> to Trieste, intending to do the rest of the journey

<sup>1</sup> The Austrian Lloyd Steam Navigation Co. started in 1848 a regular service between Alexandria and Trieste to correspond with the monthly P. & O. steamer from Galle, Ceylon. The five to six day journey was made by a steamer of 600 to 700 tons and 260 horse-power, 'fitted up in superior style and English is spoken on board'. Each steamer provided '38 First Class berths, including 16 for ladies; 20 Second Class berths, including 7 for females'! Fares were £18 first class and £12 second, including 'table money and steward's fees'. *China Mail*, 21 Dec. 1848.

by that route. We are behind time and I have scarcely a moment to write, have not even had time to wash. This is merely to tell you I have drawn on you for £20 in favour of Mr Partridge,<sup>1</sup> a fellow passenger who was good enough to lend me it – be kind enough to honour it. He is a partner of Oake, Partridge & Co., Austin Friars, London. Excuse haste.

Corfu (near Trieste), 14 June 1853  
on board *Calcutta*

I wrote you (the Firm) from Penang and posted it to go via Marseilles, but very likely you may get this first. You will be surprised to hear that I am so near home, and by the time you get this I will be much nearer than I am now. You will see by the place I date this from that I have taken it into my head to go via the Trieste route this time. In my letter via Marseilles I have told you why I made up my mind to start off. In case you get this first, I may say it was just because I thought a run home would do me good after being five summers in Canton, and that I thought it a good time to take a trip, as next year will be a speculative one and one of high prices and very likely a losing one.

The last advices from Shanghai brought down news of the rebels having taken Nanking and Chekiangfoo and of business being entirely stopped at Shanghai. The export of tea, according to last computation, will be greater a good deal than up to same time last year; but now as they have taken off the duty, that will help it off at home. Perhaps now that the duty is taken off, you may think I should have remained in China; but I am afraid there will be a greater rise in China in consequence of the duty coming off than there will be at home. I sent home all the bills unsold addressed to J. R. & Co. and also wrote them via Marseilles.

I was rather short of money; but to the credit of my fellow passengers, be it spoken, no less than about a dozen offered to lend me as much as they could spare. So I got £20 from a Mr Partridge and I have given him a bill on you (A. M. & Co.) for it; so do not forget to honour it when presented. It is made payable in London, by the by. I also borrowed £8 from a Mr Griffiths<sup>2</sup> and £15 from

<sup>1</sup> Partridge: not identified.

<sup>2</sup> Griffiths: not identified.



a Mr Gittins<sup>1</sup> (an old China friend who came all the way with me). I won't require so much as all that but I thought it better to be well provided going by the continent; and what I don't use I can easily take home with me. I have given orders on Ewart & Co. for the £8 and the £15 so you have nothing to do with them, it is only the one for £20 in favour of Mr Partridge you have to do with. I drew a bill for £500 . . . before I left, but all about that I have written via Marseilles. I don't think I need write any more now, we will be at Trieste the day after tomorrow. The mail for England starts as soon as we reach Trieste and I have written this to be ready to send by it. I will write you again from some place on the continent, perhaps Trieste or Venice.

The news of Nanking being taken may raise the price of tea. This conveyance will be home I think before the Marseilles one. If you get the news first, you may make something of it; but I am afraid there is no chance of that as it will be telegraphed long before this reaches. I have got intimate with a good many of the passengers, especially with some Dutch gentlemen from Java, very respectable people. One of them has been 26 years in Java and was Superintendent of Trade there for which he had £10,100 or Rs 40,000 per annum, but he has gone home by Southampton. However, a friend of his, a Mr Hope Loudon,<sup>2</sup> and a young Baron go with us by Trieste. Mr Hope Loudon is the son of a Scotchman and speaks English like an Englishman or a Scotchman; he has a son at school near Portobello and says he will be in Edinburgh soon. He has been several times the continental route and knows all about it. He has asked me to go with him this time and I should like to go; but I am afraid I won't be able as he knows a good many people in Vienna and will stay there for some weeks, which would not answer my purpose. However, many English on board here tell me it would be a capital opportunity to see Vienna and advise me to stay, especially as little is to be seen there, they say, unless you can get introduced by a person known there. Perhaps it might be a pity to lose a good opportunity.

All the rest of the passengers go by a different route and do not go near Vienna. They go by the Lakes and the country. So if I go

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Gittens had been in China from 1847. CR (1848 through 1851).

<sup>2</sup> Hope Loudon: not identified.

with Mr Loudon, I leave all the rest of the passengers and would have either to stay in Vienna with him for three weeks or go home alone; and as I cannot speak French, I would rather be with someone who can. But it would not matter much either as I could easily find my way, that route being all from town to town where I could easily make myself understood, English waiters being at all the hotels. You must understand the Vienna route is the town route and the route all the passengers go is the country one; the town route anybody can go, as plenty speak English. I will see.

ps. I write you in a day or two what route I will take.

Milan, 21 June 1853

You see that I have decided on taking the route by the lakes and that I am as far on my journey as Milan. The last time I wrote we were just going into Trieste. We remained a day there; it seems a busy business place, with a great deal of shipping and a pretty town besides. We started for Venice next morning and arrived there in about six hours. You must take a trip some day and see it, beautiful buildings, palaces of the Venetian nobles in times gone by, and all built on the water or rather on piles of wood. The street is a canal and you go from one house to another in the gondola. Some splendid paintings and churches to be seen. I saw four pillars taken from the Temple of Solomon; I saw them in the Church of St Mark, where he lies buried, and I saw the altar piece of the Stones of Jasper and different precious stones. I have not time now to write any more as my two companions are going out to see anything to be seen.

I could not go by Vienna, not being able to speak French it would have been dangerous, so I made up my mind to go with two friends this route. We cross the Alps and I do not suppose we will be home before the end of June. I should like to be home sooner, but there is no help for it; and perhaps it is just as well as it is, as I will see a great deal of the country. In haste.

ps. We will be some days of getting to Basel in Switzerland. You might address me a letter there at the post office to lie till called for just to let me know what has been done. You will require to look very sharp for me to get it, as the post is slow. You had better

address it so that it may be returned if not in time to catch me. At all events write me to London; I don't think I will be there before the 30th of June.

Lucerne, 25 June 1853

Like Hannibal and Napoleon I have just crossed the Alps, only I have done it much quicker. My last to you was from Milan. We left Milan next morning at five by diligence and arrived at a small place, Calende,<sup>1</sup> at one end of Lake Maggiore about 11 o'clock, got into a small steamer there and steamed up the lake to Magadino<sup>2</sup> (a small village), thence we went to Bellinzona<sup>3</sup> which is just at the foot of the Alps. We slept at Bellinzona that night and started at four next morning in a carriage to cross the Alps by the pass of St Gotthard. We got up to the top about 6 at night, came down about twelve miles to a place 'Ospital and slept there all night, started from there next morning, and arrived at Lake Lucerne about 3 o'clock, steamed up the lake to the town of Lucerne where we are now, and where we slept last night.

We are now just on the start again for a place called Thun<sup>4</sup> and from thence to Berne. We travel in a carriage; being three of us, it is as cheap nearly as the diligence. One of our party is a lawyer, a very nice man and been all over the continent often, an old traveller, and we find he is of great use to us. I hardly know sometimes how we could have got on without him. Breakfast is ordered and I must finish.

We have now decided on going to Paris. Be good enough to address me there 'to lie at the Post Office till called for'. Perhaps Mr Simpson would give me a line just to say what has been done, as my last dates from you are getting old now, having had no letters for two months.

ps. Write to Paris soon. My travelled friend tells me to tell you to address your letter thus: W. Melrose, Poste Restante, Paris. That means to stay till called for; no more is necessary. In haste.

<sup>1</sup> Calende: now Sesto Calende, on the Italian end of Lake Maggiore, lat. 45.44 N., long. 8.38 E.

<sup>2</sup> Magadino, Switzerland, lat. 46.09 N., long. 8.52 E.

<sup>3</sup> Bellinzona: town in the canton of Ticino, Switzerland.

<sup>4</sup> Toun or Thun: lat. 46.46 N., long. 7.38 E., 16 miles south-south-east of Berne.

Paris, 1 July 1853

Here I am at last. I have just got Mr Simpson's letter, and I am glad to think you must be all well (as nothing is said to the contrary). It must be about four months since the date of any of the letters of yours which I have seen, and a great deal might happen in that time.

From Lucerne, where I last wrote, we went to Thun, Berne, Basle, Strasbourg, and from Strasbourg to Paris. I have hardly made up my mind as to whether I may remain a few days here and see what is to be seen now that I am here. It is interesting to see the places one has read so much about in the papers in the time of the revolutions.

If any of you are inclined to write, address me a line or two to 'Galignani & Company, No. 18 Rue Vivienne, Paris'. It is such a long way to the post office and they require you to show your passport etc.

I think it is very likely I may remain for two or three days, as I have had a good deal of rather fatiguing travelling for the last ten or twelve days and find a rest, especially when there is something to see, very agreeable.

I am much obliged to Mr Simpson for his letter which contains all the information I could desire, and would have written but am not altogether settled down yet.

The duty coming off will set them all in a biz in China at the opening of the season. I see you wrote me to Ewart. I am now at Meurice's Hotel but I don't like it, and I am not certain but I might change.

PS. I have got a nasty cold in my head again and my nose blossoming like an alderman's but it is better today. Adieu for the present as I must make the most of my time.

Paris, 4 July 1853

I intended to have written you yesterday, but I went to Versailles and did not get home until long past post hours. You and Ellen were there I remember; and I had often heard you talk of it, which made me more anxious to see it, and really it is well worth seeing. I have seen a good many places since I arrived. I hire a guide at 5

francs a day and though rather dear, I believe it is the cheapest way in the end. He is an Englishman and gives me all the information he can. I have been with him to see a good many places today and am quite tired; it is hard work sightseeing.

As I was walking along the street, to my astonishment I fell in with Gilbert and Muir.<sup>1</sup> They wanted me to go down to Versailles with them today, but having been there yesterday I declined. I have to meet them at their hotel tonight at 9 o'clock. I am still at Meurices but I do little more than sleep and breakfast there. I have met no less than four old friends on my way home; go where you like you are known. I don't think there is much more to be seen here, so I think of leaving soon. Kind remembrance to all.

Paris, 6 July 1853

I wrote you the day before yesterday and told you I had met Gilbert and Muir. We went together sightseeing yesterday and saw the Madeleine, Jardin des Plantes, the School of Fine Arts, Saints Chapel and the Hippodrome. It comes much less expensive, I find, going three together than going alone, as carriage hire, the expense of the guide, and everything else is only one third, which makes a great difference; besides it is much pleasanter to have some company. There is hardly anything more lonely than staying in a large city and being alone. All the places which I have not yet seen, I have agreed to go and see with them; the places which I have seen already they will leave until I go away. I should like much to see Napoleon and the Empress and the 'Tuileries', but there is some bother about getting an order. They are trying to persuade me to go by Brussels and Antwerp and see the Field of Waterloo. I remember you were there too and I have a great mind to go home that way.

I saw in a French paper that the 6th of May mail had arrived; and as far as I could make it out, no news had been received from Shanghai and they were conjecturing some row up there must have kept back the steamer. Adieu for the present; the carriage is waiting and they are bullying me to finish.

<sup>1</sup> Possibly John Gilbert or W. Gilbert and J. D. Muir who left China in Sept. 1851; for the Gilberts, see above, pp. 220, n. 2, 225, n. 1, and for Muir, see *Overland Friend of China*, 19 Sept. 1851.

Paris, 10 July 1853

The day before yesterday we were to start to see Fontainebleau but Gilbert and Muir were not ready. I started myself but was too late and lost the train. Yesterday, however, I went and spent a very pleasant day. The woods or forest round the place are immense. I got back about one half past eleven at night. This morning I went to Gilbert and Muir but they had gone off to see Fontainebleau today; so we are all at sixes and sevens. They told me the day before yesterday that they did not intend going at all, or I would have waited for them.

I think I will start tomorrow certain for Brussels and after that to Antwerp to the Hotel Saint Antoine, Antwerp. I got Mr Simpson's letter. It is rather a funny place to send Davie to – the Isle of Skye. I am just coming from the Celestial Empire, it would appear, at the same time as Davie is going to enter it. No news, I hope you are all well.

ps. Many thanks to Mr Simpson for his letter.

Antwerp, 15 July 1853

I slept at Brussels the night before last, remained there all yesterday and came on here by the last night's half past nine train. I have just got a list of all the places worth seeing in this place and there seem to be a good many; a great many pictures by Rubens I see marked down. I have got a catalogue of the picture gallery and am going there as soon as I finish this. I had a letter from Mounsey at Brussels enclosing the one you sent to London for me. I had written to him to send it to me here. Maccaughey must have been in Paris for Mounsey says in his last to me that he had gone to Paris and accompanied Maccaughey to London.

By the by, I had nearly forgotten to tell you that, like Wellington, I had been to the Field of Waterloo and had about as hard a fight there with the French as he had. I mean with the language. There was only one inside passenger, a Frenchman, in the coach to Waterloo; and I had hard work to make him understand anything of what I said. I found out in the end that he was an officer in Napoleon's army and present at the battle, in command of a battalion at

Hougoumont<sup>1</sup> where there was hard fighting I believe. He was 18 years old at the time, which makes him about 58 now; but he did not look nearly that.

By the by, Gilbert was telling me that you were looking better by far than when he was at home some seven or eight years ago, and that he never saw anybody wear so well in all his life. I am glad to hear it. I suppose I will be here a day or two. In the meantime, Adieu.

Dublin, 1 September 1853

We arrived here yesterday afternoon and saw part of the review in the park, but it was a wet night and we stayed only a short time. However, it was worthwhile going to see the number of people and cars driving about like 'stour'. We are just going off to the Exhibition. We intend after that going to see the Lakes of Killarney; they say the finest scenery almost in the world. You and Eliza should just start and meet us there. You can get to Cork by steamer and then you are within a short distance of the Lakes. We will likely be a day longer here and stay two or three days at the Lakes (always providing our purse is long enough); so you would have plenty of time to pick us up.

The letters from China will most likely be in by the time you get this. You should receive the first of bills for £40,000. Of course, you will easily know the packet which contains them; and some of you had better open it and see that the bills have come back all safe. As for the other letters to my address, be good enough to put them in a safe place until I write you what to do with them. There will be some bills enclosed in them.

6 p.m.:

It has been a terrible wet day all day; it would be nonsense going to the Lakes unless it is better. Will write you tomorrow what we do.

Dublin, 2 September 1853

We are still here. The weather has cleared and we start for the Lakes tomorrow. Be good enough to send my China letters and a

<sup>1</sup> Hougoumont: a château near Waterloo, noted for its importance in relation to the battle.

£5 note, or you had better say a £10 in case I run out. Address them to the Bilton Hotel, Sackville Street, 'to lie till called for', Dublin. We have been running about all day and are quite tired. It is now 6 o'clock. We are just going to take dinner. We saw the Prince this morning. We are at a very comfortable hotel and have a nice little sitting parlour. Kindly remember us to all of them and don't forget my letters and £10.

ps. By the by, when we arrived at Glasgow, a porter came up to me and asked if my name was Melrose and gave me the enclosed letter. Of course, I could not accept the invitation. In haste.

Dublin, 3 September 1853

We are just on the move for the Lakes of Killarney; we start by half past one o'clock train and should arrive in Killarney about half past eight tonight. I wrote you yesterday to send my China letters and a £10 note to the above address. We expect to be about two days at Killarney after which we will return to Dublin and I expect my letters will be waiting here for me by that time. We are all well and won't be surprised to meet you at Killarney. Just off.

Shrewsbury, 21 September 1853

I beg to advise having sent to your address in Edinburgh today two young women<sup>1</sup> in good order and condition. I saw them off myself from Stafford in the twenty minutes past twelve o'clock, and they should be in Edinburgh about half past eight or eight tonight where I hope they will arrive in like good order. About a dozen of people have been waiting at the railway station every night in the hopes of meeting Andrew but he has never come. In haste.

For James:

Be good enough to look up in my bedroom in Chapel House; and you will find a book in leather boards, if not lying out on one of the chairs or the table, you will find it in my trunk. It is my 'Invoice Book'. You will find the two last invoices entered in it are of the *Flora McDonald* teas, one for tea on account of William

<sup>1</sup> The two young women were William's sisters, Isabella and Agnes, the 'Irish Party' as referred to in A. S. Craig to A. M., 16 and 20 Sept. 1853, AMA.



Melrose and one on account William Melrose and Andrew Melrose and Co. jointly. As I have got valuations of them from London, I would like to see the invoice of them; like a good chap, take the trouble just to copy or get copied out for me the two invoices and send them as soon as you can. I see Ewart has valued some of the Andrew Melrose and Co. jointly with William Melrose, as high as 1s. 10d.; the highest of mine is 1s. 7d. to 1s. 8d. although the cost is higher; but they will all pay well. Sam is just shutting up, in haste.

Shrewsbury, 14 October 1854

I have been here for five or six days now. I have a letter from Rothwell, which I send you. You may send it to J. R. & Co. if you think proper. I have received from Turner & Co. £4,428 in bills and expect about £530 more, which leaves about £330 profit, better than nothing. It appears they could not get any tea. I had a letter from Mounsey yesterday morning with a sample of fine Congou (Woopack) which was to be had at 2s., and he wished to know if I would like any as fine might be scarce this year. But I am not sure if I will write for any; I may perhaps.

I heard Helen had about as many teeth pulled out as you had at one sitting and am glad to hear she is better. You should ask Sam to let her stay a little after his departure to recoup a little. I have written him tonight and have said to him the same thing. Kind remembrance to all.

PS. The bills are not due for six months.

Shrewsbury, 27 October 1854

Sam and Helen arrived safely on Wednesday night. I dined with them yesterday. I have dined with Mr Teece<sup>1</sup> often and he always drinks your health every time and sometimes two or three times in a night, making a long speech every time. He is very fond of reading and anxious to get a history of the Chinese War as he knew a captain of one of the steamers engaged in it. So I promised to send him up the history of it, which you may remember I lent you to read, a thick book with engravings in it, I think written by

<sup>1</sup> Charles Bowen Teece, attorney, Shrewsbury, from 1828; superintendant registrar, 1851-6, and of Teece and Corser, solicitors, Swan Hill, from 1856.

O'Donnaghue;<sup>1</sup> and I think you took it over to George Street with you. If you will send it addressed to Sam, he will give it to Teece and return it to you when he is done with it.

You may tell Andrew also to send me up my Invoice Book. He will find it in one of my overland trunks underneath the dressing table in his bedroom. It is a long book with the boards covered with a light kind of leather, and contains the invoices of all the shipments I made from Canton. I want it to refer to. He had better put it along with the history of the Chinese War and address both to Sam and send them by the railroad, and tell Miss Dickson<sup>2</sup> to put in the parcel two pairs of my warmest stockings.

You will get this on Saturday morning; send the parcel by first train on Monday morning and I will get it on Tuesday. Andrew or James will do it if you give them this letter. Kind remembrances to the aunts etc.

PS. No news from China by the mail. Murrow had not taken up the promissory note or I would have received the money last mail. I wrote Gaskell<sup>3</sup> last mail to China to force payment if not paid by the time he would get my note.

PPS. Muir has some fine fowls of the Dorkin breed.<sup>4</sup> They eat better than any game I ever tasted if proper attention is paid to their feeding. He wishes to send you a cock and two hens that you may breed them for your own eating. Shall I send you them?

London, 29 December 1854

I wish you a merry Christmas and many more may you be spared to see! I drew on you the other day for £30 – just to show you how fast money goes when travelling and that you might be sure I was still in the land of the living. I have been here a few days. I stayed at a hotel for a day or two but have now taken apartments in Piccadilly. Very good rooms they are, but rather dear, 35s. per

<sup>1</sup> O'Donnaghue: a mistake for Lieutenant John Ouchterlony, *The Chinese War: an Account of All the Operations of the British Forces from the Commencement to the Treaty of Nanking, with 53 Illustrations, from Original Drawings by the Author* (London, 1844).

<sup>2</sup> Miss Agnes or Nancy Dickson, a sister-in-law of A. M.

<sup>3</sup> William Gaskell, solicitor, Hong Kong, appointed proctor in Admiralty Court, 24 July 1850. *China Mail*, 5 Oct. 1848 and 1 Aug. 1852.

<sup>4</sup> Dorking, a famous Surrey breed of fowl.

week; but you cannot get respectable rooms under that in this city, at least not in a respectable and convenient part of it.

I have not called upon Ewarts. At this time I know they will all be giving dinners and parties and I would rather be quiet and away from them; besides I would require to be calling at their office every day and bothering, and I am freer (is that wrongly spelled?) and quieter by myself. I have not gone much into the city in case I might meet any of them; however, I was tempted to go down and have a look at the old place which I had not seen since June 1848. I went down at night about 10 o'clock to have a quiet survey of where I had stayed two years and where I used to meditate about what my plans were to be when I left it: whether go back to George Street, or to China, or turn broker in London under your powerful auspices. The old alley, the bank and many other remembered places brought many thoughts of days gone by into my head; and I was wondering what would come into my head next when I would see the old door, no. 4 itself.<sup>1</sup> I came to it in time; and what was my surprise to see a ticket on the upper part of the house, on the very windows of the room where I used to be morning and night canistering samples - 'to let' - and on nearing the door I read 'removed to Fenchurch Street'. I was disappointed. I felt as if all things were changed; and I immediately ran into the Burton Coffee House (Ah, it was still in its old place) and drank off a glass of beer to assuage my wounded feelings.

What do you think of taking a trip up for a change? You can have my bedroom, a very comfortable one with a wc attached to it, and for it only. There is another bedroom to let in the house and I could take it; and I have an excellent little parlour well furnished, and the people very civil. So take it into serious consideration. John or Simpson had better not mention to Ewart that I am here, for the present at least. I send you Sam's letter to me; you will see he is well pleased with the present I sent him. Just write me one line to say how you all are as I have had none for long.

London, 1 January 1855

A happy New Year to you. You can say you have the first of my correspondence this year at any rate. I received yours of 30

<sup>1</sup> The old address of Ewart Maccaughey was 4 Cophthall Street.

December '54 this morning. The name of the people I stay with is Eddles, 34 Piccadilly, but any letter will soon find me with only 34 Piccadilly.

I have a letter from Andrew this morning also. I see he is on the wing for Shrewsbury. Sam Craig is gone to see his friend Clarke<sup>1</sup> at Hereford; at least he told me he was going in his last letter.

There is never a letter to me from China now. It is too bad of that lawyer Gaskell. Murrow's promissory note fell due on the 9th of August last, and we have dates from China as late as the middle of November, so the money should have been home two months ago. But what a slippery customer that Murrow is!! I have written out to Gaskell two or three months ago to enforce payment. I wrote him also, as I think he is behaving rather slackly in the matter, that my man of business here was advising me to take steps which would be disagreeable to him (Gaskell) if acted upon, and hoped he would be able to get the matter wound up without putting me to the unpleasantness of having to do so, or something to that effect, which I hope will sharpen him up a bit. I had a letter from him in August saying he had additional security in the shape of 100 bags of saltpetre at \$9.00 to \$10.00 a bag and that Murrow would no doubt take up the bills when due; and I have not a word from him since. He said something in his letter, if it was not coming soon, it was sure at all events; so perhaps he felt not very sure of getting it soon. If you see Robertson just 'by the by', you might perhaps hear what he thinks; but I would not ask professional advice for a little yet.

London, 19 January 1855

Tell John I have received his last. The weather has set in awfully cold here; we have had three days intense frost. I am getting tired of this end of the town now and perhaps may change my lodging to the other side and see what is to be seen there, but I am not sure about it. I am now nearly quit of my cold and feel all right again, but I was very queer for some three or four days. I suppose Andrew has started for Shrewsbury by this time.

Did you see a letter from the Secretary of the American Telegraph

<sup>1</sup> Clarke: not identified.

Company in Russia – an American who was resident there for some time?<sup>1</sup> It was in most of the London papers and no doubt it would be in the *Courant*. It was headed 'What the Russians think of the War'; and if true what he says in the letter, it is different from the impression we have at home. It is worth reading. I hope you are all well.

London, 24 January 1855

I have yours of I forget the date but your last I suppose. I see you have had your share of cold weather and also of colds. I have still a little cough, only in the morning and at night, but am nearly all right. I am sorry to hear Mr Simpson has been so poorly; John wrote me he had had a dose of it too.

I wrote to Muir in Shrewsbury the other day for a liberty to draw upon the bank he is connected with here; and he gave me a power to draw on them to the extent of £100; and you were to pay into the 'Commercial' in Edinburgh either the sums I may get from time to time, as I got them, or leave it to be settled when I leave this, or when the amounts I draw come to the £100. I drew £10 of it on 16 January and wrote Muir I had done so and that I would not pay anything to his account at Commercial Bank Edinburgh until I had drawn more, perhaps about £50; and then I would write to pay in that amount for him, as it is of no use writing to him and you and so on about £10.

I went out to the ice but it appeared anything but tempting; four people were drowned two or three days ago and a great many tumbled in since. The ice is not secure from its having snowed nearly all the time it was freezing; and it is very rough and bad skating, and only here and there spots swept clear of snow on which one can skate. I did not like the look of things and came home again without showing my 'scientific knowledge', as O. Anderson<sup>2</sup> said

<sup>1</sup> The letter, printed in *The Times* (London), 11 Jan. 1855, was written by T. P. Shaffner who had been in St Petersburg in Oct. 1854. The gist of the writer's argument was that Russia had not been prepared for an attack on the Crimea but had concentrated its immense strength somewhere in Poland, and that the Czar was very popular, 'idolized' by the people who were enthusiastic about the war for religious purposes. Moreover, Russian manufacture and agriculture were in a state of prosperity.

<sup>2</sup> O. Anderson: not identified.

to you. Hoping you are all well (no word from China yet – they are a bad set).

ps. Address me still to 34 Piccadilly until I advise to the contrary.

London, 11 February 1855

I hope James is recovering. I have not heard for a day or two. It has set in quite a snowstorm here and must be some feet deep.

By the by, I wrote John about settling with him for board and lodging at Chapel House for the time I have been there, as I think it nonsense paying for board so much a year when I may very probably not be actually a couple of months a lodger in the house; and I am still of the same opinion. I have been absent all the autumn and winter and will most probably be absent nearly all the summer too, as I may probably take a trip to America and if not there to some other place. So I think I will sell my horse and just take a lodging or stay at a hotel for the short time I will be at home. I see by my account current that I was debited £80 for board on 22 July '54, so I am due you for board since 22 July '54 to the present day, say between six and seven months. Four of those months I have been absent from Edinburgh entirely; and the two months I was in Edinburgh I was quite as much out as at home, so that actually I have had but one month's board, you may say. The lodging, as you have kept two beds for me as John says, may be calculated for all the time. However, as John seems to think that I have been rather 'bare' with you, in the hope that I may satisfy him (I don't think you think much about it), I give you an order on my account for a twelvemonth's board, £80, as an equivalent for what board and lodging I have had since 22 July '54 to the present. And of course you will not look upon me as a boarder from this date. However, that won't prevent me coming to see you and the rest as often as I used to do, as I can send in some wine and anything in the spirituous line and have a glass with you without interfering with the grave subject of bed and board.

I wrote Macaulay the other day a note saying 'Mr W. M. (a son of Mr A. M. of George Street, Edinburgh) would be greatly obliged by an order to see the *Houses* of Parliament and so on'. I send you his answer and the order he sent; keep them for me as I

would like to keep the great historian's letter. I was too late of getting his letter to take advantage of it, having changed my lodgings the day it came.

John seems to think by his letters to me that I should not correspond with you direct on such a subject as board; but as you are the party directly concerned, I thought it much better to have a fair and open understanding with yourself. Please show John this and it will do as an answer to his two letters.

Andrew is here and staying with me; we are very comfortable and jolly. Please remember us kindly to John and all the rest of the family; we drink you all after dinner.

London, 19 February 1855

I have Easy's letter dated last Wednesday and hope you have recovered from the rheumatism of which you were complaining when she wrote. I have had no letter since and am anxious to hear how James is. Andrew leaves London for Shrewsbury at 5 tonight on his way to Edinburgh. I suppose he intends to stay a day in Shrewsbury.

I hear from Easy that my last with order for £80 took you quite by surprise. I understood from John's letters that he had been speaking to you about board and that you thought I had been very 'bare' with you. It is still hard frost here and terribly cold; I never felt it so cold. I went down to the great Exhibition the other day and was quite delighted with it. I am just off to the ice, thousands on it now. ps. Please pay in £60 for me to the Commercial and get the receipt I sent signed.







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## Appendices

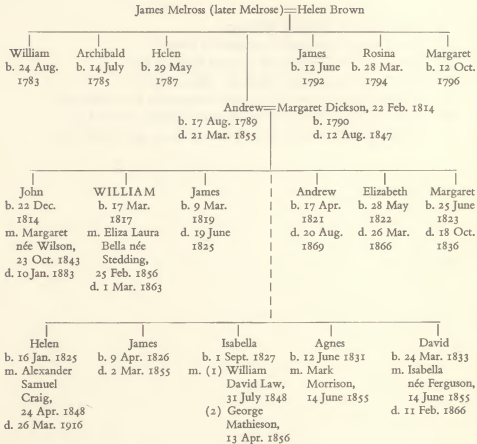
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- I The family of William Melrose
- II List of ships mentioned in Melrose's letters
- III Names and meaning of the several kinds of tea
- IV Bills drawn on Andrew Melrose, 1843-1853
- V Investment and profit from joint ventures in tea, 1848-1854
- VI Cost and sale proceeds of tea by several ships, 1850-1851
- VII Quantity, valuations and sale prices of cargo per *Naomi*, 1851

## APPENDIX No I

## THE FAMILY OF WILLIAM MELROSE



## APPENDIX No II

### LIST OF SHIPS MENTIONED IN MELROSE'S LETTERS

Ship	Nationality	Tonnage	Route	Captain	Despatcher	Tea carried (in 000 lbs)	Source
Aberfoyle	British	417	H.K. to Leith, 10 Nov.	M'Alpin	Jamieson How & Co.	518	a = China Mail b = Overland Friend c = Overland Register
Abergeldie	British	600	H.K. to Shanghai, 21 Sept.; Shanghai to London, 30 Nov.	Wilson	Gibb Livingston		a - 26 Nov. 46
Aden	British	339	H.K. to Liverpool	Smith	Dent & Co.	458	a - 25 Sept., 30 Nov. 50
Alecto	British	325	to Manila, s. 10 Apr.	Grace	W. Rathbone & Co.		a - 12 Apr. 49
Ann	British	800	Whampoa to Singapore, s. 22 Oct.	Walker	Gibb Livingston		a - 28 Oct. 52
Anna	Dutch	300	Boston to Shanghai, arr. 10 Aug.	Kleynberg	Lindsay & Co.		a - 4 Sept. 50
Anna Maria Asia	U.S. British	484 524	to London, to Cork, s. 29 July	Osgood Watt	A. Heard & Co. Jardine Matheson	634	a - 10 May 49 a - 2 Aug. 49

NOTE: H.K. indicates Hong Kong; s. indicates the date of sailing.

Ship	Nationality	Tonnage	Route	Captain	Dispatcher	Tea carried (in 000 lbs)	Source		
							a = China Mail	b = Overland Friend of China	c = Overland Register
Astarte	British	380	Whampoa to Liverpool, s. 28 Aug.	Roberts	Holliday Wise & Co.	345	a - 29 Aug., 12 Sept. 50		
Auguste and Bertha	Hamburg	300	Whampoa to Clyde, s. 7 Oct.	Peterson	William Pustau & Co.	325	a - 9, 23 Oct. 50		
Bangalore	British	511	H.K. to Liverpool s. 5 May	Arnott	Gibb Livingston	485	a - 8 May, 15 Apr. 50		
Alexander Baring	British	505	Arrived Whampoa fr. Bombay, 2 May	Wilson			b - 22 June 52		
John Bibby	British	549	Whampoa to Liverpool, s. 23 Sept.	Pearson	W. H. Wardley & Co.	700	a - 26 Sept., 3 Oct. 50		
Blackfriar	British	621	to London, s. 21 Feb.	Williams	Dirom Gray & Co.	761	a - 22 Feb. 49		
Braganza	British		to H.K., arr. 22 Oct.		P. & O. Steamer	none	a - 21 Dec. 48		
Buc <sup>th</sup> - not identified (? Buccleugh)									
Frances Burn	British	216	Woosung to London, s. 11 Sept.	French	Hargreaves & Co.	tea and silk	a - 7 Oct. 47		
Thomas Campbell	British	630	H.K. to London, s. 28 Nov.	Clark	Jardine Matheson	774	a - 4 Dec. 51		
Chalco	British	236	to Dublin, s. 29 Sept.	Brown	Dent & Co.	318	a - 4 Oct. 49		

Challenge	U.S.	2,004	Whampoa to London, s. 5 Aug.	Pitts	Russell & Co.	1,600	a - 12 Aug., 9 Sept. 52
Earl of Chester	British	517	Whampoa to London, s. 5 Apr.	Blackstone	Dirom Gray & Co.	687	a - 11, 18 Apr. 50
China	British	630	to London, s. 22 Sept.	Fergusson	Gilman & Co.	918	a - 27 Sept. 49
Chrysolite	British	440	Whampoa to Liverpool, s. 9 July	Enright	W. H. Wardley & Co.	550	a - 15, 29 July 52
Clifton	British	896	to London, s. 16 Jan.	Kettlewell	Jardine Matheson	1,007	a - 18 Jan. 49
Coquette	U.S.	575	Macao to Calcutta	Prescott	Russell & Co.		a - 10 Aug. 48
Ann Cropper	British	523	to Singapore, s. 4 Mar.	Morton	MacVicar & Co.		a - 8 Mar. 49
Dauntless	British	433	to London, s. 4 Oct.	Put	Dent	628	a - 21 Oct. 48
Dulius	British	327	H.K. to Liverpool, s. 17 May	Maxton	N. Duus & Co.	322	a - 23 May 50
Eliza and Hester Euphrates	British	477	to London, s. 11 Sept.	Kruger	Reiss & Co.		c - 23 Aug. 50
Foam	British	617	to London, s. n.d.	Gifford	Jamieson Edger & Co.	851	a - 15 Dec. 48
Forfarshire	British	626	Whampoa to Liverpool, s. 6 Sept.	Findlay	Jardine Matheson	626	a - 9 Sept., 7 Oct. 52
Frolic	U.S.	614	Whampoa to London, s. 10 Sept.	Tudor	Lindsay & Co.	780	a - 12, 19 Sept. 50
		212	Macao to Bombay, s. 11 Oct.	Faucon	A. Heard & Co.		a - 12 Oct. 48

Ship	Nationality	Tonnage	Route	Captain	Despatcher	Tea carried (in 000 lbs)	Source		
							a = China Mail	b = Overland Friend	c = Overland Register
Glenmore	British	328	H.K. to Leith, s. 30 Nov.	Burnett	Jardine Matheson	428	a	- 10 Dec.	46
Grecian	British	518	to London, s. 22 Sept.	Langford	Turner & Co.	709	a	- 28 Sept.	48
Sir T. Gresham	British	593	Whampoa to London, s. 22 Oct.	Boyce	Reis & Co.	824	a	- 1 Nov.	49
W. H. Harbeck	U.S.	872	Whampoa to Liverpool, s. 13 Apr.	Shinn	Wetmore & Co.	840	a	- 17 Apr.	51
L. Hardinge	British	434	to London, s. 3 Mar.	Streacy	Gibb Livingston	559	a	- 8 Mar.	49
Herald	British	307	Wooosung to Leith, s. 27 Aug.	Lawson	Hargreaves & Co.	365	a	- 25 Sept., 2 Oct.	51
Hermes	British	man-of-war, 6 guns,	from London	Fishbourne			b	- 28 Dec.	52
Inca	U.S.	376	Whampoa to	Buxton	A. Heard & Co.		a	- 9 Dec.	47
Inglewood	British	518	Cork, Liverpool, s. 21 Oct.	Smith	Jamieson How & Co.	656	a	- 30 Oct.	45
Invincible	U.S.	1,769	to Singapore, s. 2 Feb.	Johnson	W. Anthon & Co.		a	- 15 July	52
Charlotte Jane	British	749	Wooosung to London, s. 2 Nov.	Lawrence	Turner & Co.		a	- 8 Feb.	49
Juliet	British	444		Watson	Jardine Matheson	490	a	- 16, 23 Nov.	48

Duke of Lancaster	British	463	to Liverpool, s. 31 Oct.	Wakeham	Dirom Gray & Co.	591	a - 1 Nov. 49
Lancastrian	British	502	Whampos to London, s. 17 June	Langley	F. B. Birley & Co.	800	a - 20, 27 June 50
Larpent	British		Liverpool to Shanghai	Gibson			a - 5 June 50
Lascar	British	441	to Leith, s. 3 Nov.	Thompson	Jardine Matheson	591	a - 9 Nov. 48
Leith - not identified	British	353	H.K. to Singapore, s. 14 Nov.	Proud	Murrow		a - 18 Nov. 52
Flora MacDonald	British	280	H.K. to San Francisco, s. 26 Sept.	Dunn	Stephenson & Co. [by order]		a - 30 Sept. 52
Marion M'Intyre	British	318	H.K. to Cork, s. 17 Sept.	Robertson	Jardine Matheson		c - 23 Aug. 50
Ann McLean	British	358	to Liverpool, s. 23 Oct.	Sproule	Reiss & Co.	420	a - 16 Nov. 48
Magellan	British	186	H.K. to Sydney, s. 10 July	Drewett	Birley & Co.		a - 17 July 51
Maggie	British	667	to London, s. 3 Oct. 48	Ryrie	Reiss & Co.	809	a - 5 Oct. 48, 20 Dec. 49
Marian	U.S.	776	Woosung to New York, s. 19 Feb.	Stoddard	Augustine Heard & Co.	727	a - 18 Mar., 15 Apr. 52
Mandarin	U.S.	509	Shanghai to Liverpool, s. 21 Oct.	Penrice	Jardine Matheson	492	a - 13, 20 Nov. 49
Mclish - not identified.	British	337	Shanghai to Liverpool, s. 12 Feb.	Percival		378	a - 28 Feb. 50
Mencius	British	666	H.K. to San Francisco, s. 26 Apr.	Morrice	Murrow		a - 29 Apr. 52
Momarch	British				Stephenson & Co.		
Walter Morrice	British						

Ship	Nationality	Tonnage	Route	Captain	Despatcher	Tea carried (in 000 lbs)	Source		
							a = China Mail	b = Overland Friend of China	c = Overland Register
Naomi	British	403	Whampoa to Clyde, s. 9 Sept.	Cotlay	Reis & Co.	504	a - 12 Sept. 50		
Nerbudda	British	428	Singapore to Shanghai, arr. 11 Aug.	Main	J. M. Smith & Co.		a - 4 Sept. 50		
Nonpareil	British	330		Brown					
North Star	British	384	Whampoa to Glasgow, s. 31 Oct.	Palmer	Turner & Co.	488	a - 5 Sept. 50, 24 Feb. 53		
John O' Gaunt	British	439	Whampoa to London, s. 15 Feb.	M'Donald	Turner & Co.	593	a - 19 Feb., 4 Mar. 52		
Oriental	U.S.	1,450	Whampoa to London, s. 27 Aug.	Palmer	Russell & Co.	887	a - 29 Aug., 12 Sept. 50		
William Prouse	British	355	to Liverpool, s. 1 Jan.	Ward	A. A. Ritchie & Co.	459	a - 4 Jan. 49		
Queen	British	442	to Clyde, s. 26 Nov.	Hutton	Lindsay & Co.	510	a - 6 Dec. 49		
Reindeer	British	327	Woosung to Cork for orders, s. 9 July	Hunt	Watson & Co.		a - 24 July, 7 Aug. 50		
Rifleman	British	384	Whampoa to London, s. 2 July	Hammack	Dallas & Co.	405	a - 5 July 49		
Sir Robert Sale	British	740	to Bombay, s. 15 Feb.	Brown	Lindsay & Co.		a - 22 Feb. 49		



Sappho	British	440	H.K. to Manila, s. 15 Dec.	Hildreth	Jardine Matheson	a - 19 Dec. 50
Scotland	British	388	to London, s. 18 Feb.	Ritchie	Golman & Co.	a - 1 Mar. 49
James Scott	British	346	Woosung to Liverpool,	Sutter	Gibb Livingston	a - 23 Oct., 13 Nov. 51
Countess of Seafield	British	450	s. 13 Oct. Shanghai to London, s. 2 Oct.	Leask	Dent Beale & Co.	a - 16 Oct. 50
Somnauth	U.S.?	671	Bombay to Whampoa, arr. c. 30 May	Lawson	Russell & Co.	a - 30 May, 3 Oct. 50
Mary Sparks Stornoway	British British	554 527	Whampoa to London, s. 5 July	Graham Robertson	Lindsay & Co. Jardine Matheson	a - 14 June 49 a - 10, 24 July 51
Superb Surprise	British U.S.	325 1,261	H.K. to Liverpool Whampoa to London, s. 28 July	Mordue Dumaresq	Jardine Matheson Russell & Co.	a - 29 Aug. 50 a - 31 July, 4 Sept. 51
Velocipede	British	150	Macao to Solo, s. 17 Nov.	Wolf	L. Pereira	a - 23 Nov. 48
Hugh Walker Walton	British British	496 260	to London to Liverpool, s. 9 Mar.	Cameron Stanton	Nye Parkin & Co. Wetmore & Co.	a - 5 Oct. 48 a - 15 Mar. 49
Wanderer	British	404	H.K. to England, s. 16 Mar.	Smith	Turner & Co.	a - 27 Mar. 45
James Watt	British	531	Whampoa to Cork for orders, s. 10 Sept.	Turpie	Dent & Co.	a - 12 Sept. 50

## APPENDIX No. III

## NAMES AND MEANING OF THE SEVERAL KINDS OF TEA

Chinese names	Anglicized names	Transliteration of Chinese characters		Meaning
		Contemporary	Modern	
	<i>Black tea:</i>			
大棟安溪	Congou	kung foo	kung fu	work
小種	Campoi	keên pei	chien pei	selected for firing
包種	Ankoi	an ke	an ch'i	name of hill where the tea was grown
白毫	Souchong	seau chong	hsiao chung	small sort
上	Pouchong	pow chong	pao chung	the bundled sort
	Pekoe	pik hao	pai hao	white hair
	Orange Pekoe	shang heang	shang hsiang	very fragrant

紅梅 紫毫	Hong Moi	hung muey	hung mci	'red plum', colour of the infusion
松羅 熙春 皮茶 雨前 珠茶 麻珠	Flowers Pekoe	tsze hao	tzu hao	'carnation hair', colour of the dried leaf
	<i>Green Tea:</i>			
	Singlo	sung lo	sung lo	area where the tea was grown
	Hyson	he chun	hsi ch'un	flourishing to indicate spring
	Hyson skin	pa cha	p'i ch'a	skin of the tea leaf
	Young Hyson	yu tsün	yü ch'ien	before the rain
	Imperial	choo cha	chu ch'a	pearl tea
	Gunpowder.	ma choo	ma chu	hemp pearl

## NOTE:

This list is not intended to be exhaustive. It leaves out names used by foreign merchants for the purpose of greater refinement in distinguishing quality and names for which there is no Chinese equivalent. For example, Caper was a kind of Orange Pekoe and Ning Yung was a kind of Souchong. Nearly all green teas were separated into the Taiping and Moyune varieties, both being possibly districts where the tea was grown. The contemporary transliteration of the Chinese characters is incorporated to show the close derivation of the Anglicized names, whereas the modern transliteration indicates the meaning of the Chinese characters more accurately.

SOURCES: 'Description of the Tea Plant', *Chinese Repository*, viii, no. 3 (July 1839), 150-4; *China Mail*, 3 Jan. 1850.

## APPENDIX No IV

## BILLS DRAWN ON ANDREW MELROSE, 1834-1853 (in £)

Year	Total of all bills	China portion	Distribution of China portion						William Melrose
			J. M. & Co.	Russell	Y. J. Murray	Wetmore & Co.	Turner & Co.	J. H. & Co.	
1834	16,262	428	428						
1835	32,487	297	100						
1836	63,846	4,600	4,600		197				
1837	76,382	10,349	7,325						
1838	40,137						1,500	1,524	
1839	44,377	1,123	1,123						
1840	86,104	1,524	1,524						
1841	70,898								
1842	64,375	1,600	1,600						
1843	76,926	6,100	3,100						
1844	42,635	2,800	3,000						
1845	56,386	19,303	14,853	2,800					
1846	50,361	16,347	3,500	850					
1847	40,618	9,962	6,500	1,922					
1848	39,456	14,456							6,500
1849	59,933	56,569							3,433
1850	46,103	40,952							56,569
1851	40,380	27,751							40,952
1852	17,076	14,810							27,751
1853	7,194	2,050							14,810
									2,050

ABBREVIATIONS: J. M. & Co.: Jardine Matheson & Co.; J. H. & Co.: Jamieson How & Co.  
SOURCE: AMA, Bills Payable Book from 1826.

## APPENDIX No V

INVESTMENT AND PROFIT FROM JOINT VENTURES IN TEA,  
1848-1854 (in £)

Accounting period	Total investment	Profit to each co-venturer				Total profit	% of profit to investment
		A. M. <sup>1</sup>	J. R. <sup>2</sup>	R. S. <sup>3</sup>	W. M. <sup>4</sup>		
20 Nov. 1848-							
30 Oct. 1849	25,400	2,006			2,006	4,012	15.8
Feb. 1849-							
June 1850	19,080	2,125	2,125			4,250	22.0
Apr. 1849-							
May 1850	26,067	1,450	1,450			2,900	11.0
21 Oct. 1850-							
17 Apr. 1851	39,000	1,362	1,362			2,725	7.0
21 Oct. 1850-							
10 Dec. 1852	11,000	413		413		826 <sup>5</sup>	7.5
6 Feb. 1850-							
20 June 1853	22,400	643			643	1,286	5.7
17 Apr. 1851-							
16 Dec. 1852	23,600	401	401		401	1,203	5.0
20 Sept. 1852-							
28 June 1854	5,619	216			216	432	7.6
19 Oct. 1852-							
15 July 1853	22,012	2,569	2,569		2,569	7,707	35.0
Total profit		11,185	7,907	413	5,835	25,341	13.0
Total investment	194,178	89,488	57,277	5,500	41,913		

## NOTES:

<sup>1</sup> Andrew Melrose.<sup>2</sup> James Richardson.<sup>3</sup> Robert Schaw.<sup>4</sup> William Melrose.<sup>5</sup> This figure may not represent actual profit because a part of tea in the shipment was sent from Liverpool to Edinburgh, the account of which cannot now be traced.

SOURCE: AMA, Sales Ledger 'O', Wholesale, 1841-54; various joint venture accounts.

## APPENDIX No VI

COST AND SALE PROCEEDS OF TEA BY SEVERAL SHIPS,  
1850-1851

	<i>Forfarshire</i> Sept. 50-Jan. 51	<i>Naomi</i> Oct. 50-Feb. 51	<i>Bangalore</i> Oct. 50-Mar. 51
<i>Cost at Canton:</i>			
Total quantity in lbs.	23,566	501,549	12,593
number of chests		6,829	
Total invoice value in \$	4,166 <sup>1</sup>	108,800	3,980
Charges (included in invoice) in \$	327	5,344	300 <sup>1</sup>
Exchange rate per \$	4s. 9d.	4s. 9½d.	4s. 11d.
Invoice value in £	989	26,060	983
Insurance in \$	127	933 (?)	216
<i>Sale Proceeds in Britain in £-s-d:</i>			
Place of sale	London	Glasgow	London
Gross proceeds	£1,212 16s. 11d.	£34,102 os. od. <sup>2</sup>	£1,094 2s. od.
Charges:			
1. Fire insurance	£1 16s. od.		£1 18s. 6d.
2. Dock	£67 4s. 9d.		£41 13s. 7d.
% of gross proceeds	5.52%		3.83%
3. Freight: Rate per 50 cu. ft.	£3-£3 10s.		£2 10s.
Rate per chest (calculated)			
Total	£78 12s. 1d.		£46 5s. od.
% of gross proceeds	6.49%		4.25%
4. Interest on charges	£1 5s. 4d.		13s. 6d.
5. Broker's commission (1% of gross proceeds)	£12 2s. 7d.		£11 15s. 9d. <sup>3</sup>
Total charges	£161 os. 9d.		£120 6s. 2d.
% of gross proceeds	13.2%		9.3%
Net proceeds	£1,051 16s. 2d.	£31,816 os. od. <sup>4</sup>	£991 15s. od.

## NOTES:

<sup>1</sup> These totals include insurance charges.

<sup>2</sup> The total is calculated from AMA, Misc. Material relating to China trade, Report on Sale per *Naomi*, 1851. The sum understates the total proceeds because a small portion of the tea was not sold.

<sup>3</sup> The total included charges for advertising.

<sup>4</sup> The total is calculated from AMA, Sales Ledger 'O', Wholesale, 1841-54, various accounts of Canton ventures.

SOURCES: Except for figures noted in notes <sup>3</sup> and <sup>4</sup> above, all figures are calculated from AMA, Misc. Material relating to China trade, Collection of Invoices, Shipping and Sales Documents.

<i>Eliza and Hester</i> Sept. 50-Feb. 51	<i>Euphrates</i> Oct. 50-Mar. 51	<i>Mary Sparks</i> Oct. 50- Mar.-Apr. 51	<i>Harbeck</i> Mar. 51- Sept.-Oct. 51	<i>Superb</i> Aug. 50-May 51
5,859	12,000			
	150	1,618	45	628
1,168 <sup>1</sup>	2,836	22,354 <sup>1</sup>	469	8,143
91			37 <sup>1</sup>	
4s. 10d.	4s. 10d.	4s. 10d.	4s. 9d.	4s. 10d.
282	685	5,402	112	2,032
35	83	660	14	265
<b>London</b>	<b>Liverpool</b>	<b>Liverpool</b>	<b>Liverpool</b>	<b>Liverpool</b>
£366 15s. 8d.	£779 10s. od.	£6,760 8s. 5d.	£107 17s. 9d.	£2,126 4s. 9d.
12s. od.	15s. 6d.	£9 9s. 9d.	4s. od.	£3 14s. 4d.
£17 3s. od.	£15 3s. 3d.	£129 12s. 3d.	£2 19s. 6d.	£54 0s. 9d.
4·64%	1·9%	3·64%	2·77%	2·53%
£3 10s.	£3	£2 10s.	£1 10s.	£2 10s.-£3 10s.
	5s. 5d.	3s. 7d.	1s. 8d.	5s. od.
£22 8s. 10d.	£39 19s. 8d.	£295 9s. 8d.	£3 15s. od.	£160 4s. 11d.
6·05%	5·10%	4·36%	2·80%	7·52%
8s. 8d.		£2 14s. 9d.	10d.	£1 12s. 3d.
£3 13s. 4d.	£7 16s. od.	£67 12s. 9d.	£1 1s. 6d.	£21 5s. 3d.
£44 5s. 10d.	£63 14s. 5d.	£504 18s. 5d.	£8 0s. 10d.	£240 17s. 6d.
12·1%	8·08%	7·47%	7·0%	11·3%
£322 9s. 10d.	£715 15s. 7d.	£6,255 10s. od.	£99 16s. 11d.	£1,885 7s. 3d.

## APPENDIX No VII

QUANTITY, VALUATIONS AND SALE PRICES OF CARGO PER  
NAOMI, 1851

Lot	(1) Quantity in lbs.	(2) Invoice price & charges	(3) Valuations			(4) Upset price	(5) Price at sale	(6) Total no. of chests
			Connal	Thompson	A. M. & Co.			
1	55,133	11·3	15	14·5	15·5-16	16		635
2	53,279	10·8	16+	15	16	15·5	15·5	627
3	51,939	15·2	16-17	16-17+	20+	20	20	605
4	54,147	15·8	16+	16-17·5	21+	20·5	19·5 <sup>1</sup>	1,318
5	57,145	11	15+	15	17	16·5	16·6	667
6	43,031	11·3	14·5-15	14-15	16·5-18	17	16·3	528
7	57,061	13·3	19-20	17	19	19	19·5	(200 of 654) <sup>2</sup>
8	56,936	9·9	19	14	16·5-17	17·5	16·5	(200 of 676) <sup>2</sup>
9	16,456	14	14	16	20	20	19	(107 of 207)
10	2,765	12·4	20+	18-19	20	20	20	125
11	14,826	11·8	18+	16	18	18	18	280
12	15,967	13·5	15+	16-17	19+	18		197
13	18,607	13·5	12-13	15-16	19+	18		225
14	4,257	11	20	17	17-18	18	17	85

## NOTES:

All prices are in (old) pence per lb.

+ indicates a plus value estimated for these figures.

<sup>1</sup> Subsequently, parts of this lot were discovered inferior in quality and prices were reduced: 235 chests to 17·5d.; 86 to 15d.; and 64 to 12d. (AMA, Misc. Material relating to China trade; J. R. & Co. to A. M. & Co., 15 Feb. 1851).

<sup>2</sup> At a later sale the remainder of both lots was sold at 18·5d. (*ibid.* 13 Mar. 1851).

## SOURCES:

1. All figures in columns (1), (2) and (6) are taken from AMA, Misc. Material relating to China Trade, Invoice of Cargo per *Naomi*, Canton, Oct. 1850.

2. All figures in columns (3) and (4) are taken from AMA, Statement of the Sale of *Naomi* cargo in Glasgow (arrived 23 Jan. 1851, sold 7 Feb. 1851) and J. R. & Co. to A. M. & Co., 5 Feb. 1851, enclosure.

3. All figures in column (5) are taken from AMA, J. R. & Co. to A. M. & Co., 8 Feb. 1851, enclosure: 'Sold on account of Messrs James Richardson & Co. of the Teas per *Naomi*, 8 Feb 1851'.



## INDEX

- ABERDEEN**, 4th earl of, *see* Gordon,  
 George Hamilton  
**Aberdeen, Leith & Clyde Shipping  
 Co.**, lxxv  
*Aberfoyle*, sailing-ship, 261  
     tea per, 25, 78, 161  
*Abergeldie*, tea clipper, 166, 261  
**Aden**, 9, 13-16  
*Aden*, sailing-ship, 51-52, 174, 180,  
 261  
     tea per, 49, 53-54, 87, 136, 170  
*Admiral*, steam-boat, 3  
 agency houses, China and India,  
     xxvi, xxviii, xxix and *n* 4, xxxiv-  
     xxxv, xxxvii, 162-3  
     *see also* Jamieson How & Co.;  
     Jardine Matheson & Co.;  
     Russell & Co.  
 agents, China, li-lii, liv, 68, 99,  
     110-11, 137, 138-9, 166, 175  
     commission, li, 163, 166, 181  
     *see also* Melrose, William  
**Al-Atf**, *see* El-Atf  
*Alecto*, sailing-ship, 99, 261  
**Alexander**, [*blank*], 91  
**Alexandria**, Egypt, 9-13, 34, 241  
**Amaral**, João Maria Ferreira do,  
     Portuguese governor of Macao,  
     48 *n* 1, 56 and *n* 1  
**American Telegraph Co.**, Russia,  
     254-5  
**Amicable Insurance Office of  
 Calcutta**, 127  
**Amoy**, Fukien, China, 172  
**Anderson**, G., Canton 221 and *n* 1  
**Anderson**, O., 255  
**Anglo-Chinese War**, first, ix, xxxiv,  
     251-2  
**Anjer Lor**, Java, 84, 201, 204, 229  
**Ankoi tea**, 113, 268  
*Ann*, sailing-ship, 171, 261  
*Anna*, sailing-ship, 236, 261  
*Anna Marie*, sailing-ship, 187, 261  
**Anthon, W., & Co.**, China agency  
     house, 264  
**Antwerp**, Belgium, 247-8  
 apprenticeship for the tea trade,  
     xvii-xix, 5, 33-34, 92  
 archives: Andrew Melrose, lxxvi;  
     Jardine Matheson & Co.,  
     lxxvi-lxxvii  
**Arnott**, [*blank*], Captain of the  
     *Bangalore*, 262  
*Arrow* incident, lxix  
**Arthur**, Charles, London, tea broker,  
     xvi and *n* 2  
**Arthur & Co.**, London, tea brokers,  
     xvi *n* 1  
*Asia*, sailing-ship, 59, 261  
*Astarte*, sailing-ship, 120, 262  
*Auguste and Bertha*, sailing-ship, 262  
     chartered by W. M. in 1851,  
     xlx, lix, 179-80, 192-3, 197-8  
     speed of, 201, 206-7, 209-10, 219  
     tea per:  
         character and cost of, 178-9, 183  
         compensation for damage of, 241  
         sale and valuation of, 204, 212  
**Australia**, lxxviii  
     *see also* Melbourne; New South  
     Wales; Sydney  
**Austrian Lloyd Steam Navigation  
 Co.**, 241 and *n* 1  
**Ayrshire coast**, lxxi *n* 2  
  
**BACON**, [*blank*], 3  
**Baird**, V. C., Edinburgh, wine-  
     merchant, 94 and *n* 1

- Bangalore*, sailing-ship, 129, 262  
 tea per, 130, 141, 272
- Bank of England, acceptances, 58, 79, 121, 191
- Bank of Western India, Calcutta and Ceylon, 62 *n* 1
- banks, in China, xxvii  
*see also* Commercial Bank, Canton; Oriental Bank, Canton
- Baring Bros & Co., 205 *n* 1, 207  
 letters of credit, 55, 58, 67-68, 72, 80, 97, 114, 121
- Baring (Alexander Baring)*, sailing-ship, 262  
 tea per, 1
- Basel, Switzerland, 244
- Batavia, Indonesia, 18, 167
- Bateson, James, Sons & Co., Liverpool, tea brokers, 146 and *n* 1, 147
- Bedwell, [*blank*], London, tea dealer, 4 and *n* 5, 7
- Bedwell Yates & Co., London, wholesale grocers and tea dealers, 4 *n* 5, 50, 56
- Beheira, province in Egypt, 13 *n* 3
- Belfast, Ireland, lxxi *n* 2
- Belhaven*, sailing-ship, xxx, xxxvi
- Bellinzona, Switzerland, 245
- Bentinck*, steam-ship, 13-17
- Bernard, [*blank*], officer on the *Braganza*, 18
- Berne, Switzerland, 245-6
- Bibby (John Bibby)*, sailing-ship, 52, 262  
 tea per, 49, 51, 53, 54, 63, 87
- bills of exchange  
 drawn on A. M. & Co., 22-24, 30, 80, 129, 190, 270  
 usance of, 35, 53, 63, 122-3, 130, 142, 145, 147
- Birley, F. B., & Co., China agency house, 265
- Black, John, Leith commission agent, xli
- Black, Thomas, Leith commission agent, xli
- black sugar, 115 and *n* 1, 116
- Blackfriar*, sailing-ship, 65, 262
- Blackstone, [*blank*], Captain of the *Earl of Chester*, 263
- Bogue, mouth of the Pearl River, China, 221 and *n* 1
- Bombay, India, 152 *n* 2, 262-3, 266-7
- Bombay Commercial Insurance Society, 127
- Bonham, Samuel George, Governor of Hong Kong, 43, 57 *n* 1, 238 and *nn* 1, 2
- Boston, Mass., U.S.A., 261
- Bowic, J., & Co., Glasgow brokers, 104 *n* 1
- Boyce, [*blank*], Captain of the *Gresham*, 264
- Boyd, Archibald, Leith, merchant, xxx, xxxiii-xxxvi, 6 and *n* 3
- Boyd, William Sprott, London, East India merchant, xxxiv
- Braganza*, steam-ship, 17-19, 262
- Brice, [*blank*], Dr, Whampoa, 177 and *n* 2
- Briscoe, [*blank*], Dr, *see* Brice, Dr
- Bristol, outport for free trade tea, xviii, xix, xxxv, 33, 36-37, 75  
 brokers, *see* tea brokers
- Brown, [*blank*], Captain of the *Chalco*, 262
- Brown, [*blank*], Captain of the *Nonpareil*, 266
- Brown, [*blank*], Captain of the *Sir Robert Sale*, 266
- Brussels, Belgium, 247-8
- Bucleugh* (?), sailing-ship, 1, 262
- Burn (Frances Burn)*, sailing-ship, 7, 262
- Burnett, [*blank*], Captain of the *Glenmore*, 264
- Buxton, [*blank*], Captain of the *Inca*, 264

- Byron, 6th Lord, *see* Gordon, George
- CAFFRE WAR, *see* Kaffir War
- Cairo, Egypt, 11, 13
- Calcutta, India, xix, xxviii, 30, 47, 208, 263  
mail via, 227, 228, 230-1
- Calcutta, steam-ship, 242-4
- Calende, *see* Sesto Calende
- California, U.S.A., 103, 111, 142, 144, 222  
*see also* coolie trade
- California gold rush, 41, 144
- Cameron, William, xiii and *n* 5, 213 *n* 1
- Cameron, [blank], Captain of the *Hugh Walker*, 267
- Cameron, [blank], 213 and *n* 1, 222
- Campbell (Thomas Campbell), sailing-ship, 190, 262
- Canton, China, xix, xxviii, xxx, xxxi, li, lxxv-lxxvii, 8 *n* 5, 15, 16, 19, 29, 31, 35, 39, 87-88, 132, 137, 151, 152 *n* 2, 171, 202, 205, 214, 221, 227, 232, 242, 252  
amateur theatre, 201, 203, 210  
British right of entry to, lxix, 38 and *n* 4, 40  
Chamber of Commerce, British, 219, 222, 223  
climate, 22, 36, 40-41, 48, 59, 91, 106-7, 117, 146, 182, 186, 201, 208, 211, 234  
decline as centre of the China trade, xlix; *see also* Shanghai, trade rival of Canton  
factories, xv, xx-xxi, xxiii-xxiv, 55, 91, 107, 117  
foreign community at, xxi-xxiv, 57 *n* 1; *see also* Melrose, William  
French flagstaff incident, 238 and *n* 3  
house rent, 50  
postal service to, 27, 114, 164  
regatta, xxii, 23, 27  
steam packet service, lxvii, 41-42, 45, 62, 73, 128, 134, 206  
*see also* China trade; exchange markets in China; exchange rates, in China; freight rates; Parsees; tea market, Canton; tea trade
- Canton Insurance Office (Jardine Matheson & Co.), 122-3, 127, 154, 159, 185, 205
- Canton Press, *The*, xxii *n* 3
- Canton Regatta Club, 23 *n* 1
- Canton River, *see* Pearl River
- Cantonese, hostility to foreigners, xxii-xxiv, lxix
- Cape of Good Hope, South Africa, xix, xlviii *n* 2, 9, 18, 49, 63, 123, 154, 159, 206
- Capsingmoon, Kuangtung, China, 26 *n* 1
- Carlisle and Co., London, tea and coffee brokers, 211
- Carlisle, Lanarkshire, lxxi *n* 2
- Carvalho, L., Macao, 29 *n* 1
- cash (Chinese currency), xxvii and *n* 2
- Caudery, [blank], London, associate of North Simpson Graham & Co., 5-6
- Ceylon, 9, 12, 15, 17-18, 50, 241  
*see also* Galle
- Chalco, sailing-ship, 59, 262
- Challenge, tea clipper, 211-12, 263  
tea per, 214, 231
- Chapel House, Edinburgh, ix, lxxv, 34, 39 and *n* 2, 250, 256
- Chekiangfoo (?), China, 242
- Chester (Earl of Chester), sailing-ship, 105, 263
- Child, William, Edinburgh, china merchant, 220 and *n* 3
- China, x, xx, xxxi, xxxii, xxxv, xxxix, xlvi, lii, lvi, lxxii, lxxiv,

China—*continued*

- lxxvi, 3, 5-7, 9, 12, 17, 30 *n* 1,  
34, 78, 102, 115, 152, 209, 227,  
240, 242, 246, 249  
*see also* Amoy; the Bogue;  
Canton; Capingmoon;  
Chekiangfoo (?); Foochow;  
Formosa; Fukien; Hong Kong;  
Hunan; Hupek; Kiangsi;  
Kuangsi; Kuangtung; Loo  
Kong; Macao; Moning;  
Nanking; Poyang Lake;  
Shanghai; Whampoa  
Christian converts in, 125-7  
climate, 176; *see also* Canton,  
climate; Macao, climate  
disruption of the Manchu Empire,  
234-6; *see also* Taiping  
Rebellion  
foreign population in, lxxvii and *n* 3  
French missionaries in, 202  
life of foreigners in, liii, lxxv-lxxvii;  
*see also* Melrose, William;  
Seare, Benjamin; Watson, Dr  
T. Boswell  
as market for British manu-  
factures, xxvi, xxviii, xxx  
production and distribution of  
tea in, 51, 98, 153  
travel conditions in, 171-2  
*see also* China trade; exchange  
market, China; exchange rates,  
in China; tea trade  
*China*, sailing-ship, 61, 263  
tea per, 5  
*China Mail, The*, xxii *n* 3, 15, 48,  
100, 113, 171  
China New Year, effect of, on  
Canton exchange market, lxxvii,  
28, 30-31, 81-82, 136-7, 141-2,  
190, 201, 230, 232  
China Sea, 177  
piracy on, xxix, 171-2, 237  
China trade, ix-x, xix-xx, 1-li, 152  
*n* 2, 161  
and abolition of monopoly, xvi,  
xviii, xxvii-xxviii  
bartering in, xxviii-xxix, xlix  
disruption of, lxix  
inelasticity in, xvi-xvii  
and opium dealers, xxvii, xxviii-  
xxix  
provisioning of foreign exchange  
for, xxvii-xxix  
*see also* 'Chinamen'; credit,  
letters of; exchange markets;  
tea trade  
'Chinamen' (tea brokers), liv,  
52-53, 67, 75, 100, 119, 123,  
133, 141, 148, 150, 159, 177,  
184, 217, 230, 236  
credit extended by, 22, 61, 68, 81,  
87, 137, 141-2, 156, 160  
integrity of, 103, 109, 121, 159  
relations with foreign buyers,  
liii, lvii, 121; *see also* Melrose,  
William, relations with his  
Chinese suppliers  
Chinese: characteristics of, 125-6,  
194  
hostility to foreigners, xxii-xxiv,  
lxix-lxx, 29, 56  
revolt against Manchus, 234-5;  
*see also* Taiping Rebellion  
Chinese lanterns, 96  
Chinese merchants, shippers of tea,  
25  
Chinese Missionary Association, lxxi  
*Chinese Repository, The*, xxii  
Chinnery, George, artist in Macao,  
xxi *n* 1, lxvi, 30, 153, 208-10  
cholera, 131  
Chow Chow Factory, Canton, xxii  
Christie, John, Edinburgh, grocer  
and tea dealer, 209 and *n* 1  
Christie, Robert, son of John C., 209  
*Chrysolite*, tea clipper, 211, 263  
tea per, 229-30  
Civita Vecchia, Malta, 10 and *n* 2,  
11

- Clark, Rev. John, Edinburgh, xiv, 11
- Clark, [blank], Captain of the *Thomas Campbell*, 262
- Clark, [blank], 254
- Clifton*, sailing-ship, 49-50, 65, 71, 75, 263  
tea per, 46, 50, 98
- Clyde, River, lxxi n 2
- Coalport, Shropshire, 220 n 3
- Colonial Chaplain's School, Hong Kong, 48 n 1
- Commercial Bank, Canton, 62 and n 2, 81, 121
- Commercial Bank of Scotland, Edinburgh, lvi, 255, 257  
letters of credit from, 7, 27, 69, 135, 144-5  
bills drawn under, 24, 28, 80-82, 126, 130, 133, 142, 145, 151, 180, 211, 214-15, 241
- communication, slowness of, and trade cycles, xlvi-xlviii
- Company rupees, *see* East India Company bills
- Congou, common: trade in, xxxvi, liv, 111, 132, 136-7
- comprador, li and n 1, 131, 159
- Compton, Charles S., merchant in China, xxiii-xxiv, 8 and n 5
- Connal, William, Glasgow, tea broker, lx and n 1, lxii, 94 n 2, 97 and n 1, 101, 274
- Connal, William, & Co., Glasgow, 97 n 1, 145 n 3
- Constable Wood & Co., Manila merchant house, 106
- coolie trade  
to California, 225  
to Cuba, 224  
at Hong Kong, lxxviii, 224-5
- Cooper, Matthew, Hong Kong, 152
- Coquette*, sailing-ship, 1, 263
- Corfu, Greece, 242
- Corigliano, 115 n 2
- Cork, Ireland, 249  
tea despatched to, for orders, xxxiii, lix, 36, 52, 59, 114, 124-5, 149, 187, 193, 261, 264-7
- Cotlay, [blank], Captain of the *Naomi*, 182-3, 266
- Cotlay family, 182
- Cowan & Co., Edinburgh, grocer, xxxii n 2
- Craig, Alexander Samuel, Shrewsbury, solicitor, brother-in-law of W. M., xii, lxx, lxxiii and n 1, 3, 4 and n 1, 10, 41, 55 n 1, 131, 189, 192, 221, 251, 252-4, 260
- Craig, Andrew Melrose, son of Alexander Samuel C., xiv, 77 and n 1, 92, 125
- Craig, Helen, *née* Melrose, sister of W. M., lxxiii, 4 n 1, 10, 19, 41, 51, 56, 77, 92, 125, 131, 167, 234, 251, 260
- Craig, Rev. James, Shrewsbury, lxxiii n 3
- Craig, John, Shrewsbury, 55 and n 1
- Craig, Robert Alexander, son of Alexander Samuel C., 234 and n 1
- Craig family, lxxiii n 3, lxxv n 3
- Creak Factory, Canton, xxiii
- credit, letters of, xxv, xlvi, xlix, 67, 95, 147, 149, 197-8, 202-3  
bank charges for, lvi n 2, 2  
usage of, xxxi, lvi, 36, 80
- Crimean War, 255 and n 1
- Cropper (Ann Cropper)*, sailing-ship, 32, 34, 263
- Cuba, 224
- Cunha, Captain P. A. da, Portuguese Governor of Macao, 131
- 'curiosities', trade in, xlv, lxxv, 37, 87-88, 90, 96-97, 145 and n 3, 147, 157-8, 173-4, 180-1, 184, 212, 217-18

- currency in China, xxvii, 80 and  
*n* 1, 114 and *n* 1, 149  
 Czar of Russia, 255 *n* 1
- DAKIN & CO., London, wholesale  
 tea dealers, 5 and *n* 1  
 Dallas & Co., China agency house,  
 266  
 Dalsersf, Lanarkshire, lxxiii *n* 3, 55  
*n* 1  
 Daniel, Maxwell, Canton, 8 *n* 5  
*Dauntless*, sailing-ship, 23, 263  
 Delafosse, Francis J., London tea  
 broker, 13  
 Dent, John, Canton, partner of  
 Dent & Co., 23  
 Dent, [blank], Canton, 221 and *n* 1  
 Dent & Co., China agency house,  
 xxvi, xxix, lviii *n* 2, 23, 55,  
 120, 186, 205, 261-3  
 Dent Beale & Co., 267  
 Derby, 14th earl of, *see* Stanley,  
 Edward George Geoffrey Smith  
 Dickinson, William, Canton, 8 *n* 5  
 Dickson, Agnes, aunt of W. M.,  
 252  
 Dickson, Margaret, *see* Melrose,  
 Margaret, *née* Dickson  
 Dirom Gray & Co., China agency  
 house, 33 *n* 1, 262-3, 265  
 Disraeli, Benjamin, 234 and *n* 2  
 Donaldson, P., Hong Kong, 164  
*Dona Marie II*, Portuguese frigate,  
 131  
 Drewett, [blank], Captain of the  
*Maggie*, 265  
 Dublin, Ireland, 38, 249, 250, 262  
*Dulus*, sailing-ship, 93, 96, 101, 156,  
 263  
 tea per, 105, 122, 134, 137, 140,  
 158  
 Dumaresq, [blank], Captain of the  
*Surprise*, 267  
 Duncan Ferguson & Co., Greenock  
 agents, 104 *n* 1
- Duncan, James, Leith, broker, xxxv  
*n* 5, xxxviii, xlii, xlv, 39  
 Duncan, James, & Co., Leith, 36  
 and *n* 1, 80 *n* 2  
 Dunlop, Archibald, manager of the  
 Oriental Bank, Canton, 76 and  
*n* 1, 186  
 Dunlop, George, Leith, distiller, 76  
 and *n* 1  
 Dunlop, [blank], Mrs, of Edinburgh,  
 186  
 Dunn, [blank], Captain of the  
*Marion McIntyre*, 265  
 Dunoan, Argyllshire, lxxi *n* 2, 75  
 Dutch Factory, Canton, xxxiii  
 Duus, N., & Co., China agency  
 house, 263
- EAST INDIA COMPANY, xxi, 57 *n* 1  
 abolition of its monopoly, xxvi-  
 xxvii, xxix  
 bills, xxvii, 47, 94, 149, 160  
 conduct of the tea trade, xiv-xv,  
 lxii  
 Court of Directors, xxvii  
 East India Rupee Stock, lxxiv and  
*n* 2  
 Eddles family, London, 254  
 Edger, Joseph Frost, Hong Kong,  
 partner of Jamieson How &  
 Co., xx, li *n* 1, lxix, 20 and  
*n* 3, 39, 40, 43, 67, 131, 147-8,  
 164, 222, 224, 227  
 Edger, Mrs Joseph Frost, lxix, 10  
 and *n* 1, 39, 224, 229  
 Edinburgh, xii, xiii *n* 1, xviii, xxxiii,  
 xlv, xlvi, lii, lxiii, lxiv, lxxii,  
 42, 75, 85, 171, 197, 224, 243,  
 250, 256-7  
 banks, *see* Commercial Bank of  
 Scotland; National Bank of  
 Scotland  
 Chamber of Commerce and  
 Manufactures, xiii *n* 1  
 churches: Brighton Street, 107

- n 2; Canongate, II n 1; Old Kirk, xiv  
 Lord Provost, 44 n 2, 107 and n 2  
 Post Office, 148  
 public meeting, controversy at, 107 and n 2, 108  
 Royal Edinburgh Lunatic Asylum, 191 and n 1  
 streets and districts: Buccleugh Place, 132; Canongate, xvii; Chapel Street, 34, 39 n 2; George Street, 115; Morning-side, 191 n 1; Nicolson Street, xiii; Princes Street, xxxvii, 94 n 1; South Bridge, 76-77  
 Theatre Royal, 201, 210 n 1  
 Town Council, 44 n 2  
 University, 39, 46 n 2  
*Edinburgh Evening Courant*, 255  
 Egypt, 12, 34  
   conditions of travel in, 13-14, 43-44  
   *see also* Alexandria; Beheira; Cairo; El-Atf; El-Mahmudigya; Nile  
 El-Atf, Beheira, Egypt, 13  
*Eliza and Hester*, sailing-ship, 263  
   tea per, 127-8, 273  
 El Mahmudigya, Beheira, Egypt, 13 n 3  
 Emperor of China, *see* Tao-Kuang  
 England, 34, 37, 50, 149, 153, 202, 204, 210-11  
   advices from, and their effect on China market, 113, 124, 176, 185, 232  
 Enright, [blank], Captain of the *Chrysolite*, 263  
*Erin*, steam-boat, 177 and n 1  
*Euphrates*, sailing-ship, 30, 38, 41, 60, 180, 263  
   tea per, 70, 88, 110, 130, 273  
 Ewart, [blank], London, tea broker, lxxiv n 1, I and n 1, 4-5, 48, 56, 106, 154  
 Ewart Maccaughey & Co., London, tea brokers, xvi n 1, 8, 72, 130  
   advices to W. M., lx, 10, 92, 102, 111, 133-4, 225  
   charactering and evaluating tea, 33, 37, 53, 70, 79, 83, 85, 87, 98, 99, 135, 138, 139, 240, 243, 251, 253  
   Melrose's business relations with, xvi-xviii, lxxii, 97  
 Ewart Maccaughey Delafosse & Co., xvi n 1  
 Ewart Maccaughey Delafosse & Mounsey, xvi n 1, 33 n 2  
 Ewing, James, Glasgow, merchant, xxxiii, xxxv  
 Ewing, James, & Co., Glasgow, merchant house, 198  
*Ewing (James Ewing)*, sailing-ship, xxxiii  
 exchange markets, China, xxvii-xxix, lvi-lvii, 66-69, 71-72, 80-82, 93, 121, 149  
   bills available for India or London, 28, 65-67, 79, 81  
   denomination of bills, 58, 61-62, 65-66, 101  
   usance and exchange rate, 47, 67, 95  
   *see also* China New Year; exchange rates; opium trade; Parsees; Shanghai  
 exchange rates, in China  
   before 1833: xxvii-xxviii  
   1848-51: lvi  
   1842: xxxiii  
   1843: xxx, xxxiv  
   1844: xxxvi  
   1848: 28  
   1849: lviii n 1, 47, 53, 55, 58-59, 62-63, 66-69, 72, 79, 80-82  
   1850: 94-95, 97-98, 101, 105, 110, 114, 117, 121, 124, 126-7, 129-30  
   1851: 141-2, 145, 147, 149, 151,

- exchange rates—1851—*continued*  
 156, 158-61, 171, 175, 180,  
 184-5, 188-91  
 1852: 209-11, 215, 219-20, 224-5  
 1853: 226-7, 232, 240
- FACSIMILES: *in end pocket*  
 bill of lading, shipment per *Eliza and Hester*  
 insurance policies: Britain,  
 Alliance Marine Assurance Co.,  
 London; China, Canton  
 Insurance Office  
 invoices: tea per *Eliza and Hester*;  
 tea per *Naomi*  
 sale account, tea per *Eliza and Hester*
- Faucon, [*blank*], Captain of the  
*Frolic*, 263
- Ferguson, Isabella, wife of David  
 Melrose, lxxv, 260
- Ferguson, Dr John, Rothes, lxxv
- Ferguson, [*blank*], Captain of the  
*China*, 263
- Findlay, [*blank*], Captain of the  
*Foam*, 263
- Findlay Duff & Co., Glasgow,  
 merchants, 97 n 1
- Fishbourne, [*blank*], Captain of the  
*Hermes*, 264
- Fisher, [*blank*], 14-15
- Fletcher & Co., China agency  
 house, 182
- Fletcher Alexander & Co., China  
 agency house, 152 n 2, 182  
 n 2, 205 n 1
- Fletcher Larkins & Co., China  
 agency house, 182 n 2
- Flint, Alexander, farmer, Lasswade,  
 brother-in-law of Andrew  
 Melrose, 182 and n 1
- Flint, Jane, *née* Dickson, sister of  
 Margaret Dickson Melrose,  
 182 n 1
- Foam*, sailing-ship, 239, 263
- Fokien, tea district, China, 199
- Fontainebleau, France, 248
- Foochow, Fukien, China, 8 n 5
- Forbes, Paul S., partner of Russell  
 & Co., 148 and n 2
- Forbes, R. B., partner of Russell &  
 Co., xxvi
- Forfarshire*, sailing-ship, 118, 128,  
 263, 272
- Formosa, China, 172, 177 n 1
- Frame, Richard, Edinburgh, 39 n 2
- France, 202  
*see also* Fontainebleau; Marseilles;  
 Paris; Versailles
- freight rates  
 1849: lix, 55, 70, 84  
 1850: 109, 120, 122-3, 128, 136,  
 272-3  
 1851: 140, 150, 169, 176, 183,  
 185, 273  
 1852: lix, 200, 203, 213, 223  
 1853: 230
- French, [*blank*], Captain of the  
*Frances Burn*, 262
- French missionaries, 202
- French Revolution, 1848, 10, 12,  
 202
- Friends of China and Hong Kong*  
*Gazette*, xxii n 3
- Frolic*, sailing-ship, 263
- GALIGNANI & CO., Paris, 246
- Galle, Ceylon, 241 n 1
- Ganges, steam-ship, 238
- Gaskell, William, Hong Kong  
 solicitor, 252 and n 3, 254
- Gibb, Thomas A., partner of Gibb  
 Livingston & Co., 25
- Gibb Livingston & Co., China  
 agency house, 25 and n 4,  
 261-2, 264, 267
- Gibraltar, 9, 12
- Gibson, [*blank*], Captain of the  
*Larpen*, 171, 265
- Gifford, Alexander, Calcutta,



- partner of Jamieson How & Co., xx, 164 and *n* 2
- Gifford, John, Calcutta, partner of Jamieson How & Co., xx, 30
- Gifford, [blank], Captain of the *Euphrates*, 30, 263
- Gilbert, John, Hong Kong, merchant, 220 and *n* 2, 247 and *n* 1, 248-9
- Gilbert, W., Canton, merchant, 225 and *n* 1, 226, 247 and *n* 1, 248-9
- Gilman & Co., China agency house, 263
- Gittens, Thomas, 243
- Glasgow, xii, xliii, lxx, 14, 97 *n* 1, 104 *n* 1, 181, 212, 239, 250
- Glasgow tea market, xviii, xix, xlix, lviii, lxiii, lxx, lxxi, 52, 60, 83, 120, 163, 195, 204-5
- limited demand of, lx, 114, 185, 200, 202
- shipments of tea to
- 1842-3: xxxiii, xxxv
- 1849-50: 36, 47, 56-57, 59, 75-76, 97, 266
- 1850-1: 112, 124, 262, 266
- 1851-2: 179, 182-3, 187-8, 198, 266
- 1852-3: 215
- Glencorse, Penicuik, lxxv, 220, 237
- Glenmore, sailing-ship, 33, 36, 80, 264
- Glyn & Co., London, lvi
- gold
- discovered in Australia, 176
- and exchange transactions in China, xxvii, 144
- Golman & Co., China agency house, 267
- Gordon, George, Lord Byron, 129
- Gordon, George Hamilton, Lord Aberdeen, 236 and *n* 1
- Gough, Sir Hugh (later 1st Viscount Gough), 50 *n* 2
- Grace, [blank], Captain of the *Alecto*, 261
- Graham, [blank], Captain of the *Mary Sparks*, 267
- Graham, [blank], of North Simpson Graham & Co., London, wholesale grocers, 4 and *n* 6, 6, 44-45
- Granton Pier, Leith, 6 *n* 1
- Gray, James, Edinburgh, 8, 76
- Gray, Samuel, manager of the Oriental Bank, Canton, 8 and *n* 1, 62, 76, 186, 210
- Great Eastern Railway, lxxiv and *n* 2
- Great Exhibition, 146, 165, 177, 202 *n* 1, 257
- Great India Peninsular Railway, lxxiv *n* 2
- Grecian, sailing-ship, 23-24, 264
- tea per, 22, 26, 38, 43
- Greenock, Renfrewshire, 104 *n* 1
- Gresham (Sir T. Gresham), sailing-ship, 154, 264
- Griffiths, [blank], 242
- Gunpowder tea, lv *n* 1, 269
- Gye, Frederick, & Co., London, wholesale tea dealers, xxxviii and *n* 1
- HALLAM, Samuel J., 25, 31, 34, 36, 46, 94, 103, 148, 207
- assistant in Russell & Co., xx, xxiv, xxxvii-xxxviii, lvii, 30, 45, 82, 88
- China agent for Andrew Melrose & Co., xxxviii-xxxix, 30
- health of, 88, 91, 93, 106, 129, 160
- London tea broker, 207, 211
- Hallam Spence & Co., Edinburgh, tea dealers, xxxvii, xxxviii and *n* 1
- Hamburg, Germany, lix, 180

- Hamilton, Captain Samuel, 6 and *n* 2, 38, 60
- Hammack, [*blank*], Captain of the *Rifleman*, 266
- Harbeck* (*W. H. Harbeck*), sailing-ship, 150-1, 196, 264, 273
- Hardinge* (*L. Hardinge*), sailing-ship, 54, 65, 99, 264
- Hardinge* (*Sir H. Hardinge*), sailing-ship, 63, 94
- Hargreaves, George, Liverpool, merchant, of Platt Hargreaves & Co., 167 and *n* 2
- Hargreaves, Joseph, Manchester, merchant, of Platt Hargreaves & Co., 167 and *n* 2
- Hargreaves & Co., China agency house, 182, 262, 264
- Harrison and Crosfield, Liverpool, tea and coffee merchants, 53 and *n* 1
- Hashemy*, sailing-ship, 152 *n* 2
- Hastie, Robert, & Co., Glasgow, merchants, 104 *n* 1
- Heard & Co., China agency house, 261, 263-5
- Herald*, sailing-ship, 179-80, 182-3, 193, 199, 264
- mutiny on, 203, 204, 205, 207-8
- Hereford, Herefordshire, 254
- Hermes*, British man-of-war, 237, 264
- Hildreth, [*blank*], Captain of the *Sappho*, 267
- Hill, George, & Co., Edinburgh, 173 and *n* 2, 180, 212, 217-18
- Hippodrome, Paris, 247
- Hodgson, J., Canton, of Dirom Gray & Co., 33
- Hodgson, [*blank*], Liverpool, brother of J. Hodgson, 32
- Hodgson, [*blank*], London, partner of Bedwell Yates & Co., 4 and *n* 6, 5, 7, 50
- Holliday Wise & Co., China agency house, 146 *n* 1, 262
- Holy Land, lxxiv, 11, 34
- Hong Kong, 18, 29, 32, 34, 49, 88, 186, 207, 208, 222, 231, 234, 237
- British community in, lxxviii-lxix, 39, 40, 76 *n* 1, 134, 221, 224-5, 229
- Chinese population in, and hostility to British, lxxviii-lxxx
- coolie trade at, lxxviii, 224-5
- depreciation of property in, 227
- governor of, *see* Bonham, Sir Samuel George
- Legislative Council of, lxxviii, 20 *n* 3, 40 *n* 2
- Post Office, 52, 148 and *n* 1, 164-5
- postal service with Britain, xii, lxix, 28, 31, 53, 73, 85, 88, 147, 234
- as shipping centre, lviii, 54, 57, 58, 179, 261-5, 267
- steam-boat service to Shanghai, 172 and *n* 3
- Hong Kong Register*, 40 *n* 2
- Hong merchants, Canton, 54 and *n* 2, 171
- Hong Moi tea, 78 and *n* 1, 79-80, 138, 268
- Hougoumont, château, Belgium, 249
- House of Commons, 256
- House of Lords, 256
- Howqua IV, *see* Wu Ch'ung-yueh
- Hsu Kuang-chin, Imperial Commissioner and Governor-General of Kuangtung and Kuangsi, 235 and *n* 2, 236
- Hulbert, James A., Liverpool tea broker, 3 and *n* 3
- Hull, port for free trade tea, xviii, xxx, xxxv
- Hunan, province, China, 235 *n* 2
- Hunt, [*blank*], Captain of the *Reindeer*, 266

- Hupek, province, China, 235 *n* 2
- Hutchison, James H., Leith, merchant, xxxii and *n* 1
- Hutchison, Thomas H., Leith, merchant, xxxii and *n* 1, 210 and *n* 2
- Hutchison & Co., Leith, xxxii *nn* 1, 2, 210 *n* 2
- Hutton, [blank], Captain of the *Queen*, 266
- Hyde, Samuel, London, merchant, of Hyde Lenox & Co., 152 *n* 2
- Hyde Lenox & Co., East India merchants, xxvi, 29 *n* 1, 152 and *n* 2, 162, 206
- Hyde (William Hyde)*, sailing-ship, 152 *n* 2
- Hyland, Thomas, Hong Kong, postmaster, 148 and *n* 1, 164-5
- Inca*, sailing-ship, 187, 264
- India, 15, 30 *n* 1, 50 and *n* 2, 142-3, 152 *n* 2, 153  
*see also* Bombay; Calcutta and finance of the China trade, xix-xx, xxviii-xxix, lvii, 28, 30, 65-66, 81; *see also* China trade; tea trade
- Inglewood*, sailing-ship, 3, 264
- insurance, on shipments from China:  
 in Canton offices, 53, 63, 64, 118, 122-3, 127, 129-30, 138-9, 186, 190, 205, *facsimile*  
 policy opened in Britain, 48-49, 52, 54, 59, 63, 73, 96, 128, 130, 136, 144-5, 156, 174, 211, 214, *facsimile*
- interest, rates of:  
 in Britain, 13, 69, 121  
 in China, 87, 118, 156, 158, 192
- Invincible*, American clipper, 214, 218, 238, 264
- Ireland, lxxii  
*see also* Belfast; Cork; Dublin; Londonderry
- Isabella*, sailing-ship, xxxi and *n* 1, xxxii and *n* 2, xl, 210 *n* 2
- JAMESON, John, Edinburgh, school-master, lxxv *n* 1
- Jamieson, Andrew, Glasgow-Liverpool merchant, xix *n* 4, xxviii, 3
- Jamieson, Robert, Glasgow-Liverpool merchant, brother of Andrew J., xix *n* 4, xxviii, 3
- Jamieson & Co., Calcutta, merchant house, 30
- Jamieson Bros., Liverpool, merchant house, xix *n* 4, 3 *n* 2, 41
- Jamieson Edger & Co., China merchant house, 20 *n* 3, 114, 131, 132, 163, 227, 263
- Jamieson Gifford & Co., China merchant house, 20 *n* 1, 30 *n* 2, 131 *n* 1, 164 *n* 1
- Jamieson How & Co., Glasgow-Liverpool East India merchant house, xix and *n* 4, xx, xxvi, xxviii, 2, 20 *n* 1, 92, 107, 109, 261, 264, 270
- Jane (Charlotte Jane)*, sailing-ship, 111, 264
- 'Japoon' screens, 96
- Jardin de Plantes, Paris, 247
- Jardine, Andrew, partner of Jardine Matheson & Co., xxxv
- Jardine, David, partner of Jardine Matheson & Co., 222
- Jardine, Dr William, partner of Jardine Matheson & Co., xxx, xlviii *n* 1, 47
- Jardine Matheson & Co.:  
 China agency house, xxvi, lxxiv *n* 1, 26, 107, 152 *n* 2, 205  
 as merchant and agents in the tea trade, xvii, xxxi-xxxvii, xxxiii and *n* 7, xxxiv-xxxv, 76, 120, 163, 169, 211, 219, 270

- Jardine Matheson & Co.—*continued*  
 operations on the Canton exchange market, xxix and *n* 4, xxx, 87  
 opium trade and dollar reserves, ix, xxvii, xxix–xxx, lviii *n* 2  
 shipments of tea to the outports, xxx, xxxiii, xxxiv–xxxvi, 33, 36–37, 52, 59, 97, 114, 239, 261, 263, 264–5, 267  
 as shipowners and despatchers, xxix, 6, 57, 123, 167, 262  
*see also* Canton Insurance Office
- Java, Indonesia, 243
- Java Head, Cape, Indonesia, 84
- Johnson, [*blank*], Captain of the *Invincible*, 264
- Johnston, Sir William, of Kirkhitt, Lord Provost of Edinburgh, 107 and *nn* 1, 2
- joint accounts, x, xl–xlii, 83, 215–17  
 advantages of, xl–xli, 137, 162  
 organisation of, xl–xli, 165  
 problems of cooperation, li–lii, 162–3, 166, 196–7, 232–4  
*see also* Andrew Melrose and Co., joint venture accounts
- Jones Lloyd & Co., London, lvi
- Juliet*, sailing-ship, 183, 264  
 tea per, 197–8, 209, 233
- KAFFIR WAR, 193 and *n* 1
- Kaffraria, province, South Africa, 193 *n* 1
- Kelso, Roxburghshire, xiii *n* 2
- Kenny, Dr B., Canton, lxvi, 42 *n* 1, 53, 176, 202, 213, 219, 228, 231, 234
- Kenny, [*blank*], Mrs, wife of Dr Kenny, 42, 176, 213, 219, 229
- Keppel, Captain Harry, of the British navy in China, 48 *n* 1
- Kettlewell, [*blank*], Captain of the *Clifton*, 263
- Kiangsi, province, China, 98 *n* 1
- Killarney, Co. Kerry, Ireland, 249, 250
- Kleyenberg, [*blank*], Captain of the *Anna*, 261
- Knights of Malta, houses of, 11
- Kruger, Henry R., Captain of the *Eliza and Hester*, 263
- Kuang-li hang, one of the Hong merchant houses, Canton, 54 *n* 2
- Kuangsi, province, China, 235 *n* 2
- Kuangtung, province, China, 54 *n* 2, 235 *n* 2
- Lady Mary Wood*, mail steamer, 172 and *n* 3
- Laidlaws, Edinburgh family, 8
- Lancaster (Duke of Lancaster)*, sailing-ship, 70, 88, 265
- Lancastrian*, sailing-ship, 105, 117, 134, 140, 265
- Langford, [*blank*], Captain of the *Grecian*, 264
- Langeley, [*blank*], Captain of the *Lancastrian*, 265
- Larken, Edmund, London, tea broker, xvi and *n* 2
- Larken Varnham & Hamilton, London, tea brokers, xvi and *n* 1, xvii–xviii
- Larpent*, sailing-ship, 171–2, 265
- Lascar*, sailing-ship, 28, 52, 265
- Lasswade, Midlothian, xiii, 30, 32, 182 *n* 1
- Law, William, grocer and Lord Provost of Edinburgh, lxxv, 25 *n* 2, 44–45, 107 and *n* 2
- Law, William David, son of William L. and brother-in-law of W. M., 25 and *n* 2, 146, 164, 167, 260
- Lawrence, [*blank*], Captain of the *Charlotte Jane*, 264
- Lawson, [*blank*], Captain of the *Herald*, 203–4, 264
- Lawson, [*blank*], Mrs, wife of Captain Lawson of the *Herald*, 203

- Lawson, [*blank*], Captain of the *Somnauth*, 267
- Layton, John, London, tea broker, xv and n 1
- Leask, [*blank*], Captain of the *Countess of Seafield*, 267
- Le Geyt, William, Canton, of MacVicar and Co., xxi
- Leith, Midlothian, 6 n 3, 39, 139
- Leith tea market, xviii, lxx, 38, 80, 165  
 attempt to control, xxxv-xxxvii  
 limited demand of, xxxvi, lviii, lx, 33, 37, 193, 200, 202  
 sale of first shipment of free trade tea, xxxi-xxxii  
 shipments of tea to  
 1842-3: xxxiii-xxxiv  
 1843-4: xxx  
 1846-7: 261, 264  
 1848-9: 28, 265  
 1849-50: 36, 75  
 1851-2: 179, 182-3, 185, 187, 199, 203, 264
- Leith*, sailing-ship, 20, 265
- Lindsay, Hugh Hamilton, partner of Lindsay & Co., 57 n 1
- Lindsay & Co., China agency house, 76, 120, 211, 263, 267  
 shipments of tea to Glasgow, 57 and n 1, 75-76, 112, 204, 266  
 trade at Shanghai, 57 n 1, 112-13, 173, 261
- Linlithgow, W. Lothian, xlii n 5
- Littledale, Harold, Liverpool, partner of T. & H. Littledale & Co., 3 and n 4
- Littledale, I., Liverpool, merchant and broker, 3 n 4
- Littledale, Thomas, Liverpool, partner of T. & H. Littledale & Co., 3 and n 4
- Littledale & Co., Liverpool, merchant and brokerage house, lx, 3 and n 4, 33, 110, 145 n 3
- Liverpool, Lancashire, xix, 3, 33-34, 88, 91-92, 132, 149, 174, 178, 181, 205, 218
- Liverpool tea market, xv, xviii, xxxv, lxiii, 113, 151, 158, 195, 198  
 business circulars concerning, 98, 100, 146-7  
 sales at, lx, lxiv, 100, 273  
 shipments of tea to  
 1849-50: 49, 51, 99, 170, 265-7  
 1850-1: 96, 122, 128, 261-3, 265, 267  
 1851-2: 140, 185, 264, 267  
 1852-3: 211, 214, 263  
 stock on hand, 90, 163
- London, lxxiii-lxxiv, lxxvi, 6, 8, 17, 19, 30, 125, 146, 171, 245, 248, 252-3, 257  
 as a financial and monetary centre, xxvii-xxviii, liv, 47, 65, 67, 205 and n 1, 242
- London tea market, lxiii, lxx, 33, 52, 61, 92, 151, 163, 198, 219, 229  
 centre for the tea trade, xiv-xvi, xviii-xix  
 demand for fine quality tea, lix, 47, 60, 73, 83  
 sales, xxxiv-xxxv, lx, lxii, lxiv, 111, 272-3  
 shipments of tea to  
 1848-9: 23, 24, 263-5, 267  
 1849-50: 49, 51, 53, 261-7  
 1850-1: 124-5, 129, 261, 263, 265-7  
 1851-2: 140, 167, 183, 185, 262, 267  
 1852-3: 211, 263, 266  
*see also* tea, tastes and preferences
- London Price Current*, 32, 44-45
- Londonderry, Ireland, lxxi n 2
- Loo Kong (?), China, 145 n 2
- Lord Amherst*, East Indiaman, 57 n 1
- Loudon, Hope, 243-4

- Lu Wen-wie, founder of Kuang-li hang, 54 *n* 2
- Lucerne, Switzerland, 245-6
- M'ALPIN, [*blank*], Captain of the *Aberfoyle*, 261
- Macaulay, Thomas Babington, 256-7
- Maccaughey, Hugh N., London, tea broker, xvi-xvii, 4 and *n* 3, 7, 8, 13, 27, 97, 114, 152, 248
- M'Cracken, William, Liverpool-Glasgow merchant, partner of M'Cracken Jamieson & Co., xix *n* 4
- M'Donald, [*blank*], Captain of the *John O'Gaunt*, 266
- McDonald (*Flora McDonald*), sailing-ship, 239, 265  
tea per, 33, 36, 80, 250
- McEwan, [*blank*], 8
- McGregor, R., Canton, 221 and *n* 1
- M'Intyre (*Marion M'Intyre*), sailing-ship, 222, 265
- McLean (*Ann McLean*), sailing-ship, 151, 265
- Macmillan, John, partner of Andrew Melrose & Co., lxxii *n* 6
- McShane, A., Canton, 145
- MacVicar & Co., China agency house, xxi, 263
- Macao, China, xxii, 31, 35, 39, 40 *n* 1, 41, 49, 85, 102, 132, 141, 146, 148, 151, 167, 187, 221, 263  
climate, lxvi, 30, 40, 86-87, 131, 134, 152-3, 176, 201, 208  
house rent at, 40  
jurisdiction of Portuguese at, lxvii, 29, 32, 48 and *n* 1, 56 and *n* 1  
Portuguese governor of, 29, 32, 56 and *n* 1, 131; *see also* Amaral, João Maria Ferreira do; Cunha, Captain P. A. da  
Portuguese post boat, 147-8
- resort for foreigners in China, lxvi-lxvii, 27, 28-29, 38, 62, 76, 79, 88, 93, 106, 194  
steam packet service to Canton, 42, 45, 82
- mace (Chinese currency), 80 and *n* 1
- Madeleine, Church of, Paris, 247
- Magadino, Switzerland, 245
- Magellan, sailing-ship, 166, 265  
chartered by W. M. in 1849, 54, 59, 63, 88  
freight rate for, lix, 55, 57  
speed of, 57-58, 84, 90, 125  
tea per (1849):  
character and valuation of, 65, 75, 85-86, 94, 98, 123, 143  
insurance of, 139  
sale of, 93, 104, 151  
chartered by W. M. in 1852, 212, 215, 217  
freight rate for, lix, 213-14  
speed of, 229, 237, 238  
tea per (1852):  
character and valuation of, 218, 222-3, 224-5, 228, 231-2, 236, 240  
sale of, 238-9
- Maggie, sailing-ship, 148, 265
- Maggiore, Lake, Italy/Switzerland, 245
- Magniac & Co., predecessor of Jardine Matheson & Co., xvi
- Magniac Smith & Co., London correspondents of Jardine Matheson & Co., xxxiv-xxxv
- Main, [*blank*], Captain of the *Nerbudda*, 266
- Malacca, Malaya, 238 *n* 1
- Malta, 9-12  
*see also* Civita Vecchia
- Man, James Lawrence, Canton, partner of Benjamin Seare & Co., 144, 147
- Manchester, Lancashire, lxxvi
- Manchu Empire, lxix

- Manchus, 235  
*Mandarin*, tea-clipper, 198, 205, 265  
 Manila, Philippines, 26, 106, 153, 203, 207, 261, 267  
*Marian*, sailing-ship, 23, 74, 265  
*Marion*, American man-of-war, 172  
 Marriage Bill of 1850 (Deceased Wife's Sister's Bill), 107 *n* 2  
 Marseilles, France: overland mail *via*, 10, 131, 147-8, 241-2, 243  
 Matheson, D., Glasgow, 36 *n* 1  
 Matheson, James, partner of Jardine Matheson & Co., xxx  
 Mathesons, of Jardine Matheson & Co., ix  
 Mathieson, George, Edinburgh, shipowner, brother-in-law of W. M., lxxv, 260  
 Mauritius, sugar trade of, xliii and *n* 2, 14-15  
 Maxton, [*blank*], Captain of the *Dulius*, 263  
 Melbourne, Australia, lxxi *n* 3  
*Mellish*, sailing-ship, 1, 265  
 Melrose, Agnes, sister of W. M., lxxv, 75, 132, 148, 177, 249-50, 260  
 Melrose, Andrew, father of W. M., 260  
   business policies and practices, xvii, xxiv, xxxviii-xxxix, xlv, xlvi, lx, lxii-lxiv, 35-37, 41, 47, 61, 87, 93, 104 and *n* 1, 160  
   character and relations with W. M., x, xii, xiv, xx, lxvi, 34, 42, 44 and *n* 1, 45, 48, 85-86, 88, 91, 93, 125, 132, 161, 162, 164-5, 177, 189, 201, 207, 209-10, 224, 228, 253, 256-7  
   difficulties encountered with China agency houses, xviii, xxxi-xxxvii, lv  
   early career, xiii and *n* 1, xiv, xvii, xliii  
   health, 46, 115, 257  
   as joint venturer, xxxii, xxxviii, xl-xlii; *see also* Melrose, Andrew, & Co., joint venture accounts  
   properties, xiii, lxxv, 39 *n* 2, 220 and *n* 1, 237  
   style of life, xiii-xiv, lxxiv, lxxv and *n* 2, 39, 43-44, 117, 131, 148, 194, 213, 246, 249  
   as tea dealer and merchant, v, xvi, xxv-xxvi, lxiii, 47, 74, 76-78, 86, 94, 105-6, 134, 135 *n* 2, 270-1, 274  
   *see also* bills of exchange, drawn on A. M. & Co.; Melrose, Andrew, & Co.  
 Melrose, Andrew, Jr., brother of W. M., 44, 132, 189, 194, 206, 213, 219, 225, 237, 250, 252, 254, 260  
   capital and partnership in Andrew Melrose & Co., lxv, lxxii and *n* 6, 129  
   character, lxxi, 72, 75-76, 92, 124, 147, 186, 257  
   health, lxxv, 224, 227-8, 234  
   as tea taster, lxxi-lxxii, 20, 24, 33, 37, 49, 161  
 Melrose, Andrew, & Co.  
   capital, amount of, xxxix, xlv, lxxii  
   capital, recruitment and employment of, in overseas trade, xxxiii, xxxviii, xxxix-xl, xlii, xlv, l, lvi, 270-1  
   joint venture accounts:  
     with W. M., xxiv, 20-21, 53, 65, 70, 74, 85, 94, 96-97, 101, 105, 110-11, 114, 117, 122, 127, 130, 135, 141, 147, 149-50, 154-6, 159, 188-90, 192, 209, 211, 214-16, 226, 230, 251  
     with James Richardson & Co., 31, 64-68, 71, 104, 118, 121-3,

- Melrose, Andrew & Co.—*continued*  
 126-7, 129-30, 142, 145, 147,  
 151, 153-4, 156, 159, 173, 176,  
 178, 197, 215-16  
 with James Richardson & Co.  
 and W. M., 1, 162-3, 165, 178,  
 187-8, 190, 192, 198, 206, 236,  
 241  
 with Robert Schaw & Co.,  
 104, 122-3, 126, 127-8, 130,  
 151, 153-5  
 management of the import and  
 sale of tea, xi-xii, xvii, xxv,  
 xxxiii, xliv, 1-111, 1x-1xiv, 22,  
 27, 42-43, 102-3, 187, 193, 274;  
*see also* Simpson, John  
 retirement of partners and its  
 effect on, xliv, lii, lxv, lxx-  
 lxxi, lxxii and *n* 6  
 profits, xlvii, lxiv-lxv, 129, 271  
 tea dealers, wholesale and retail,  
 xiii and *n* 1, xvii-xviii, xli, xlv,  
 lv, lxi, lxiv, lxxiv, 36 *n* 1
- Melrose, Archibald, brother of  
 Andrew M., 260
- Melrose, David, brother of W. M.,  
 lxvi, lxxv, 16, 134, 208, 213,  
 218-19, 221-2, 248, 260
- Melrose, Elizabeth, sister of W. M.,  
 lxxv *n* 3, 34, 41, 56, 75, 92,  
 115, 117, 195, 249, 260
- Melrose, Helen, *see* Craig, Helen
- Melrose, Helen, *née* Brown, wife  
 of James M., grandmother of  
 W. M., 260
- Melrose, Helen, sister of Andrew  
 M., xiv, 147, 194
- Melrose, Isabella, sister of Andrew  
 M., xiv, 129, 189, 194
- Melrose, Isabella, sister of W. M.,  
 lxxv, 25, 41, 56, 125, 146,  
 164, 167-8, 202, 249-50, 257,  
 260
- Melrose, James, Penicuik, grand-  
 father of W. M., xiii *n* 1, 260
- Melrose, James, brother of Andrew  
 M., 260
- Melrose, James, brother of W. M.,  
 xix, lxxv, 6-7, 75, 132, 250-1,  
 252, 256-7, 260  
 training for the tea trade, lx, 3  
*n* 4, 5, 17, 19, 33-34, 88, 91-92
- Melrose, John, brother of Andrew  
 M., 41 and *n* 1
- Melrose, John, brother of W. M.,  
 4, 7, 60, 75, 88, 92, 189, 202,  
 206, 253-5, 260  
 capital and partnership in Andrew  
 Melrose & Co., lxv, lxx, 93,  
 99, 129  
 character, lxxi, 129, 256-7  
 manager of John Melrose & Co.,  
 lxx-lxxi, lxxi *nm* 1, 2
- Melrose, John, & Co., Glasgow,  
 wholesale tea firm, lxx, lxxi  
 and *n* 2
- Melrose, Margaret, *née* Dickson,  
 mother of W. M., xiii and *n* 2,  
 xiv, xxv, 260
- Melrose, Margaret, sister of Andrew  
 M., 260
- Melrose, Margaret, sister of W. M.,  
 260
- Melrose, Rosina, sister of Andrew  
 M., 260
- Melrose, William, brother of  
 Andrew M., 260
- MELROSE, WILLIAM, xxvii,  
 xxviii, xxxi, xxxviii, lxxvii, 260  
 advices from Britain, important  
 to, li, lv, lx-lxi, 76, 98-99, 101,  
 110-11, 204-5, 229-30  
 as agent and co-venturer, xii, xxv,  
 xxxvi-xxxvii, xxxix-xlii, xlv-  
 liv, 45, 66-69, 114, 139, 162-4,  
 166, 270, *facsimiles of invoices*;  
*see also* Melrose, Andrew, &  
 Co., joint venture accounts  
 assistant for Jamieson How & Co.,  
 xix-xxi, xxxvii



- business philosophy and counter-cyclical policies, *xlvi*, *l*, *lxix*, *lxx*, 92, 129, 135, 143, 146, 150, 161, 167, 184-5, 187-8, 195-6, 204
- exchange operations, *lvi-lviii*, 22-24, 28, 30-31, 35, 37, 55, 58, 65-70, 78, 80-82, 95, 97-98, 109
- gunpowder tea, speculation in, *lv-lvi*, 61, 64-65, 90, 93, 102-4, 106, 108-11, 116-17, 121-2, 125, 140-1
- health, *xxiv-xxv*, *xxxix*, *lxvi*, 17-19, 22, 30, 46, 48, 85, 90, 93, 104, 115-16, 124, 131, 135, 168, 182, 201, 203, 207, 213, 219, 225, 240
- life in China, *xi*, *xx-xxv*, *liii*, *lxv-lxix*, 27, 29-30, 32, 34, 39-42, 54-55, 76, 86, 88, 91, 94, 107, 117, 146, 186, 194, 207, 209
- own account trading, *lxv*, 37, 44-45, 61, 63-65, 69, 86-87, 96, 104-5, 114, 142, 156, 189-90, 192, 196, 206, 251
- personal characteristics, *xi*, *xlili-xliv*, *xlix*, *lxvi*, *li*, 34, 43-44, 67, 71-72, 75-76, 79, 125-6, 207
- profits and investments, *lxiv-lxv*, *lxxiv* and *n 2*, 271
- purchasing practices and policies, *xlvi*, *liv-lvi*, 36, 43, 45, 74, 86, 89-91, 100-1, 113, 118-20, 183-4, 230
- relations with his Chinese suppliers, *liii*, *lvii*, 109, 158
- shipping practices and policies, *xlvi*, *xlvi*, *lviii-lx*, 51-52, 58, 76, 89, 93, 96, 133, 136, 141, 149
- style of life in Britain, *lxxii-lxxvi*, 249-51, 252-3, 255-6
- as tea taster, *lv*, 24, 49, 51-52, 72-73, 75, 78-79, 82-83, 99, 106, 123, 177, 179
- training for the tea trade, *xiii*, *xvii-xix*, *lv*
- Melrose family, *xiii* and *n 1*, *xiv*, *xvi*, *lxxv*, 5, 260
- Melrose, Roxburghshire, 42
- Mencius*, sailing-ship, 51-52, 265
- Mid Calder, Midlothian, 44 *n 1*
- Middletown, Conn., U.S.A., 45 *n 2*
- Milan, Italy, 244-5
- Mingqua Factory, Canton, *xxiv*
- Moffat, Robert, London, tea and coffee broker, 7 and *n 1*
- Moffat, William, London, tea and coffee broker, 7 and *n 1*
- Moffat, [*blank*], of Bangholm, 202 *n 1*
- Moffat & Co., London brokers, 7 *n 1*
- Monarch*, sailing-ship, *xlii*, 265
- tea per, 63, 64, 93, 99
- 'money market', Britain, 90, 93, 143
- money of account, China, *lvi* and *n 1*, 80 and *n 1*
- Moning, tea district in Kiangsi, China, 98 *n 1*
- monsoon, and rate of insurance, 64
- Mordue, [*blank*], Captain of the *Superb*, 267
- Morningside Mirror, The*, 191 *n 1*
- Morrice, [*blank*], Captain of the *Walter Morrice*, 265
- Morrice (*Walter Morrice*), sailing-ship, 154, 265
- tea per, 70, 73
- Morrison, Mark, Edinburgh merchant, brother-in-law of W. M., *lxxv*
- Morrison, William, Edinburgh merchant, *lxxv*
- Morton, [*blank*], Captain of the *Ann Cropper*, 263

- Mounsey, John Thomas, London, tea broker, lxxiii, lxxiv and *n* 1, 33, 38, 85, 107, 225, 248, 251
- Mowqua, of Kuang-li hang, Canton, lxvi, 54 and *n* 2
- Moyune, green tea, 269
- Muir, J. D., Amoy, 247-8
- Muir, Robert, Shrewsbury, banker, lxxiii, 4 and *n* 2, 252, 255
- Murray, Charles W., Canton, son of W. H. Murray, 201 and *n* 2, 210
- Murray, Henry, Canton, son of W. H. Murray, 201 and *n* 2, 210
- Murray, William Henry, actor-manager of the Theatre Royal, Edinburgh, 201, 210 and *n* 1
- Murrow, L. E., Canton, brother of Y. J. Murrow, 35
- Murrow, Y. J., Canton and Hong Kong, lxix, 30, 35, 46, 50, 221, 229, 237  
as agent and merchant, 21-22, 109-10, 137, 154-5, 222, 227, 252, 254, 270  
bankruptcy, 161, 167, 208  
as ship-builder and despatcher, lviii and *n* 2, 20 and *n* 2, 54, 58, 179, 213, 224-5
- Murrow & Co., Canton, China agency house, 35
- Murrow Stephenson & Co., Hong Kong, 265
- musters, overland, and valuation of, 153-4
- NANKING, Kiangsi, China, 238 and *n* 2, 242-3
- Naomi, sailing-ship, 178-9, 182-3, 188, 198, 205-6  
chartered by W. M. in 1850, 124-5, 149, 266  
tea per :  
character and valuation of, 128, 138, 141, 143-4, 150, 154, 172, 174, 274  
cost of, 272, 274, *facsimile of invoice*  
insurance of, 127, 138-9, 153, 156, 159-60, 215, 217  
sale of, lxii, 151, 155, 272, 274
- Napoleon, Louis, President of France, 202, 207, 248
- National Bank of Scotland, Edinburgh, 76  
letters of credit from, xl and *n* 2, lvi, 46, 61, 64-65, 85, 144, 146-7, 149-50, 176  
bills drawn under, 58-59, 62, 66, 68, 105, 110, 117, 121, 126, 130, 155-6, 159, 189
- National Provincial Bank of England, Shrewsbury, 4 *n* 2, 255
- Nerbudda, sailing-ship, 171, 266
- Nether Mosshouse, Penicuik, xiii *n* 1
- Newman, Marie Eliza, widow of Rev. Stedding, lxxvi
- New English Factory, Canton, xxiii
- New South Wales, Australia, xxxii *n* 1, 210 *n* 2
- New York, N.Y., U.S.A., 265
- Nicholson, John, London, tea agent, xvi
- Nile, River, Egypt, 11, 13-14, 44
- Ning Yong tea, 58 and *n* 1, 83
- Nonpareil, sailing-ship, 112, 266
- North, [blank], London, of North Simpson Graham & Co., 4 and *n* 4, 5
- North Simpson Graham & Co., London, wholesale grocers and tea dealers, 4 *n* 4, 5 *n* 2, 44-45
- North Star, Aberdeen clipper, 188, 266
- Nye Parkin & Co., China agency house, 267

- Nymph*, sailing-ship, 237
- OAKE, PARTRIDGE & CO., London, 242
- Oakley, Horace, Canton, 221 and *n* 1
- O'Donnaghue, *see* Ouchterlony, John
- O'Donnell, [*blank*], of Pendreich, 41
- O'Gaunt (*John O'Gaunt*), tea clipper, 52, 211, 266
- Old English Factory, Canton, xx-xxi, xxiii
- Oolong tea, 26, 58 *n* 1
- opium trade, ix, xix, xlix, 45 *n* 2, 66, 87, 149, 177, 206, 235 and conveyance of mail, 172 and *n* 3
- duopoly in, xxix, lviii *n* 2 and exports of tea to Britain, xxvii-xxix, xxxiv-xxxv *see also* Parsees; Shanghai
- Opium War, *see* Anglo-Chinese War, first
- Orense, P. Manuel S., Macau, agent for Spanish mail, 26 and *n* 1, 27
- Oriental*, tea clipper, 120, 166, 173, 200, 266
- Oriental Bank, Canton, 62, 76, 147, 167, 171, 186, 210 operations on the exchange market, lvii, 47, 55, 58, 79, 80-81, 94-95, 97-98, 114, 121
- Osgood, [*blank*], Captain of the *Anna Maria*, 261
- <sup>1</sup>Ospital, Switzerland, 245
- Ouchterlony, Lieutenant John, author of *The Chinese War*, 252 *n* 1
- Overland China Mail*, xxii *n* 3
- Overland Friends of China*, xxii *n* 3
- Overland Register and Price Current*, xxii *n* 3
- Pacha*, P. & O. steamer, 177 and *n* 1
- Paisley, Renfrewshire, lxxi *n* 2
- Palmer, [*blank*], Captain of the *North Star*, 266
- Palmer, [*blank*], Captain of the *Oriental*, 266
- Palmer McKillop Dent & Co., London correspondent of Dent & Co., 186, 205 and *n* 1
- Palmerston, Lord, *see* Temple, Henry John
- Paris, France, 245-6, 248
- Parkes, Harry, British consul in Canton, 238 *n* 3
- Parsees, and the Canton exchange market, xxviii, lvii, lviii *n* 1, 28, 66, 81, 121, 176
- Partridge, [*blank*], 242-3
- Passenger*, sailing-ship, xxx, xxxvi
- Pearl*, sailing-ship, 18
- Pearl River, China, xxi, 26 *n* 1, 38 *n* 5, 91, 221 *n* 1
- Pearson, [*blank*], Captain of the *John Bibby*, 262
- Pekin, China, 238
- Penang, Malaya, 17, 19, 240-2
- Pendreich (Pittendreich), Lasswade, xiii-xiv, xxv, lxxiii, lxxv, 11, 16, 19, 29, 32, 36, 41, 75
- Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company, x, xii, 172 and *n* 3, 241 *n* 1
- Penicuik, Midlothian, xiii *n* 1, 46 *n* 1, 220 *n* 1
- Pennycuik, James Farrell, son of John P., 50 and *n* 2, 51
- Pennycuik, John, Brigadier-general, 50 and *n* 2, 51
- Penrice, [*blank*], Captain of the *Mencius*, 265
- Percival, [*blank*], Captain of the *Monarch*, 265
- Pereire, L., Macao, 267
- Peterson, [*blank*], Captain of the *Auguste and Bertha*, 183, 262

- Piccope, T. C., Canton, of Mac-Vicar & Co., xxi
- Piccope, W. N., Canton, of Murrow & Co., 35
- picul (Chinese weight), lvi and *n* 1
- pirates, on the China coast, 26 *n* 1, 221 and *n* 1
- Pittendreich, *see* Pendreich
- Pitts, [*blank*], Captain of the *Challenge*, 263
- Platt Hargreaves & Co., China agency house, 167 *n* 2
- plough, steam, 202 and *n* 1
- Poland, 255 *n* 1
- Portobello, Midlothian, 243
- Portuguese, behaviour in the treaty ports, 56 *n* 1
- postal service: Britain and China, xxii and *n* 2, li, 27, 52, 147, 206, 226-7, 230
- Poyang Lake, Kiangsi, China, 98 *n* 1
- Praya Grande, Macau, 29
- Pratas, Island, South China Sea, 172 and *n* 1
- Prescott, [*blank*], Captain of the *Coquette*, 263
- Presidencies, Indian, xxvii
- Prince of Wales Island, 238 *n* 1
- Proud, [*blank*], Captain of the *Flora MacDonald*, 265
- Prouse (William Prouse), sailing-ship, 49, 114, 266
- Pustau, William, & Co., China agency house, 262
- Put, [*blank*], Captain of the *Dauntless*, 263
- Queen*, sailing-ship, 75, 112, 204, 266
- Rajah*, sailing-ship, xxxiii-xxxiv
- Rathbone Bros & Co., Liverpool merchants, ix *n* 1, xxxiii and *n* 2, lxii
- Rathbone Worthington & Silva, China agency house, xxi, 1-li, lvii, lviii *n* 1, 261
- Red Sea, 13-14
- Reindeer*, tea clipper, 166, 266
- Reiss & Co., China agency house, 173, 263-6
- Renton, Dr Robert, Edinburgh, 46 and *n* 1, 108
- Reynard*, British man-of-war, 172
- rice, speculation in, 222
- Richardson, Catherine, *née* Weemys, wife of James R., xliii *n* 3
- Richardson, David, son of James R., sugar merchant, xliii, 14-15, 19, 60, 72, 78-79
- Richardson, James, Glasgow merchant, 12, 24-25, 31, 43, 46, 60
- business policies and practices, xli, xliii-xliv, lx, lxii-lxiii, lxiv, 137
- career in the sugar trade, xlii-xliii, xliii *n* 5
- Richardson, James, & Co., Glasgow merchants, 30, 61, 69, 74, 86, 104, 251
- investments and profits from joint ventures, xlv, xlvii, lvi, lxv, 271
- management of joint ventures in tea, xii, lii-liii, 162-5, 174, 177, 185-7, 193, 196-8, 200, 202, 207, 212, 229, 241-2
- 'own account' trade in tea, 139-41, 155, 160, 187
- as sugar merchants and refiners, xlii, 14-15, 224
- Richardson, (James) Jr., & Co., Edinburgh branch of James Richardson & Co., xlii *n* 6, 60
- Richardson, Thomas, Linlithgow, tenant farmer, father of James R., xlii *n* 5
- Richardson, Thomas, son of James R., Glasgow, sugar merchant, 8 and *n* 3, 37, 46, 54

- Richardson family, xlv, 77  
*Rifleman*, sailing-ship, 52, 266  
 Ripley, Philips W., Canton, of  
   Ripley Smith & Co., 31, 210  
 Ripley Smith & Co., China agency  
   house, 30 n 3, 31  
*Ripon*, paddle-steamer, x and n 1,  
 8-10  
 Ritchie, [blank], Captain of the  
   *Scotland*, 267  
 Ritchie, A. A., & Co., China  
   agency house, 266  
*Rob Roy*, tea clipper, 39  
 Roberts, [blank], Captain of the  
   *Astarte*, 262  
 Robertson, James, Captain of the  
   *Isabella*, xxxi n 1  
 Robertson, John, Captain of the  
   *Stormoway*, 52 and n 1, 167,  
 211, 267  
 Robertson, John, Edinburgh,  
   solicitor, 254  
 Robertson, [blank], Captain of the  
   *Ann McLean*, 265  
 Robertson, [blank], of Edinburgh,  
 209  
 Robinson, [blank], Edinburgh,  
   writer, 110  
 Ronaldson, Alexander, Glasgow,  
   merchant, son-in-law of James  
   Richardson of Glasgow, 189 n 1  
 Ronaldson, Catherine, daughter of  
   James Richardson of Glasgow,  
   xlv, 189  
 Rose & Co., Coalport, 220 n 3  
 Rothes, Moray, lxxv  
 Rothwell, Richard, of Jamieson  
   How & Co., Canton, 20, 79,  
   132, 168, 251  
 Rouse, [blank], Galle, Ceylon, 18  
*Royal Victoria*, London-Edinburgh  
   passenger ship, 6 n 1  
 rupees, and the Canton exchange  
   market, 47, 95, 149, 160  
 Russell, George E., Edinburgh, of  
   James Richardson, Jr., & Co.,  
   31  
 Russell, Lord John, 151-2  
 Russell, Samuel, founder of Russell  
   & Co., 45 n 2  
 Russell, Thomas, Edinburgh, iron-  
   monger, 107 n 2  
 Russell & Co., China agency house,  
   xx, 25, 52, 109, 120, 129, 162,  
   211, 263, 266-7  
   as agent for Andrew Melrose,  
   xxxvi-xxxviii, 270  
   exchange operations in Canton,  
   lvii, 28, 45, 71, 82, 97  
   partners of, xxvi, 88, 148 n 2  
 Russia, 255 and n 1; *see also* St  
   Petersburg  
 Ryrie, [blank], Captain of the  
   *Marian*, 265
- SACRAMENTO, Calif., U.S.A., 144  
 St Andrew's Day, 30  
 St Gotthard Pass, Switzerland, 245  
 St John, co-cathedral of Malta, 9-10  
 St Katharine's Steam Wharf,  
   London, 6 n 1  
 St Mark, Church of, Venice, 244  
 St Paul's, London, 8  
 St Petersburg, Russia, 255 n 1  
 Saints Chapel, Paris, 247  
*Sale (Sir Robert Sale)*, sailing-ship,  
 43, 266  
 Saltcoats, Ayrshire, lxxi n 2  
 San Francisco, Calif., U.S.A., 265  
*Sappho*, sailing-ship, 112, 114, 267  
 Schaw, Robert, Leith, merchant,  
   12, 24-25, 139, 204  
   joint venturer with Andrew  
   Melrose, xxxv-xxxvi, xlv,  
   271; *see also* Melrose, Andrew,  
   & Co., joint venture accounts  
   with Robert Schaw  
   tea purchased by W. M. for, 38,  
   48, 53-54, 99, 122, 128, 141,  
   158

- School of Fine Arts, Paris, 247
- Scott, [blank], 237
- Scotland, xxv, xxxvii, xl, li-lii, lvii, lxi, lxx, 34, 153  
 as a market for tea, lviii, 20, 38, 57; *see also* Glasgow tea market; Leith tea market; tea market, Britain; tea, tastes and preferences
- Scotland, sailing-ship, 65, 236, 267
- Scotsman, *The*, 4, 32, 50, 107-8, 134, 202
- Scott (James Scott), sailing-ship, 188, 267
- Scott, Sir Walter  
*Rob Roy*, 210 n 1
- Seafield (*Countess of Seafield*), Aberdeen tea clipper, 166, 267
- Seare, Benjamin, China agent, 31, 39, 42, 46, 85-86, 88, 131, 134, 147, 176, 194, 202, 204, 208  
 as amateur actor, 201, 203, 210  
 as assistant in Hyde Lenox & Co., 29 n 1, 152 and n 1, 162-3, 206  
 home in Macao, lxxvii, 29-30, 32
- Seare, Mrs Benjamin, Macao, 29, 31, 39, 206
- Seare, Benjamin, & Co., Canton, 144 n 1
- Seare, [blank], son of Benjamin S., 29, 39
- Second Sikh War, 50 n 2
- Sesto Calende, Lombardy, Italy, 245
- Seu, *see* Hsu Kuang-chin
- Shaffner, T. P., secretary of the American Telegraph Co., Russia, 254, 255 and n 1
- Shakespeare, William  
*As you like it*, 117  
*Julius Caesar*, 129 and n 1
- Shanghai, China, 18, 29 n 1, 33 n 1, 40 n 1, 57 n 1, 60, 76, 131, 163, 172, 220, 221, 226, 237, 240, 242, 247  
 customs evasion at, 235  
 exchange market, 180, 191, 200, 230, 232; *see also* exchange markets, China; exchange rates, in China  
 failure of agency houses at, 161  
 Taiping Rebellion and trade at, xxviii, xlix, 238 and n 2, 239  
 trade rival of Canton, xlix, lxxix and n 1, 22, 165-8, 170-1, 198, 212, 219-20, 227  
*see also* tea market, Shanghai
- Shepard, John, Liverpool, of Bateson Sons & Co., 146-7
- Sheppard, Robert, Edinburgh, grocer and tea dealer, xiii n 1, xliii, 44 n 2
- Sherard, R. S., Hong Kong, of Jamieson How & Co., 32
- Shinn, [blank], Captain of the *Harbeck*, 264
- ships, chartering of, lviii-lix, 54-58, 124-5, 178-9, 213-14  
*see also* Melrose, William, shipping practices and policies
- Shrewsbury, Shropshire, xii, xiv, lxxii-lxxiv, 3-4, 55 n 1, 75, 131, 192, 251, 254, 257
- Simpson, George, Edinburgh, house carpenter, father of John S., xlv n 2
- Simpson, George, Edinburgh, son of John S., lxx, 229
- Simpson, Hannah Elizabeth, wife of John S., lxxv and n 1, 114, 192
- Simpson, James, Edinburgh, son of John S., lxxv
- Simpson, John, Edinburgh, 255  
 capital in Andrew Melrose & Co., xlvi and n 2, lxx, lxx  
 character, xlvi, lxx  
 early career, xlv-xlvi  
 management of the tea ventures, xi, lx, 1-3, 7, 12-13, 21, 24, 26, 32, 36-38, 43, 45, 47-48, 53-54,

- 62-75, 79-85, 87-89, 94-102,  
106, 108-16, 118-23, 132-43,  
145-6, 149-51, 153-60, 165-7,  
169-76, 180-6, 191-2, 195-7,  
199-201, 204-5, 212-13, 215-17,  
219-20, 222-6, 229-34, 236,  
238-40, 245-6, 253  
partner in Andrew Melrose &  
Co., xi, xlvi, lxx  
retirement of, lxx, lxxii  
style of life, xlvi and *n* 2, lxxxv  
and *n* 1  
*see also* Melrose, Andrew, & Co.  
Simpson Bros & Co., Edinburgh,  
wholesale tea dealers, lxx  
Singapore, 12, 17-19, 115, 177,  
238 *n* 1, 241, 261, 263-6  
Skye, Isle of, Inner Hebrides, 248  
Sleigh, W. C., London, barrister,  
107 *n* 2  
Small, [blank], Captain of the  
*Royal Victoria*, 6  
Small, [blank], Mrs, wife of Captain  
Small, 6  
Small, Charles, brother of Captain  
Small, 6  
Smith, H. H., Canton, tea taster  
for Ripley Smith & Co., 30,  
72, 78-79, 106  
Smith, J. M., & Co., China agency  
house, 266  
Smith, [blank], Captain of the  
*Aden*, 261  
Smith, [blank], Captain of the  
*Inglewood*, 264  
Smith, [blank], Captain of the  
*Wanderer*, 267  
Soillarrie, Perthshire, 50 *n* 2  
Solazzi, 115 and *n* 2  
Solor, Is., Indonesia, 267  
Somnauth, sailing-ship, 267  
tea per, 122, 127-8, 133, 155  
South Melville Mains, Lasswade,  
182 *n* 1  
Southampton, Hampshire, x, 7, 243  
mail *via* the sea route, 10, 48, 122,  
124, 128, 131, 148, 154, 241  
Spain, demand for tea in, 26-27  
Spanish Carolus, 114 and *n* 1, 115  
Spanish Factory, Canton, xxxi  
Sparks (*Mary Sparks*), sailing-ship,  
267  
tea per, 128, 130, 214, 273  
speculation, in the China trade,  
xlix-1, 90, 101, 143  
Melroses' dislike of, xlvii, 1, lxiv,  
61, 137  
Sproule, [blank], Captain of the  
*Magellan*, 58, 214, 265  
Stafford, Staffordshire, 250  
Stanley, Edward George Geoffrey  
Smith, earl of Derby, 234 and  
*n* 2  
Stanton, [blank], Captain of the  
*Walton*, 267  
Stedman, [blank], Mrs, of Melrose,  
42, 60  
Stedman family, 132  
Stedding, Eliza Laura Bella, wife of  
W. M., lxxxv, 260  
Stedding, Rev. Henry, father of  
Eliza S., lxxvi  
Stephenson, James, Hong Kong,  
partner of Murrow Stephenson  
& Co., 154  
Stirling, Stirlingshire, 97 *n* 1  
Stoddard, [blank], Captain of the  
*Mandarin*, 265  
Stones of Jasper, Venice, 244  
*Stornoway*, Aberdeen tea clipper,  
52 *n* 1, 166-7, 169, 211, 267  
Strachan, John, Edinburgh, mer-  
chant, 40 and *n* 2  
Strachan, Robert, Hong Kong,  
merchant and publisher, 40  
and *n* 2, 208  
Straits Settlement, coolie trade to,  
lxviii  
*Straits Times*, 239  
Strasbourg, France, 246

- Streacy, [blank], Captain of the  
*Hardinge*, 264
- Sturgis, Robert S., Canton, of  
Russell & Co., 25 and *n* 5
- Sturgis, Russell, *see* Sturgis, Robert  
S.
- Styan & Co., London, tea brokers,  
218 and *n* 1
- Suez, Egypt, *xlvi* *n* 2, 11, 13-14  
sugar trade, *xliii* and *n* 2, 14-15,  
224
- Summers, James, Protestant  
missionary in China, 48 *n* 1
- Sunda Strait, Indonesia, 201 *n* 1
- Superb*, sailing-ship, 267
- tea per  
character and variety of, 121,  
123, 128  
cost and sale proceeds of, 123,  
155, 273  
insurance of, 118, 122, 149,  
154, 158-9, 186, 205
- Surprise*, American tea clipper, 167,  
169, 211, 227, 267
- Sutter, [blank], Captain of the  
*James Scott*, 267
- sycee (Chinese currency), *xxvii*, 149
- Sydney, Australia, 111, 176, 265
- Syme, Dr James, professor, Uni-  
versity of Edinburgh, 46 and *n* 2
- TAEL (Chinese currency), *lvi* and  
*n* 1, *lxxvii*
- Taiping, green tea, 269
- Taiping Rebellion, *xxviii*, *lxix*,  
234-5, 236, 238 and *n* 2, 242
- Taipings, *lxix*
- Taiwan, 172 *n* 1
- Tao-Kuang, emperor of China, 235
- Tartars, *see* Manchus
- Taylor, J. J., Edinburgh, merchant,  
80 and *n* 2
- tea, character and varieties of, 2, 56,  
58 and *n* 1, 60, 78-80, 82-83,  
86, 97, 98 *n* 1, 99 *n* 1, 100,  
112-13, 118-20, 123, 138, 144,  
178, 180, 186, 199, 268-9
- tea, exported to Britain, 195, 223-4,  
240
- varieties of  
black, 21, 36, 113, 133, 159,  
163, 217, 219  
green, 1, 90, 100, 159
- tea, tastes and preferences  
changes in, 37, 71-72, 75, 78-80,  
83, 86, 98-99, 124, 170  
regional variations in, *lx-lxi*, 43,  
49, 51, 60-61, 112-13, 138
- tea blending, *lv*, 168, 170, 196, 200
- tea brokers, British  
charactering and evaluating,  
*xviii-xix*, *lxiii*, 33, 94, 98-99,  
274  
commission, *lxi*, 272-3  
reputation of, *xvii*, *lx*  
services to buyers, *xv-xvi*,  
*lxi-lxiii*  
services to importers, *xvii*,  
*lx-lxiv*, 71, 75  
*see also* Connal, William; Ewart  
Maccaughey & Co; Littledale  
& Co.; Thompson, William  
James
- tea brokers, Chinese, *see* Chinamen
- tea consumption in Britain, *xxxviii*,  
87, 89-90, 100, 111, 128-9,  
135, 143, 161, 190, 195
- tea crop, China, *liv*, 128-9, 168,  
170, 176, 218, 222-3, 227, 229,  
235, 239
- tea dealers, in Britain, *xiv-xv*,  
*lx-lxi*  
*see also* Melrose, Andrew;  
Melrose, Andrew, & Co.;  
Melrose, John, & Co.; Hallam,  
Samuel J.; Hallam Spence &  
Co.
- tea duty, in Britain, 193, 236  
reduction of, and effect on trade,  
*lxiv*, 2, 40-41, 90, 230-1, 242



- tea market, in Britain
- demand
    - for fine teas, 12, 19, 106, 113, 117, 120, 133-4, 209
    - for common teas, 89-90, 111, 140, 167, 170-1, 190, 199
  - regional differences of, xviii-xix, lx-lxi, 20, 33, 37-38, 43, 52, 83, 112-13, 151, 158, 185
  - state of
    - depressed, 1, 12, 34-35, 40, 45, 175-6, 177, 185, 187, 191-3, 201
    - buoyant, xlvi, 124, 143, 225
    - stock on hand, 90-91, 113, 143, 150, 161, 185, 188, 197, 218
  - tea market, Canton, xi, xvi-xvii, xxxvii, xlvi, liv, lxix *n* 1, 24-25, 69, 150, 159, 170, 217-20, 222-4, 225, 228, 235, 241
  - opening of, liv, 2, 46-48, 105-6, 108, 112, 117-19, 169, 209-10
  - prices
    - 1845: 1, 2
    - 1848: 15, 20
    - 1849: 49, 51-52, 73
    - 1850: 113, 118-19, 128, 133-4, 136
    - 1851: 141, 159, 169, 174
    - 1852: 210, 225
  - seasonal character of, lviii, 74-75, 120, 132, 141, 174-5, 180
  - tea market, Shanghai, xlvi, 3, 90, 117, 180, 182, 192, 194, 200, 212, 224, 228, 261, 265-7
  - prices, 112-13, 169-70, 172-3, 185-6, 223
  - speculation on, xlix, 175-6, 203
  - teamen (Chinese tea merchants), xxviii *n* 2, li, liv, 74, 119
  - tea merchants, xxx-xxxii, xxxiv-xxxv, xxxvii
    - see also* Melrose, Andrew; Melrose, Andrew, & Co.;
  - teamen
    - tea prices in Britain
      - black, 1, 7, 74, 86-87, 100-1, 117, 150, 187, 193, 196, 198, 228
      - green, 53-54, 90, 200, 225
    - tea tasters, in China, xx, lv, 19, 21-22, 76, 79, 83, 104, 112, 117, 158, 162, 166, 173, 218
      - see also* Melrose, William
    - tea trade, ix-x, xxv, lxix, 8 *n* 5, 54-55
      - and China agency houses, xxxiii-xxxvii, liv, 166
      - and cotton manufactures, xxvi, xxviii and *n* 2, xxx
      - difficulties in, xvii-xviii, xxvi-xxvii, xlvii-xlix, 86-87, 150, 154, 161, 174-5, 195-6
      - effect of communication and transportation on, xlvii, xlvi and *n* 2, lii, 166, 181, 197
      - 'laying down' the dollars for, xxviii-xxix, 47, 55, 66-68, 78, 80, 95, 114, 124, 149; *see also* China trade; opium trade; India organization of, xxvi-xxxii
      - profits in, 20, 33, 40-41, 102, 116; *see also* Melrose, Andrew, & Co.; Melrose, William; Richardson, James, & Co.; Schaw, Robert
      - sales in Britain, lx, lxi, lxii-lxiv, 33, 60, 272-3, 274, *facsimile*
      - secrecy concerning destination of ships, lviii, 52, 57, 75-76, 124
      - speculation in, xlvii, xlix, lxiv, 21, 25, 93, 136-7, 150, 203, 241
    - Teece, Charles Bowen, Shrewsbury, solicitor, 251-2
    - Teece and Corser, Shrewsbury, solicitors, 251 *n* 1
    - Temple, Henry John, 3rd viscount Palmerston, 152 *n* 1
    - Temple of Solomon, pillars of, Venice, 244

- Thompson, William James, London, tea broker, lx, 274
- Thompson, William James, & Co., London, tea brokers, 94 and *n* 2, 97-99, 231  
trade reports from, 98, 101
- Thompson, [blank], Captain of the *Lascar*, 265
- Thompson, [blank], Edinburgh, of Hill & Co., 173-4
- Thomson, Dr Andrew, Edinburgh, 38 and *n* 2
- Thomson, [blank], son of Dr Andrew T., 38
- Thomson, [blank], Mrs, wife of Mr T., 38
- Thorburn, [blank], Shanghai, tea taster for Hargreaves & Co., 117, 167, 182
- Thorburn, [blank], Mrs, 167
- Thun, Switzerland, 245-6
- Tiger Island, Pearl River, 221 *n* 1
- Times, The*, 235, 255 *n* 1
- Torrington*, sailing-ship, 29 *n* 1
- Tranent, East Lothian, lxxv *n* 1
- Treaty of Nanking, 1842, 38 *n* 4, 40, 43
- Trieste, Italy, 241-4
- Tudor, [blank], Captain of the *Forfarshire*, 263
- Tuileries, Paris, 247
- Turner & Co., China agency house, xxxii, 55, 57 and *n* 2, 58, 112, 117, 188, 211, 251, 264, 266-7, 270
- Turpie, [blank], Captain of the *James Watt*, 267
- UNION BANK of Glasgow, lvi  
bills drawn under letters of credit from, 118, 121, 127, 180, 215
- Union Insurance Society of Canton (Dent & Co.), 122-3, 127, 159, 205 *n* 1
- United States of America, lxxiv, 1, 2, 34, 129  
coolie trade to, lxxviii  
shipment of tea to Britain from, 159  
transhipment of tea to, 3  
*see also* Boston, Mass.; California; California gold rush; Middletown, Conn.; New York, N.Y.; Sacramento; San Francisco
- Usher, James, Edinburgh, brewer and inventor, 202 and *n* 1
- VARNHAM, Charles, London, tea broker, xvi
- Varnham Ewart & Co., London, tea brokers, xvi *n* 1
- Velocipede*, sailing-ship, 172, 267
- Venice, Italy, 243-4
- Versailles, France, 246-7
- Vienna, Austria, 243-4
- voyage, to and from China, x, 8-19, 240-9
- WAKEHAM, [blank], Captain of the *Duke of Lancaster*, 265
- Walker, Alexander, Canton, assistant in Jamieson How & Co., xx, 2 and *n* 3
- Walker, [blank], Captain of the *Ann*, 261
- Walker (Hugh Walker)*, sailing-ship, xxx, 23, 144, 267  
tea per, 43, 46, 48
- Walton*, sailing-ship, 267  
tea per, 54, 65, 99
- Wanderer*, sailing-ship, 161, 267
- Ward, [blank], Captain of the *William Prouse*, 266
- Wardley, W. H., & Co., China agency house, 262-3
- Wardrope (Wardrop), R., Hong Kong, 224 and *n* 1  
warehouse charges, lxiv, 136

- Waterloo, battlefield of, Belgium,  
247-8
- Watson (*Anna Watson*), sailing-  
ship, xxxiv
- Watson, Dr T. Boswell, Macao,  
lxvi, lxvii, 39-42, 46, 60,  
85-86, 88, 131-2, 134, 194,  
201, 204, 206, 208, 213
- Watson, [*blank*], son of Dr T.  
Boswell W., 206
- Watson, [*blank*], Mrs, wife of Dr  
T. Boswell W., lxvii, 39,  
41-42, 60, 206, 213
- Watson family, 86
- Watson, William Stewart,  
Melbourne businessman, lxxi n 3
- Watson, [*blank*], Captain of the  
*Asia*, 261
- Watt (*James Watt*), sailing-ship,  
124-5, 151, 267
- Weave Murray & Co., China  
agency house, 201 n 2
- Webster, Robert, China, merchant,  
40 and n 1
- Weemys, David, Edinburgh,  
writer, xliii n 3
- Wem, Shropshire, lxxiii n 3
- West Indies, coolie trade to, lxxviii
- Wetmore & Co., China agency  
house, xxxii, III, 162, 218,  
264, 267, 270
- Whampoa, Kuangtung, China,  
29 n 1, 38 and n 5, 179, 182,  
221, 238, 261-6
- wharfage, 272-3
- Williams, [*blank*], Captain of the  
*Blackfriar*, 262
- Wilson, Margaret, wife of John  
Melrose, 260
- Wilson, Dr R., Whampoa, 42 n 1,  
144-5
- Wilson, [*blank*], Captain of the  
*Abergeldie*, 261
- Wilson, [*blank*], Captain of the  
*Alexander Baring*, 262
- Wilson, [*blank*], Captain of the  
*Euphrates*, 38, 41, 60
- Wilson, [*blank*], Mrs, wife of  
Captain W. of the *Euphrates*, 38
- Wiltshire Public Tea Taster, 263
- Wolf, [*blank*], Captain of the  
*Velocipede*, 267
- Woopack, tea district, China, 99  
and n 1, 236
- Woosung, *see* Wusung
- Wu Ch'ung-yueh, Chinese official,  
235 and n 3
- Wusung, Kiangsu, China, 262,  
264-7
- YATES, [*blank*], London, of Bedwell  
& Yates, 50



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SCOTTISH HISTORY SOCIETY

REPORT

of the 85th Annual Meeting

The 85th Annual Meeting of the Scottish History Society was held in the Rooms of the Royal Society, George Street, Edinburgh, on Saturday, 11 December 1971, at 11.15 a.m. Professor Gordon Donaldson, President, was in the Chair.

The Report of Council was as follows:

The Council is pleased to report that the seventh volume of the Fourth Series, *Calendar of Scottish Supplications to Rome, 1428-1432*, edited by Dr Annie I. Dunlop and Dr I. B. Cowan, issued during the year, has been received well by members and has attracted very favourable notice outside the Society. On its publication, a letter was sent to Dr Dunlop on behalf of the Council congratulating her on her achievement, thanking her for her life-long support of the Society, and extending to her the Society's hopes for an improvement in her health.

The Council has heard with deep regret of the death of Mr A. V. Cole, co-editor with Mr R. J. Adam of our volumes for the current year, *Papers on Sutherland Estate Management, 1800-1816*. His loss will be felt keenly in his own field of political economy, as well as by members of this Society who will be deprived of the detailed economic analysis of the estate papers which he was proposing to contribute to the introduction of these volumes. Mr R. J. Adam, however, has undertaken to reorganise where necessary the text to be printed and to add to his own introduction. The Council is extremely grateful to him for accepting this additional task at short notice, but regrets to have to inform members that as a result of this unfortunate event the work will be delayed until early spring. Members will recollect that this edition, through the generosity of the Leverhulme Trust, will be printed in two volumes.

The publication to be issued to members for 1972 will be *William Melrose in China: the letters of a Scottish tea merchant, 1845-1855*, edited by Professor Hoh-Cheung Mui and his wife Lorna H. Mui. These letters are from the archives of Messrs Melrose, the Edinburgh tea merchants, and in them William Melrose, a young partner in the business, describes to his father his activities in Canton and Hong Kong, including the fluctuating state of the tea market and trading conditions in general. This volume will contribute much to our knowledge of Scottish commercial enterprise overseas in the mid-nineteenth century.

During the past year the Council has concerned itself with a close and detailed examination of the Society's affairs, particularly with regard to its financial position and its publication policy. Hitherto, finances have been barely adequate, as members' subscriptions, on which the Society mainly relies to carry out its policy, have had to be supplemented by annual grants from the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland, by special grants from organisations such as the Leverhulme Trust, and by gifts from well-wishers. Expenses are rocketing; printing costs grow regularly almost year by year, and postal charges have recently been drastically increased. The officers of the Society concern themselves with keeping costs to a minimum, and have developed, and will continue to develop, methods of doing this; yet it is clear that in the near future the Society could find itself in serious difficulties.

The surest way of facing the problem, for the continuance of financial aid from Trusts cannot be relied on, is to increase the membership of the Society. A campaign to do this is being planned and executed by the Hon. Assistant Secretary. While the brunt of this will fall on members of Council, individual members of the Society could give considerable help by informing the Hon. Secretary of the names and addresses of anyone they believe may be interested in the objects of the Society. This drive for increased membership is essentially a long-term policy. In order to resolve the difficulties more immediately the Council feels forced to take two steps. In the first place it has regretfully decided that it must propose to the Annual Meeting that the subscription be raised to £3·00, this increase to be effective in the financial year beginning November 1972. Secondly, in order to remove the anomaly that former publications of the Society can be purchased at a price considerably less than the present subscription, the Council has decided that as from 31 January 1972 the price to members of those volumes of the First, Second and Third series still available will be raised to £2·00 and that the price of back numbers of the Fourth series should in future be equal to the current subscription (i.e. until 31 October 1972, £2·10; after 1 November 1972, £3·00, if this increased subscription is accepted by the Annual Meeting). The Council recognises that these measures are drastic, but, after considering many alternatives, believes they are essential to the future stability, and possibly the existence, of the Society.

The other main feature of the Council's deliberations was the Society's publication policy. It is accepted that our primary obligation is to produce a balanced programme of publications ranging over the entire chronological



span of Scottish history. At the same time it is recognised that some periods and subjects are of more interest to members in general than others. Council has examined this problem and considered among others the possibility of producing additional volumes in fields not adequately covered by the basic programme, and of providing volumes with a deliberate educational content for use in schools and universities. Although the discussion was stimulating, no decision was reached on these points, which are in many ways controversial. At the same time the implications of the Society's contract with the Kraus Reprint Corporation for the reprinting of the early series of publications were examined. In order to have information about the possible demand by members for specific volumes which may be reprinted, a questionnaire is being circulated with this Report; it is hoped that the replies will provide statistics which will enable the Council to determine its reprint policy either with the Kraus Reprint Corporation or with any other organisation Council may authorise to reprint the Society's out-of-print publications.

During the year the Council was invited by the Scottish Records Advisory Council to give its opinion, on behalf of historian-users of archives, on the form a Local Archive Service might take if set up in conjunction with the proposed new structure of Local Government. A special committee of Council, under the Chairmanship of Mr D. J. Withrington, examined this question in some detail and prepared a submission which was received with gratitude by the Advisory Council.

The Council has noted with regret the death of Sir Thomas Innes of Learney, G.C.V.O. As a man with a very wide interest in Scotland's past, he loyally supported the Society as a member for almost half a century, and gave practical service and advice as a member of Council on several occasions during that period.

Members of Council who retire in rotation at this time are Mrs Rosalind Mitchison, Mr James Halliday, and Rev. Duncan Shaw. The following will be proposed to the Annual Meeting for election to the Council: Professor R. H. Campbell, Sheriff P. G. B. McNeill, and Mr W. H. D. Sellar.

During the past year seven members have died, four have resigned, and five removed from membership for non-payment of subscription; eighteen new members have joined. The total membership, including 222 libraries, is now 708, compared with 706 in 1970. The Council is pleased to note that the level of membership is being maintained, but, for reasons expressed earlier in this Report, urges all members to encourage their friends to join the Society.

In presenting the Annual Report, Monsignor David McRoberts mentioned that the *Calendar of Scottish Supplications to Rome* issued to members earlier in the year had been received with favourable comment both at home and abroad and commented appropriately on the services given to the Society by Dr Dunlop. He discussed in detail the points raised in the Report and emphasised that a steady increase in membership was the only secure and permanent way of keeping abreast of rising costs. In a nation which prided itself on interest in its history, its established national historical society did not seem to be adequately represented by a Scottish membership of some 400 individuals, and he felt that this figure might well be doubled.

The Hon. Treasurer reported a satisfactory balance, but pointed out that most of this sum would be required to meet current printing expenses. He then detailed the reasons why it was necessary to recommend the raising of the subscription, expressing the hope that by acting now it would be possible to keep it steady for some years; the last increase was made in 1965. He expressed the appreciation of the Society to Dr C. T. McInnes for his long and generous service as Honorary Auditor.

Dr G. G. Simpson moved the adoption of the Annual Report, to include assent to the raising of the subscription; this was seconded and duly approved.

The President nominated for election as ordinary members of Council Professor R. H. Campbell, Sheriff P. G. B. McNeill, and Mr W. D. H. Sellar; this was seconded by the Hon. Secretary and they were duly elected.

The President gave an address entitled 'The emergence of schism in seventeenth-century Scotland'. The proceedings concluded with a vote of thanks to the President proposed by Mrs R. Mitchison.

ABSTRACT ACCOUNT OF CHARGE AND DISCHARGE OF THE  
INTROMISSIONS OF THE HONORARY TREASURER for the  
year 1 November 1970 to 31 October 1971.

I. GENERAL ACCOUNT

CHARGE

I. Cash in Bank at 1 November 1970		
1. Sum at credit of Savings Account with Bank of Scotland	(£1,929 0 5)	£1,929.02
2. Sum at credit of Current Account with Bank of Scotland	(48 12 0)	48.60
3. Sum at credit of Savings Account with Edinburgh Savings Bank	(56 11 9)	56.59
4. Sum at credit of Special Invest- ment Account with Edinburgh Savings Bank	(830 11 4)	830.56
	<u>(£2,864 15 6)</u>	<u>£2,864.77</u>
II. Subscriptions received		1,431.38
III. Past publications sold (including postages recovered from purchasers)		451.69
IV. Interest on Savings Accounts with Bank of Scotland and Edinburgh Savings Bank		143.17
V. Grant from Carnegie Trust		250.00
VI. Income Tax Refund (1969-70)		165.12
VII. Donation		100.00
VIII. Transferred from A. I. Dunlop Special Fund		960.35
IX. Sums drawn from Bank Current Account	<u>£3,866.65</u>	
X. Sums drawn from Bank Savings Account	<u>£500.00</u>	
		<u>£6,366.48</u>

## DISCHARGE

1. Cost of publications during year ( <i>Scottish Supplications to Rome, 1428-32</i> )	£1,815.30
Binding ( <i>Argyll Estate Instructions</i> )	95.52
Cost of printing Annual Report, Notices and Printers' postages, etc.	92.08
	<hr/>
	£2,002.90
II. Stationery	26.40
III. Miscellaneous Payments and refunds of subscriptions	87.35
IV. Sums lodged in Bank Current Account	<u>£3,907.14</u>
V. Sums lodged in Bank Savings Account	<u>£4,709.34</u>
VI. Funds at close of this account:	
1. Balance at credit of Savings Account with Bank of Scotland	£3,264.76
2. Balance at credit of Current Account with Bank of Scotland	40.49
3. Balance at credit of Savings Account with Edinburgh Savings Bank	57.99
4. Balance at credit of Special Investment Account with Edinburgh Savings Bank (Leverhulme Trust Fund)	886.59
	<hr/>
	4,249.83
	<hr/>
	<u>£6,366.48</u>

## II. DR ANNIE I. DUNLOP SPECIAL FUND ACCOUNT

## CHARGE

I. Cash in Bank at 1 November 1969		
1. Sum at credit of Savings Account with Bank of Scotland		£889.74
2. Sum at credit of Current Account with Bank of Scotland		19.30
		<hr/>
		£909.04
II. Interest on Savings Account with Bank of Scotland		51.56
		<hr/>
		£960.60
III. Sums drawn from Bank Current Account	£19.30	
	<hr/>	
IV. Sums drawn from Bank Savings Account	£960.35	
	<hr/>	
		<u>£960.60</u>

## DISCHARGE

I. Transferred to General Account to meet expenses towards <i>Scottish Supplications to Rome: 1428-32</i>		£960.35
II. Bank charges		00.25
III. Sums lodged in Bank Current Account	£0.00	
IV. Sums lodged in Bank Savings Account	£70.61	
V. Funds at close of this Account:		
1. Balance at credit of Savings Account with Bank of Scotland	£0.00	
2. Balance at credit of Current Account with Bank of Scotland	£0.00	
	<hr/>	
		<u>£960.60</u>

EDINBURGH, 12 November 1971. I have examined the General Account and Dr Annie I. Dunlop Special Fund Account of the Honorary Treasurer of the Scottish History Society for the year from 1 November 1970 to 31 October 1971 and I find the same to be correctly stated and sufficiently vouched. The Special Fund account is now closed, the funds having been applied to the purpose for which they were given.

C. T. MCINNES  
Auditor



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<del>14</del>	117	Half chests Tea	64.167	14.083	50.084	5.859	43.94	15	490.92	1.098.50
										21.97
										1.076.53
		Charges								
		Commission 5%					53	82		
		papers					1	17		
		Shroffage					1	07		
										56.06
										1.132.59
		Insured in Canton office for							1.173.25/4	
		premium @ 3%							35.20 or 29.99	

Account Sales of Tea of Plover & Aster, Kanger @ Canton  
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 Messrs. A. Melrose & Co. Prompt 23 May 1851

By Ewart Maccaughey & Co

~~7~~  
14

No	Apr	Sc'd Cr.	Teles	lb	price	£	s	d
894	108			5442	1.3	340	2	6
810		9	exam'd for damage	457	1.2	26	13	2
	117			5899				
<u>Charges</u>								
July 10			Fire Insurance				12	1
Sept 3			S: Water D <sup>r</sup> Chgs			17	3	
	8		Freight	22	10.5	22	8	10
			Interest on charges				8	8
			Inspection & Brokerage 1% Cent			3	13	4
May 23 <sup>rd</sup>			Balance to Credit in A/c					
						322	9	10

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1850.

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117 half chests Tea  
Average recoverable in every \$250 value as if separately Insured

touching the adventures and perils, which we the Assurers are contented to bear, and to take upon us in this voyage; they are, of the Seas, Men of War, Fire, Enemies, Pirates, Rovers, Thieves, Jettizons, Letters of Mart, and counter Mart, Surprisals, Takings at Sea, Arrests, Restraints, and Detainments, of all Kings, Princes, and People, of what Nation, Condition, or Quality, soever; Barratry of the Master and Mariners; and of all other Perils, Losses, or Misfortunes, that have or shall come to the Hurt, Detriment or Damage of the said Goods and Merchandizes, &c. and Ship, &c. or any part thereof. And in case of any Loss or Misfortune, it shall be lawful to the Assured, their Factors, Servants, and Assigns, to sue, labour, and travel for, in and about the Defence, Safeguard, and Recovery of the said Goods and Merchandizes, &c. and Ship, &c. or any part thereof, without prejudice to this Insurance; to the charges whereof we the Assurers will contribute, each one according to the Rate and Quantity of his sum herein assured. And it is agreed by us the Insurers, that this Writing or Policy of Assurance, shall be of as much Force and Effect as the surest Writing or Policy of Assurance made in LONDON.—And so we the Assurers are contented and do hereby promise and bind ourselves, each one for his own Part, our Heirs, Executors and Goods to the Assured, their Executors, Administrators, and Assigns, for the true Performance of the Premises; confessing ourselves paid the Consideration due unto us for this Assurance, by the Assured, at and after the Rate of Three per Cent (3) and further, we the Assurers do hereby covenant, promise and agree, and oblige ourselves, our Heirs, Executors, Goods and Chattels, in case of loss happening (which God forbid) to satisfy and pay the sum of Money, by us so Assured, upon the abatement of two per Cent. and no more; Provided always, that the sum of Money so Assured, shall be paid in London at the expiration of six Months after proper Notice of loss is given to the Agent at Whampoa at the Exchange of Five shillings & four pence for one dollar otherwise no abatement whatsoever to be made, but to pay the full sum, any Use or Custom to the contrary notwithstanding.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, We, the Agents for the CANTON INSURANCE OFFICE, have subscribed our Name on the part of the Company at large, for the Sum ASSURED in CHINA, this seventh Day of September One Thousand Eight Hundred and Fifty two to two Policies of the same Tenor and Date, one of which being accomplished, the others to be void.

\* \* Salt, Sugar, Jagry, Rice, Wheat, Ghee, and Seed, are warranted free from Average, under Ten per Cent., and all other Goods, free of Average, under Five per Cent., unless general or occasioned by the Vessel being stranded; Vessel and Freight free of Average, under Five per Cent. Also Ship's Provisions of all kinds, unless general or occasioned by the Vessel being stranded.

An exception is hereby declared against any Risks or Detention of the Governments of China, Manila, Siam, or Pegue; also against any Risks, or Accidents from Gunpowder as Cargo; also against all Risks from Storms or Gales of Wind on the Coast of Coromandel, from Point Palmiras to Ceylon, and within soundings, between 15th October and 15th December inclusive, which Risks are to be borne by the Assured and not by the Assurers, any thing herein before contained to the contrary notwithstanding.

All losses by act or acts of any Government as also by war risks are hereby excepted

James Matheson & Co.  
GENERAL AGENTS.

MEMORANDUM.

PREMIUM on \$ 1173<sup>15</sup> at 3 per Cent. \$ 35. 20 @ 5/4 \$ 9. 7. 9  
POLICY FEE ..... 3. .  
\$ 38. 20

Invoice of 6,829 packages of Tea shipped on board the Naomi Cothay for Cork for orders. Consigned to Messrs J. Richardson & Co Glasgow, and on joint a/c of said Messrs J. R. Co. & Messrs A. Melrose & Co. Edinburgh.

			Wt in Lbs	Tare Lbs	Net Lbs	Wt in Hrs	Wt in Hrs	Wt in Hrs	Wt in Hrs	Wt in Hrs	Wt in Hrs	Wt in Hrs	Wt in Hrs	
200	200	235	635			Eching	110.10	23.275	86.825	55.133	413.50	18.5	7.649.45	10.624.45
2	2	2	627			Jin Ching	108.65	23.175	84.975	53.279	399.59	17.5	6.992.72	9.712.10
227	200	200	605			Chinghing	108.750	22.900	85.850	51.939	389.54	24.5	9.543.73	13.255.18
3	3	3	1318	helps		Luong Kee	54.666	13.583	41.083	54.147	406.10	25.3/4	10.457.80	14.523.72
200	205	200	667	chts		See Kee	109.050	23.375	85.675	57.145	428.59	18	7.714.62	10.714.45
4	4	4	528			Chang fong	102.10	21.60	81.50	43.031	322.43	18.5	5.970.50	8.292.36
300	300	300	654			See Jung	110.50	23.25	87.250	57.061	427.96	21.5	9.201.14	12.779.36
4	4	4	676			Luong King	107.95	23.725	84.225	56.936	427.02	16	6.832.32	9.489.33
227	200	240	207			Jin Kee	104.20	24.70	79.50	16.456	123.42	23	2.838.66	3.942.58
6	6	6	125	helps		Lau heong	29.50	7.375	22.125	2.765	20.74	20	414.80	576.11
7	7	7	280	helps		Chun heong	66.90	13.950	52.950	14.826	111.19	19	2.112.61	2.934.18
200	254	200	197	Chests		Luong Kee	106.00	24.95	81.05	15.967	119.75	22	2.634.5	3.659.03
8	8	8	225	do		Haw Wo	107.05	24.30	82.70	18.607	139.55	22	3.070.10	4.264.02
200	200	276	85	helps		Mun King	69.15	14.083	55.067	42.572	31.93	18	574.74	798.25
9	9		6,829											
107	100													
10														
12														
13														
125	100													
14														
													\$ 10.5565.72	
Charges														
Commission 5%													\$ 5.172.42	
papers 1/100													68.29	
Shroffage 1/100													103.45	
													Dist 2%	2.111.31
														\$ 103.454.41
														5.344.46
														<u>108.798.87</u>

W. Melrose  
Canton Decr 1850