

Correspondence.

56, Hawkes Street,
Wellington,

July 23rd, 1914.

To the Editor,
"Waiapu Church Gazette,"

Napier.

Dear Sir,

Herewith I enclose you copy of a letter from General Chang, Military Adviser to the President of China, to the Editor of the London Daily News and Leader, stating a few startling facts, and containing an urgent appeal from China against the continued sale of Opium in the foreign settlements in China.

Owing to the discontinuance of the cultivation of opium in China and the stoppage of the import from India, the opium merchants in Shanghai are making immense fortunes from the stock which they now have in hand, as owing to the drastic regulations against smoking, the wealthy opium sots are congregating to the foreign settlements in Shanghai and Hankow where they can smoke without molestation under the protection of the hated foreigner.

I am, Dear Sir,

Yours faithfully,

H. S. BLACKBURNE.

Hon. Secretary N.Z. Anti-Opium Association.

CHINA AND OPIUM.

General Chang's Complaint against British Merchants.

(To the Editor.)

Peking, May 4th 1914.

Sir,

I trust that you will again allow me to put before your readers a few facts concerning the opium traffic in China, from which our nation has grievously suffered, and alas! is still suffering, in some respects, more than ever before.

I do not wish to burden your readers with a detailed account of the progress China has made, especially in the last year, in her anti-opium campaign. Suffice to say that the progress has been so rapid that we hopefully expect the British Minister, after thorough inspection, to declare several more provinces free from the cultivation of the poppy, and therefore entitled to prohibit the importation of any more Indian opium. But while it is admitted on all hands that

China has made great strides in the matter of reducing the native production of opium, and has made unprecedented sacrifices in order to accomplish this end, it is exceedingly regretted that, on the eve of her emancipation from the evils of this age-long vice, she is obliged to submit to the ruthless and heartless manner in which British merchants, under the protection of the Shanghai "Model Settlement," are exploiting her to the fullest extent of their ability. These merchants are taking advantage of the present situation, and insisting upon receiving unheard-of prices for each chest of their "black poison."

I beg to send you herewith synopsis of the reports of the Shanghai opium stocks, as they appeared at intervals between August 8th, 1913, and March 20th, 1914. Your readers will be surprised to learn that the price has jumped from £340 per chest last August to £900 per chest in March last, and the prospect is good for still higher prices.

The present enormous price is due entirely to the rapid extinction of the cultivation of the poppy in China, and the scarcity of the native drug on the market, as well as the cessation last year of the importation of Indian opium. Knowing as they do the weakness of opium smokers, the British merchants have taken advantage of them unfairly, and inflated the prices to such an extent that only the well-to-do classes, who can afford to move to the foreign settlements of Shanghai, may still continue in the use of the drug, but this does not reduce the price demanded by the merchants, as they feel confident that the remaining stock on their hands at the end of this year will command still higher prices, in spite of the fact that the trade is to be declared extinct at the end of this year.

Such is the situation to-day; a situation fraught with great danger to China. Last year the foreign banks in Shanghai tried to bring pressure upon China to compel her to grant the opium traders unrestricted freedom to sell the drug in the open market, so as to save both of them from financial ruin. Owing to the high prices now prevailing, those concerned have gotten out of the "coup," and large profits have been made, especially by the merchants interested.

The idea is fast growing among

the opium merchants, that next year will be the most glorious year yet for the opium trade, as they feel that they will be allowed further freedom to dispose of their unsold drugs without let or hindrance. They confidently expect that the prices will be as high as £1,300 to £2,000 per chest, and this is quite possible, in view of the present rapid advance in the prices, and the weakness of those who are addicted to the vile habit.

It is under the British flag that such a great crime, unparalleled in the history of a civilised nation, is being inflicted upon us. The most deplorable part of the whole matter is that this great and monstrous crime is allowed by your Government, although it is fully aware of all the facts.

Negotiations are now going on between our own Government and the British Minister in Peking regarding the disposal of the remainder of the stock of opium in Shanghai at the end of this year, and I beg to appeal, through the medium of your widely-read journal, to the best elements of the civilised British nation, not to allow their own tolerant and liberty-loving Government to inflict upon us such a terrible crime as to allow the traffic in opium to continue any longer, for it appears to us a grave crime to see British merchants fattening themselves at the expense of the happiness of our long-oppressed nation.

L. CHANG,

Military Advisor to the President of China, and President of the National Opium Prohibition Union.

	1914.	1913.
Chests remaining—		
August 8	15,735	17,130.5
August 22	15,268	17,939.5
September 19	13,700	19,022
October 17	12,509	19,022
October 31	11,915	19,023
November 14	11,396	19,425
November 28	10,892	19,956
December 12	10,353	19,972
December 26	9,977.5	20,416
January 9	9,511	21,167
January 23	8,899	20,920
February 6	8,545	20,636.5
February 20	5,180	20,164.5
March 20	7,743.5	18,793.5

Between January 1st, 1914, and March 20th, 1914, sixty-six (66) chests were imported.

In the period in question the selling price per chest rose from taels 2,625 to taels 5,475.