

pated. Explanations were asked by puzzled merchants from subordinate officials, but were never forthcoming. Everybody wrote from Peking to say Sir John was the most charming, gentlemanly, hospitable, and kind-hearted man that ever presided over the Legation. Some of the disappointed ones, despairing of solving the mystery by letter, themselves went up to Peking. The kindness and hospitality were certainly extraordinary; everything paid for by Sir John; picnics, routs, rides, pleasures of all sorts at Sir John's expense, whilst Sir John himself pored the whole day long in his study over despatches. How was it possible to say anything ungenerous against the methods of a man who plied you with cigars, ice-creams, ponies, and tennis-parties, whilst he himself sacrificed all his pleasures to the public service? "Why don't you go and assist poor Sir John?" "He won't let me; he insists on working it all out for himself." Now, the reason why some able ministers at Peking had failed to please had been that instead of opening their despatches at once and pencilling replies there and then, they had taken time to consider for an hour or so, and had thus often missed the mail. But here was a minister who took everything to his own room and pored over it for days. To cut a long story short, things soon got to such a pitch that no reply on any question, public or private, official or unofficial, at any time, under any circumstances, could be got from Peking. It took several years before this truth became generally realized in all its force. However, so great was Sir John Walsham's personal popularity that people contented themselves with waiting until it should be time for him to go, it being openly stated that he loathed Peking so heartily that he never willingly left the Legation precincts. But, after four years or more, the alarming news was spread that Sir John had become so enamoured of Peking that he was a candidate for a second term! The rebellious spirit in all quarters was so unmistakable on the part of the leading merchants that this had to be altered, and Sir John was transferred to Bucharest. His career in China was quite unique. Mysterious hints of the great things done in high diplomacy reached the outer world; a good spurt was certainly made by Sir John when British missionaries began to be massacred wholesale. During Sir John Walsham's term of office, the new opium rules were put into force; but that business must have been in train, and near completion, shortly before his arrival. Everybody said Sir John did very well when the missionary rows took place. Everyone, without exception, spoke in the highest terms of Sir John as a host, a gentleman, a hard worker, and (in "high diplomacy") a man of great capacity. Otherwise his five years or more in Peking produced absolutely nothing. *Vox et præterea nihil* (minus the *vox*),—so far, at least, as the trading community knows.

Great things were expected of Mr. O'Connor when he came back, colours flying, as full Minister to replace Sir John. Now at last we were going to settle those rascally Chinese! At last we have a proved man, approved, improved, and destitute of all silly Chinese literary notions! Merchants boarded the steamer almost before it anchored at Hongkong. We all thought that on that occasion he looked as business-like as one of the local bankers: we were, as usual, charmed with him. In what a friendly way did he button-hole us: "Now, my friend, let's get to the bottom rock of this: