
To My Missionary Critics

Author(s): Mark Twain

Source: *The North American Review*, Apr., 1901, Vol. 172, No. 533 (Apr., 1901), pp. 520-534

Published by: University of Northern Iowa

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25105150>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The North American Review*

JSTOR

TO MY MISSIONARY CRITICS.

BY MARK TWAIN.

I HAVE received many newspaper cuttings; also letters from several clergymen; also a note from the Rev. Dr. Judson Smith, Corresponding Secretary of the American Board of Foreign Missions—all of a like tenor; all saying, substantially, what is said in the cutting here copied:

“AN APOLOGY DUE FROM MR. CLEMENS.

“The evidence of the past day or two should induce Mark Twain to make for the amen corner and formulate a prompt apology for his scathing attack on the Rev. Dr. Ament, the veteran Chinese missionary. The assault was based on a Pekin dispatch to the *New York Sun*, which said that Dr. Ament had collected from the Chinese in various places damages thirteen times in excess of actual losses. So Mark Twain charged Mr. Ament with bullyragging, extortion and things. A Pekin dispatch to the *Sun* yesterday, however, explains that the amount collected was not thirteen times the damage sustained, but *one-third in excess of the indemnities*, and that the blunder was due to a cable error in transmission. The 1-3d got converted into 13. Yesterday the Rev. Judson Smith, Secretary of the American Board, received a dispatch from Dr. Ament, calling attention to the cable blunder, and declaring that all the collections which he made were *approved by the Chinese officials*. The fractional amount that was collected in *excess* of actual losses, he explains, is being *used for the support of widows and orphans*.

“So collapses completely—and convulsively—Mark Twain’s sensational and ugly bombardment of a missionary whose character and services should have exempted him from such an assault.

“From the charge the underpinning has been knocked out. To Dr. Ament Mr. Clemens has done an injustice which is gross but unintentional. If Mark Twain is the man we take him to be he won’t be long in filing a retraction, plus an apology.”

I have no prejudice against apologies. I trust I shall never withhold one when it is due; I trust I shall never even have a disposition to do so. These letters and newspaper paragraphs are entitled to my best attention; respect for their writers and for the humane feeling which has prompted their utterances requires this of me. It may be barely possible that, if these requests for

an apology had reached me before the 20th of February, I might have had a sort of qualified chance to apologize; but on that day appeared the two little cablegrams referred to in the newspaper cutting copied above—one from the Rev. Dr. Smith to the Rev. Dr. Ament, the other from Dr. Ament to Dr. Smith—and my small chance died then. In my opinion, these cablegrams ought to have been suppressed, for it seems clear that they give Dr. Ament's case entirely away. Still, that is only an opinion, and may be a mistake. It will be best to examine the case from the beginning, by the light of the documents connected with it.

EXHIBIT A.

This is a dispatch from Mr. Chamberlain,* chief of the *Sun's* correspondence staff in Peking. It appeared in the *Sun* last Christmas Eve, and in referring to it hereafter I will call it the "C. E. dispatch" for short:

"The Rev. Mr. Ament, of the American Board of Foreign Missions, has returned from a trip which he made for the purpose of collecting indemnities for damages done by Boxers. Everywhere he went he compelled the Chinese to pay. He says that all his native Christians are now provided for. He had seven hundred of them under his charge, and three hundred were killed. He has collected 300 taels for each of these murders, and has compelled full payment for all the property belonging to Christians that was destroyed. He also assessed fines amounting to thirteen times† the amount of the indemnity. This money will be used for the propagation of the Gospel.

"Mr. Ament declares that the compensation he has collected is moderate when compared with the amount secured by the Catholics, who demand, in addition to money, head for head. They collect 500 taels for each murder of a Catholic. In the Wen-Chiu country 680 Catholics were killed, and for this the European Catholics here demand 750,000 strings of cash and 680 heads.

"In the course of a conversation Mr. Ament referred to the attitude of the missionaries toward the Chinese. He said:

"I deny emphatically that the missionaries are vindictive, that they generally looted, or that they have done anything since the siege that the circumstances did not demand. I criticise the Americans. The soft hand of the Americans is not as good as the mailed fist of the Germans. If you deal with the Chinese with a soft hand they will take advantage of it."

In an article addressed "To the Person Sitting in Darkness," published in the *NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW* for February, I made some comments upon this C. E. dispatch.

In an Open Letter to me, from the Rev. Dr. Smith, published

*Testimony of the manager of the *Sun*.

†Cable error. For "thirteen times" read "one-third." This correction was made by Dr. Ament in his brief cablegram published Feb. 20, above referred to.

in the *Tribune* of February 15th, doubt is cast upon the authenticity of the dispatch.

Up to the 20th of February, this doubt was an important factor in the case: Dr. Ament's brief cablegram, published on that date, took the importance all out of it.

In the Open Letter, Dr. Smith quotes this passage from a letter from Dr. Ament, dated November 13th. The italics are mine:

"This time I proposed to settle affairs *without the aid of soldiers* or legations."

This cannot mean two things, but only one: that, previously, he *had* collected by armed force.

Also, in the Open Letter, Dr. Smith quotes some praises of Dr. Ament and the Rev. Mr. Tewksbury, furnished by the Rev. Dr. Sheffield, and says:

"Dr. Sheffield is not accustomed to speak thus of *thieves, or extortioners, or braggarts.*"

What can he mean by those vigorous expressions? Can he mean that the first two would be applicable to a missionary who should collect from B, with the "aid of soldiers," indemnities possibly due by A, and upon occasion go out looting?

EXHIBIT B.

Testimony of George Lynch (endorsed as entirely trustworthy by the *Tribune* and the *Herald*), war correspondent in the Cuban and South African wars, and in the march upon Pekin for the rescue of the legations. The italics are mine:

"When the *soldiers* were prohibited from looting, no such prohibitions seemed to operate with the *missionaries*. For instance, the *Rev. Mr. Tewksbury held a great sale of looted goods, which lasted several days.*

"A day or two after the relief, when looking for a place to sleep in, I met the Rev. Mr. Ament, of the American Board of Foreign Missions. *He told me* he was going to take possession of the house of a wealthy Chinaman who was an old enemy of his, as he had interfered much in the past with his missionary labors in Pekin. A couple of days afterward *he did so*, and held a *great sale of his enemy's effects*. I bought a sable cloak at it for \$125, and a couple of statues of Buddha. As the stock became depleted *it was replenished by the efforts of his converts, who were ransacking the houses in the neighborhood.*"—*N. Y. Herald, Feb. 18.*

It is Dr. Smith, not I, who has suggested that persons who act in this way are "thieves and extortioners."

EXHIBIT C.

Sir Robert Hart, in the *Fortnightly Review* for January, 1901.

This witness has been for many years the most prominent and important Englishman in China, and bears an irreproachable reputation for moderation, fairness and truth-speaking. In closing a description of the revolting scenes which followed the occupation of Peking, when the Christian armies (with the proud exception of the American soldiery, let us be thankful for that,) gave themselves up to a ruthless orgy of robbery and spoliation, he says (the italics are mine) :

"And even some *missionaries* took such a *leading* part in 'spoiling the Egyptians' for the greater glory of God that a bystander was heard to say: '*For a century to come Chinese converts will consider looting and vengeance Christian virtues!*'"

It is Dr. Smith, not I, who has suggested that persons who act in this way are "thieves and extortioners." According to Mr. Lynch and Mr. Martin (another war correspondent), Dr. Ament helped to spoil several of those Egyptians. Mr. Martin took a photograph of the scene. It was reproduced in the *Herald*. I have it.

EXHIBIT D.

In a brief reply to Dr. Smith's Open Letter to me, I said this in the *Tribune*. I am italicizing several words—for a purpose :

"Whenever he (Dr. Smith) can produce from the Rev. Mr. Ament an assertion that the *Sun's* character-blasting dispatch was not authorized *by him*, and whenever Dr. Smith can buttress Mr. Ament's disclaimer with a confession from *Mr. Chamberlain*, the head of the Laffan News Service in China, that that dispatch was a false invention *and unauthorized*, the case against Mr. Ament will fall at once to the ground."

EXHIBIT E.

Brief cablegrams, referred to above, which passed between Dr. Smith and Dr. Ament, and were published on February 20th :

"Ament, Peking: Reported December 24 your collecting thirteen times actual losses; using for propagating the Gospel. Are these statements true? Cable specific answer. SMITH."

"Statement untrue. Collected 1-3 for church expenses, additional actual damages; now supporting widows and orphans. Publication thirteen times blunder cable. All collections received approval Chinese officials, who are urging further settlements same line. AMENT."

Only two questions are asked; "specific" answers required; no perilous wanderings among the other details of the unhappy dispatch desired.

EXHIBIT F.

Letter from Dr. Smith to me, dated March 8th. The italics are mine; they tag inaccuracies of statement :

"Permit me to call your attention to the marked paragraphs in the inclosed papers, and to ask you to note their relation to the two conditions named in your letter to the *New York Tribune* of February 15th.

"The first is *Dr. Ament's denial of the truth of the dispatch in the New York 'Sun'* of December 24th, on which your criticisms of him in the NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW of February were founded. The second is a correction by the '*Sun's*' special correspondent in Peking of the dispatch printed in the *Sun* of December 24th.

"Since, as you state in your letter to the *Tribune*, 'the case against Mr. Ament would fall to the ground' if *Mr. Ament denied the truth of the Sun's* first dispatch, and if the '*Sun's*' news agency in Peking also declared that dispatch false, and these two conditions have thus been fulfilled, I am sure that upon having these facts brought to your attention you will gladly withdraw the criticisms that were founded on a 'cable blunder.'"

I think Dr. Smith ought to read me more carefully; then he would not make so many mistakes. Within the narrow space of two paragraphs, totaling eleven lines, he has scored nine departures from fact out of a possible $9\frac{1}{2}$. Now, is that parliamentary? I do not treat him like that. Whenever I quote him, I am particular not to do him the least wrong, or make him say anything he did not say.

(1.) Mr. Ament doesn't "deny the truth of the C. E. dispatch;" he merely changes one of its phrases, without materially changing the meaning, and (immaterially) corrects a cable blunder (which correction I accept). He was asked no question about the other four-fifths of the C. E. dispatch. (2.) I said nothing about "special" correspondents; I named the right and responsible man—Mr. Chamberlain. The "correction" referred to is a repetition of the one I have just accepted, which (immaterially) changes "thirteen times" to "one-third" extra-tax. (3.) I did not say anything about "the *Sun's* news agency;" I said "Chamberlain." I have every confidence in Mr. Chamberlain, but I am not personally acquainted with the others. (4.) Once more—Mr. Ament didn't "deny the truth" of the C. E. dispatch, but merely made unimportant emendations of a couple of its many details. (5.) I did not say "if Mr. Ament denied the truth" of the C. E. dispatch: I said, if he would assert that the dispatch was not "authorized" by him. For example, I did not suppose that the charge that the Catholic missionaries wanted 680 Chinamen beheaded was true; but I did want to know if Dr. Ament personally authorized that statement and the others, as coming from his lips. Another detail: one of my conditions was that

Mr. Chamberlain must not stop with confessing that the C. E. was a "false invention," he must also confess that it was "*unauthorized*." Dr. Smith has left out that large detail. (6.) The *Sun's* news agency did not "declare the C. E. dispatch false," but confined itself to correcting one unimportant detail of its long list—the change of "13 times" to "one-third" extra. (7.) The "two conditions" have not "been fulfilled"—far from it. (8.) Those details labeled "facts" are only fancies. (9.) Finally, my criticisms were by no means confined to that detail of the C. E. dispatch which we now accept as having been a "cable blunder."

Setting to one side these nine departures from fact, I find that what is left of the eleven lines is straight and true. I am not blaming Dr. Smith for these discrepancies—it would not be right, it would not be fair. I make the proper allowances. He has not been a journalist, as I have been—a trade wherein a person is brought to book by the rest of the press so often for divergencies that, by and by, he gets to be almost morbidly afraid to indulge in them. It is so with me. I always have the disposition to tell what is not so; I was born with it; we all have it. But I try not to do it now, because I have found out that it is unsafe. But with the Doctor of course it is different.

EXHIBIT G.

I wanted to get at the whole of the facts as regards the C. E. dispatch, and so I wrote to China for them, when I found that the Board was not going to do it. But I am not allowed to wait. It seemed quite within the possibilities that a full detail of the facts might furnish me a chance to make an apology to Mr. Ament—a chance which, I give you my word, I would have honestly used, and not abused. But it is no matter. If the Board is not troubled about the bulk of that lurid dispatch, why should I be? I answered the apology-urging letters of several clergymen with the information that I had written to China for the details, and said I thought it was the only sure way of getting into a position to do fair and full justice to all concerned; but a couple of them replied that it was not a matter that could wait. That is to say, groping your way out of a jungle in the dark with guesses and conjectures is better than a straight march out in the sunlight of fact. It seems a curious idea.

However, those two clergymen were in a large measure right—

from their point of view and the Board's; which is, putting it in the form of a couple of questions:

1. *Did Dr. Ament collect the assessed damages and thirteen times over?* The answer is: He did *not*. He collected only a *third* over.

2. *Did he apply the third to the "propagation of the Gospel?"* The answer is this correction: He applied it to "church expenses." Part or all of the outlay, it appears, goes to "supporting widows and orphans." It may be that church expenses and supporting widows and orphans are not part of the machinery for propagating the Gospel. I supposed they were, but it isn't any matter; I prefer this phrasing; it is not so blunt as the other.

In the opinion of the two clergymen and of the Board, these two points are *the only important ones* in the whole C. E. dispatch.

I accept that. Therefore let us throw out the rest of the dispatch as being no longer a part of Dr. Ament's case.

EXHIBIT H.

The two clergymen and the Board are quite content with Dr. Ament's answers upon the two points.

Upon the first point of the two, my own viewpoint may be indicated by a question:

Did Dr. Ament collect from B, (whether by compulsion or simple demand), even so much as a penny in payment for murders or depredations, without knowing, beyond question, that B, and not another, committed the murders or the depredations?

Or, in other words:

Did Dr. Ament ever, by chance or through ignorance, make the innocent pay the debts of the guilty?

In the article entitled "To the Person Sitting in Darkness," I put forward that point in a paragraph taken from Macallum's (imaginary) "History":

EXHIBIT I.

"When a white Boxer kills a Pawnee and destroys his property the other Pawnees do not trouble to seek *him* out; they kill any white person that comes along; also, they make some white village pay deceased's heirs the full cash value of deceased, together with full cash value of the property destroyed; they also make the village pay, in addition, *thirteen times** the value of that property into a fund for the dissemination of the Pawnee religion, which they regard as the best of all religions for the softening and humanizing of the heart of man. It is their idea that it is only fair and right *that the innocent should be made to suffer for the guilty*, and that it is better that ninety

*For "thirteen times" read "one-third."—M. T.

and nine innocent should suffer than that one guilty person should escape."

We all know that Dr. Ament did not bring suspected persons into a duly organized court and try them by just and fair Christian and civilized methods, but proclaimed his "conditions," and collected damages from the innocent and the guilty alike, without any court proceedings at all.* That he himself, and not the villagers, made the "conditions," we learn from his letter of November 13th, already quoted from—the one in which he remarked that, upon *that* occasion, he brought no soldiers with him. The italics are mine:

"After our *conditions* were known many villagers came of their own accord and brought their money with them."

Not all, but "many." The Board really believes that those hunted and harried paupers out there were not only willing to strip themselves to pay Boxer damages, whether they owed them or not, but were sentimentally eager to do it. Mr. Ament says, in his letter: "The villagers were extremely grateful because I brought no foreign soldiers, and were glad to settle on the terms proposed." Some of those people know more about theology than they do about human nature. I do not remember encountering even a Christian who was "glad" to pay money he did not owe; and as for a Chinaman doing it, why, dear me, the thing is unthinkable. We have all seen Chinamen, many Chinamen, but not that kind. It is a new kind: an invention of the Board—and "soldiers."

CONCERNING THE COLLECTIONS.

What was the "one-third extra"? Money due? No. Was it a theft, then? Putting aside the "one-third extra," what was the *remainder* of the exacted indemnity, if collected from persons not *known* to owe it, and without Christian and civilized forms of procedure? Was *it* theft, was it robbery? In America it would be that; in Christian Europe it would be that. I have great confidence in Dr. Smith's judgment concerning this detail, and he calls it "theft and extortion"—even in China; for he was talking about the "thirteen times" at the time that he gave it that strong

*In civilized countries, if a mob destroy property in a town, the damage is paid out of the town treasury, and no tax-payer suffers a disproportionate share of the burden; the mayor is not privileged to distribute the burden according to his private notions, sparing himself and his friends, and fleecing persons he holds a spite against—as in the Orient—and the citizen who is too poor to be a tax-payer pays no part of the fine at all.

name.* It is his idea that, when you make guilty and innocent villagers pay the appraised damages, and then make them pay thirteen times that, besides, the *thirteen* stand for "theft and extortion."

Then what does *one-third* extra stand for? Will he give that one-third a name? Is it Modified Theft and Extortion? Is that it? The girl who was rebuked for having borne an illegitimate child, excused herself by saying, "But it is such a *little one*."

When the "thirteen-times-extra" was alleged, it stood for theft and extortion, in Dr. Smith's eyes, and he was shocked. But when Dr. Ament showed that he had taken only a *third* extra, instead of thirteen-fold, Dr. Smith was relieved, content, happy. I declare I cannot imagine why. That editor—quoted at the head of this article—was happy about it, too. I cannot think why. He thought I ought to "make for the amen corner and formulate a prompt apology." To whom, and for what? It is too deep for me.

To Dr. Smith, the "thirteen-fold-extra" clearly stood for "theft and extortion," and he was right, distinctly right, indisputably right. He manifestly thinks that when it got scaled away down to a mere "one-third," a little thing like that was something other than "theft and extortion." Why? Only the Board knows! I will try to explain this difficult problem, so that the Board can get an idea of it. If a pauper owes me a dollar, and I catch him unprotected and make him pay me fourteen dollars, thirteen of it is "theft and extortion"; if I make him pay only a dollar and thirty-three and a third cents, the thirty-three and a third cents are "theft and extortion" just the same. I will put it in another way, still simpler. If a man owes me one dog—any kind of a dog, the breed is of no consequence—and I—— But let it go; the Board would never understand it. It *can't* understand these involved and difficult things.

But *if* the Board could understand, then I could furnish some more instruction—which is this. The one-third, obtained by "theft and extortion," is *tainted money*, and cannot be purified even by defraying "church expenses" and "supporting widows and

*In his Open Letter, Dr. Smith cites Dr. Ament's letter of November 13th, which contains an account of Dr. Ament's collecting-tour; then Dr. Smith makes this comment: "Nothing is said of securing 'thirteen times' the amount of the losses." Further down, Dr. Smith quotes praises of Dr. Ament and his work (from a letter of the Rev. Dr. Sheffield), and adds this comment: "Dr. Sheffield is not accustomed to speak thus in praise of thieves, or extortioners, or braggarts." The reference is to the "thirteen-times' extra-tax.

orphans" with it. It has to be restored to the people it was taken from.

Also, there is another view of these things. By our Christian code of morals and law, the *whole* \$1.33 1-3, if taken from a man not formally *proven* to have committed the damage the dollar represents, is "theft and extortion." It cannot be honestly used for any purpose at all. It must be handed back to the man it was taken from.

Is there no way, then, to justify these thefts and extortions and make them clean and fair and honorable? Yes, there is. It can be done; it has been done; it continues to be done—by revising the Ten Commandments and bringing them down to date: for use in pagan lands. For example:

Thou shall not steal—except when it is the custom of the country.

This way out is recognized and *approved* by all the best authorities, including the Board. I will cite witnesses.

The newspaper cutting, above: "Dr. Ament declares that all the collections which he made were approved by the *Chinese* officials." The editor is satisfied.

Dr. Ament's cable to Dr. Smith: "All collections received approval *Chinese* officials." Dr. Ament is satisfied.

Letters from eight clergymen—all to the same effect: Dr. Ament merely did as the *Chinese* do. So they are satisfied.

Mr. Ward, of the Independent.

The Rev. Dr. Washington Gladden.

I have mislaid the letters of these gentlemen and cannot quote their words, but they are of the satisfied.

The Rev. Dr. Smith, in His Open Letter, published in the Tribune: "The whole procedure (Dr. Ament's), is in accordance with a custom among the *Chinese*, of holding a village responsible for wrongs suffered in that village, and especially making the head man of the village accountable for wrongs committed there." Dr. Smith is satisfied. Which means that the Board is satisfied.

The "head man"! Why, then, this poor rascal, innocent or guilty, must pay the whole bill, if he cannot squeeze it out of his poor-devil neighbors. But, indeed, he can be depended upon to try, even to the skinning them of their last brass farthing, their last rag of clothing, their last ounce of food. He can be depended upon to get the indemnity out of them, though it cost stripes and blows, blood, tears and flesh.

THE TALE OF THE KING AND HIS TREASURER.

How strange and remote and romantic and Oriental and Arabian-Nighty it all seems—and is. It brings back the old forgotten tales, and we hear the King say to his Treasurer:

“Bring me 30,000 gold tomauns.”

“Allah preserve us, Sire! the treasury is empty.”

“Do you hear? Bring the money—in ten days. Else, send me your head in a basket.”

“I hear and obey.”

The Treasurer summons the head men of a hundred villages, and says to one:

“Bring me a hundred gold tomauns.” To another, “Bring me five hundred;” to another, “Bring a thousand. In ten days. Your head is the forfeit.”

“Your slaves kiss your feet! Ah, high and mighty lord, be merciful to our hard pressed villagers: they are poor, they are naked, they starve; oh, these impossible sums! even the half——”

“Go! Grind it out of them, crush it out of them, turn the blood of the fathers, the tears of the mothers, the milk of the babes to money—or take the consequences. Have you heard?”

“His will be done, Who is the Fount of love and mercy and compassion, Who layeth this heavy burden upon us by the hand of His anointed servants—blessed be His holy Name! The father shall bleed, the mother shall faint for hunger, the babe shall perish at the dry breast. The chosen of God have commanded: it shall be as they say.”

I am not meaning to object to the substitution of pagan customs for Christian, here and there and now and then, when the Christian ones are inconvenient. No; I like it and admire it. I do it myself. And I admire the alertness of the Board in watching out for chances to trade Board morals for Chinese morals, and get the best of the swap; for I cannot endure those people, they are yellow, and I have never considered yellow becoming. I have always been like the Board—perfectly well-meaning, but destitute of the Moral Sense. Now, one of the main reasons why it is so hard to make the Board understand that there is no moral difference between a big filch and a little filch, but only a legal one, is that vacancy in its make-up. Morally, there are no degrees in stealing. The Commandment merely says, “Thou shalt not *steal*,” and stops there. It doesn’t recog-

nize any difference between stealing a third and stealing thirteen-fold. If I could think of a way to put it before the Board in such a plain and—

THE WATERMELONS. ..

I have it, now. Many years ago, when I was studying for the gallows, I had a dear comrade, a youth who was not in my line, but still a thoroughly good fellow, though devious. He was preparing to qualify for a place on the Board, for there was going to be a vacancy by superannuation in about five years. This was down South, in the slavery days. It was the nature of the negro then, as now, to steal watermelons. They stole three of the melons of an adoptive brother of mine, the only good ones he had. I suspected three of a neighbor's negroes, but there was no proof: and, besides, the watermelons in those negroes' private patches were all green and small, and not up to indemnity standard. But in the private patches of three other negroes there was a number of competent melons. I consulted with my comrade, the understudy of the Board. He said that if I would approve his arrangements, he would arrange. I said, "Consider me the Board; I approve: arrange." So he took a gun, and went and collected three large melons for my brother-on-the-half-shell, and one over. I was greatly pleased, and asked:

"Who gets the extra one?"

"Widows and orphans."

"A good idea, too. Why didn't you take thirteen?"

"It would have been wrong; a crime, in fact—Theft and Extortion."

"What is the one-third extra—the odd melon—the same?"

It caused him to reflect. But there was no result.

The justice of the peace was a stern man. On the trial, he found fault with the scheme, and required us to explain upon what we based our strange conduct—as he called it. The understudy said:

"On the custom of the niggers. They all do it."

The justice forgot his dignity, and descended to sarcasm:

"Custom of the niggers! Are our morals so inadequate that we have to borrow of niggers?" Then he said to the jury: "Three melons were owing; they were collected from persons not proven to owe them; this is theft. They were collected by compulsion; this is extortion. A melon was added—for the widows

and orphans. It was owed by no one. It is another theft, another extortion. Return it whence it came, with the others. It is not permissible, here, to apply to any object goods dishonestly obtained—not even to the feeding of widows and orphans, for that would be to put a shame upon charity and dishonor it.”

He said it in open court, before everybody, and to me it did not seem very kind.

A clergyman, in a letter to me, reminds me, with a touch of reproach, that “many of the missionaries are good men, kind-hearted, earnest, devoted to their work.” Certainly they are. No one is disputing it. Instead of “many,” he could have said “almost all,” and still said the truth, no doubt. I know many missionaries; I have met them all about the globe, and have known only one or two who could not fill that bill and answer to that description. “Almost all” comes near to being a proportion and a description applicable also to lawyers, authors, editors, merchants, manufacturers—in fact to most guilds and vocations. Without a doubt, Dr. Ament did what he believed to be right, and I concede that when a man is doing what he believes to be right, there is argument on his side. I differ with Dr. Ament, but that is only because he got his training from the Board and I got mine outside. Neither of us is responsible, altogether.

RECAPITULATION.

But there is no need to sum up. Mr. Ament has acknowledged the “one-third extra”—no other witness is necessary. The Rev. Dr. Smith has carefully considered the act and labeled it with a stern name, and his verdict seems to have no flaw in it. The morals of the act are Chinese, but are approved by the Board, and by some of the clergy and some of the newspapers, as being a valuable improvement upon Christian ones—which leaves me with a closed mouth, though with a pain in my heart.

IS THE AMERICAN BOARD ON TRIAL?

Do I think that Dr. Ament and certain of his fellow missionaries are as bad as their conduct? No, I do not. They are the product of their training; and now that I understand the whole case, and where they got their ideals, and that they are merely subordinates and subject to authority, I comprehend that they are rather accessories than principals, and that their acts only show faulty heads curiously trained, not bad hearts. Mainly, as it seems to me, it is the American Board that is on trial. And

again, it is a case of the head, not of the heart. That it has a heart which has never harbored an evil intention, no one will deny, no one will question; the Board's history can silence any challenge on that score. The Board's heart is not in court: it is its head that is on trial.

It is a sufficiently strange head. Its ways baffle comprehension; its ideas are like no one else's; its methods are novelties to the practical world; its judgments are surprises. When one thinks it is going to speak and must speak, it is silent; when one thinks it ought to be silent and must be silent, it speaks. Put your finger where you think it ought to be, it is not there; put it where you think it ought not to be, there you find it.

When its servant in China seemed to be charging himself with amazing things, in a reputable journal,—in a dispatch which was copied into many other papers—the Board was as silent about it as any dead man could have been who was informed that his house was burning over his head. An exchange of cablegrams could have enabled it, within two days, to prove to the world—possibly—that the damaging dispatch had not proceeded from the mouth of its servant; yet it sat silent and asked no questions about the matter.

It was silent during thirty-eight days. Then the dispatch came into prominence again. It chanced that I was the occasion of it. A break in the stillness followed. In what form? An exchange of cablegrams, resulting in proof that the damaging dispatch had not been authorized? No, in the form of an Open Letter by the Corresponding Secretary of the American Board, the Rev. Dr. Smith, in which it was *argued* that Dr. Ament could not have said and done the things set forth in the dispatch.

Surely, this was bad politics. A repudiating telegram would have been worth more than a library of argument.

An extension of the silence would have been better than the Open Letter, I think. I thought so at the time. It seemed to me that mistakes enough had been made and harm enough done. I thought it questionable policy to publish the Letter, for I "did not think it likely that Dr. Ament would disown the dispatch," and I telegraphed that to the Rev. Dr. Smith. Personally, I had nothing against Dr. Ament, and that is my attitude yet.

Once more it was a good time for an extension of the silence. But no; the Board has its own ways, and one of them is to do the

unwise thing, when occasion offers. After having waited fifty-six days, it cabled to Dr. Ament. No one can divine why it did so then, instead of fifty-six days earlier.* It got a fatal reply—and was not aware of it. That was that curious confession about the “one-third extra”; its application, not to the “propagation of the Gospel,” but only to “church expenses,” support of widows and orphans; and, on top of this confession, that other strange one revealing the dizzying fact that our missionaries, who went to China to teach Christian morals and justice, had adopted pagan morals and justice in their place. *That cablegram was dynamite.*

It seems odd that the Board did not see that that revelation made the case far worse than it was before; for there was a saving doubt, before—a doubt which was a Gibraltar for strength, and should have been carefully left undisturbed. Why did the Board allow that revelation to get into print? Why did the Board not suppress it and keep still? But no; in the Board’s opinion, this was once more the time for speech. Hence Dr. Smith’s latest letter to me, suggesting that I speak also—a letter which is a good enough letter, barring its nine defects, but is another evidence that the Board’s head is not as good as its heart.

A missionary is a man who is pretty nearly all heart, else he would not be in a calling which requires of him such large sacrifices of one kind and another. He is made up of faith, zeal, courage, sentiment, emotion, enthusiasm; and so he is a mixture of poet, devotee and knight-errant. He exiles himself from home and friends and the scenes and associations that are dearest to him; patiently endures discomforts, privations, discouragements; goes with good pluck into dangers which he knows may cost him his life; and, when he must suffer death, willingly makes that supreme sacrifice for his cause.

Sometimes the head-piece of that kind of a man can be of an inferior sort, and errors of judgment can result—as we have seen. Then, for his protection, as it seems to me, he ought to have at his back a Board able to know a blunder when it sees one, and prompt to bring him back upon his right course when he strays from it. That is to say, I think the captain of a ship ought to understand navigation. Whether he does or not, he will have to take a captain’s share of the blame, if the crew bring the vessel to grief.

MARK TWAIN.

*The cablegram went on the day (Feb. 18) that Mr. George Lynch’s account of the looting was published. See “Exhibit B.” It seems a pity it did not inquire about the looting and get it denied.