

The Black Flags

The following is the proclamation issued by Lin-Yang-Fu, the Commander of the “Black Flags”, on May 8th, 1883, fixing May 12th for the day of conflict:-

“You, French freebooters, are forcible dwellers in Europe, and look like Tigers on the world at large, seeing how to give vent to your crafty schemes and cruel deeds. There is no land for which your mouth does not water; there are no riches you do not desire to devour. Religious teaching you employ as a means to undermine and injure the people. International commerce is to you the pretext to swallowing up countries. Your cruelty is infinite. Your wickedness is extreme. On your strength you rely to debauch (our women), which excite the indignation of gods and men, and is unendurable in Heaven and on earth. Now you want to avail yourselves of an excuse to endeavour to acquire Annam, and under the pretext of International commerce to depart from the treaty, trying to bufool (= trick) the world in order to give vent to your martial designs, and to seize cities and storm towns, slaughtering officials and robbing the revenue; killing the innocent and encouraging secret bands. Your outrages and cruelties have reached far and wide.

Your crimes are almost too numerous for words. Your shame could not be washed out, though you were to exhaust the water of the West (or Canton) River. The issuer of this proclamation having received commands to avenge the wrongs inflicted by you, and having sworn, with an army with justice on its side, to lead his troops to the slaughter of you vile lot, his first desire was to proceed at once with lightning speed to beat down your rabbit-hole and to exterminate you pack of foxes without pity, which would be a matter of great rejoicing to the heart of man, and would manifest Heaven's vengeance. But reflecting that Hanoi is also old territory belonging to the Government, and that the traders there are all respectable, loyal people, I do not endure that the city should be reduced to ruins, and young and old be killed at the edge of the sword. I therefore issue this proclamation that you may all know that on the day this proclamation arrives, you, French robbers, who have already acted unlawfully, relying on your powers, may lead forth your crowd of dogs and sheep to meet our army of heroes, and to decide which is to be master. I have fixed on Wai-tak-fu, and empty space, as the spot where I shall establish my fame. If you know you are no match for us, that

you, vixen Jews, will only go to greases the edges of our swords, and as desirous still to maintain your lives, then if you will at once decapitate your leaders and present their heads at my official abode, return to squat in your own dens, leaving our city, I, out of regard for the lord of Heaven, for humanity and for my commission from Government to maintain peace, will not kill these who surrender to gratify myself. If you dilly-dally and are irresolute, coveting and hanging on still on still in our land, one morning the soldiery will arrive and with it unforeseen misfortune. Ah! You ought to see your chance and yield. Do not be mulish and so involve yourselves in death. Each one ought to seriously consider the matter, and so save himself from future ill.”