

The Shanghai Merchant's Point of View

Following on Friday's successful mass meeting and Sunday's parade, canvassers representing the 22 relief organizations on Monday began their house to house collection and remained hard at work throughout the day. At night they were able to report good results at Headquarters, one of the earliest arrivals announcing over \$6,000 as the receipts for the day. It is estimated that Shanghai's contributions to date total over \$5,000,000, whilst other sums of money are known to have been sent to the North which have not gone through the hands of the famine relief societies.

THE OBNOXIOUS SURTAX.

The failure of the Peking Government to come to the relief of the starving millions is occasioning much concern among the merchants of Shanghai. Should the officials persist in their determination to levy a surcharge on all likin taxes, it will mean a loss of large sums running into hundreds of thousands of dollars to the Drive, and consequently to the famine relief. That the sums collected from the surtax will not be devoted to saving the lives of the starving is free-

ly declared by the merchants, for it is openly stated that it is the intention to apply this money to road building, administration etc. Such a policy, they say, will provide nice incomes for the favoured ones who are appointed to this work by the Peking officials but, in the meantime, the absence of grain, fuel, clothing and preventive medicines will cause deaths running into hundreds of thousands.

The attitude of these merchants is unfortunate, but they take the position that while they would gladly contribute to the cause of saving life, it can hardly be expected they will give once to the Northern government and again to the Relief societies for one and the same purpose. One of the leading merchants of Shanghai pointed out yesterday that a cargo of goods going from here to Hangchow is taxed for likin at four points on the way. At the present time the Government is collecting 10 per cent. on these charges at every likin point and before the goods reach their destination there is an added tax on the tariff of 40 per cent.

'THE OFFICIALS' HARVEST.

"You can see," he added, "that the officials are reaping a harvest at the present time and we merchants are being very heavily taxed to pay for it. Well, it only means that such a charge will be passed on to the consumer eventually, for it is my firm conviction that the Government has no intention of ever reducing this tax to its former position after we have once become accustomed to paying it. And that means an advance in the price of all commodities and in the general cost of living."

When asked how much the merchants of Shanghai would be likely to give if it were not for the likin tax, he stated, "At least half a million."