The ill-fated Amherst Mission of 1817, a lesser-known (and even less successful) sequel to the famously abortive Macartney Mission of 1793, was Britain’s second attempt to open diplomatic relations with China and the last such effort before the outbreak of the Opium War. Though it ended in catastrophe, in the hopes of those involved on both sides we can see glimpses of a very different direction the relationship between Britain and China might have gone in the early 19th century.

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