

# THE GOVERNMENTAL SYSTEM OF CHINA

"HE WHO exercises government by means of his virtue," says the Chinese proverb, "may be compared to the north polar star, which keeps its place, and all the stars turn toward it."

There are three things of which the superior man stands in awe. He stands in awe of the ordinances of heaven, he stands in awe of great men, he stands in awe of the words of sages."

These Confucian maxims, like many other excellent precepts of the great Chinese teacher, are, it is feared, more honored in the breach than in the observance. It is assumed, for instance, that the man who exercises government by means of his virtue is personified in the emperor, whomsoever he may be that the moment sits upon the "dragon

straight from heaven inspired by the gods. He is the "unequaled being," the "isolated, solitary man," set apart from the beginning of time for the peculiar mission he is to perform. None must approach him but with self-abasement and none speak of him but with reverence. His person is sacred, he never appears in public unless accompanied by a large bodyguard, and his retinue of a thousand courtiers consists mainly of eunuchs pledged to defend him with their lives.

The emperor is the apex of the governmental pyramid, a structure strongly based, notwithstanding some have insinuated that it is something like a pyramid reversed—unstable and insecure. Like many a monarch, however, he is more a figurehead than a real

to carry out a routine that has existed for centuries, there is a cabinet consisting of the four chief chancellors or mandarins of the empire, two of them Manchou and two Chinese. As the dominant dynasty is Manchou, however, having ruled the Chinese for two centuries and a half, the former have a veto on the latter. It may be noted in passing, though, that while nominally the conquerors of China, the Man-

ment was created and called the t'ung-yi-yamen, or foreign office, which holds a similar position to the American department of state and the British foreign office in Downing street. This department has dealings directly with other nations and has been used as a kind of intermediary between them and the emperor, relieving him of the responsibility for disagreeable performances and acting as an international arbiter in affairs of importance. It is composed of the heads of the higher boards and has been presided over by such distinguished men as Prince Ching and Prince Tuan, who have come into prominence of late as leaders of rival armies.

These are the bureaucratic officials of high class who have their headquarters in Peking and who are dependent mainly upon the emperor or who ever acts in the imperial capacity for favor. There are rumors of late that the imperial authority has been usurped by the empress dowager Tsi An, the ambitious relic of Emperor Kwang Hsu's immediate predecessor. But whoever reigns the bureaucracy will remain the same. It has outlasted the rebellions and plottings of more than two centuries, and will probably continue till the end of the chapter. The

Sometimes there is but one viceroy to two or three provinces, but each province has its governor, under whom is an assistant staff of mandarins, besides a chief justice, literary chancellor, provincial treasurer and military commandant. Under all these, again, there is a host of "intendants" or magistrates, 1,300 in number, with swarms of parasites and hangers on in general.

The governmental system of China has well been called the most stupendous bureaucracy in existence, which without doubt it is. It can be seen by the above that while the system is only loosely held together by dependence upon the central authority, yet there is the strongest kind of control exercised over the officials by a system of espionage and counterchecks of opposing interests. To recapitulate: First, there are the gods above who manifest their desires to the emperor, through whom they are promulgated to his cabinet, thence to the various boards and departments, to the viceroys, governors, mandarins, intendants, local justices, tax collectors, police, constables and the riffraff of officialdom. Thus is the whole empire honeycombed by corruption, and the mandarins, of whom there are many thousands, have been declared the very worst curse ever inflicted

banks might be set down to an "act of God" or natural causes, but not in China. The mandarin class in China every time the great Yellow changes its course and overflows vast territory, with enormous loss of life, and many a one has lost his head because he did not somehow avert the disaster.

The evils of the Chinese provincial system came out strongly in the war with Japan, showing that, while it might have been convenient to use the viceroys as scapegoats at times, it would have been better had they all been bound together under direction of the central government. Local justice, however, is not a very good thing, sending aid to Li Hung Chang at the beginning of that war, and the consequence was that his armies were easily beaten by the Japanese, taking them singly, when if combined the result might have been different. The renowned Prince Ching once remarked to Lord Charles Beresford that he did not think it would be possible or at least advisable to alter the old established custom of having provincial armies to maintain order in China. The Englishman replied that the Chinese government had, he thought, an excellent illustration of that same provincial system when carried out with regard to its fleet. If, he said, the two fleets—the Peking and the Nanyang—had been a national fleet under one commander and organization, it would have been impossible for the Japanese to have obtained the easy and brilliant victories which they achieved in the late war.

"The lack of patriotism," says the editor of a Peking paper, "that insular sentiment of every true soldier, is notable in China, not only among the rank and file, but among the high officials of both military and civil life. The man who does not risk and steal from his country's treasury when he has a chance is looked upon as a fool, and the names of the viceroys and governors who have grown immensely rich from their official positions would make a long list, including nearly all."

Estimates of the total revenues of the imperial government vary from \$20,000,000 to \$40,000,000, but it is acknowledged by all that it does not receive one-third the aggregate sum collected. In an address of the Chinese merchants of Hongkong they say: "Suppose it is possible to furnish China tomorrow with a well equipped army and perfectly organized police, we are quite certain that neither force would be maintained in an efficient state for a year and a day. China's corrupt government and her peculating officials would starve out either or both the forces." A high mandarin of cabinet rank in the capital of China does not get more than \$1,000 a year; a viceroy, with emoluments, not more than \$2,000, while in point of fact the former requires from 10 to 20 times his salary to live upon, and the latter expends not less than \$50,000 or \$60,000 per annum!

"A general in the army or an admiral in the navy gets less than \$2,000 a year as salary, and from these high wages down the Chinese officials are all underpaid in the same proportion, until one gets to the lowest grade, the petty mandarin and the soldiers and sailors, who receive from \$1 to \$3 a month. How do they supply the deficiency in their salaries? By the 'squeeze,' which is exacted from the lowest to the highest. Every sort of traffic and transaction has to pay its tribute. Officers in the army draw pay for hundreds of soldiers not in the ranks, they buy ammunition for the government and sell it for their own profit.

"In short," the board summarizes, "ask any independent Chinaman you meet, and he will tell you the same story—namely, that when a sum of money passes from the imperial board of revenue successively through the various channels to its destination, like a well known musical scale, it gradually diminishes and becomes beautifully 'less'."

There is at least one commendable feature of Chinese officialdom, and that is that all the offices are open to the people, without any distinction of birth, nationality or creed—only of sex. The so-called literary examinations are free to all for competition, but are so severe that sometimes men pass their lives in vain attempts to gain an office and die of old age without having accomplished the object of their desires.

The life history of "the most distinguished foreigner in China," Sir Robert Hart, is a case in point illustrating both the liberality of the Chinese and the corruption of their officials. Appointed inspector general of customs 40 years ago, he, though a Scotchman born, acquired the confidence of the government by saving it many millions, previously lost through the corruption of its officials, and was made a mandarin of the highest class. He has been the mainstay of this great administration for two score years, and while standing in relation to the Chinese government as its servant, though a foreigner, yet in relation to the foreigners he was one of themselves, though a Chinese official.

This relation shows that while, according to Lord Beresford, "the traditional official system is corrupt, the Chinese people are honest. The integrity of their merchants is known to every banker and trader in the east, and their word is as good as their bond. They have, too, a traditional and idolatrous respect for authority, and all they need is an honest and good authority."

CHANNING A. BARTOW.

## FLOATING BIRDS' NESTS.

There is a variety of grebe (Columbus minor) which hatches its young on a regular raft. Its nest is a mass of strong stems of aquatic plants closely fastened together. These plants contain a considerable quantity of air in their cells and set free gases in the process of decaying. The air and the gases imprisoned in the plant make the nest lighter than water. The bird usually sits quietly on its eggs, but if any intruder approaches or any danger is feared the mother plunges one foot in the water and, using it as a paddle, transports her floating nest to a distance, often dragging along with it a sheet of water plants. A naturalist who frequently watched this remarkable removal says: "The whole structure looks like a little floating island, carried along by the labor of the grebe, which moves in the center of a mass of verdure."

## CUBA'S SUGAR OUTPUT.

Cuba is the greatest sugar producing country in the world, and its normal crop is about 1,000,000 tons.

It has 11 armored cruisers and 23 torpedo boat destroyers. Japan has on the stocks 4 first class battleships, 5 cruisers, 3 torpedo boat destroyers and 13 torpedo boats.

Russia's national debt is \$798,598,000; Japan's, \$25,424,903.

Japan's annual exports are valued at \$18,500,000 a year; Russia's at \$75,000,000.

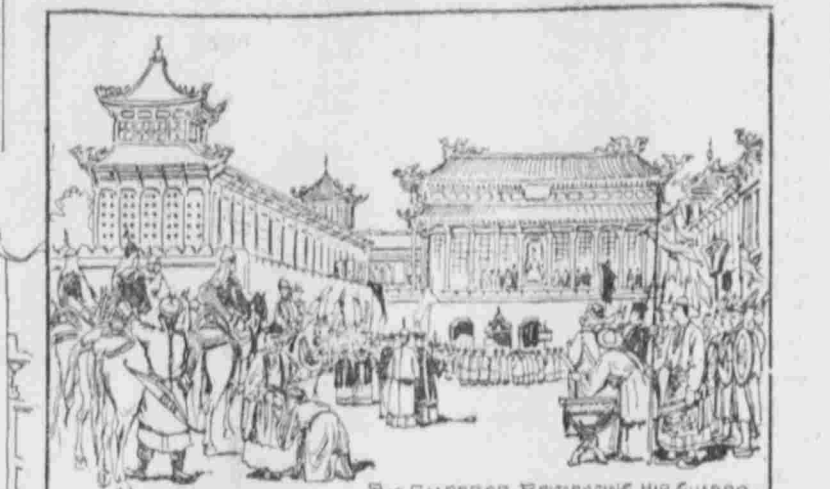
Russia is now building 6 first class



STONE ELEPHANT AT THE MING TOMBS.

throne," and whether he be a nonentity, swayed like a puppet by his ministers, or a being highly endowed by nature and with humanitarian impulses.

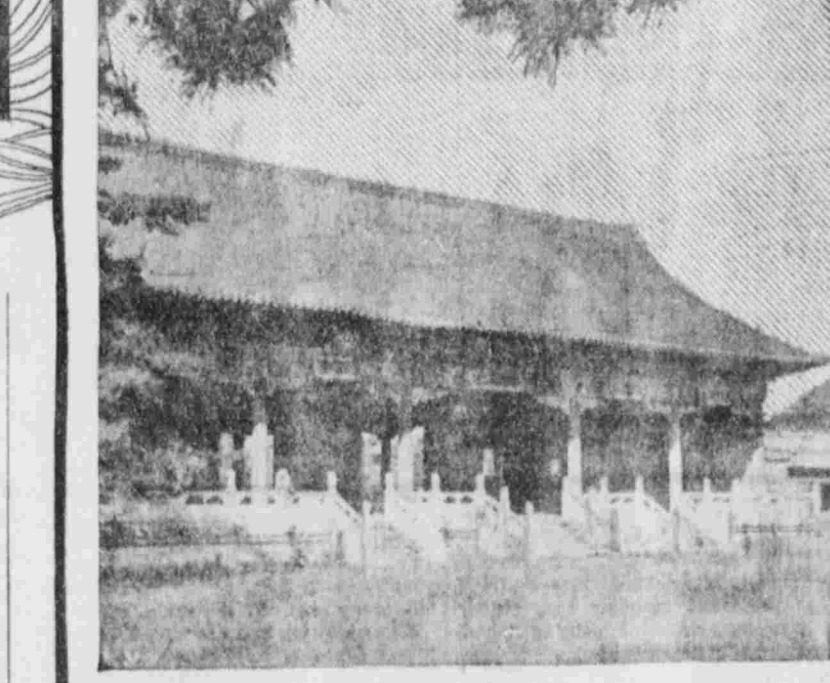
The emperor of China may well say, like the renowned monarch of France, "I am the state," for in him centers all authority, and from him emanate the decrees which he is supposed to receive



THE EMPEROR REVIEWING HIS GUARDS.



BRONZE ASTRONOMICAL INSTRUMENT AT PEKING.



THE GREAT HALL AT THE MING TOMBS.



READING AN IMPERIAL EDITION IN A PROVINCIAL TOWN.

## NOTABLE SCENES IN THE FLOWERY KINGDOM.

choos have themselves been conquered in a sense, for the language of the Tartars is only by a state fiction that of the sovereign and his court, the written and colloquial Chinese being universal throughout the country.

The Ming dynasty, which was finally overthrown by the Tartars in 1644, is still preserved in glorious memory, its traditions, and particularly its tombs, revered, the latter being held so sacred that it was recently proposed by the consuls of the powers to threaten them with destruction unless the Chinese government should suppress the rebellion, as a measure of protection. The great highway, lined with stone statues of camels, elephants, etc., leading to the magnificent tombs of the departed Ming is one of the wonders of the world, and would probably be left intact even should the sepulchers themselves be destroyed.

Relics of the former dynasty also are to be seen all over China, and a notable monument to the scientific attainments of the ancient people is that wonderful astronomical observatory close to the city walls of Peking. It was founded long before the first Tartar conquest by Kubla Khan in 1279 and possessed quaint instruments, which are still preserved, but received a great impulse in or about 1670, at the beginning of the present dynasty, when the zodiacal globe, astrolabes and other antiquated paraphernalia were set up by a Jesuit missionary, one of them being a gift from the then reigning king of France. No longer valuable as scientific accessories, these objects are yet considered the most beautiful bronzes in the world, after their centuries of "weathering" on the crumbling walls of the observatory.

Returning to the theme of this article after this brief digression in the field

public works, "kung-pu." Each department has two presidents and four vice presidents, equally divided between Chinese and Manchou, and with control over a host of subordinates.

In addition to these boards there are two other high departments of the empire within a wheel system, each extremely important in its own sphere and wielding vast influence. The first is that called the "tu-chu-yuen"—all examining court—a sort of smelling committee or secret service corps of detectives appointed to spy out all that is going on in the country. It is particularly commissioned to find out all intrigues against the lawful authority, and its members and their subordinates have full power to arrest any and all who incur suspicion of plotting the overthrow of the existing government.

This "board of censors," so long as it continues loyal to the emperor, is the binding chain or cohesive force that keeps this loose aggregate of officialdom together and holds it attached to the throne. It is very powerful, and in one sense can act as protector of the people if its members so choose, being the only approach to a popular representation of the governed in China. Through it any subject who has a grievance against the government may present his claim for redress; but it is not often that this privilege is availed of, on account of the universal injustice practiced in China toward the influential claimant. The people have a proverb that expresses the situation exactly, which is, "If you hit a tiger and do not kill him, you become his prey." To be more explicit, another: "When the moneyless speak, the hearer hastens away!"

Forty-two years ago, after the treaties with the powers, another depart-

Peking coterie, then, forms the ruling power of China, and yet it could not exist without its subordinate officials, devoted to the emperor and under their guidance.

The empire is territorially divided into 13 provinces, each province, if large enough, the seat of a viceroy with nearly unlimited powers and almost as independent of the central authority as the governor of an American state is of the federal president. These viceroys or governors general are appointed by the emperor, and are, as their title indicates, the royal representatives through whom he maintains his hold upon the various provinces. The central, in order to avoid as much as possible the possibility of their rising against the throne they are never appointed to govern provinces of which they are natives, nor allowed to contract marriages within those provinces, thus absolutely precluding the local and family influences which are so strong as factors of official influence in China.

Each viceroy is appointed for three years only, at the end of which period he is removed to a distant province. The fortunes and vicissitudes of a high official may be found illustrated in the life of that most eminent of Chinamen, Li Hung Chang, who, although at times very near the throne, has passed a good portion of his life in governing provinces distant from his home. During the allotted period of three years, however, the viceroy has probably improved his opportunities so well that he has accumulated a fortune and is not at all averse to a change to "fresh fields and pastures new," where he will proceed to squeeze out another fortune from the merchants and taxpayers, if not already exhausted by the exactions of his predecessor.

upon an industrious and long suffering people.

Each class, however, has troubles of its own, and there is no official so high in standing that he may not without warning lose his office or his head. Even the viceroys are not exempt, and few of them dare make a showing of affluence through fear that they will be called to account and forced to disgorge their ill gotten plunder. It may throw light upon this year's events in China to mention that while each viceroy is responsible for his province to the emperor or ruling power at Peking, he in turn is held accountable for the actual conditions there. This allows the central authorities a loophole for escape from retribution for the deeds of their soldiers, as this very month was shown, in the plea they have advanced that it was the uncontrollable mob of another province that committed the horrible massacres in Peking, Tien-tsin, etc.; that orders had been issued to the governors general to combat the Boxers and aid the foreigners. But instead of that they turned against their own government and hence, being wholly irresponsible of course, nobody was to blame and nobody should be punished. It remains to be seen whether the outraged sense of justice in the foreign allies will tolerate such a plea and whether the Chinese will not receive a lesson of lasting import.

Not only upon the breaking out of a serious revolt in his province is the viceroy or the governor held personally responsible, but he is also brought to book for the disasters that occur through floods or famines. There is not an official in China, who covers the vicereignty of the Yellow river province, owing to the bad reputation that river has for periodic overflows. In other countries the bursting of a river's

## LADY RANDOLPH CHURCHILL AND LIEUTENANT WEST.



Society circles both in England and America were greatly excited when the announcement was positively made that Lady Randolph Churchill and Lieutenant George Cornwallis West of the British army had determined to be married despite the violent opposition of both families. Lady Churchill has a son who is by several years the senior of Lieutenant West. She was formerly Miss Jerome of New York. Her first husband was the brilliant but somewhat erratic Lord Randolph Churchill, brother of the late and uncle of the present Marquis of Salisbury. Lieutenant West is a member of one of the proudest families in England, whose women have for generations been noted for their beauty.

## CLIPPINGS OF INTEREST.

Mexico is considering the advisability of adopting a standard system of reckoning time. At present Mexico has an official time, computed at the capital and telegraphed to various parts of the republic. That time differs from Greenwich six and one-half hours. It is the time adopted by the railroads and tele-

graph lines, but in many parts of Mexico, especially in places not in telegraphic communication with the rest of the world, local time prevails.

There are few complete collections of campaign badges in existence. Two of them are owned in New York, one in Chicago, one in Philadelphia and one in

Louisville. There are quite a number of collections dating back to Grant's first political campaign. In later years the campaign badge, the distinctive emblem of the campaign, has gone out of existence, having been supplanted by the campaign button, which is much neater and much less costly.

Lyons is a school for teaching the manufacture of silk, as well as a great

center of the silk trade. Young men come from all countries to learn to make silk, acquiring the language while learning an important branch of commerce.

In the silk department of the commercial school there are generally from 250 to 300 pupils. The price of tuition is \$154 per year for Frenchmen and \$221 for foreigners. All kinds of silks, velvets, plain and figured goods

are made by the learners under the superintendence of skilled workmen with the most improved machinery.

The navy of Japan consists of 3 battleships, 12 armored cruisers and 44 torpedo boats—a total of 60 ships. Russia has 15 battleships, 13 cruisers and 174 torpedo boats, bringing the total to 222.

The population of Korea is 12,000,000.

The country is 82,000 square miles in area, and until 1894 was under the suzerainty of China. Rice, millet, cotton, hemp and tobacco are the principal products.

The population of Japan is just over 42,000,000—about the same as that of the United Kingdom. Russia's population is 129,211,000.

Russia is now building 6 first class