

CURRENT EVENTS.

There is little reason to doubt that a great war has begun in China. It is believed that Prince Tuan, an uncle of the emperor, is at the head of the Boxer movement. He is the father of the boy whom the Empress Dowager has recently had proclaimed successor to Kwang Su, the present Emperor; and is, perhaps, the virtual ruler of the Chinese empire, so far as it may be said to have a ruler at the present time.

The young Emperor, whose throne name, Kwang Su, means Succession of Glory, had come under the influence of the leaders of the reform party in China, and had issued a remarkable series of edicts favoring the introduction of Western civilization. Schools were to be established for the teaching of Western learning; a bureau of mines and railroads was to be formed; arts, sciences and agriculture encouraged, and many other reforms initiated. The reform leaders were Chinese; the imperial family, and the chief office holders, Manchus. Conservative regard for the established order of things was mingled, in the minds of the ruling class, with the fear that the Manchu minority might lose control of the government. For two hundred and fifty years the Manchu dynasty had governed China, and the Chinese had more or less willingly submitted to their rule. Now Britain, Russia, France and Germany had gained foothold on the coasts, Christianity was spreading, and a weak Emperor was ready to adopt Western ideas at the bidding of reformers who belonged to the subject race. The Dowager Empress, widow of an uncle of the present Emperor, supported by the Manchu nobles, assumed the government. Virtually deposing the Emperor, (who, according to Chinese notions of filial duty, could make no resistance to her authority,) she repealed his edicts, and drove the leading reformers from the country. Thus the anti-foreign movement was begun. Whether this movement soon got beyond control, or whether the Empress and her advisers have countenanced the evil doings of the Boxers, may never be known; but it seems probable that Prince Tuan, putting himself at the head of the movement, sought to re-establish the hold of the Manchu dynasty upon the people of China by acting as their leader against foreign aggression. The great viceroys of the provinces into which the empire is divided, however, are very largely independent of the central government; and there is reason to hope that some of the most powerful of these local rulers are using their authority for the protection of foreigners and the suppression of the rebellious Boxers, or other insurrectionists, in the territories under their rule.

Whether acting under orders from Peking or not, there is no doubt that Chinese regular troops have been engaged in conflict with the allied forces of the foreign powers. Early in June an attempt was made to send reinforcements by rail to strengthen the guards of the foreign legations in Peking. The relief force consisted of 2,300 men,—British, German, Russian, American, French, Italian, Japanese and Austrian,—under command of Admiral Seymour, of the British Navy. They pushed forward nearly to Peking, but were obliged to turn back; and, after fifteen days continuous fighting, found themselves surrounded by the enemy near Tien Tsin, and unable to proceed farther. In the meantime, hostilities had begun at the mouth of the Pei Ho. Certain movements at the Taku (Tah-koo) forts, at the mouth of the Pei Ho, were interpreted as hostile, and the commanders of the foreign warships demanded that they should be stopped; whereupon the forts opened fire upon the fleet. Russian, British, French and Japanese warships returned the fire; and the forts were carried by assault on June 17th. A few days later communication with Tien Tsin was interrupted, and a force which the allies sent to relieve it was ambuscaded and turned back. Another force was more successful. The city of Tien Tsin was relieved on the 25th of June; and the Russian general in command of the relieving forces sent forward a column on the same day which rescued Admiral Seymour and his party. Since then there has been almost incessant fighting at Tien Tsin. The Chinese forces engaged are found to be well drilled and armed; and, although the foreign commanders have treated them as rebels, it is quite credible that they are acting under imperial orders in resisting the advance of the allied forces from the foreign fleets.

Week after week, the civilized world waited anxiously for reliable news of the fate of the foreign legations at Peking, until at last hope was almost abandoned. It was known that on June 18, the German minister to China insisted on visiting the Tsung Li Yamen, (the yamen, or office, of foreign affairs,) and was killed by a mob on the street. It was also known that on June 25, the legations were resisting an attack, and the situation was desperate. The Chinese authorities claimed that the capture of the Taku forts by the allies had led to a state of anarchy in the capital, and that the government was using every effort to protect foreigners and to suppress the rebels; but the fact of Chinese soldiers having invaded Russian territory on the north of the Amur, from which they were driven out by the Russian garrisons with heavy loss, seemed to indicate that the government of the Empress Dowager was at war with the world, and that the motto of the