

Messenger and Visitor

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S. MCC. BLACK EDITOR.
 A. H. CHIPMAN BUSINESS MANAGER.
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The Situation in China.

The clouds still hang dark and heavy over China. Should the best that can now be hoped for prove true, the situation is sad enough, and such as to justify the gravest apprehensions as to the immediate future. And if the worst that is being reported from Shanghai and other Chinese coast cities is true, the state of affairs is terrible indeed. According to these reports the Imperial power has been seized by Prince Tuan, the father of Prince Pu-Chun, the heir to the throne, the Emperor Kwang-Su has been put to death or forced to commit suicide, and the Empress Dowager has been either imprisoned or forced to fly from Peking. Prince Tuan is understood to represent the anti-foreign spirit in its most virulent form, so that through him the Boxer insurrection against the foreigners has obtained the sanction of the Imperial authority and the support of the military. It is declared that the small foreign military force, consisting in all of some 420 officers and men, after having made the best defence that brave men in such a desperate situation could make, has been overpowered, and that a general massacre of all foreigners and native Christians has taken place, so that the streets of the Chinese Capital have literally run with blood, and that similar massacres of missionaries and other foreign residents, as well as native Christians, have taken place in other parts of northern China. It is also stated that the Chinese themselves have suffered terrible things at the hands of Prince Tuan, who has had a thousand leading Chinese butchered, it is said, for merely petitioning him to restrain the rioters and to prevent wholesale massacre.

It is well known that Shanghai despatches are apt to be of a sensational character, and there is therefore at least some ground for hope that the horrors of the situation have been exaggerated. But there appears to be no reason to doubt that the power of government at Peking has passed into the hands of Prince Tuan and that he would be ready to employ his power to exterminate foreign influences from the country. Almost the only bit of news that encourages a more hopeful view of the situation is a despatch from a mercantile firm in Shanghai, which says that the British legation was standing July 2, and adds that there are reassuring reports regarding the lives of Europeans. It is quite possible that this represents a calmer and more trustworthy view of affairs than that presented by the lurid despatches of the professional news-gatherers. But when all the known facts are put together and the persistent reports of massacre at Peking are taken into account, it must be acknowledged that the worst is to be feared.

It was reported after the rescue of Admiral Seymour's force that a stronger force had gone forward for the relief of the legations at Peking, but if such a force started, it was evidently obliged to retire, and the impossibility of reaching Peking by means of such foreign forces as are now available is clearly recognized. Indeed the despatches indicate that, though the foreign settlement at Tien Tsin had been rescued and the Chinese forces driven off and held at bay, yet it was becoming more and more difficult for the allied forces to hold their position there against the overwhelming numbers of the Chinese opposing them, so that it might soon become necessary to withdraw to Taku.

In view of the small number of European troops now in China, the time that would be necessary for the Powers to place there a force adequate to the requirements, and the difficulties and dangers connected with any attempt at their joint military action, the British Government is understood to have urged strongly that, in order to meet the present exigency, Japan should be given a free hand in China. To this Russia demurred, but has now consented, it is said, and Japan will accordingly without delay place twenty thousand additional

troops in Pe Chi-li. Whether such a force would be sufficient to meet the present emergency, or whether it would only fan the flame of anti-foreign sentiment and arouse the people of China to greater fury may well be questioned. Everything depends on the attitude of the people of the other Provinces. If they remain comparatively undisturbed by the anti-foreign movement, a moderately strong force of well disciplined troops would be sufficient to subdue the uprising in the Province of Chi-li, but if the conflagration spreads to the other Provinces and the people as a whole became inspired with the determination to eradicate foreign influence, the pacification of China would become a task of vast proportions. As Christians we must cherish the hope and the belief that good will come out of this upheaval and the time will be hastened when China shall acknowledge the lordship of Christ. The present situation which is so dark with hatred and bloodshed and which seems so tremendous in its possibilities, is one which must make a strong appeal upon every Christian heart and must call forth earnest prayer that the Almighty Ruler may stretch forth his hand graciously to restrain the wrath of man from cruelty and bloodshed and save the nation for himself.

Since the above was written, a despatch has been received in London from Acting Consul General Warren at Shanghai, stating that trustworthy news had been received by him that two legations at Peking were still holding out against the Boxers on July 3rd. A despatch of July 8th from the consuls at Shanghai also reports that the Peking legations were safe on July 4th, and that the Chinese had ceased from their attacks. A correspondent of a London paper casts doubt upon the correctness of this information, but it affords at least a gleam of hope that the worst is not true and that the foreign residents at Peking may yet be saved.

Editorial Notes

—As we write the Baptist Convention at Winnipeg is in progress. The delegation from the Maritime Provinces was not so large as it had been hoped that it might be. But if not large in numbers, it is, we believe, very excellent in quality. Those who are privileged to attend the Convention will doubtless receive as well as impart valuable inspiration. In another issue we hope to be able to publish from a competent source an account of the proceedings. A Winnipeg despatch says that Hon. H. R. Emmerson has been chosen President of the Convention and Rev. C. A. Eaton, of Toronto, Secretary.

—At the World's Temperance Congress recently held in London Lord Roberts was quoted as saying that the temperance movement had added the equivalent of two battalions to the effective strength of the British army in India, worth in money £4,000,000 a year. "Give me a teetotal army," said Lord Roberts, "and I will go anywhere and do anything with it." And if total abstinence adds so immensely to the effective force of a nation's military equipment, it adds in equal ratio to the effectiveness and producing power of that greater army of men who are engaged in peaceful and industrial pursuits. The wealth—to say nothing of more precious things—which is being constantly squandered by the drinking habits of the nations is appalling.

—The Presbyterian family of churches is a large and highly influential one, and has its representatives in many lands. The Presbyterian Witness says, "According to the latest authorities, there are 70 distinct churches of the Presbyterian family. These embrace in round numbers 29,800 congregations, 26,000 ministers, 127,000 elders, 4,900,000 communicants, 337,000 Sunday School teachers, 3,500,000 pupils. The Presbyterian churches constitute for Home Mission work, \$32,000,205, and about \$350,640,760 for Foreign Missions. They support 840 ordained Foreign missionaries; 1306 medical missionaries, 465 ordained native workers, and they have among the heathen over 148,000 communicants. In colleges and in schools and in Mission fields 158,648 pupils. The Presbyterian population of the world is 25,000,000."

—One is not infrequently surprised and disturbed to observe the things which professing Christian men will do, things which many a man who makes no pretension to Christian character would scorn to do. But it is not wise to conclude hastily that the men who do these unchristian things are wholly false in their profession and destitute of the spirit of Christ. Most men have some especially weak spots. With one man the unsoundness is in one part of his nature, and with another in quite another part, and each is perhaps equally unconscious of his own special weakness. It does not follow that because our temptations and our faults are not of the same kind as our brother's, we are therefore qualified to be his judge. If the grace of God has not in the course of a few years made a man wholly angelic in character, it should be considered that it has done much in some cases if it has saved him from being an unconscionable scoundrel.

—Hitherto the Free Churchmen in England have been under the disability of not being permitted to receive the degree of Doctor of Divinity from any English University. Whether the disability was also a disadvantage is a question upon which there might be different opinions. However the disability is about being removed in connection with certain changes in the statutes and functions of the University of London. Henceforth that seat of learning is to be a teaching as well as an examining and degree-conferring body, and it will be able, under certain conditions, to confer the degree of B. D. and D. D., without regard to ecclesiastical affiliations. The conditions for the degree will, however, be quite different from those upon which it is generally obtained on this side the Atlantic, since it will be granted only upon examinations which shall satisfactorily demonstrate that the candidate has qualifications on the ground of scholarship to entitle him to secure the degree.

—The news from South Africa does not indicate much change in the general situation during the past week. The Boers are still pursuing their guerilla tactics. They are watchful and active, ready at once to take advantage of any weak point, but their attempts at capturing convoys, recapturing towns and cutting off isolated bodies of troops appear not to have met with much success during the past week. They attacked the Vicksburg garrison on Tuesday, but were driven off after 45 minutes fighting. On Thursday General Brabant occupied Bornburg, between Senekal and Winburg, which had served the Boers as a base for bands assailing convoys. On Thursday and Friday Col. Mahon, of General Hutton's mounted troops, engaged 3,000 Boers and caused them to retire. The British casualties were 33. An attempt of a Boer commandant to recapture Rustenburg was foiled. Thirty-four of Strathcona's Horse were attacked by 200 Boers east of Sta nderton, but the Canadians took possession of a kopje and successfully withstood the enemy. Lord Roberts reports the arrival of General Buller at Pretoria on Saturday, looking well. Lord Roberts also reports that the general in command at Ladysmith has telegraphed him that 800 British prisoners belonging to the Yeomanry and Derbyshires have been put over the Natal border from Secretary Reitz's advance party and have reached Acton Homes en route for Ladysmith. A British convoy passing Greylingstad on Saturday, was attacked in a defile of the hills and shelled by the Boers. The British protecting force under Col. Thornycroft were well handled, however, and the Boers were driven off. Mr. Kruger has moved his headquarters to a point nearer the Portuguese frontier and is reported as saying that he will not submit so long as 500 Burghers are willing to fight.

—The N. B. Southern Association met with the First Johnston church at Thorntown on Friday. A considerable delegation started from St. John by the steamer "Star" on Thursday at ten o'clock, and as accretions were received here and there by the way, the delegation had assumed quite formidable dimensions by the time that Thorntown was reached. It appeared that a good many of the delegates had neglected the important preliminary of forwarding their names, and the good people of Thorntown were, therefore, rather taken by surprise. But Squire Thomas Hetherington, by whom we were met soon after landing, speedily demonstrated that his resources were large and his hospitality unbounded. By the aid of his double team there was soon landed at his door a company almost large enough to tax the resources of a metropolitan hotel. Some of the company Mr. Hetherington distributed among his neighbors, but the bigger, if not the better, part of us he kept for himself. Those who went elsewhere, we believe, fared well, and certainly delegates to an Association were never more generously provided for than those who remained with Squire H. and his most estimable and resourceful wife. The Association was held under favorable conditions, amid the charming scenery of the far-famed Washademoak, with pleasant weather and a good attendance of delegates. The routine of the Association was well conducted and a spirit of harmony prevailed. The afternoon discussions on subjects outside the ordinary work of the Association and the addresses of the evening sessions were strong and helpful. In agreement with the plan adopted at Fredericton, the Association unanimously appointed six men to form, in conjunction with similar appointments by the two other Associations, a Board of Home Missions for the Province. An extended report of the Association will appear next week.

P. E. Island Association.

Refreshing showers fell gently upon the green fields as the delegates from our Island Baptist churches wended their way to the commodious hall at O'Leary Station, where the thirty-third annual gathering of the P. E. I. Association was held. Years ago this section of Prince County was one of the weakest of our home missionary fields, and many of our ministerial brethren took some part in preaching the gospel among its scattered families. At present it forms, with Springfield and Alberton, a promising pastorate, in which Rev. A. H. Whitman is proving himself to be a "workman that needeth not to be ashamed."

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