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CHINA DECIDES FOR RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT

After Countless Centuries of Autocracy, the Proudest and Most Conservative Nation in the World Follows Western Examples



PRINCE CHING

(Colonial Press Despatch)
China to have a responsible government!

When a few days ago the news was flashed across the cables from Peking that the Prince Regent had issued an imperial edict which substituted a responsible cabinet modelled on Western lines, for the ancient Grand Council and Grand Secretariat, students of political economy, historians and students of history, archaeologists and reading men of a reflective turn of mind, rubbed their eyes, and pinched themselves, so to speak, to ascertain whether they were really awake. To thousands the first thought that followed the perusal of the despatch must have been that it was the opening act in an Oriental nation-building programme, or nation-rebuilding programme, to be more correct, of a potential magnitude similar to that which about half a century ago started Japan on the marvellous course of civilization which has rendered her a first rate power with a swiftness till then unrecorded. The move of the Prince Regent raises speculation as to whether the rise of China will be as rapid as that of her neighbor, for despite the fact that the Chinese are of the same color as the Japanese, there are vital differences between the two races, as a careful study of the town types of faces will show. Whatever the outcome may be, it remains that the first step has been taken, which means that the "Sons of Han," as the Chinese call themselves, have partly turned their backs upon the unnumbered centuries which lie behind them reeking of tradition.

Prince Ching, the First

It seems odd to hear references to the "Premier of China," but she has one now. Prince Ching is the one who will go down to history as the first man to whom the title has been applied. He has two satellites who will be known as "Vice Premiers." Na Tung and Hsu Shih have been chosen to act as these officials. The remainder of the Cabinet is

made up of the ten presidents of the existing boards, which pass out of existence with the advent of the order. This making-over of the Government into new divisions will necessitate a huge amount of reorganization, so six eminent viceroys have been appointed a conciliating board to act jointly with the Cabinet in recasting the system of the provinces, of which up to the present there have been eighteen. A Privy Council has been created with Lu Jun-Hsiang as president. It is patterned after the corresponding body in Japan but its duties have not yet been defined. The creation of the Cabinet has brought to an end the Bureau of Constitutional Reform.

To the student of history, the most enthralling consideration in connection with the change is its possible effect upon the future, not of the Chinese race only, but the world. It requires but slight reasoning to reach the conclusion that the vast population, backed up by a country of over 5,000,000 square miles, a third part of the continent of which it is a part, and a tenth of the habitable globe, will exercise a profound influence when the true awakening has come. The Chinese have shown that they possess faculties of adaptation, to conceive which one has but to reflect that a reform of the army was undertaken in 1902, which, providing for the importation of many Japanese and other officers, was designed to lead to an army consisting of 28,000 officers and 430,000 men, well trained, and all the recognized divisions, including infantry, artillery, cavalry and engineers, in 1913, when the reorganization is to be completed. It is true that the Chinese have been, for the most of their long history, a peace-loving race, and that they have earned a reputation for timidity as a result, but with a modern university in Hong Kong, founded in 1909 through the efforts of a British Governor, with the English, French, German, Japanese and Russian languages taught by capable European professors, and, what is the most valuable asset of all, the example of Japan, whose reorganisation started almost during the present generation, had such a splendid vindication in the war with Russia. Western knowledge and methods will soon be a national possession, bringing in their train a national self-confidence which is a sure outcome of the ownership of the most modern and effective machinery, armaments and methods.

And when that does come what will be the result? It is impossible to predict with certainty. Indications may be drawn from the decisive assertion by that other nation which turned to Western ideals of her right to be regarded as a nation of the first class.

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