

General Miscellany.

CHINA, AND ITS GOVERNMENT.

[The events which are now transpiring in China, render almost every thing connected with the history of that country interesting. The following, in relation to its government, (from a California paper) which it seems is the aim of the rebellion to overthrow, possesses unusual interest at the present time.]

"The Government of China, in its reception and structure, was unquestionably patriarchal, and has always been considered to be so; but the *modus operandi* of its machinery proves it to be one of the most absolute and unmitigated systems of despotism upon the face of the earth. The people have no voice or influence in the choice of their supreme rulers. Each Emperor names his successor, nor is the name of a successor known until after the death of an Emperor. Each Emperor writes the name of the person he wishes to succeed him, upon a slip of paper, depositing the same in some safe and secret depository known only to himself and to whomsoever he pleases to make it known. On the death of the Emperor, this paper is opened by those who possessed his confidence, and his successor thus becomes known, ascends the throne, and is acknowledged by the people. The Emperor is the supreme head of the nation; all power, both over the lives and property of his subjects, centres in himself; and as a natural consequence, all power, rank, or distinction, must and do emanate from him. His will is the supreme law of the land. His *fat* cannot be opposed without the danger of loss of life and the confiscation of property. He is known by a number of high sounding but fulsome titles, such as Tien Whang, Celestial, August One—Shing Whang, the Wise and August, infinite in knowledge, and perfect in virtue—Tien Tsze, Son of Heaven, &c., &c. He is addressed when approached by his highest officials, with titles equally absurd and ridiculous, as Wan-Sui-ye, Sire of ten thousand years, and Pichia, beneath the footstool, accompanied with prostrations. The present dynasty, Tartar, is called the Ta Tsing, the great pure dynasty, and the present Emperor, Ham Fung, the seventh who has reigned under this dynasty, is a young man about two and twenty years of age, who ascended the throne on the death of his father, the late Emperor, Tan Kwang, who died in 1851. Some idea may be formed of his imperial establishment from his having attached to it an extensive harem, and some five thousand eunuchs to superintend it and do the work of menials.

"The concubines who compose the harem are the daughters of Manchus, and additions are made to it about every third year, by the Emperor himself, selecting from among the daughters of his nobles and officers such of them as may please him, who are over twelve years of age. The parents of the children consider it an advantage if not an honor to have their children in the Imperial harem. The harem is composed of seven legal concubines, and an unlimited number of illegal ones. The illegal ones are restored to liberty at the age of twenty-five years, unless they have borne children to his Majesty; in which case they are retained in the harem, doubtless for the purpose of rearing the children they have borne.

"The table of his Majesty is daily supplied with thirty pounds of meat, seven pounds served up in soup, lard and butter one and one-third pound each, two sheep, two fowls, two ducks, the milk of eighty cows, seventy parcels of tea.

"The table of her Majesty is supplied with thirty-four pounds of meat, thirteen of them boiled with vegetables, one fowl, one duck, twelve pitchers of water, the milk of twenty-five cows, and ten parcels of tea. Her Majesty's maids and the concubines, have their fare minutely specified. If the possession of unlimited power and a superabundance of good things of this world could make a man happy, one would naturally suppose the Emperor of China one of the happiest mortals living. The details of the Imperial establishment of Peking, with a mass of other information, may be found in a work called Hwni Tien.

"The Chinese have a written code of laws, the germ of which may be found in the writings of Le Kwei, who wrote some twenty centuries since, with which have been incorporated, from time to time, the ethics of Keng-fu-trz, Confucius, Mang-

fu-trze Mencius, and others of their ancient sages, and to which have been added the rescripts of many Emperors. The Chinese style their present code of laws ta tsing liu li statutes and rescripts of the great pure dynasty, a new edition of which is published by authority every five years.

"Their code of laws was revised about the middle of the seventeenth century, under the Emperor Sunche, and is arranged under seven heads, viz., general, civil, fiscal, ritual, military, and criminal.

"Unfortunately, the execution of the laws of the empire is committed to men whose ruling passion is cupidity, and whose main aim is self-aggrandizement; and hence the people are oppressed by those who should be their guardians and protectors."

TURKEY AND RUSSIA.

THE relation of these powers, is now a question of great interest. The following from the *Boston Journal* presents a very clear view of the subject:

The threatening aspect of the relations of Turkey and Russia has given cause for apprehension that the two countries will soon be arrayed against each other in a war which may involve the peace of the continent. It appears by recent advices that the Porte has abandoned its temporizing policy, and, doubtless acting under the advice of the English and French Governments, has rejected the ultimatum of the Russian ambassador, who has suspended diplomatic intercourse, and withdrawn from Constantinople. Prince Menschikoff, if reports may be credited, has threatened, in the course of the negotiations, that in case the demands of his Government are not acceded to, war would be declared. The frontiers of Turkey are bristling with Russian bayonets, and a large Russian fleet is in the Black Sea, ready for active service at an hour's notice. The next act in the drama will be watched with eager interest.

The questions at issue between the Russian and Turkish Governments, although involving the independence of Turkey, are comparatively of small importance to Russia. They relate to the division of the holy places among the various sects who have long and bitterly contended for their possession and guardianship. The Emperor Nicholas, as head of the Greek Church, claims concessions and exclusive privileges which cannot be granted by the Ottoman Government without violating treaty stipulations with France, and giving to that country just cause of complaint, and without humiliating the national pride, and without sacrificing the national independence. To the autocrat these concessions can be of no real value or importance, though upon this frivolous dispute the peace of Europe how hangs as by a thread.

The very insignificance of the issues between the two countries, so far as they effect the interests of Russia, in fact gives cause for apprehending a war. It cannot be supposed that the Czar would, for so trivial an object, place himself in a position from which he cannot retreat with honor. He has, without doubt, ulterior objects, for the attainment of which a quarrel with Turkey is to be made subservient. The course pursued by Russia throughout this affair, as well as in relation to the Montenegrin insurrection, has been arbitrary and uncompromising, and has betrayed a disposition to fix a quarrel upon her weak and distracted neighbor. It is not difficult to conjecture the object of this belligerent policy. The darling project of the Russian Czars, since the time of Peter the Great, has been the extension of their government to the Mediterranean. The Emperor Nicholas has doubtless had this constantly in view, and it is more than probable that, finding himself in the decline of life, with the object of his ambition still unattained, and no immediate prospect of a European war and its consequent general distribution of the spoils, he has determined no longer to wait the slow movements of "manifest destiny," but to force a quarrel upon Turkey with a view to her dismemberment. That this is the policy of the Russian Government is proved by the warlike aspect of the mission of Prince Menschikoff, and by the insolent and uncompromising tone which that functionary adopted in his intercourse with the Turkish Government. Were it not that the interests of other nations are deeply involved, we should not consider the independence of Turkey as worth a year's purchase.

But England and France are not indifferent spectators in this controversy. They cannot acquiesce in the extension of Russian power over European Turkey without sacrificing interests of

vital importance. Russia has a large naval force and immense naval resources in the Black Sea, which, with the navigation of the Dardanelles secured, would command the commerce of the Mediterranean, and prove formidable to the interests of every other European nation. The most direct route between England and her East India possessions would thus be controlled. France would find herself liable to be dispossessed of her African colonies, and her coast would be constantly in danger of an attack from a hostile armament. Indeed, the admission of a Russian fleet into the Mediterranean would involve the necessity of constant vigilance and activity on the part of the nations whose territories border upon or who are interested in the navigation of that great inland ocean.

It is not surprising, therefore, that France and England have mutually agreed to sustain Turkey against the encroachments of her more powerful neighbor. If we may credit the last advices, the interference of the two Governments will not be limited to remonstrances. Constantinople will be protected, if necessary, by the English and French fleets; and unless Russia recedes from her position, and refrains from enforcing her demands, a war must result. Opinions are divided as to the prospect of such an issue, but the fact that the funds have not materially declined indicates the prevailing impression among the shrewdest observers of passing events that Russia will not resort to the last extremity. The next advices from Europe will however be looked for with much interest.

THE TURKISH QUESTION.

The demands of Russia, include among other things that the Greek Church in Turkey shall be placed under the protection of the Russian ambassador at Constantinople—the Emperor of Russia being the head of the Greek Church. When it is considered that the Greek Church embraces twelve millions of Turkish subjects, it will be seen that to accede to this demand, would be giving Russia a preponderance of power in Turkey, incompatible with the independence of the Sultan and conflicting with the interests of other European powers. The interest of Russia in the "Holy Shrines" at Jerusalem is mere talk. What she aims at is the possession of Constantinople, and free egress and ingress through the straits of the Dardanelles and Bosphorus. No wonder, therefore that the fleets of Russia, England, France, and Turkey are lying in full force with long rows of iron teeth looking at each other, and messengers flying from court to court with despatches to their respective sovereigns. The Russian ambassador having sent his ultimatum to the Sultan, and that having been refused, the Czar must either enforce the ultimatum by an appeal to arms, or must *disavow* the act of his ambassador. To enforce it must bring Russia in collision with England and France, as well as with Turkey. To disavow it, may defer the crisis; but it is by no means likely that Russia will abandon its aim to secure a free passage through the Turkish waters. The next intelligence will be looked for with much interest.—*Advent Herald*.

MORE PERSECUTION IN TUSCANY.

From a private letter, recently received from a distinguished lady abroad, we are permitted to give to our readers the following extract. Rome is evidently making a general attack upon the faith of the saints, and where she has power, and it is politic to exert it, upon the persons of the saints also. It is a time for Christians, everywhere to pray for those who are called to suffer persecution. While we write, and while our readers read, we know not what new occasions for our sympathy and our prayers may be arising in Papal countries. May God give his suffering people grace to be faithful, even unto death.

"The miserable government of Tuscany, or rather the Jesuits have changed their method now, lest the angry eyes of free countries should be upon them; and they arrest on some political pretence, hiding the fact that it is Bible reading, and possessing which is their real crime. I saw a letter from an English woman in Florence last week, stating that the departure of Rosa and Francesco Madia is kept very quiet there, and that at least 30 have been recently imprisoned on the new political plea.

One Carlo, a tailor, who was caught after midnight, when all lights in the streets were out, studying the word of life in his own house, she particularly named, for his sister had been to her to tell her of the filth, the airlessness, and the very scanty and