

NEWS NARRATIVE

The figures in brackets at the ends of paragraphs refer to volumes and pages of The Public for earlier information on the same subject.

Week ending Tuesday, February 20, 1912.

China Becomes a Republic.

Following the abdication of the Manchu dynasty last week, all China began to fuse into the republican government already organized in the south. The Ching Hwa Republic becomes the official name of the new China. On the 14th the Imperial Premier, Yuan Shi Kai, officially informed the foreign legations at Peking that the Throne had instructed him to form a republican government which would for the time being continue to be carried on with his former cabinet. An official telegram from Peking to the Chinese legation at Washington has directed that while "a provisional government is being established, all ministers accredited to foreign governments shall act provisionally as diplomatic representatives and continue to perform their duties as heretofore. All members of the legation staff and consular officers (in America) shall temporarily retain their present posts." [See current volume, page 153.]

To make possible a coalition between radical south China, already organized into a republic under the Presidency of Sun Yat Sen, and conservative north China, just coming out from under the dominance of the Manchu Emperors, and left by the Imperial edicts in charge of Yuan Shi Kai, regarded in China as the ablest of living Chinese, it became immediately necessary to arrange for some compromises. President Sun Yat Sen, following out a course he had indicated from the beginning of his official responsibility, resigned the Presidency on the 14th, two days after the abdication of the little Emperor; and on the 15th the National Assembly, sitting at Nanking, unanimously elected Yuan Shi Kai President, and decided that the provisional capital should remain at Nanking, though it is also reported that a majority of the members are willing to permit a temporary removal to Peking for convenience. Dr. Sun Yat Sen's resignation was accepted by the National Assembly, on condition that both he and the present cabinet should hold office until the new President and cabinet should take over the duties. The National Assembly afterwards passed an impressive tribute to Dr. Sun, saying of his voluntary resignation of his exalted office, that—

Such an example of purity of purpose and self-sacrifice is unparalleled in history. It was solely

due to his magnanimity and modesty that northern China was won over.

It was at first announced that Yuan Shi Kai would undertake the responsibilities to which he had been elected, but that he could not go to Nanking at present, as his presence was needed in the north to ensure tranquillity. It was reported on the 17th, however, that he had on that day telegraphed Dr. Wu Ting-fang, the Republican Minister of Justice, as follows:

I am unable to control the involved situation in China, as I am suffering from impaired health. Now that the aims of the Republicans have been attained, I have accomplished my duty. The post of President of the Republic would only serve to lead to my ruin. I ask your kind offices and interest with the people of the country to elect Dr. Sun Yat Sen, to whom credit should be given. I will wait here until I am relieved. Then I will return to my home and resume my work as a husbandman.

In the meantime Yuan is said to have had his queue cut off, to signify his acceptance of Republican customs as well as principles.

The old style Chinese calendar, abrogated by President Sun Yat Sen on his inauguration on January 1st, went finally out of existence on Friday, the 16th, when the year 4609 ended. [See current volume, page 15.]

According to news given out by the Department of State at Washington, China is now assured of an early abolition of the Indo-Chinese opium traffic, and the prohibition of the importation of morphine or cocaine except for medical use, by the terms of the convention between the Powers represented at the international opium conference at The Hague. The United States, China, France, Germany, Great Britain, Holland, Italy, Japan, Persia, Russia and Siam have signed the convention, and all other civilized Powers not represented at the conference will be urged to do so. The subscribing Powers agree to limit the number of ports where prepared opium may be exported, and the Powers agree to control the manufacture. Traffic in raw opium will be limited to authorized persons. [See vol. xiv, pages 318, 323, 363, 443.]

Land Tenure in Papua.

On January 12 the London Morning Post, a Tory paper which strongly opposed the great Budget of 1909-1910, printed an interview with Mr. Staniforth Smith, Administrator of the Australian dependency of Papua, the southeastern part of the large island of New Guinea lying north of Australia and just south of the equator. Mr. Smith expressed himself as well satisfied with the

land laws, which he believes are calculated to encourage agricultural enterprise and the investment of capital. Papua has an area of 90,000 square miles, a healthy though tropical climate, and a rich, well watered soil. "One of the most interesting features of the system of colonization," says the Post, "is the determination of the Administration to retain the fee simple of the land of Papua." Out of 58,000,000 acres only 27,000 are free hold. This fortunate condition is due to the watchfulness of the Australian Government which defeated an almost successful attempt on the part of an English syndicate to acquire a huge slice of territory. "The Commonwealth Government claim to have averted the introduction into the territory of a system which is said to be responsible for the holding-up of millions of acres which were acquired by syndicates and corporations in Australia through the complaisance of the Colonial Office in the early days of settlement, and which have now to be bought back by the state at enormously enhanced values." The land in Papua may be taken up on 99-year leases, at an average yearly rental of three pence per acre, subject to reappraisal every twenty years. Some 370,000 acres are thus employed for the cultivation of Para rubber, cocoanuts, coffee, sisal-hemp, maize, sugar, tobacco, etc. All the rest of the land, excepting one million acres in possession of the government and the small freehold already mentioned, are held by the 300,000 natives. There are 1,100 white residents. The condition of the natives under this regime is particularly noteworthy. "The foundation of the natives' charter of rights," says Mr. Staniforth Smith, "was the wise provision that they should be confirmed in the actual possession of their own lands. . . . No settler is allowed to purchase lands from the natives. If a planter desires to lease an area of land belonging to a Papuan he must apply to the Government," whose land buyers authorize the transfer "only in the event of the natives not requiring the land and being willing to sell it. . . . The million acres of Crown lands are held in trust, as it were, to meet future applications." In providing that no land can be alienated in fee simple and that rental must be assessed on the unimproved value of land, the law recognizes the common interest of all the inhabitants in the soil which supports them. [See vol. xi, page 678.]



The British Parliament.

Reassembling on the 14th, the British Parliament was addressed from the Throne in the usual perfunctory manner, the King's speech being a colorless reflection of Ministerial policy. It announced the submission of three distinct proposals of importance, as follows:

A measure for the better government of Ireland will be submitted to you.

A bill will be laid before you to terminate the establishment of the church in Wales and make provision for its temporalities.

Proposals will be brought forward for the amendment of the law with respect to the franchise and the registration of electors.

[See vol. xiv, page 1293.]



Home Rule in Great Britain.

That Irish home rule will be followed with home rule for Scotland and Wales, with the ultimate result of home rule for England also, and for national purposes a national parliament representative of all the autonomous British governments on the globe, has for three years or more been in the undercurrent of British political discussion. This discussion came to the surface in London on the 17th, when 20,000 persons assembled in Trafalgar Square, London, in support of the Ministerial policy of home rule for Ireland. Resolutions adopted at the meeting urge the necessity of giving as generous a measure of home rule to Ireland as is consistent with the maintenance of Imperial supremacy, and suggest that the bill be framed so as to be capable of early application to England, Scotland and Wales. They are reported to have been adopted with the greatest enthusiasm. [See current volume, page 154.]



Local Land Values Taxation in Great Britain.

At a meeting of the City Council of Glasgow, Scotland, on the 25th, a resolution soliciting powers from Parliament to resort to land values taxation for local purposes, was adopted by a vote of 43 to 11. [See vol. xiv, pp. 1101, 1170.]



The German Reichstag.

Later dispatches confirm the rumor that the president of the Reichstag, Dr. Spahn, of the Catholic party, refused to hold the office with a Socialist for first vice-president. Dr. Spahn resigned, and Johannes Kaempf, a Radical, was elected in his place. The National Liberal second vice-president, Dr. Paasche, also resigned, presumably for like reasons, and Heinrich Dove, a Radical, was chosen to succeed him. These changes officered the Reichstag with Radicals for president and second vice-president, respectively, and a Socialist for first vice-president, the latter being Mr. Scheideman. Dispatches of the 17th report that Mr. Scheideman has declined to take part in the ceremonial call of the Reichstag officers upon the Emperor to announce its organization; the same dispatches report that the Emperor refuses to receive the two Radicals. [See current volume, page 154.]