

descendants of the imperial family constitute a charmed circle, governed by a sort of clansman's court. It appears that the two Empresses, who seem to have completely effaced the widow of the late Emperor, have sufficient resolution and craft to dominate the imperial clan, and even supersede the children and grandchildren of those powerful Princes, KUNG and his brother TUN, brothers of the Emperor HIEN-FUNG, in selecting a ruler for the Empire. It is a strange spectacle, this tranquil assumption of the supreme power in a nation of four hundred millions of people. To pass over one Prince for another in determining the succession to a throne has, before now, convulsed an Empire. Petty Kingdoms, States, and Republics are agitated by continual revolutions for the most trivial causes. The great Empire of the world is quite undisturbed by a revolution conceived and carried out by two resolute and elderly women. The Emperor of China is nominally the fountain of all power. He is at once father and mother of the people. He is of divine origin; his throne is the "divine utensil" in which he sits while he consents to govern. But the system of government—the slow accretion of twenty centuries of growth—seems to be indestructible. It has been described as "at once the most gigantic and the most minutely organized that the world has ever seen." This wonderful machine moves on automatically, whatever may be the changes in the "Palace of the Dragon." To the millions of China, the trick of two old women is merely the will Heaven.

A CHINESE PUZZLE.

It seems to be a well-settled fact that at least one-third of the population of the globe are now governed by two women. The publication in China of a series of imperial decrees and rescripts shows that the two Empresses have recovered the power which they were supposed to have lost when the late Emperor, young TUNG-CHE, ascended the throne. To fully understand the *coup d'etat* by which these women repossessed themselves of the reins of government, it is necessary to recall a few points in the history of the Chinese imperial succession. HIEN-FUNG was Emperor of China when the English and French forces, under Sir JAMES HOPE GRANT and Marshal PALIKAO, reduced Peking to subjection and dictated terms of peace. This was in 1860, and the Emperor, dying soon after, a regency was formed, at the head of which were the first wife, or Empress, of the late HIEN-FUNG, and a concubine of the late Emperor, who had been raised to the rank of Empress in consequence of her having given birth to an heir to the throne. The first of these women rejoices in the name of TS'ZE-AN-TWAN-YU-K'ANG-K'ING, and is known as the Empress Dowager, though she is childless. The second is TS'ZE-HI-TWAN-YU-K'ANG-I, and is Empress Mother. Her son, the late TUNG-CHE, was about five years old when the Regency was formed. Prince KUNG, brother of the Emperor who died in 1860, and, therefore, uncle of the young heir, was one of the Regency Council. In 1861, by a stroke of policy, he succeeded in getting rid of all his associates except the two Empresses, with whom he shared the administration of the affairs of the Empire. Last year TUNG-CHE, coming of age, married and ascended the throne. Prince KUNG was soon after temporarily degraded, and the young Emperor was supposed to be in the hands of the managing old women who had so long been the dual head of the Empire. Early in the present year TUNG-CHE died of small-pox, or, as the imperial proclamation puts it, "His Majesty the Emperor ascended upon the Dragon to be a guest on high." It is not etiquette in China for an imperial person to die. He is divine, and he merely ascends on high, or he joins the "Sacred Ones," his ancestors.

TUNG-CHE left a widow, the fair AN-LU-TE, but no children; and, so suddenly did his mortal complaint come upon him, he omitted to designate his successor. So, for the first time since the foundation of the present or "Great Pure" dynasty, there was no regular heir to the "Dragon Throne." The proper thing, according to Chinese precedent, would have been for the young Empress, who should now be Empress Dowager and Mother combined, to adopt a son and heir. But this disconsolate widow was so overcome by her bereavement that she failed to take the steps necessary to secure her rights. The old Empresses seized the opportunity, and themselves took the responsibility of choosing a successor to the throne. The Empress Mother adopted TSAI-TIEN as the son of the late Emperor HIEN-FUNG, and the two Empresses thereupon declared this child to be the Emperor of China. This neat stroke of business continues the two women as Regents; and, as the lucky infant is only about three years old, these crafty managers have every prospect of a long reign before them. The ruling spirit of the imperial clan is undoubtedly the Empress Mother—formerly HIEN-FUNG's concubine—and she has selected as heir and adopted son the child of her own sister, a wife of the Prince CH'UN. To keep up appearances, there is published in China a proclamation purporting to have been written by the late Emperor while he was dying of small-pox. This document, which we reproduce elsewhere, acknowledges TSAI-TIEN as legal heir and in the best Chinese and grandiose manner, recites the principal events of the past brief reign. Considering that TUNG-CHE was a weak and effeminate young man, his dying effort may be said to be remarkable. This valedictory is curiously like the proclamation of his infant successor, in which that three-year-old potentate gives notice of his inheritance of the throne, and depicts himself as "prostrate upon the earth, bewailing grief to heaven, and vainly stretching out hands in lamentation."

This princeling is the ninth in the Tsing, or "Great Pure" dynasty, which was founded in 1644, while MOHAMMED IV. was Sultan of Turkey, OLIVER CROMWELL Lord Protector of England, and LOUIS XIV. was King of France. His reign is to be known as the Kwang-su, or "Continuation of Glory," as that of one of his immediate predecessors was "The Glory of Reason." The lineal