THE PRESENT POLITICAL CONDITIONS IN CHINA.

By Gilbert Reid.

The political situation in China is bewildering. Those of us who have lived the longest in China are most ready to confess our ignorance. And yet we are all surmising or prophesying, sometimes with feelings of pessimism and sometimes with clear optimism. While a republic has taken the place of the old Manchu monarchy, there does not seem to be any great moral re-awakening. True reforms are as difficult to secure as they were under the Manchu rule. This is easy of explanation, if we consider some of the principles which lay at the basis of the revolution. The revolution was successful because of the spirit of disloyalty, either on the part of those who held or had held official position in the late government, or on the part of the soldiers who formed a part of the imperial army and were paid from the imperial treasury. Besides, there was the feeling of personal hatred to the Manchus, who belong to the same race as the Chinese but were looked on as aliens and usurpers. It is hard to secure unity after the cultivation of feelings of mutual animosity. In addition there was the desire on the part of many to secure better positions for themselves than they had under the old regime. It is true that many of the revolutionists were true patriots, but the establishment of a republican form of government is made difficult by the existence of these characteristics to which we have just referred.

As a matter of fact there is no sign of great improvement in matters of true reform. There is plenty of talk of liberty, equality and fraternity, but in too many cases the liberty is without the restraints of law, the equality is without any distinction of parent and child, man or woman, or between those in authority and those who are represented by those in authority, and the fraternity is largely
superficial, still maintaining the distinction between the five races of China, represented by the five colors of the new flag, and emphasizing the rights of the provinces in contradistinction to the rights of the central government.

It has been a matter of surprise that with those who are Christian converts, and even with some missionaries, there has been a profession of friendliness to the Chinese officials of the old regime in past years, in the hope of securing favors and contributions, while there has been a secret plotting to overthrow the old government and to bring about the revolution. This method of blowing hot and cold cannot command the respect of any right-minded person.

The financial difficulties facing China are colossal. We see no way for China to maintain either her sovereignty or her standing as a sound credit nation with the other nations of the world. She is in danger of bankruptcy, or of subserviency to the financial control of foreign money-lenders. What is the method of relief is beyond our comprehension at present.

Notwithstanding these difficulties and dangers, there seems little likelihood of the Manchu Dynasty being restored. In the opinion of some of us a constitutional monarchy, by preserving continuity
with the past and by observing the fundamental teachings of China's own sages, would have been better than an attempt at a republican form of government, which breaks down old traditions and throws the country into a state of anarchy. In saying this, it is not because any of us disbelieve in democratic ideas, for such ideas have always existed in China and would have been just as possible under a constitutional monarchy as under a republic.

We who live in China have great sympathy for the Chinese people, and we would be glad if relief could be found from her many calamities as well as from her present political difficulties. The problems to arise in the future call for sound judgment and full sympathy on the part of those who come to China from other countries and live here among the people. Any one who is not willing to help China had better stay away. There is much that we can learn from her past, and there is much that we can give her, if we consider what is really the best, and not what the Chinese for the moment may desire or demand.

The transformation that has taken place so suddenly presents an interesting spectacle to every student. The outcome will have a far-reaching effect on all the nations of the world.