

above all, according to their own ability. All these programmes include, in the first place, the construction of certain railway lines, the reorganisation of the troops according to European pattern, the improvement of the resources of the province by the introduction of mining and manufacturing on behalf of the administration, and in the second place the establishment of schools, both civil and military, on established principles, and the abolition of opium smoking. The length of tenure of a post by one of these dignitaries depends on the more or less satisfactory fulfilment of this programme, for Peiping pays little consideration to the difficulties he may be faced with, surrounded as he is by incompetent officials, often opposed to reforms, and with insufficient resources at his disposal. Should any of his undertakings miscarry, he may be sure that willing tongues will lose no time in reporting the matter to headquarters; even if all goes swimmingly, he has, besides his work on the spot, to wage an incessant war with slander and intrigues at court. His every step is watched by spies and in order to cope with them he is forced to keep an eye on proceedings in Peiping by means of his own spies. It is not surprising that under such circumstances some reforms are only carried out with a view to being able to report them to headquarters, while others, more seriously thought out and of graver import, proceed more slowly and are not accompanied by the benefits they should produce. This extremely precarious position of the higher Chinese officials is made worse by the purely instinctive and stubborn, if not outwardly exhibited, resistance that every change in existing conditions evokes among the uneducated Chinese masses. During a visit that Shen had to pay to a temple last summer he was subjected to an unheard-of insult, according to Chinese ideas, a poster with insulting contents being stuck up on the arch of the town gate. Others, directed against the Taotai, his closest counsellor and assistant in the sphere of reforms, had been displayed on several occasions in that part of the town in which his new industrial undertakings and school had been established.

The following example shows how unreasonable such dissatisfaction often is. Shen is the first Viceroy to abolish the custom that his subordinate officials, merchants etc. should make him valuable presents on his own birthday and his mother's, at New Year and on other special occasions. This does not mean, however, that he scorns to follow the Chinese custom of making a certain illegal income. He is forced to maintain a staff of about 200 people in his yamen, keep a great many horses etc., and his pay of 24,000 taels a year would not nearly suffice for this. As there is a crowd of 600—800 hubus (officials awaiting appointment to regular posts) in addition to the regular officials in Lanchow, these gifts — when each man tries to purchase the goodwill of his superior — represented a very considerable sum both for the Viceroy and for the more important merchants, furriers etc. in the town. The latter were now frantic at being deprived of this appreciable income. I should not be surprised, if even these impoverished »hubus», whose purses he wished to spare, were displeased, since in this way they were deprived of a means of attracting attention.

Even the most useful reforms are often neglected for fear of provoking displeasure. For instance, the idea of establishing a water supply from the Hwang ho to the town, an easy undertaking in view of the proximity of the river, was abandoned. The water-carriers of the town, about 300, come from Shui-chuan; they are reputed to be far more