

AMERICAN ASSOCN. OF CHINA

Feb. 2.

THE American Association of China, whose report for 1923 has just reached us, are much more modest in their outpourings than we remember in bygone days. In truth, the task of writing reports on "progress of events" (as the phrase goes) is a depressing one nowadays, consisting of nothing but the record of fruitless expostulation. To some extent the American Association appears to be overshadowed by its sister Chamber of Commerce. The Association's membership is only 207, resident, and the report urges that more Americans, especially those not eligible for the Chamber, should join. This is reasonable, experience having shown, certainly in the British, and we have no doubt in the American community as well, that there is scope for both Chamber and Association and work that quite obviously is better handled by one than by the other.

The report states that "the Executive Committee have made every effort to bring before the authorities at Washington the views of the Association on matters of vital importance to Americans residing in China." The Lincheng outrage is cited in particular, when the Association actively joined with other similar organizations, American and British, in telegraphic bombardment of Home Governments. It is the ceaseless preoccupation of foreigners in China how to enlighten public and official opinion in their home countries as to the true state of affairs in this. We find that great desideratum urgently dwelt on in the very first number of the "North China Herald" seventy-three years ago, and it remains as desirable and as unattainable as ever. In fact, the situation is really worse to-day than it was in 1843. Then, nobody knew anything about China and the people on the spot had a free hand. Now, every twopenny politician thinks he knows everything about China, and Ministers are simply bound hand and foot to their respective chancelleries. Thus we find the American Association writing to the President of the United States to urge "that no action be taken on the proposed remission of the unremitted portion of the Boxer Indemnity until China had a united government." As the report shows, the contingency does not appear imminent. But the mere reference is enough to illustrate the general state of trepidation of foreign communities produced by the sloppy sentiment which suffuses the eyes of Western—it is to be feared we must add, especially American, politicians looking towards China. It is not that these communities ask for the mailed fist: far from it. All they would make clear is that sympathy—the watchword, now, in every affair of the Far East—unless based on a full understanding of facts can only end in disaster, and that the class of person in China with whom the foreign diplomats deal is in no sense representative of the real people and true interests of the land of Sinim.

Some interesting paragraphs describe the work of providing relief among needy Americans, which, it need hardly be added, has grown largely in recent years. The Association undertook to raise the necessary funds—which it did to the tune of \$8,000, no mean sum with a

membership of only 200—while the American Red Cross did the work of administration and investigation. But the A.R.C. being entirely supported from Home, the Association tried to arrange with other American organizations to take over and finance this part of the work. The attempt failed, but another is being made which, with the aid of the American Club and the Columbia Country Club, looks more promising. The hope is to obtain a regular monthly income. In no selfish sense the members of other foreign communities in Shanghai would be glad if the scheme succeeded. It is a pleasing custom now of many years standing—and it was an American, Dr. Amos Wilder, who invented it—when one of our friends “goes West” to send something to a charity instead of buying a wreath; and when that friend is an American, what more natural than to choose an American charity? But, curiously, for a people that are most generous in giving and even lavish with endowments, there appears to have been a deficiency of organized philanthropies among Americans in Shanghai; at least we must confess to being ignorant of their names. The ideas of the American Association of China, therefore, in this direction are welcome on all counts: and when they set about collecting money, perhaps we might remind them of the title of one of their country's most brilliant comedies, that “it pays to advertise.”

MR. Wen Shih-tsen, Commissioner of Foreign Affairs and Superintendent of Customs at Nanking, and Mrs. Wen, celebrated their silver wedding on Tuesday. Mr. Wen, who is also adviser to Marshal Chi Shieh-yuan (Military Governor of Kiangsu), has made a name for himself for his work at Lincheng in helping to secure the release of the Chinese and foreign captives from the hands of Sun Meiyao, leader of the Paotzeku tufei, and his men. President Tsao Kun sent one of his staff officers, Gen. Foh Yin-shan, to Nanking to present a huge pair of silver cups to Mr. and Mrs. Wen as a memento of the occasion.

AN interesting statement has been made by the new Premier, Mr. Sun Pac-chi, to President Tsao Kun, this being to the effect that some time during spring he will travel about the country for three months, to meet the leaders in the provinces and to urge upon them the necessity of peace and unification in China. During his absence he suggests that Dr. Wellington Koo (Minister of Foreign Affairs) or Dr. W. W. Yen (Minister of Agriculture and Commerce) should be acting Premier. Mr. Sun also suggests, reports the “Journal of Commerce,” a loan to meet the expenses of the Presidential Office and for the payment of the Chinese and Foreign advisers of the Government.

A Peking newspaper states that the Ministry of Finance has instructed the provinces not to levy special taxes on cigarettes. Chêkiang was the first province to levy this extra tax which has been regarded by the British and American Ministers as a violation of treaty rights. To this the Chêkiang provincial authorities retorted that the tax simply meant an increase of burden for the consumers, but not for the cigarette merchants. Since then other provinces have followed suit. The British Minister warned the Government that such action on the part of the provinces might eventually affect the decisions of the Tariff Conference. Although tobacco and wine are luxuries, Customs regulations do not permit the provinces to levy extra taxes. The Ministry of Finance fearing that this illegal tax may embarrass China's position at the conference has instructed the Civil Governors concerned to cancel the tax.