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YUAN SHIH-KAI.

The Oriental Review for November gives a very interesting sketch of the career of Yuan Shih-kai, who is the last hope of the Manchu dynasty in China.

Yuan Shih-kai is not a Manchu, but a Chinese, and has had a remarkable career. He is fifty-two years old, and since the death of the Dowager Empress Tzer Hsi has lived in forced retirement on one of his several estates. Those who forced him out of public life have now turned to him to save the fortunes of the dynasty which has ruled China for more than 250 years, but is now tottering to its fall.

If the past record of Yuan may be accepted as an indiction of his present character, he is not the man to save the situation. More than once he has shown the qualities of a traitor, eager to advance his own fortunes rather than to serve the interests of the people. Adopted by a soldier uncle, he went in 1882 with a Chinese detachment to the assistance of the King of Korea, who was treatened by an insurrection. At the age of 26 he was Imperial Resident at Korea. The Oriental Review declares that he was responsible for the outbreak of the China-Japan war in 1894, by ordering Chinese troops to Korea in open violation of a treaty with Japan. The latter promptly replied by sending troops to the Hermit Kingdom. Yuan then prevailed upon the Korean government to demand the withdrawal of Japanese troops, but on the very night the demand was presented he secretly fled to China, leaving Korea to the mercies of Japan. His part in the coup d'etat of 1908 was infinately less to his credit. The Emperor was in favor of radical reforms, but was opposed by the Empress Dowager, who had been won over by the reactionary party. Her plan was to set aside the Emperor and resume the regency. In this she relied upon the aid of Jung Lu, viceroy, living in Tientsin. She and the Emperor were to visit Tientsin in the 9th Moon. Before that time arrived, Yuan Shih-kai, who was then the Judicial Commissioner of Chihli' arrived at Peking, was received in audience by the Emperor, and discussed with him the needs of the Empire. Yuan, who owed his erapid advancement to the great viceroy Li Hung Chang, was then 39 years old. He professed so much interest in the cause of reform that the Emperor took him into his confidence and outlined his plan of action. It was necessary to remove Jung Lu, who was gevernor general of Chihli and commander-in-chief of the foreign drilled forces, which were needed to keep the reactionary party in check. Yuan Shih-kai undertook to have Jung Lu decapitated, to bring the troops to the capital, and seize and imprison the Empress Dowager. He accepted a decree by which on the completion of his mission he would become viceroy of Chihli.. Having given the Emperor the most solemn assurances of his fidelity, Yuan proceeded to Tientsin, but instead of keeping his pledge revealed the whole plan to Jung Lu. The latter, taking with him the Emperor's decree, hurried to Peking, told the story to the Empress Dowager, and within twenty-four hours the Emperor was a prisoner. He was kept a prisoner, though still nominally the emperor, until his death two years later. Yuan Shih-kai was made viceroy of Chihli, as the reward of his perfidy.

When the Empress Dowager died, Yuan was forced into retirement, and has since taken no part in public affairs. There seemed to be considerable doubt whether he would accept the premiership lately offered him, and there were rumors that he might join the revolutionists. However, he is now at Peking as the champion of the Manchu government. His former friend and patron, Li Hung Chang, is with the republicans.

The Oriental Review expresses the view that had not Yuan played the traitor to the former Emperor, who was disposed toward radical reforms, China would be much farther advanced today. Yuan, however, is a very able man. After the war with Japan he drilled and armed troops on European lines, established military schools and enforced dicipline. When governor of Shanting he suppressed the Boxers, protected foreigners, and maintained order. It is said to the credit of his authority that "not a foreigner in his province perished while Chihli was in flames."

This is the man strong, selfish, unscrupulous, but of remarkable abill ity, who is facing the revolution that has raised its head in every province of China. The Oriental Review, which is a Japanese publication, declared that his task is hopeless, and that the days of the Manchu dynasty, cruel, corrupt and tyrannical, are numbered.

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Mapping Alaska.

Previous to 1896 our knowledge of Alaska was crude and imperfect. The coast mountains were known, but the two great inland ranges, one of which contains the highest peaks on this continent, were hardly indicated on any map. But owing to the labors of the geological survey all the larger geographic features of that country have now been outlined and a network of explorations has been extended over the whole of Alaska. There are no more mountain ranges to be discovered, although there are several yet to be explored. Out of a total area of about 620,000 square miles not one-half remains unmapped and unexplored. The mining resources have been particularly studied, and there is no known mining district in Alaska about which the survey is not able to furnish definite information.—Harper's Weekly.

Perils of Interior Africa.

There are native towns not remote from the Lake Chad region of interior Africa where a white man's life isn't worth a nickel. Lieutenant Boyd Alexander, the British explorer, was put to death in one of them recently. Lieutenant Alexander and his Portuguese collector, one Jose, had encamped under a tree in the outskirts of Tama. Suddenly they were surrounded by a band of yelling savages. One, a mere stripling, seized a gun and shot the lieutenant, and the others fell upon him with clubs. The Portuguese tossed his finger rings to the natives, and while they were interesting themselves in them Jose leaped to his saddle and escaped.

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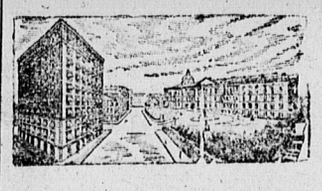
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