THE ARREST OF EUGENE CH'EN

BY PUTNAM WEALE.

It is time the writer invokes the powerful weapon of public opinion in defence of a man who although sometimes too violent in his verbal measurement of the Far Eastern imbroglio, has consistently upheld and attempted to make current those English ideas of good government and justice which are his birthright. Born in Trinidad, educated there and domiciled in England as a practising lawyer until four years ago, Eugene Ch'en, although of Chinese parentage, is a British subject who has never foresworn his allegiance to the British Crown. His arrest on a police-warrant last Friday for exposing what he had every reason to believe was a plot against the independence of this country, although an arbitrary act and an invasion of the rights of Britain, would not have led to action being taken by his friends had not information been received from many quarters on Saturday night that foul play was contemplated against him. As a number of instances of poisoning in prison have come under the writer's notice during his lifelong residence in this country: and as he knows how easily deep-seated vindictiveness seeks a silent revenge: and as all attempts to communicate with the accused have failed, it has been necessary to take certain urgent, final steps to prevent a crime being committed. It may interest the public to know that Eugene Ch'en is lying imprisoned in the District Court Goal, about 500 yards north of the old Board of Punishments where Harry Parkes and his companions were incarcerated in 1860 and from where they communicated in their distress with the British Force outside Peking by means of messages sewn on to their washing.

The writer as a friend of the accused calls upon all the readers of this newspaper to bring the whole weight of their opinion at once to bear in every possible quarter to secure that justice takes its proper course and that the accused be released from solitary confinement and brought to a speedy trial in a Court with competent jurisdiction.

Eugene Ch'en is himself not only British but members of his family are serving in the British army. A brother is in the Royal Engineers in France, two cousins are understood to be with the Expeditionary Force in Egypt, a sister is a Red Cross nurse—the whole family being loyal British subjects who have volunteered for active service. In 1912 when he first came to China the accused was already 35 years old and had lived all his life on British territory, coming to this country furnished with a British passport issued in the ordinary way by the British Foreign Office. In 1913 when he returned to London he travelled home through Russia on his British passport, coming back furnished with the same instrument. Nothing has since occurred to cancel his British allegiance. The imprint on this newspaper, to the effect that it is owned and edited by Chinese, was placed there owing to war-conditions, this public announcement being necessary to advertise that the entire German capital with which the newspaper was founded under Mr. Woodhead's editorship had been refunded—every penny of the money now invested being Chinese. Although the writer is not acquainted with the Deed of Sale he was informed yesterday by a highly-placed Englishman that he has seen that Deed and that it is a true and faithful statement to declare that there is none but Chinese money in the venture. The battle which has been fought in these columns is the battle of constitutionalism against militarism, of legality against Byzantinism, of right against force, and it is precisely this battle which the entire English-speaking race throughout the world is to-day pledged to carry to victory.

Eugene Ch'en was virtually trapped in the middle of Friday night into a police-cell, leaving his unfinished work solely on the understanding that his presence was required to answer certain questions. Although every pressure is being brought to bear on him, and he is suffering acutely, in body and mind, he has refused to abjure his British citizenship.

Unless his release is secured and he is handed over to the competent authorities, the writer proposes telegraphically to invoke the aid of the British Government. That Mr. Lloyd George's government, when the facts are known in England, will not desert a British subject is as certain as that the sun rises.