

CHINA

1091. This vast country, an ancient empire down to February 1912, when the Manchu dynasty was overthrown and a republic proclaimed, is the only part of the mainland of Asia besides India with a population of high density. In this we see a result of the seasonal rainfall distribution. Though the winter temperatures are cool even in the south, and in the north and most parts of the interior rigorous ¹ (55), the rains, occurring, as in monsoon regions generally, during the season of high temperatures, promote an enormous vegetable production. The figures given for the population of China Proper were formerly only vague estimates, but a recent census ² confirms the previously entertained ideas as to the **great density of population** in most of the great eastern plain in the east, which stretches from the mountains in the north of Peking to those south of the Yangtse-kiang. This plain thus extends, roughly speaking, through ten degrees of latitude, from about 30° to 40° N., and its greatest width is about the parallel of 35°. It extends everywhere to the coast except in Shantung, the province which juts out between the Yellow Sea and the Gulf of Pechili. Another large and densely peopled plain lies on the middle Yangtse and the lower course of its great northern tributary, the Han. (See map, pp. 536-7.)

1092. Another region of high density is in the south-east, forming the province of Kwang-tung, which is largely composed of a deltaic alluvial plain; and in the west there is a third region of exceptionally great density of population, in what is known as the Red Basin, in the east of the province of Sechwan and the north of Yünnan, where, besides great mineral wealth, there is a peculiar red soil of extreme fertility. West of the great plain, China is for the most part elevated and to a large extent mountainous, but even the elevated regions are in some places capable of supporting a numerous population. This is so, for example, in the region of the red soil just referred to. Where that soil is found cultivation can be pursued to a great height up the mountains; and, according to Captain Gill, the Chinese in eastern Sechwan cultivate the hill-sides wherever the slope is not above 30°,

¹ The mean January temperature at Canton, on the Tropic of Cancer, about 55° F.; at Zikawei (Shanghai), in about 31° N., 37° F.; at Peking, in 40° N., 23° F.

² A statement of the area and population of the eighteen provinces of China Proper, according to the 1910 Census published in the *Government Gazette*, showed a grand total of upwards of 302,000,000, equal to an average density of about 200 to the square mile. The most densely peopled provinces were found to be Shantung with 430, and Honan with 330, to the square mile.