

chair as he goes from one palace to the other, and as they go they wait out a chant, which means something like this: "Soldiers, protect your king."

The eunuchs are also ubiquitous, both in China and Corea. These men have great power. They are said to be wise counselors, and they certainly have a great deal to do with the administration of governmental affairs here. None but eunuchs are allowed to wait upon the queen, and her majesty has palaces, soldiers and a retinue of her own. They dress like the high officials, with long gowns reaching to their feet, and horse-hair caps. They have long, yellow, sober faces. Their voices have a high falsetto pitch and they move about with a snake-like quietness.

#### THE KING AND THE FATES.

The Coreans are very superstitious. They have their astrologers, and one of the prophets of the past said that the present dynasty would last only five hundred years. This time is now up, and the people look upon the war to a certain extent as a decree of the fates, and some of them think that the king's days are numbered. The king himself is very progressive, and he would like to improve his people. He may be able to do so if he can control his officials, and he will be able to do this only through the Japanese. There is very little known about the government of Corea, and it will be surprising to many people to know that it has a fixed organization, and that there are departments in Seoul much like those at Washington. These are supposed to control the affairs of the kingdom, and in times past they have practically controlled the king. The king, with the aid of the Japanese, is now running the machine, and it is probable that some of the rebellions throughout the country are fomented by the officials.

#### HOW COREA IS GOVERNED.

The government of Corea consists of the king and his officials in Seoul, and a vast number of officials who are scattered over the country. The kingdom is divided up into eight different provinces. Each of these provinces has a governor, who is appointed by the king, and it is divided up into countries or districts, each of which has its officers. Every city or district of ten thousand houses or less has a magistrate who is a sort of a ruler and judge. He collects all the taxes and passes upon all disputes. He is a man of power, and every one bows down before him. Corea has between three and four hundred of these magistrates, and they practically run the kingdom outside of Seoul. They collect the taxes, and they have scores of scribes about them who are a sort of political strikers, and who do the dirty work for them. These lower officers all pay those above them for their offices, and they expect to get back their money out of the people. The poor farmer, in fact, has to pay taxes over and over again, and if he gets anything ahead it is squeezed out of him by torture or paddling.

#### THE KING'S BIG MEN.

The high officials of Seoul are numerous, though the most of them have fled to the country on account of the war. I was told that there were eight vice presidents to the home office, when I was in Seoul, and there were a number of vice presidents to the foreign offices. In this office there are about fifteen clerks and nearly as many secre-

taries of state. The king has two men who are supposed to be his closest advisers, and they are called the ministers of the right and left. All of these officials when they go to the palace take their toilet cases and wardrobes with them, and a servant always trots behind carrying their extra clothes, combs, brushes and other chamber furniture. They have to wait a long time often before they can see the king and they cannot get out of the palace before the sun rises. The official work is done outside of the palace, but the offices are not in full blast until about high noon.

#### THEY SIT UP LATE.

The Coreans, although the laws do not permit the men to go on the streets at night, are fond of late hours. They sit and gossip among themselves, and their parties are always of one sex. They are always either stag parties or hen parties, and the men dearly love the flowing bowl. There are more old men gossipers in Corea than there are old maid gossipers in America. It is not an uncommon thing for a crowd of young and middle-aged men to spend a night in chatting, singing and in the writing of poetry. In poetry they use the Chinese characters, and the Chinese is the official court language. I may speak in another letter of their education and schools. They are queer in every way, and though they have many things which are cruel and bad, they are, on the whole, a very refined people, and are good-natured and kindly.

#### THE KING'S CENSORS.

There is one class of government officials, however, which Corea has which we do not find in America, and which are now restricted to Corea and China. These are the censors. They are appointed by the king, and it is their business to travel over the country and see that justice is administered. There are perhaps a dozen of them under the government. They go about in all sorts of ways, and perform the part of official detectives. No one is supposed to know who they are. They may appear in the disguise of a coolie or a peddler, and they will settle in a town ruled by an unjust magistrate and live among the poor. They find out whether the people are complaining, and if their complaints are just they have the power to remedy them. Each of them carries the king's seal, and they have the right to order any head off below that of a governor. They have of late years, however, been very corrupt, I am told, and have been bribed by the officials. The Japanese, who are now controlling the country, are doing what they can to put down this bribery. It is a herculean task, and it is believed by the foreigners in Corea that the cleaning of the Augean stables of Corean officials corruption is a bigger job than the conquering of China. How it will turn out time only can tell.

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#### THE SITUATION.

During the past season the general feeling in business was one of uncertainty and indecision, and many dealers became so conservative as really to be an obstruction, for they established in the minds of their patrons the same feelings, and thereby much trade that could have been done safely was al-

lowed to pass by, and today it is realized that very few have done as well as they might have done, had they known or foreseen that things would have turned out as well as they have.

Discouraging as this may be, on reflection it is pleasant to know that a more buoyant, hopeful feeling prevails throughout the commercial world today, spite of the omnipresent dissatisfaction on the money or currency question, and the diversity of opinion in regard to gold, silver or paper as the circulating medium of the country.

That this subject is not fully understood appears clear to an observer, and that many theories are purely individual or local is beyond question, and that bonds and securities of one kind and another are being returned from abroad is established by the continuous drain of gold. The banks of the great centers meanwhile are accumulating the precious metal beyond all precedent—the plethora of funds and the pressure to obtain employment for the enormous accumulation in the hands of capitalists and money-eyed corporations—being coincident with the depletion of the treasury reserve, the increase of the national debt and the not improbable issue of bonds—more bonds!

The latter question is one which is creating discussion in the ranks of the more thoughtful of the middle trade class and of the better informed of the labor class, and the question is pertinently asked and pressed, "If the government or nation (as it is) can issue its promises to pay, in denominations of one thousand or ten, to the extent of one hundred millions in a year of peace, on a determined interest, cannot the same power issue the same amount in one or ten dollar promises to pay, without interest, as a matter of economy?"

Would not all those employed of the people from the President to the senator, or from the treasury clerk to the soldier or pensioner, be just as well satisfied and contented if paid in clean, crisp notes, as they are with gold, providing that such issue (as now) was acceptable for the payments of all debts, "public or private?" And could not this issue be carried safely to or beyond the point per capita known to some nations, when the immense magnitude of this country is considered, and the time it takes to scatter generally any money at all?

That inability to buy is at the foundation of restricted trade seems reasonable, the decrease being estimated at from twenty to twenty-five per cent, although 1894 was much better than the previous year; and yet the assumed cost of living in 1894 was ten per cent less than in 1893, many goods indeed being sold upon a margin so close that profits on the whole were unsatisfactory.

Part of the general loss of trade had considerable of a local character, though the effects were far-reaching. It has been estimated that the great railway strike of last summer involved a loss of over eighty million dollars, and of this some fifty millions was in wages lost to workingmen—a loss which had its influence on dealers of every grade.

Tariff changes also exerted an influence over trade in some lines at least, whether as to importation or consump-