

Written for this Paper.

## COREAN OFFICIALDOM.

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HAVE just received letters from Corea stating that the whole country is in a state of anarchy. The Tong Haks, or rebels, have sprung up again in different parts of the kingdom. The Japanese

send out troops to subdue them, but the moment they are conquered in one place they spring up in another, and they honeycomb even the ranks of the people in Seoul. The king is said to be in great danger, and he fears assassination more than ever. There are many Coreans who hate everything connected with Japan, and as the king is now working in combination with the Japanese troops, he is charged by some with selling out the country. I wrote you some weeks ago of my interview with him. I did not describe his palaces and his court. It would be impossible for any one to have the access to these buildings today which I had, while I was in Seoul.

## HOW THE KING IS GUARDED.

The King of Corea does all his work by the electric light. He sleeps in the daytime, and receives all of his callers at night. There is a wall about twenty feet high which runs clear around his palace city, and there are watch-houses on top of it in which sentinels stand day and night. Every three hundred feet along the outside of the wall there is a little guard house about five feet square, which contains two armed soldiers. Each of these guard houses has a well within it lined with straw, and while one soldier watches the other curls himself up like a caterpillar in this well and goes to sleep. The soldiers all sleep in their day clothes, and they rarely have blankets. The gates which go into the palace city are guarded by soldiers, and there are always servants and officials about them. At one time the king thought of running a lot of live wires around the palace walls, in order that any one who attempted to climb over them might be killed by the terrible electric shock which would result from the contact.

## HE MOVES WITHOUT NOTICE.

The buildings in the king's palace cities (he has two in Seoul) are numbered by hundreds. They cover many hundred acres, and he has suits of apartments in different parts of the grounds. He keeps his movements a secret, and only the fewest people know in which palace he sleeps or how long he will stay there. You can never tell where to find him, and it would be almost impossible to lay a plan for his abduction. He has all the walls of his palace city lighted, and when the electric plant is in full blast every corner will be as bright at night as it is in the daytime. He sleeps in rooms guarded by eunuchs, and in receiving his officials they are required to come into the palace during

the daytime, and they wait around until his majesty is ready to receive them in the evening. As soon as it becomes dusk the gates which enter the palace are closed with heavy doors plated with iron. They are locked with massive iron bars, and the keys are taken into the king. It is death to any one outside of the gatekeeper to touch the locks, and they are so heavy that one of them is a load for a man.

## WORSE THAN THE ARABIAN NIGHTS.

The scenes about these gates are more gorgeous than those of the "Arabian Nights." They are surrounded by all the queer characters who make up official Corea. There are soldiers in plum-colored pantaloons and blue coats. There are the king's musicians in yellow, and there are all sorts of gorgeous servants, dressed in bright gowns. Men with paddles for whipping the people squat under the walls, their sleeves rolled up to the shoulder and their brawny muscles ready for action. There are gorgeously caparisoned ponies, who stamp their feet and neigh. There are leopard-skin-covered chairs watched by servants in livery, awaiting the coming out of their owners, who have gone in to see the king. There are lackeys of all sorts, and as you look you see that the "Black Crook" is here outdone. There are no such gorgeous people on the planet as these officials. Here comes one of them on horseback. He has a servant on each side to steady him as he sits in the saddle. Another servant leads the horse, and he fans himself as he rides through the streets. His gown is of light blue silk, and he looks clean enough to be eaten. I doubt, however, whether investigation would show this to be the case, and it makes me think of the young society lady who, before going to a party, yells down to her mother as follows:

"Say, ma, shall I wash for a high or a low-necked dress?"

Just behind this man, looking even more gorgeous, comes another noble riding on a monocycle, with six men pushing and carrying him. This machine runs on the bicycle principle, and it has been in use in Corea for ages. The people go down on their knees as he passes by, and he is undoubtedly a very high official indeed. He had on official boots of black broadcloth. A fifteen-dollar horsehair cap covers his head, and the leopard skin, which is only permitted to be used by officials, covers the back of his chair. I note that the other officials get out of their chairs when they meet him. This is etiquette in Corea, and it provides that the man of low rank must never be above a man of higher station. As the monocycle approaches the gaudy dude on horseback sees him, and his fan drops in dismay. He is proud, and he doesn't like to get down, but there is no help for it. He is an under-officer, and he cannot tower above the man in the chair. He orders his servants to stop. They lift him off his horse, and he walks along while his superior rides by. As the chair comes up, its retinue of servants howl to all to get out of the way, and to bow down before the great man they are carrying. And they do bow and they bow quick. The officials of Corea try not to meet each other on the streets, because of humiliations which they have to undergo of this nature. One day I saw the king's father go into the palace, and a dozen high officials had to

get out and walk in order to do him honor. I could see they were all angry at having to do so.

## WHAT RUINED COREA.

It is these nobles who have ruined Corea. The country is said to be poor, but the officials roll in wealth, and it is a wonder to me where they get all the money they spend. They dress in the finest of silk, and the ordinary man of rank who has access to the palaces wears a green gown containing enough silk to make a lady's ball dress. Best of Corean hats cost from ten dollars upwards, and everything is high. Their expenses in keeping up their establishments must be heavy. Many of them carry from ten to a hundred servants with them when they go along the streets, and these are all lodged in their own quarters. A Corean noble's home consists of a number of one-story buildings surrounded by a wall, which, in the city, opens upon the street by a gate, which is so made that you cannot see inside of the yard when it is open. Half of this wall is made up of buildings of one-story rooms, eight feet square, and these are the quarters of the servants. The noble has several houses for himself inside the yard, and a number of buildings for his wife and concubines. He lives very well. His home is by no means an uncomfortable one, and with its wide verandas, its queerly-shaped ridged roofs, and its warm rooms, heated by fires under the floor, he can, if he has enough money, live very well. This money he gets out of squeezing the people. It all comes from the men who grub the soil, and from the offices which the king's officials give to him for a consideration. Such an official is fairly well educated from a Chinese standpoint. He has learned to read the Chinese, and he can read and write the Corean. He has passed the examinations by which the king selects his officials, and if he can keep up his share of the king's revenue his office is usually left with him. Many such men write poetry, and are good talkers, and men of much more than ordinary intelligence, and the whole nation has the making of a very good people, if any method can be evolved by which corruption may be done away with, and property rights be preserved.

## INSIDE THE PALACE WALLS.

I had an opportunity to get inside of the palace walls once or twice, in addition to the trip which I made through the grounds when I called upon the king. The buildings are surrounded by a wall, and they are built within pens, each of which contains from two to four acres of space. In going to the king you have to pass through from six to a dozen buildings, and everywhere you go you meet soldiers and eunuchs.

The king's bodyguard confronts you at every turn, and there are servants by the tens of hundreds. There are five hundred of these bodyguards and each of these is so strong that he has to lift a bar of iron, six feet long and weighing one hundred pounds, from the ground and hold it at arm's length above his head. This is the test which the soldiers undergo before they are admitted to the guard. If you will straighten out your arm, bend over and take a rod of iron weighing a hundred pounds and attempt to lift it above your head without bending your arm, you will see something of the wonderful strength these men possess. A number of them are always close to the king, and they surround his