

MISCELLANEOUS.

Written for this Paper.

COREAN REFORMS.

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HAVE JUST received letters from Seoul stating that the Japanese have inaugurated their reforms, and that the Korean government is rapidly changing. Lines of railroad have been planned, and the greedy

and barbarous officials are being deprived of their offices. Salaries are to be fixed by law, and rank is, to a certain extent, to be done away with. The queen's family, which embraces the worst of the nobility, is being driven into the background, and the king is taking all matters into his own hands. It is an open secret in Seoul that for years the king has been a henpecked husband, and I heard many stories of the queen's jealous disposition. His majesty had a number of beautiful dancing girls, who were now and then, as is the custom, called in to dance before the court. The king, who is a rather lively man of about forty-odd, has now and then singled out one of these and paid her special attention, much to the disgust of the queen. He has also carried on some intrigues of this kind unknown to her majesty, and the quarrels between the two on this account have been frequent. Just before I left Seoul one of the high officials connected with the court was caught by the queen carrying notes from the king to one of his favorites, and she at once sent him on a long mission to southern Corea. He was connected with important public works, and all of these had to stop on this account. The latest news is that the king has cut entirely loose from his wife's apron strings, and that he is now going to establish a harem in the palace, as was the custom in Corea in the past, and as is the custom still in nearly all eastern countries. The emperor of China has hundreds of beautiful women, and he has the right to any of the noble Tartar girls over twelve years of age. He takes the pick of the country between the ages of twelve and eighteen, and he replenishes his stock every three years. The King of Siam has the most wives, perhaps, of any Asiatic monarch, though the queen is his own half sister. He also has the right to any and all of the girls of the kingdom, though the laws provide that he cannot marry his mother or his mother-in-law. The Emperor of Japan has a number of noble ladies inside of his palace grounds, and he has a sort of a harem, though the Japanese try to keep the matter secret, and no gossip concerning it ever gets into the newspapers. It is the same with other Asiatic and Indian rulers, and the action of the King of Corea is not surprising,

especially as almost all of the Korean nobles have their concubines.

NEW COREAN LAWS AS TO MARRIAGE.

The king's intended reforms include a number of new laws regarding marriage, and this in the favor of the women. One provision is that men shall not be married under twenty and girls under sixteen. Heretofore boys could be married at fourteen and I saw boys who were under this wearing the hats which are the badges of matrimony. Girls are now married at thirteen, and are often engaged at seven. The custom of the country is such that widows cannot marry again, and pretty widows are carefully watched, and if there is anything forward or bad in their actions, they are sometimes kidnapped by the officials and held as concubines. The new laws which are now proposed will take away this restriction, and all marriages, whether of maids or widows, are to be left to the volition of the parties concerned. They also provide that there shall be no more buying and selling of human beings, and fathers will not be able to sell their daughters. The customs of mourning are to be modified, and other changes which tend to the leveling of the classes are to be enacted. In the meantime, there is a decided opposition to all reform, and a great many of the people think the country is going straight to ruin. There is a woeful lack of confidence in the Japanese, and the pro-Chinese feeling is strong.

THE EAST COAST OF COREA.

I want to tell you something about the east coast of Corea. This is but little known, and most travelers have confined their visits to the ports nearest China. The peninsula is in the neighborhood of 200 miles wide, and in crossing it I traveled northwest through the mountains and came out at Broughton bay, or the harbor of Gensan. This is a magnificent harbor, and it is much coveted by the Russians, because it is opened all the year round. Their harbor on the Pacific is that of Vladivostock, on the lower edge of Siberia, which I visited after leaving Corea, and of which I will write in my next letter. Vladivostock is frozen up for about six months of the year, and the Russians want a winter outlet to the sea. They are watching Gensan, and the Trans-Siberian railroad will probably have a branch running down to it. The Russian trading houses have agents at Gensan, and both the Russian and the Japanese ships stop there en-route to Siberia. There is already a thrifty Japanese city there, of several thousand people, and these are engaged in shipping and trading. Their houses are of wood, with heavy tiled roofs, and their town is clean and well kept. The Korean town is perhaps twice as large, but it is a dirty settlement, made up of little one-story thatched huts. The people are poor and shiftless and queer, and they are like their kind all over Corea.

THE OLD COREA.

The old Corea will probably soon pass away, and the curious things of which I have written may become a matter of history. The whole of the country is so strange that I have only been able to partially describe it. On

this trip across the country I saw all sorts of queer customs. Our eggs, I remember, we bought by the stick, and in Corea eggs are stacked up like cordwood, or rather, kindling wood. Ten eggs are laid end to end, and they are then wrapped about with straw, so that they stand out straight and stiff, and look more like a club than eggs. In the stores these sticks of eggs are piled up crosswise, and the price is about three cents a stick, or about three-tenths of a cent per egg. Chickens are peddled about in crates or baskets made of string and wood, and fish are often eaten raw. I saw many black hogs on the trip, and these were usually tied by strings or ropes of the size of clothes line, which ran through holes in the tops of their ears.

The cattle we saw were very fine, large animals, but they are used almost entirely as beasts of burden. They pull rude bullock carts, and carry packs on heavy wooden saddles. The saddles are badly made, and they rub off the skin, and my heart was sickened again and again by a bull as stately as any worshipped in India with two great raw spots as big as your hand on each side of his back.

A VISIT TO A DOG BUTCHER.

There are dogs all over Corea. They are of a snowy white variety, and are always snarling and barking at foreigners. The poorer classes sometimes eat dog-meat as food, and during the hot days I was told that the flesh was a preventive against ague, malaria and other sickness. At this time thousands of dogs are killed, so "General" Pak told me, all over Corea. In ordinary times only the poorest of the poor eat the flesh of dogs. I visited a dog butcher one day in the Korean capital and watched him kill and dress one of the curs for the market. He caught him as he ran through the door of the house by throwing a slip-noose about his neck. The dog was rather a nice animal, of about the size of an Irish setter, and his fur was as gray as that of the wolf. He seemed to be aware of the danger, and he tugged at the rope, which soon tightened on his throat. And then the bare-armed butcher swung him off of his feet and whirled him about in the street at the end of the string till life was extinct. He next laid the dog down on the ground and stabbed him, as we stick a pig. He then hung him on the wall of his hut and cut him up into dog steaks, soup meats and roasts. He asked me if I did not want a tenderloin, and dished up a bowl from a pot of dog soup, which was cooking outside his hut, and asked me to taste it. It did not look at all appetizing, and I thanked him and left.

HOW COREAN WOMEN IRON CLOTHES.

Among many queer Korean customs there is none stranger than that of ironing. There are no better dressed people in the world than the Koreans. They wear immaculate gowns, and the prevailing custom is white. The common dress of the men is made up of a long, full cotton gown, full white pantaloons and wadded white stockings. These are as clean as the best work of a Chinese laundry, and after they are washed in cold water and ironed with a cold club. The women do all the washing and ironing of the land. They wrap the garment round a stick, which is laid on the floor, and then one or two women squat down beside it and pound