

Written for this Paper.

THE EMPEROR OF CHINA.



WILL devote my letter this week to the Emperor of China. He is the most secluded monarch on the face of the globe, and no race horse is guarded more carefully than he. His officials have him

corralled in the center of the big Tartar city of Peking, and you have to go through three sets of walls before you approach the building in which he is kept, guarded by eunuchs. First, there are the immense walls of the great Tartar city, which are sixty feet thick and as tall as a four-story flat. These inclose a large area filled up with the houses of Tartars and government buildings, which run around a space in the center of which is known as the Imperial City. This has a high wall of gray bricks about six miles in length, and it includes the outside palaces, the pleasure grounds and the temples of the Sacred City. The emperor is kept in the third pen inside this, and his exclusive quarters are known as the Purple Forbidden City. The walls of this last pen are rigidly guarded. They inclose the quarters of the emperor, his family, the ladies of the royal harem and the thousands of eunuchs who make up the servants. It has buildings in the center for court ceremonies, and there are small buildings arranged around on the two sides of a ridge of palaces, which runs from the north to the south. The emperor himself lives in the north-western part of the pen, and the empress dowager has a palace near by. In another part of the inclosure is the hall of literary abyss, or the imperial library, and in this the cabinet officers hold their sessions, and it contains also a department of the royal treasury. No one outside of the foreign legations has ever gotten into the palaces of the Emperor of China, and no foreigner is permitted to see him. Our minister has been granted an audience, but even the Chinese of Peking do not know how he looks, and of the hundreds of millions who make up the empire I venture to say that there are not five thousand men outside of his eunuchs who have ever set eyes on him. He knows absolutely nothing about the actual condition of his people and capital. When he goes out into the city matting is hung up in front of all the houses and strips of cloth are stretched across the alleys and side streets through which the imperial procession must pass. Our minister warns all Americans not to go out at their peril, for the emperor is always accompanied by soldiers, and the man who peeps around the corner or has his eye fastened to a hole in the matting is liable to be blinded with a bullet or arrow. The streets are fixed up for the occasion. All the booths and squatters are driven away and the roads are covered with bright yellow clay. Yellow is

the imperial color, and I saw armies of half-naked coolies carrying such dirt into the city in wheelbarrows during my stay in Peking for one of the emperor's outings. It is the same when he goes into the country, and as some of his tours to worship at the tombs of his ancestors extend many miles you will see that it costs something in the way of clay hauling to give him a good track to move on.

It is not easy to get reliable gossip about the Emperor of China, and the only view I had of his palaces was from the city walls, and during the time that I prowled round the gate with my snapshot camera and my Chinese photographer. Still, I met a number of officials who were quite close to the throne, and I got good information from one or two eunuchs. I visited Peking six years ago, at the time that the empress dowager picked out his first wives, and some of the stories I will tell further on were given me in a whisper, and if their authors were known they might lose their heads. The truth of the matter is that the young emperor is by no means an angel, and the eunuchs told me that he hops up and down in his rage when anything goes against him. He is merely the tool of the old empress dowager, and he has been under this old lady's thumb since he was a baby. She supervised his education. She picked out his wives for him, and she makes the ladies of his harem howl today if they don't walk chalk in her presence. Of course, she took her own friends when she selected his wives, and she has him so hemmed about with her officials and girls that if he had a will of his own he wouldn't know how to use it. The emperor was seventeen years old at the time of his marriage, six years ago, and she gave him three wives to start with. The selection was curious. All the pretty Tartar girls of the empire, numbering many thousands, were gathered together and sorted, and the best of them were sent on to Peking. The selection was first made by the governors of the provinces, and no girl was presented who was over eighteen nor under twelve years of age. The choice lots were dressed in the finest of clothes, and were carted from all parts of the empire into Peking. They were here submitted to the inspection of the old empress dowager, being brought into her presence in lots of five. She passed upon them as fast as she could, and weeded out the poorest and dullest. Those who remained were taken out for the time and brought in in new lots, and so the sorting went on until the thousands had dwindled to the hundreds, the hundreds to scores, and the scores at last down to fifteen. These fifteen girls were put into training. Their paces were tested, and all sorts of experiments were made as to their tempers and traits. After some months the old empress picked out the three girls she liked, and the eldest of these, who was eighteen years old, became empress. The two others became what are called secondary wives, or chief concubines, and these two latter were sisters, one of whom was thirteen and the other fifteen years old. The marriage of the emperor was celebrated on the day that President Harrison was inaugurated, and you may have some idea of the occasion when I tell you that it cost ten million dollars. In addi-

tion to his wives, he has no ends of concubines, and the laws of China provides that a sorting like that I described must be made every three years of all the pretty Tartar girls in their teens, and that the most select of the lot must be shipped into the palace. The emperor is not restricted as to the number he takes, and he picks out those he likes best. He has a right to dismiss them at any time that he pleases, but they usually remain until twenty-five years of age, when, if they have had no children, they expect to be sent away from the palace. They have no trouble, however, in getting good husbands. The whole Chinese court is made up of intrigues and intriguers, and the nobles are glad to have their daughters in the royal harem. These Tartar girls have a dress of their own, and they wear long skirts instead of the silk pantaloons of their Chinese sisters. They do not bind up their feet, and there are no squeezed feet inside the imperial palace. They are indeed the prettiest girls of the empire. Their faces are a delicate cream verging on the bloom of a large yellow peach, and their black almond eyes are soulful enough to stir the blood of the coldest Caucasian. No man with such surroundings can devote much time to a little matter like that of a war with Japan, and doing what his highest officials and the old dowager direct, amusing himself, in the meantime, with his wives and his eunuchs. He has, in fact, much the same place that the Mikado had in Japan under the Shoguns. He is a sort of a holy figure-head, and his officials know the more sacred they make him the more power will be given to them, and the more license for their squeezing and stealing.

Everything connected with the emperor is regulated by law. He has imperial physicians who watch over his health. The law provides just what he shall eat, and I am told that he squats on the floor at his meals and eats out of golden bowls with ivory chopsticks. According to the old Chinese books, there must be placed daily before him thirty pounds of meat in a basin and seven pounds boiled meat into soup. He has a daily allowance of about a pound of hog's fat and butter, and he has the right to order two sheep, two fowls and two ducks, while his drink for the day is restricted to the milk of eighty cows and the steeping of seventy-five parcels of tea. It is probable that his real diet is different, and I doubt not he is now taking bits of roast leopard and tiger-bone soup to keep up his courage, for the Chinese think that these things really make a man brave. If he desires anything that is not on the menu, the board having charge of the imperial table has to be consulted, so I am told, before he is supplied.

The emperor is by no means a physical giant. He is lean and unhealthy, and his features are long and unlike those of the typical Chinaman. His eyes are almost straight, and he bears the marks of his pure Tartar blood. His life is by no means conducive to health. He does all his business at night and he sleeps in the daytime. He begins his work about midnight, just after his breakfast, and he receives his cabinet ministers under the rays of the electric light. He has numerous audiences, and the big officials have to cool