

SHORT TALKS ABOUT KOREA.

The British Hog's Methods of Rooting After Korean Trade.

HOW THE PEOPLE DO BUSINESS.

Shops and Money—Missionary Baby-Eating—Nobility on the Half-Shekel—A Visit to the Royal School.

Korean Notes.

Special Correspondence of THE BEE.—The Americans have now the swing in Korea, though the British hog is supposed to be trying to root its way in by the aid of the Chinese government. Back of the opposition by China to Korea's sending a legation to Washington, and mixed with the recent troubles between the two countries, is a strong British influence. Great Britain has the most selfish foreign policy of any country on the face of the globe. It would be glad to throw Korea to China in order to keep it out of the hands of Russia, where, by the way, it is now in no danger of going. It would in this way the more easily control Korea's small foreign trade, the national honor of the British is a matter of shillings and pence. The British half-penny is bigger in their eyes than the comfort of this whole round earth. They forced the Chinese to become opium-eaters to add a trifle to their national income, and it is an open secret in Japan that the adoption of English railways and the letting of contracts to English engineers was the price paid for their pretended support in treaty revision. A British foreign minister upon being sent to Japan expressed himself in favor of the rights of the Japanese and he was told by the home government that he might do what he would for Japan, but that he must remember that any thing that was done by the Japanese might be demanded by the Chinese as well.

AMERICANS PREFERRED. Americans opened Japan, and had Americans pushed their trade as the British have done, they might be the foremost power there. They stand to-day in the same relation to Korea that they did to Japan along back in the sixties, and in the words of Admiral Shufeldt, who made the first treaty with Korea, it is hoped that they will hold their position and take advantage of their opportunities. Korea has one of the best climates in the world and its mineral resources are almost altogether undeveloped. Minister Dismore tells me that the king especially favors America, and that he is anxious that capitalists should come in and develop the gold mines. The total output of these mines last year was, as I said in a former letter, about three million dollars in nuggets and dust. But this was chiefly the result of placer mining, though some of it was extracted from quartz. Korean quartz mining is of the most primitive character. Large round stones are rolled back and forth over the quartz, which rests on a hard surface. It is admitted that fully 50 per cent of the gold is lost, and the use of practical machinery might make parts of this country a second California. Gold is found in all of the eight provinces of Korea, but the mines have so far existed only in several. I asked Minister Dismore whether the American government could be made as to these mines. He replied: "Yes, and Americans would have the preference over others in making such contracts. I understand that a German firm lately had a mineralogist looking at the mines, but no sale has been made yet. I think the investment would be a profitable one and reasonably safe."

"How about the country. Do you think the desire for improvement has come to stay?" "Yes, if the king can have his way. The country has, you know, been opened only six years. Last year the import of foreign cottons was nearly two million dollars and the increase over the year before was more than half a million dollars. Our American cottons are high, but the demand for them is growing on account of their superiority. The most of the people here wear cotton clothing, and a sale of ten thousand pieces of American sheetings was made to one of the guilds here a few days since. The demand for American kerosene has not increased over that of the past, and this is on account of the poor grade of oil shipped here. It is not the winter, but the climate is about that of Ohio, and the people went back to the poor native and high-priced oil."

MONEY MATTERS.

There is now one big American firm in Korea, and here at Seoul the foreign colony, which is made up of three or four hundred bright men and women, is almost altogether American. The business firm is at Cheongju, the port, and the members are Messrs. Morgan & Townsend, two bright young Bostonians who have spent years in Japan and Korea, and who possess the confidence of the native merchants. Korea does a large part of its buying through its merchant guilds and in this way large sales are made from time to time. Mr. Townsend has been shipping cotton over direct from Massachusetts, and that the people who have been accustomed to the cheaper and poorer English goods in the past, are now turning to the average Korean spends all he makes on his back and his belly, and the people, according to their incomes, spend as much on their clothes as any people in the world. Business with them has to be done largely upon the credit system, and they think nothing of forgetting to meet their payments at the time they are due. Interest is here at the rate of from 2 to 5 per cent a month, and the country is too poor to have banks. The bulk of money is the copper or brass coin known as the cash, of which it takes more than 1,300 to make a Mexican dollar worth here 20 cents. There are 20 in the neighborhood of 50,000 cash to travel from the sea coast to the capital and back, and it is the custom in traveling in the interior of Korea to take a large amount of cash to carry your money. The people outside of the three sea ports know nothing of silver and gold, and the only gold seen near Pusan, which is the southern port of country, is a cooley laden down with a bushel or so of these copper coins, which he carries upon his back. Each coin has a square hole in it, and the common way of putting them up is strands of hundreds strung on straw cords of about the thickness of a clothes line. Ten dollars is a load for a man and \$50 would break down a mule if the journey was long.

Life of Foreigners.

Considering the poverty of Korea one might suppose that the foreigners here had a hard life. This is far from the case. They have comfortable homes, and are provided with provisions, which come in large part from China, are plenty and good. They have a pleasant society among themselves, play tennis, have concerts, and are very well heard, are most free from social bickerings and strife of any of the foreign colonies of the western Pacific. They are reasonably safe except in such outbreaks as that of last June, when some of the anti-foreign fanatics among the natives started the story that the foreign devils were feeding their children babies. Then for a time it looks as if the troops had to be called from one of our men of war, which usually lies in the harbor at Cheongju. The foreigners in Seoul are the king send out a proclamation, the Koreans quiet down and it is again all quiet on the river which flows by Seoul.

I visited to-day the king's royal school for the teaching of young Korean nobles on the American plan. I saw about forty bright young men sitting in a room before desks that might have been used in an American college, and using English books. I heard their superintendent, Professor Hunter, address them in a lecture in English and could see that they understood what he said, though he talked very fast. I was asked to make a speech to them, and a few words uttered brought forth some English words in reply. Each student had his big round hat on his head, and these school boys all

wear their hats in the school room. Professor Hunter tells me there are many bright minds among them, and I learn that many of the pupils are of the royal family, and that all are the sons of nobles. The best of them when educated will probably be sent by the king to serve in his diplomatic service abroad.

This reminds me that I met the bright young Korean student who accompanied the legation to Washington last winter. He was recalled by the king after a few months' stay. He has, he tells me, received a new appointment, and will be sent back as either first or second secretary of the legation, and will be at the capital before the close of winter's festivities.

KILLING OF CHILDREN.

Speaking of Korean baby-eating by the mouth of the king in this case soon a proclamation asking any one who had known of babies being stolen by foreigners to come forth and make his charge loud. He called attention to the fact that the king had been civilized, and asked the question as to how civilized people could eat children. "But," said he, "the king has been civilized, and the proper authorities and the officers will be arrested, and if found guilty by evidence, will be punished as the law requires. The informant shall be fined in a case amount for bringing the charge." This proclamation was signed with the royal seal, and was given to the king and the king's son, and the center of the city. The selling of children is, however, not uncommon in Korea, and it is said that the king's son was sold to China. Good, fat, well-disposed babies bring from \$5 to \$25 apiece, and a father has a perfect right to sell his children. Babies are sold for adoption, and for the purpose of the poor. Slavery exists to some extent in Korea, but it is more a servitude than such slavery as we had years ago in the south.

Korean society is divided into three classes, the nobles, the commoners, and the poor. The nobles live in thatched huts and they are the poorest of the poor. The nobles or the yang-ban are the curse of the country. They are the ones who are the most hated by the people who till them for them. The better of them dress in gorgeous silks. They never go to work, and they are the most idle of the idle. When they climb up a hill they have one coolie behind them and two to hold up their canes. The more money they have the more coolies they employ, and the generals of the army are among the most pompous of them. One of these silk-wearing nobles in his hair, the Korean general was going up one of the hills to the capital the other day. He had two men behind him to push him and two others behind him to hold up his canes. The man in front was twice the man's age, walked by him with a springing step and asked him as he passed if he expected to have the same with him in his old age. It took some time for the Korean to appreciate the sarcasm of this remark, but it finally crept through his top knot, and he turned back and went home in a huff, and the next time the two came together the yang-ban general walked alone.

The American general who came here to organize the Korean army received a setback from the trouble about the baby-eating. The king was so angry that he was anxious to get rid of the foreigners, and foreign innovations were for the time unpopular. The country is now again quiet, and General Dyer tells me that he hopes that their real work of reorganization will soon begin. They have a royal military school, where they drill some of the officers of the army, and the higher officials who belong to this do-nothing, noble class to engage in work of any kind, and as yet the Korean army on the American plan is in embryo. Colonel Cummins is disgusted with the whole situation. He says he came to Korea to teach school, but to organize an army, and I believe he is right. His heart he longs for the fresh spots of Washington. There are about one thousand troops here at the capital, and an exhibition drill in the court of the barracks near the palace. About four hundred of the eight provinces of Korea are in the process of being reorganized. They are tall muscular men, wearing the Korean hat on the top of their heads, and they wear a sort of uniform. Their dress is a sort of Zouave uniform, ending in great shoes and stockings of padded cotton. They have a long loose blouse with a pair of pants, and a sword is a red band about their black hats. Their sleeves are very wide and they look anything but martial. Our minister has two of these soldiers in his quarters, and they are always accompanied by one during my walks through the city. A very fierce looking soldier met me two days since, and he was armed and acted as my escort. From the capital I found that those of the high privates I dealt with were by no means averse to an occasional fee.

A WONDERFUL CITY.

What a wonderful city is Seoul! It's 300,000 people are made up of strange characters, and my eyes were wandering about like the rays in a kaleidoscope in my efforts to appreciate it all. Everything is new, and every new thing is strange. The big wall which surrounds the city is a wonder, and its three great gates are more wonderful still. They are closed every night at sunset with iron plates, and the gates are closed at this time none outside the city can get in, nor can any inside the city get out. As the sun falls behind the mountains which surround the capital, a host of soldiers in uniform, which sounds for all the world like a Scotchman's bagpipes, goes from gate to gate and bars them shut. At the same time waterfalls spring up upon the hills, and in the direction, and from these the king knows all that is well. These waterfalls are signs of the health of the city, and the line of fire which are built upon the hills in all parts of Korea. They tell by their different flames and the intensity whether the city is well or not, and the king knows it all. They are, it is said, the royal's farewell word for the day, and they really mean that the country was quiet and the capital might sleep in peace.

PEPPERMINT DROPS.

A weigh off—the ton of coal. They call it a "duck of a bonnet" because there is so much built to it. If one is looking for big events he may find them in a file of soldiers in uniform. As far as may concern the applicant for divorce, his Bridge of Sighs is a cantlever. A young girl's first love story always begins sweetly and harmoniously with Chap. I. There is a girl who is very beautiful, and there are more lights around the polis than usual. Jay Gould says he favors peace on earth, and that's all right, but he seems to want the care of peace.

THE BARD.

Senate "cold tea" is not a drink that can be trifled with. It had a bad effect on Senator Riddleberger. Who says poetry is not encouraged in this country? The Bard made over \$20,000 this year with his feet. They have "potato socials" in Kansas. The name may be from the fact that young folks go there to eat. A debating club of young ladies up-town has been dissolved because the subject of marriage was assigned for discussion. Nobody would take the negative. Oatmeal must go in spite of its medical defenders. Taken dry it is explosive, and taken in the form of mush or porridge it is nutritive. The bond of sympathy existing between the words "winking" and "drinking" gives the Kansas poet an advantage over his neighbors. On the question of annexation to the United States the people of Canada are divided into three great parties—annexationists, doubters and bank cashiers. Everybody is saying that Clarkson is to have a place in the next cabinet. Baby Anson and Mike Kelly are democrats, so they have no chance. Happy fathers should not be in a hurry to name their children after lucky politicians. For a name that will wear well through good and evil fortune there is nothing to beat Dennis. "Yes, sir," said the young man proudly. "I understand two languages. I know English as I am speaking it, and I can understand it as it is spoken to me by telephone." The young man who cannot sing the old songs should look for a wife who can't tell the old jokes and marry him. It might be rough on him, but it would do the general public good. Somebody has invented a "waist attachment." It may be less harmful than the old waist attachment, generally applied after the old folks have gone to bed, but it will never be worn by any one.

THE ROLL-CATER.

"George, dear, what a beautiful diamond, but it looks ready to fly." "I don't see why it wants to fly," growled George. "Heaven knows it's high on the roll-cater wheel is at the other end of the street. Come on."

Editor's Child—What's the matter with you today? He's in an awful bad humor. Editor's wife—Yes, my dear. The regular funny man of the paper is sick and your father is trying to keep the department quiet.

ENGLAND'S MERRY CHRISTMAS

Its Celebration in the Country of Holly and Mistletoe.

ORIGIN OF CHRISTMAS BOXES.

The Carol Singers—A Good Old Custom Woefully Degenerated—Cards and Presents—Christmas of the Poor.

Christmas in England.

Many of the holidays that are peculiar to one country are unknown in other parts of the world, and nothing serves more effectually to make a man feel as a stranger than to be in a foreign land on one of his own national holidays. Especially is this true if you are in England on the Fourth of July! But the 25th of December is very different. The kingdom of the Nazarene is not bounded by mountains, rivers and seas, and knows no races, colors, or earthly forms of government. Monarchies, kingdoms and republics are all alike to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. His reign is over and within human hearts, and where these are found loyal to him, the form of earthly government under which they live is a matter of subordinate concern. The English seem fonder of holidays than Americans are, and have more of them. The two great national holidays are Christmas and Easter; the anniversaries of the birth and resurrection of our Lord. No matter if it is not certainly known that Christ was born on the 25th of December, on some glad day he came into the world, and in the absence of any positive knowledge of a date so remote, the wonderful event may as well be celebrated on that day as any other. The chief of England is famous for the observance of times and seasons, and this spirit pervades the entire English people. Among all classes Christmas is a time of special rejoicing, and the day is not to be enjoyed who cannot be happy in "merry England" at such a time.

THE WEATHER.

is very unlike our own at this season. Instead of our cold, bright days, it is dark and gloomy. The sun is not in evidence about 4 in the afternoon and lasts till 8 in the morning, and often it is so dark that the gas must be lighted in midday. At first thought one would think this weather very disagreeable, but the people who are accustomed to it, it possesses a weird interest that is not found elsewhere. The streets and homes are generally well lighted, and to wander through the streets and in the elegant parlors, it is like a charmed pastime. Many English cities are much handsomer by night than by day.

As in our own country, special preparations are made by everybody for the Christmas holidays, and presents are elegantly arranged, and every inducement held out to allure purchasers for holiday goods and presents. Evergreens are popular and plentiful. There is a finger not yet a superstition, there is a charm in the word "for the 'sacred mistletoe'" which the

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in the olden times, for no household is considered ready for Christmas without a bunch of this parasite. Holly is also ever made them ready for the day, and now they are in the past ages of even Asiatic civilization.

This problem is one just now proposed to the people. After centuries of despotism, and feudalism, and stagnation, the streams of foreign thought and life were six years ago admitted. The time of the land clay of ages is only beginning to moisten and it will take generations to bring the soil of the people to the now far advanced life of Japan.

To-morrow we leave the capital, and travel by inchoars, each born by eight coolies, to the great coast of Cheongju, and the Japanese steamer for China. I feel that I have but a taste of Korea, but that taste has shown me that there is here a rich meal for the man whose soul longs for things unknown and unwritten.

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SCRIBNER'S MAGAZINE. JANUARY NUMBER NOW READY. ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON'S serial novel, "The Master of Ballantrae," is continued in this issue. By W. A. Rieu, author of "Hospital Life," and "The End Paper." THE END PAPER. By W. A. Rieu, author of "Hospital Life," and "The End Paper." CASTLE LIFE. By W. A. Rieu, author of "Hospital Life," and "The End Paper." RAILWAY MANAGEMENT. By W. A. Rieu, author of "Hospital Life," and "The End Paper." THE INVALID'S WORLD. By W. A. Rieu, author of "Hospital Life," and "The End Paper." JAPANESE ART SYMBOLS. By W. A. Rieu, author of "Hospital Life," and "The End Paper." POEMS. By W. A. Rieu, author of "Hospital Life," and "The End Paper." TERMS: \$3.00 a Year; \$1.25 a Number. SPECIAL OFFER to cover the cost of the new year's volume, including all the RAILWAY ARTICLES: A year's subscription (1889) and the numbers for 1888, \$1.50. A year's subscription (1888) and the numbers for 1887, \$1.00.

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