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Corea the Land of the Morning Calm.

(Archer Butler Hulbert, former Editor of 'The Corean Independent,' in the 'Youth's Companion.')

[Corea has been the cause of each of the four foreign wars of Japan. Although the annals of the first are lost in the obscurity of prehistoric times, the legendary promise of the Corean king at its close is familiar to every Japanese: 'Until the rivers flow backward I and my people will remain tributary to Japan.' What the outcome of the present conflict will be it is impossible to predict, but all must hope that the ancient beacon-fires will soon be relighted and flash from every hilltop to the ruler of Corea the glad tidings that his country is at peace.]

A newcomer to Corea might call it a land where everything is done backward. Although it is no larger than Utah, and has a population perhaps not much greater than that of the State of New York, probably no other land can boast customs which seem so odd to the foreigner.

A striking instance of this is a Corean's way of looking at a photograph. If you hand him a picture bottom-side up, he will not turn it over, but will examine it just as it comes to him. If it is a photograph of people or animals it makes no difference; he is just as satisfied with them on their heads as on their feet.

A rollicking American marine of poetic turn touched upon certain characteristics of the Coreans in a poem, one stanza of which concluded:

The boys braid their hair down their backs like a girl,
And the chimneys are holes in the ground.

The custom of boys braiding their hair down their backs is not peculiar to Corea, but where else do men 'do up' their hair on the top of their heads? Yet that is the way in which a married Corean is distinguished from a bachelor; the latter can do his hair up only on his wedding-day. And as to the chimneys, the poem tells the solemn truth. The Coreans warm their mud-and-stone huts by building the fires just beneath the stone floors. The 'chimneys' run under the house and open in the gutters. As many of the streets of the capital, Seoul,—which is pronounced like our word soul,—are very narrow, it can be imagined that a walk through them on a cold day, when these 'holes in the ground' are puffing out smoke, is not pleasant.

The land has been denuded of trees for so many years that only the wealthy can afford pine wood. Consequently the smoke which fills the streets of Seoul is the smoke of burning pine brush, which the people gather from the hills in the summer to burn in the colder months.

Of course Coreans read and write in a way that seems backward to us. Perhaps there are other lands where the washing is spread out on the ground to dry, instead of being hung up, but where else do mourners wear the most conspicuous kind of dress, or where else is the land in which a thief would be afraid to get over a wall he could not see

through? Foreigners in Corea have built strong fences of heavy timbers, with the idea of keeping out intruders, only to learn that mere matting, hung up between posts, would have served their purpose better, provided only that no one could see through it.

Corean huts and yards—compounds—are screened from public view by mud walls or strips of matting, and it is a serious offense to intrude here.

The walls and a strange Corean superstition concerning door-steps combine to keep the Corean family quite hidden from street. While in most lands the door-step is the coign of vantage for which children quarrel and on which older persons crowd, in Corea you never see man, woman or child remaining on the threshold, because, as we say, it brings bad luck.

Another oddity in this land of queer customs is the mourner's hat. It is of straw, and is almost as large as a bushel basket. The national dress of Corea is white, although the children are dressed in colors. The Corean mourner, therefore, in his white suit and his

been several 'seouls' of Corea, for each new dynasty founds a new capital. The present Seoul was founded five centuries ago, and its straggling, crenelated wall, nine miles in circumference, containing its two hundred thousand inhabitants, speaks of the middle ages. It is perhaps the only city in the world of which it could be said that tigers and leopards have been shot within the walls.

At each gate are the high roofs, like those on Chinese walls. On these roofs in Corea are rows of clay monkeys, about two feet in height, sitting in all conceivable attitudes. They keep—so the Coreans say—the devils from entering the city. These monkeys are also placed on the palace gates, and can be seen on the East Gate and on the gate of the Kyeung-Pok Palace.

The dragon is also a potent charm to keep off evil spirits. His specialty is fire devils. A great fire once swept the city and its palace. When this palace was rebuilt one of these dragons was placed on each side of the esplanade before the main gate. No fire devil has ever come again. The Chinese say a devil



TRAVELLING IN COREA. A FARMER LIGHTS THE WAY OVER A BAD BIT OF ROAD.

bushel-basket hat, is the most conspicuous sort of a Corean to be met.

There are songs to be sung even in crushed and lifeless Corea, and the white figures of laborers in the fields and on the hills move to and fro to music set in an appropriately minor key.

If the boy on the mountain suddenly ceases his song, you may know he has struck a root. Wood is so dear that the poor Corean boy will follow a root for a long distance, and very anxiously, lest it break. To furnish the large cities with wood is one of the chief industries in the country. The little Corean ponies can carry large loads of wood, but the beasts of burden in Corea are fine, strong, patient bulls, which are to be found everywhere.

Although their white garments may exaggerate their size, the men of Corea seem the most stalwart race in the world—as tall as their wives are homely.

But both are by nature extremely mild and kind. A photographer never has to ask a Corean to look pleasant. In photographs of Corea, you will generally find the people laughing.

Seoul is the capital and chief city of Corea; indeed, Seoul means 'capital.' There have

cannot turn a corner. About ten feet in front of Chinese gateways you find an odd strip of wall, a little longer than the gate is wide. No one can enter, therefore, without turning the corner—and so the devils are kept out.

The streets of Seoul, many of which have been widened into fine boulevards since the Corean customs department has been in the hands of an English commissioner, centre at the 'Bell Place.' Here in a little latticed building hangs the great bell of Seoul. It is struck every night at midnight, by means of a huge wooden beam which is swung against it.

Formerly it was struck early in the evening, and was a curfew signal for all Corean men to retire to their homes; thereupon the Corean women, who are veiled at an early age, and are never seen upon the streets, might promenade the avenues of the city. At twelve the women retired, and the men came out again. Mrs. Bishop says that a lady of high position told her that 'she had never seen the streets of Seoul by daylight.'

The tone of this bell is peculiar, and the Coreans believe it to be a human cry—the shriek of a babe, which, as the legend goes, was thrown into the caldron when the bell was cast centuries ago. The mar-