

First Impressions of Korea.

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First impressions are always more or less unsatisfactory, but they have this virtue, that they only appear once, and very soon disappear. It is because of this fleeting nature that they are valuable. One finds that even in a country so unlike our own as Korea, the novelty soon wears off, and you pass through streets, or along the highway, with as much unconcern as an oldtimer of many years' standing. Hence the excuse for 'more' first impressions.

The Korean people—How do they strike one who meets them for the first time? After a brief experience of the smart, buoyant Japanese the Korean appears sleepy and dejected. He has the appearance of a man who has been broken upon the wheel of adversity and by long bearing of the yoke has learned meekness. Sometimes he appears sullen, and suspicious; sometimes, if he comes in from the country, he has surprise stamped on his features, as of a man who, but newly awakened from a long sleep, sees strange unheard-of things. One seems to detect a deep undercurrent of sadness in their lives, perhaps the sadness of a people whose national life has been snatched from them, whose history and traditions even are gradually and systematically being suppressed. Such may be the inevitable fate of little peoples before the onward march of modern Imperialism. Let us hope it may be for the best. One thing seems clear enough to the new-comer. Korea's future is bound to be wrapt up in the future of Japan, and Koreans must look for other than a political idea. Perhaps like another race who mourned the loss of national life, they too may out of their stony grief hew a nobler ideal of a spiritual God-given mission.

This is already the ideal of the Christian Korean. The contrast between him and his heathen brother comes next in order of first impressions. It is very marked. Perhaps it shows itself first in personal cleanliness, that virtue that comes next to godliness. The Christian Korean is more respectable in dress and general appearance than the heathen. He has discarded the practice, still prevalent among the heathen men, of wearing the hair long enough to permit its being tied in a knot on the top of the head—a practice which gained for the Koreans the name of "Topknots," and which gives rather an unkept appearance to the head. The Christian women, too, as a whole, are better dressed, and more modestly, than the heathen. Nor is it only in externals that one notices the contrast. It is seen in the brighter, more trustful, and more hopeful countenances of the Christians. It must not be thought that they lack that patriotism and national pride which is deeply rooted in every Korean breast, but,