

COOKIES AND CHAMPAGNE.

Frank G. Carpenter, With the American Minister, Enters the Korean Palace.

They See Visions of Unspeakable Splendor and Partake of the Royal Hospitality.

HIS MAJESTY OF COREA IS HEMMED ABOUT WITH INCREDIBLE POMP AND CIRCUMSTANCE.

THE QUEEN PEEPS AND GIGLES.

One of the most interesting men in the world to-day is the King of Korea. The war between Japan and China was fought over him, and the future of Asia is involved in the struggle.—The King is the absolute ruler over 12,000,000 people. The land of Korea belongs practically to him, and the development of its immense natural resources in gold and coal, which is sure to occur after the war is over, may make him one of the richest Kings in the world.

The King's palaces cover nearly 1,000 acres. They lie at the foot of a ragged gray mountain, and a thick wall of stone as high as a two-story house runs around them. This wall is entered by a half dozen great gates, at which, day and night, soldiers are stationed to see that only the proper people go in. Each gate has its own rank, and there are special entrances for servants and low nobles. The great central gate is reserved for the highest. It has three doors, and the middle one of them is kept for royalty alone, and only Kings and Princes are supposed to go through it. I see that the papers state that General Clarence Greathouse, the King's foreign adviser, is the only American who ever entered the palace city through this door. This is not true. The same honor was accorded last May to Minister Sill, H. N. Allen, and also to me.

This is how it happened: The Korean officials, who put on great airs, have been trying to lessen the rank of foreigners in the eyes of the people. They have made a back entrance to the palace for them, and they proposed to inaugurate this by thus letting in our new Minister, Mr. Sill, who had arrived in Korea during my stay. Minister Sill, however, refused to accept the proposition. He said he represented the President of the United States, and our President was as big as any King on the globe. If there was a gate for Kings he thought he ought to go through it, and he sent word to the department that he would come at the time appointed to this big gate, and if he was not admitted he would return to his legation. This message made the faces of the King's officials turn from the color of Jersey cream to skimmed milk. They saw that there would be trouble, and they referred the matter to the King. Now, his Majesty has more brains than all of his Ministers. He is packed full of common sense, and he at once became very angry. He not only said that the Minister should go through the chief gate, but he sent his own chair and servants in order that he might ride their in state. I don't know that he remembered me from my past interview, but he was told I would give me a special audience after that of the Minister was over.

I wish I could show you how we marched through the city on our way to the King. Our procession of soldiers and servants was at least 100 feet long and we rode in chairs borne by big hatted coolies. The King's chair shone like gold in its brass trimmings, and it had mahogany panels. My chair was covered with navy blue silk, and Dr. Allen rode in a gorgeous sedan of green. We had a couple of Korean nobles to go with us as interpreters, and these were gorgeously dressed. The Minister, Dr. Allen and myself had on plug hats, boiled shirts and swallow-tail coats. The servants who came from the palace were dressed in white gowns, belted in at the waist, with sashes of green. The soldiers wore blue coats and plum color pants, and out of the back of their black fur hats were tassels of the brightest vermilion, each of which was as big as a fly brush. Oh, it was gay!

In this way we went down the Pennsylvania avenue of Seoul. Our keroses ran in front and howled out to the common people to get out of the way for the great men who came. Men and women were crowded up to the walls. Bullock carts were driven down the side streets with a rush. The people who smoked took their pipes out of their mouths and held them behind them. Women with green coats over their heads scampered into their houses, and the eyes of all were so stretched out at the sight that they lost their almond shape and became circular in wonder. It was so till we reached the gate of the palace. Here our soldiers put down the chairs, and, accompanied by our pompous Korean interpreters, we walked toward the gate. Midway on the platform we were met by one of the high officials of the King, clad in a gorgeous green gown, with a stork

of white silk embroidered on a background of gold a foot square upon his breast. He had a similar square of embroidery upon his back, and as I looked at him it struck me that with a good revolver a man could kill both of these embroidered birds at the same time. He had about his waist a hoop of what seemed to be shell or horn, studded with precious stones, and he was accompanied by servants who held up his arms and sort of lifted him along the way. This was not because he could not walk, but it better showed his rank and style. He bowed low. We bowed, and after a short interval of diplomatic taffy giving he led the way up to the central gate of the palace and motioned the Minister to walk through the main entrance. He then went through one of the side gates, and our interpreters followed him. Dr. Allen and myself were walking with the Minister. Said the doctor, "He seems to intend that I shall go through the main gate, too." "Well, doctor," said I, "I think I will stick to the party, and though I have no official rank, I'll see how it feels to walk the path that has only been trodden by Kings." I had not forgotten that I was an American prince. And so we three representatives of the royalty of the United States marched through this temple like entrance. The act in itself seems little in America, but it was a great thing in Korea, and everywhere I went after that it was mentioned in connection with my introduction to other Koreans.

In our march through the city of the King this gorgeous Prime Minister stalked along in front of us, leading us through the center arch of which we passed. Then we went on through other courts walled with palaces past servants clad in brown and red, and by officials wearing all sorts of hats and gowns. There were soldiers everywhere, and Gatling guns stood near some of the entrances. We passed through street after street, walled with the buildings in which live this King and his servants, until we came to a great gate, the side door of which alone was open. The central door was closed. The Secretary of the Home Office stepped through the side gate and expected us to follow. We had gotten used, however, to the arch of honor, and we stopped and waited for the main gate to be opened. The Secretary thereupon changed his mind. He came back and was practically lifted by his servants to the top of a hill where there was a new gate, and he led us through this. This brought us into the vestibule built for the foreigners. It was a magnificent corridor, so long that you could not see the end as you stood at the top and looked down it. It was lighted at the top and also on both sides by beautiful lattices of white paper. The woodwork was papered with this wonderful Korean paper, which is as smooth as ivory and as strong as leather. The floor was covered with netting as fine as the web of a Panama hat, and so thick our feet sunk as softly into it as they would have done had it been Brussels carpet. This corridor had many landings. We descended from one to another by easy steps, and after a walk of perhaps a quarter of a mile we came out of it into an open hall which looked out upon the gardens of the King, and gave a view of the new palace in the distance.

This room was furnished in foreign style, and the highest officials of the King and a number of great nobles of the court were gathered within it. Each noble had his servant with him. Tall, broad shouldered men, clad in brown gowns and gorgeous hats, stood about as guards.

These are known as the brown-coated kesos. They are the body guard of the King, and, like the famed soldiers of Peter the Great, have been picked out for their height and strength. Nearly every one of them is over six feet, and their long gowns make them look like giants. In addition to these, there were servants in red caps, servants in caps of purple and servants with gorgeous head dressings of blue. The officials were clad in their court dresses, and the head of each showed a top-knot shining through its fine Korean cap of horse hair, which, with its great wings flapping out at the sides, forms the official head dress. These wings are oval in shape, and they stand out like ears, denoting that their owners are ever listening for the commands of the King. The gowns of these officials were of the finest silk, made very full. They fell from their necks to their feet and nearly covered the great official cloth boots, which made each man look as though he had the goat and was nursing his feet for the occasion. The gowns were of dark green, embroidered with gold on the breast and back, and contained white storks or tigers, according as the man belonged to the civil or military rank. Each man had a stiff, hoop like belt about him, which was fastened in some way to his dress, and surrounded his body just below the armpits. These hoops were so large that they stood six inches out from the dress. They are emblems of rank, and you can tell the position of the man by the character of the gold, jewels or precious stones with which these hoops are decorated. Some of them are made of a great number of small squares fastened together by joints,

and not a few of these squares were of the purest gold. Others were of silver, and others were of green jade, amber and other precious stones. Each of these officials wore a ribbon of woven horse hair about four inches wide about his head, and this ribbon was fastened on by a little round button about the size of the back of a collar button, which rested just behind the ear. These buttons also denote rank. Some were of gold, some amber and others of other precious material.

These men were all dignified. We were introduced all around by the Cabinet Minister who conducted us into the room, and we sat down to a long table upon which were plates filled with assorted cookies about the size of macaroons. At each man's seat there were champagne glasses, and the servants opened a half dozen or so of cold bottles while we chattered and waited. The American Minister had his presentation first. He spent about half an hour with his Majesty, and then one of the English speaking officials came into this room and told me that the King was ready to see me. Taking off my hat and my eyeglasses, I walked with this man through long passageways, walled with stone by red capped, red gowned servants, and past soldiers in gorgeous uniforms, to the gate of a large courtyard. As we neared this my interpreter, who was a high official noble, bent his head over, and his face looked like that of a man in pain at a funeral. As we entered the court he bent half double, and as I looked across it, I saw there was a large open hall facing us. This hall had a massive roof of heavy tiles, and at the front of it there were a number of big round pillars painted red. There were three entrances to it, reached by granite steps guarded by stone dogs, and the floor was, I judge, about six feet from the ground. Within the hall, in front of a Korean screen stood the King, with two eunuchs on each side of him holding up his arms. And about him were a number of officials, who bent over half double and dared not look at him for reverence. All of these officials had these gorgeous storks or tigers on their breasts, and they looked at me out of the tails of their eyes as I came up. My interpreter got down on his knees as he got to the steps. He crawled along the floor to the front of the King and bumped his head upon the carpet. He then bent himself over half double and remained in this position during the whole of the interview, whispering in tones of awe his majesty's sentences to me and my questions to him.

The King was dressed in a gown of crimson silk, cut high at the neck, and embroidered with gold medallions as big around as a tea plate. There was one of these medallions on each of his shoulders, and one covered each side of the gown at about wide the fifth rib is supposed to be located. This gown reached to his feet. It was gorgeous beyond description, and it harmonized with his cream-colored complexion. The sleeves of the gown were very full, and out of them a pair of delicate, shapely hands came from time to time and clasped each other nervously. On one of his fingers I noted a magnificent diamond ring, and it seemed to me as though the great solitaire must cut his fingers as he clasped and unclasped his hands, now folding them together and now pulling one finger after the other, as though he would crack the joints. About his waist he had a belly-band embroidered with jewels, and his feet were clad in heavy official boots. His head was covered with a navy blue cap of horse hair net as high as a silk hat. This came well down upon his forehead. It had no brim, and there were no wings at the back, as on the caps of the officials. He shook his own hands at me in Chinese fashion as I came up. I bowed, and I looked him straight in the eye as we talked together. I was not more than five feet away from him, and there was a little table between us. Above us shone the incandescent globes of the Edison electric light, and there was an European carpet on the floor.

The audience was largely given up to the passing of compliments, and it lasted, I judge, about twenty minutes. During it I had a good opportunity to study the King and I photographed, as it were, his form and features upon my brain. He is about five feet six inches in height. He is rather well built, but not heavy. He has beautiful, bright, black almond eyes, a complexion the color of rich Jersey cream, and teeth as white as the tusks of an African elephant. His face is full, and it shines with intelligence. He has a thin mustache and a few hairs of black whiskers. He smiled frequently, and now and then he laughed melodiously. He seemed to have a stone of about the size of a boy's lucky stone in his mouth while he talked, and this from time to time got between his teeth while he listened. When he spoke it sunk back into his mouth, taking the place of an old maid's plumper, or the tobacco quid of our Congressmen. I don't know why he uses this stone, and I am not altogether sure it was a stone. It seemed too hard for wax, and medical chewing gum has not yet been introduced in Korea.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3.

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