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## SEVEN MONTHS AMONG THE TONG HAKS.

It has been my rare privilege during the past few months to reside in one of the rebel districts of Korea and witness the working of the Tong Hak rebellion from the start to about the finish. The usual time for the Tong Hak uprising has been in the spring just before the barley crop ripens and the oppression of the officials pinches the most, but the past summer's troubles pushed nearly every thing Korean out of its normal position, even the Tong Hak periodical uprising. Early in October last, I arrived in the north west of the Whang Hai province to find every thing quiet, the only fear being that the Japanese soldiers would make a sweep upon them in the west. Several times the Japanese war ships were anchored off the coast to the great consternation of the natives who were in readiness at a moment's notice either night or day to make for the mountains. They had heard the Japanese soldiers were a great improvement on the Chinese in their treatment of the Koreans but such a story was not to be believed.

I noticed on my arrival that many of my former acquaintances who only a few months before invited me to their villages now carefully shunned me. No person wished to be identified with the foreigner. Several friends warned me of my danger as the Tong Haks were getting very numerous and were already threatening to kill the "Westerner" and all the "Western doctrine" folk (Christians). At first it did not give me any concern nor did I wish to show that I even heard the report.

In the meantime the magistrates and governor seemed to be utterly unfitted for their responsibility. The people had heard about a change in the management of public affairs; for a time it brought no benefit to them, but it proved to be for the worse.

The rapacious underlings seemed to be let loose upon the people and oppressed at will. The old system of squeezing was run to seed.

When once it was heard that the Japanese had crossed the Yalu River, the Koreans took it for granted that they would be able to treat with these officials as there would be no outside interference.

Late in October on a visit to one of the neighbouring villages as my custom was, what was my surprise to meet with a few score of these cotton clad braves all heading for the Capital of the province. They were not a very formidable looking lot, their only armor being a little bag slung over their shoulder containing ten days rations of rice and the ordinary brass spoon. Every body was surprised to find so large a number had joined them from their own villages, so quietly did they do their work of propagation. They alleged that the governor had received orders from Seoul to put them all to death and that he purposed to carry out the order.

The real purpose, in my opinion, of this demonstration, was to find out their strength and get them accustomed to traveling as well as meet the leaders. Some distance outside the city the servants of the terrorized Governor met them. They said they had been loyal to the king and honored their parents and wished to know why they were ordered to be killed. He replied that they had done very wrong in thus mustering, but if they quietly returned to their farms and did not repeat the offence all would be well,—if not they all would be put to death.

On their return to their homes, it was reported that any one who spoke any thing against the Tong Hak must have his top knot cut off. Fabulous reports were given of their numbers in *other* places.

They then after trying in vain to get the people in a body to join their ranks, started for the different magistracies. Magistrates were seized, books burned, guns, ammunition, spears, and banners plundered.

To the ordinary Korean such power so quickly acquired seemed to substantiate their reports of magical power. Little persuasion or threatening was now needed to swell the ranks. Thousands joined in a day, several who attended our meeting in the morning were on the warpath in the evening. Great were the promises and bright the prospects of the initiated.

They struck a very effective chord in the Korean's heart.

No sickness would enter the house: crops would never fail; debts would not be paid nor taxes: in the battle the bullets of the enemy would be changed to water. Indeed the magical power of the leaders was limitless. It gave an opportunity also to pay off an old score with an enemy.

The leaders were on horse back with floating banners and rattling of drums and cymbals. The horses, guns, swords, and spears of the people were seized and made to do service.

At this juncture a band of several hundred came from a distance to carry out the threat made a month before regarding us. Our villagers warned us in time the night before. They had already plundered considerable on their way. I retired to rest fully expecting to be put to death the next day. To escape was impossible. It was useless to hide in another village for the Tong Haks were everywhere. To escape by road was out of the question as the roads were watched and travelled night and day. The boats were also seized.

Every person's movements were watched, especially the "foreigner's." A man who left our room on his way home with a New Testament in his hand was seized and bound fast and had it not been for the interference of friends he would have fared badly. One of our leading Christians had made some bitter enemies among them by ridiculing their talk about magical power such as when after eating these letters they took to shaking and jumping about. He would gladly have recalled some of his words if he could, seeing the turn affairs had taken. The Tong Haks slept that night two miles away. Two of our friends started out into the dark to see an acquaintance who had become a leader among them. On into the morning they conversed concerning the Word of God and its deeper meaning. The rebel thanked him for his instruction promising to use his influence in protecting the foreigner and the few Christians, writing a letter to the several other leaders in the same strain. It had the desired effect as far as we were concerned and on the next day they passed by in hundreds levying as much rice as they wished on every village or healthy person. On that round they fell in with and killed ten Japanese merchants who were detained by head winds on their way to Pyeng Yang. About the same time seven Japanese-ship wrecked merchants were also shot, speared and mutilated and their property

plundered. Two or three Buddhist priests were also dispatched being suspected of being spies sent by Japanese to find the bodies of the dead or where they had been buried. Clocks and watches belonging to the murdered Japanese were brought to me to explain their use and set them agoing. Having once thus come to an understanding with a few of the leaders we at length became on friendly terms with them all or nearly so and when hundreds of them would be passing, the leaders would be sure to call and have a chat while their followers were made to remain without in the distance thro respect for us. Some time in January was the first meeting of the Tong Haks in that province with the Japanese soldiers. There were thousands of them mustered, most of them believing in the magical power of their leaders and marching boldly to meet their foe. There were only a couple of dozen of Japanese soldiers in the Capital, but when their bullets began to take effect, the rebels, disappointed, fled. It is said that when they saw their comrades fall they cried out to the leader in chief to use his magic. He replied that though he had now repeated those letters for ten years yet he knew of no better trick under such circumstances than to run. Not one of the Japanese was wounded, while several scores of the Tong Haks were left on the field. Previous to this they had entered into the Capital, seized the Governor and after much beating and threatening compelled him to be duly initiated and to study the mysteries. Thus we had for some time a Tong Hak Governor in our province. The Governor's son who spoke Japanese secured the services of some Japanese men from Chemulpo to keep the rebels out of the Capital. For a while Koreans also dressed in black so that those outside the city walls took them to be all Japanese and dared not come near. After this the whole movement began to fizzle as the leaders lost their influence over their men. Little bands with a leader of their own would go about plundering and squeezing at will. The poor kept on the road continually just because the wealthy must supply them with rice. Several rich persons who escaped from I'yeng Yang in the Summer were stripped of nearly all they had left. Many also who escaped to the islands some months before, were followed there and met the same fate. The explanation always given was that these were preparations for war. It became a year of plenty for the poor, while

wealth and rank formerly worshipped by the Korean now became a misfortune. Again they began the propagation of the mysteries, but this time with more violent means. They felt their cause was not going in the end to succeed and order would be restored some day, so that if all the people joined there would be a better chance of all being pardoned. All sorts of stories were circulated by the leaders to revive their drooping spirits. Three steam boat loads of Japanese heads were landed near Pyeng Yang and all put together made a large mountain. The Chinese were already in possession of Pyeng Yang and marching south. Strange red coated soldiers had landed in Chemulpo and were driving out the Japanese. Also the long prophesied "South Korean" had risen up and soldiers were pouring in from the south to give deliverance to the nation.

Right near our village a Korean interpreter or two having come ashore from a Japanese boat to make some inquiries were seized by the rebels and killed. Next day a little Japanese gunboat came quite near, fired a cannon ball into a Korean boat supposing these were the guilty parties; fortunately no one was killed. But all the villagers, men women and children, made for the mountain or neighbouring villages and when a few Japanese landed the consternation was complete. I at once became exceedingly popular in the vicinity as they imagined I might be of some service in preventing the Japanese entering their village. Some little time before this the villagers assembled and requested us to allow them to erect a Christian flag before my door. All shades of belief, rebel and loyal, Christian and devil-worshiper, joined heartily in erecting the pole. The flag was white with a red St George's cross across the middle. They all assembled and as we ran up the flag we joined in singing in Korean "All hail the power of Jesus' name." Day after day since, that emblem of purity and suffering for the sake of others waves in the breeze and can be seen for miles around by the villagers, preaching in terms easily understood.

About the last of January order was restored in Hai Ju, the capital, and for some distance off, as the Japanese soldiers had again come. A new Governor and Magistrate were sent. The magistrate on his arrival at Chong Yun was immediately seized by the Tong Haks and carried off to the house of a chief. They suspected him of being in league with the Japanese soldiers.

A short time after the Japanese did come and it was really amusing to see how the braves sneaked away like so many rats to their hiding places. For several days not a 'Tong Hak was to be seen. At night a crowd of them would come to my room to seek advice and of course they were advised to give up their plundering and obey the Magistrate. This the most of them agreed to do and glad they were to show their sincerity by delivering up their guns, spears and swords. The Magistrate promised pardon for all past offences but a renewal of them would be punishable with death. Though the promises were fair on the part of the magistrate and rebels, each suspected the other. One of the chief leaders in the province applied to me for assistance in coming to terms with the magistrate. This was secured and by it he has so far saved his head. This chief through his influence has prevented the second uprising in that large magistracy.

When the new magistrate and governor came they at once appointed several hundred soldiers for the Capital and largest magistracies. These soldiers had been many of them 'Tong Haks, but were willing enough to help destroy and plunder their former comrades when they were rendered helpless. It is exactly Korean to help the one on top of the heap. Had these soldiers acted rightly all further trouble and bloodshed might have been avoided, but they did not enlist for that purpose. On the slightest pretext these fellows would make a raid on some village not so much because there were a few inoffensive 'Tong Haks there reciting their magic letters as because there were well-to-do persons there whose houses were worth plundering. It was the custom on approaching a village to fire off their guns that the villagers might get away and the soldiers be left to carry away their belongings without any resistance. Having experienced several raids in that way the 'Tong Haks felt they were deceived by the officials and would certainly sooner or later all be put to death. Again they began to muster from all over the province among the mountains in the north. This time it was the more vicious, the guilty, the extremely poor with no family cares who were on the war path. These had little to lose and rather enjoyed wandering about living on the rice of others. When all was in readiness they made a swoop upon the cities where soldiers were stationed, carried off what they could find and burned the houses. In the city of Chang Yun alone about 400 houses were burned including the magistracy.

Of course when trouble arose the brave volunteers escaped. They had not enlisted to fight. Again the Capital, Hai Chu, was in danger and the inhabitants were in greatest consternation. The Governor almost frantic with alarm was compelled to seek assistance, wherever available. A few Japanese soldiers ingratiated themselves into the hearts of the people of Hai Chu by appearing just at the right moment as their deliverers. The Tong Haks fled without making a stand at all. They had come to have revenge on the Governor who oppressed them, not to fight with Japanese soldiers. As late as April the Kang Wha soldiers appeared upon the scene. They came to destroy all the Tong Haks or in fact to make a clean sweep of all Whang Hai province. The Tong Haks, local volunteers and police took much, but the Kang Wha heroes left nothing—so report had it. The rebels when I left May 1st. were pretty much scattered and hiding, but the Whang Hai chief Im had a little following and was fleeing before his pursuers. Quite near our village in one of the mountains several score of the worst of the rebels and their leaders built a house and were living on the spoils they had taken months before. That den was raided and they scattered leaving several of their comrades dead upon the hills. In a little skirmish at the magistracy thirty or more rebels were killed. These bodies were left a ghastly spectacle unburied, the food for foxes and crows. The bodies of the beheaded were hung for days outside the main gate of the magistracy as a warning to others. In April policemen and soldiers went about in bands of 20 or 30 supposed to be searching for rebels, but really squeezing money from the villages. The leaders of little bands though already pardoned were the principal victims. Many were the rebels who came stating they wished to be Christians, but whose real object was to secure the supposed protection of the foreigner. The magistrate had heard I was receiving into the church such men but I soon disabused his mind of such an erroneous notice.

Two questions may be asked in connection with the Tong Hak troubles.

1. What was the Object? The people are getting some ideas of liberty by contact with the foreigner and his religion and they purpose no longer to submit to the misrule of rapacious officials and their hirelings. They were desirous too of helping Providence in the fulfilment of the old prophecy that the present Dynasty was to exist for only 500 years, already completed. It was really



wonderful how little plundering they did considering the large numbers who followed for no other purpose.

2. What effect will the movement have on the spread of the Gospel? Of course the reply can only be little more than a conjecture. The people have been taught the folly of worshipping spirits and the necessity of worshipping God only. Their idea of God and his worship is according to the Roman Catholics and Buddhists combined. Abstinence, ablutions and sacrifices were freely practiced to appease the deity. "Repairing of the mind" or repentance was exhorted. The people are now asking what is the true way to worship God? They are conscious we know more about Him than they do. The spirit of inquiry is abroad everywhere. The Tong Haks feel they failed through want of knowledge. More than all, trouble and anxiety are leading the poor Korean to stretch out his hands to God.