CHAPTER XIX

THE SUPPRESSION OF FOREIGN CRITICISM

It may be asked why the Europeans and Americans living in Korea did not make the full facts about the Japanese administration known at an earlier date. Some of them did attempt it, but the strong feeling that generally existed abroad in favour of the Japanese people—a feeling due to the magnificent conduct of the nation during the war—caused complaints to go unheeded. The American Minister at Seoul, Dr. Allen, was recalled as the indirect result of an effort to show his Government that the Japanese claims and assumptions should not be taken without some critical examination. Many missionaries in Korea, while indignant and resentful at the injury done to their native neighbours, counselled patience, and believed that the abuses were temporary and would soon come to an end. It must be remembered that, at the beginning of the Russo-Japanese War, every foreigner in the country, except a small group of pro-Russians, sympathised with Japan. We had all been alienated by the follies and mistakes of the Russian Far Eastern policy; we saw Japan at her very best, and we believed that her people would act
well by this weaker race. Our favourable impres­sions were strengthened by the first doings of the Japanese soldiers, and when scandals were whispered, and oppression began to appear, we all looked upon them as momentary disturbances due to a condition of war. We were unwilling to believe anything but the best, and it took some time to destroy our favourable prepossessions. I speak here not only for myself, but for many another white man in Korea at the time.

I might support this by many quotations. I take, for instance, Professor Hulbert, the editor of the Korea Review, to-day one of the most persistent and active critics of Japanese policy. At the opening of the war Professor Hulbert used all his influence in favour of Japan. "What Korea wants," he wrote, "is education, and until steps are taken in that line there is no use in hoping for a genuinely independent Korea. Now, we believe that a large majority of the best-informed Koreans realise that Japan and Japanese influence stand for education and enlighten­ment, and that while the paramount influence of any one outside Power is in some sense a humiliation, the paramount influence of Japan will give far less genuine cause for humiliation than has the paramount influence of Russia. Russia secured her predominance by pandering to the worst elements in Korean officialdom. Japan holds it by strength of arm, but she holds it in such a way that it gives promise of something better. The word reform never passed the Russians' lips. It is the insistent cry of Japan. The welfare of the Korean people never showed its