

Lucy R. Mayo



*Monsignor
The Count Vay de Vaya and Lushkod*

PÉTER VAY

KOREA OF BYGONE DAYS

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FOREWORD BY KÁROLY FENDLER

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

BUDAPEST
TEREBESS PUBLICATIONS
2001

This publication incorporates chapters VIII, IX, X of
*Empires and Emperors of Russia, China, Korea,
and Japan*. Notes and recollections by Monsignor Count
Vay de Vaya and Luskod. John Murray, London, 1906

Cover aquarelles and illustrations were reproduced from
the Hungarian version: *Kelet császárai és császárságai*,
írta Gróf Vay Péter, Budapest, Franklin-Társulat, 1906

This publication was sponsored by the Korea Foundation

© Terebess Hungary Ltd.
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H-1165 Budapest
Fax: (+36-1) 403-6218
E-mail: terebess@euroweb.hu
<http://www.terebess.hu>

Technical editor: Kristóf Bozzay
ISBN 963 9147 43 5
TE 89
Printed in Hungary

PREFACE

As the name of the author of this book may not be so well known to some English readers as it is on the Continent, I have, at his request, undertaken to write a few lines of introduction and preface.

Count Vay de Vaya and Luskod is a member of one of the oldest and most distinguished families of Hungary. Ever since his ancestor took part with King Stephen in the foundation of the Hungarian Kingdom, nine hundred years ago, the members of his family, in succeeding generations, have been eminent in the service of that state.

The Count studied at various European universities, and was destined for the diplomatic service, but early in life he decided to take Holy Orders and devote himself to the work of the Church.

In this capacity he attended the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria in 1897 as one of the envoys of Pope Leo XIII.

The chief enterprise of his life, however, has been to study the work of the Roman Catholic Church in all parts of the world—her missions, charitable institutions, schools, and organizations of all kinds.

Few men have travelled so far and into such remote quarters as the Count Vay de Vaya has, with this object. His position has secured for him access to the leading and most accomplished circles wherever he has been, and his linguistic attainments, as well as his wide personal experience of men and affairs in every quarter of the globe, give him an almost unique opportunity

of describing and commenting on the countries which he has visited—their people, rulers, and institutions.

Seldom has any region been subjected to such complete and revolutionary changes as have the countries which he describes in the following pages.

Russia has been compelled to relax that grip on the Far East which seemed to be permanently tightening and closing: at home she has been subjected to a social upheaval which at one time threatened the existing form of government and the throne itself. And for the first time we have witnessed the triumph of an Asiatic race over one of the leading Powers of Europe.

The substance of this volume was written in 1902 and the following year, before any of these events had occurred, or were dreamed of and this may cause some of the details of the record to be a little out of date historically; but the change, far from diminishing, has, on the whole, probably increased its value to all thoughtful readers. A few passages of comment and forecast have been added since the occurrence of the war, but in the main the narrative remains as it was originally written.

Japan, Korea, Manchuria, and the Siberian Railway have been described over and over again, both during and since the war, but descriptions of them on the eve of the outbreak may come with some freshness and enable readers to compare what was yesterday with what is today.

And what has been changed in the “Unchanging East” bears but a very small proportion to what remains the same in spite of wars and revolutions.

I hope, therefore, that these first impressions of countries which, in name at any rate, are far more familiar to the British public than they were four or five years ago, may prove of great interest to many readers in England and America.

John Murray.

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COUNT PÉTER VAY,
BISHOP (1863-1948)
A FORGOTTEN HUNGARIAN TRAVELLER
IN AND ABOUT KOREA
AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 20TH CENTURY

For the last eighty years the name and works of Count Péter Vay, a honorary bishop and descendant of an ancient Hungarian aristocratic family, have vanished from common knowledge to such an extent that even his bibliographic data appear falsely and only very briefly in some of our older and contemporary dictionaries. Even his lengthy and bibliophile works such as *The Emperors and Empires of the East* (1906), *Eastern Art and Artistic Taste* (1908) and *On the Eastern Hemisphere* (1918) attract little attention when they surface in auctions organized by second-hand bookshops. It is strange, especially in the light of the fact that there were very few Hungarian writers whose books were translated into German, English and French within one and a half years following their publication. His diaries, which give a precise description of the domestic and foreign events and the main actors of the period between 1902 and 1918 and which resurfaced mysteriously in 1977, remain untreated in the Hungarian National Archives.

Who was Count Péter Vay who participated in the celebrations commemorating the 60th anniversary of Queen Victoria's reign as one of the representatives of Pope *Leo XIII* and who was one of the speakers

of the Berlin Missionaries' Conference after returning from his first trip to Asia? He travelled throughout the world on behalf of the Holy See, spent long periods of time in China, Korea, Japan, Indo-China and other Asian countries, the Near and Middle East, the United States and Central America between 1902 and 1904. He met and had discussions with Russian Czar Nicholas II, the Emperors of China, Korea and Japan, the leading statesmen of his age, including President Theodore Roosevelt. (1) As a missionary, he could always be found on ships transporting immigrants to the New World and among the coolies of Shanghai. He played an essential role in the establishment of new parish churches, monasteries and childrens' homes in various sites including Korea (in Tegu). (2) He relied on his knowledge of foreign languages and sound general education in his endeavours. He made every effort to learn as much as possible and spread information about the countries visited, their social and political situation and problems. His reports were published in the leading magazines of the age and many of his analyses and conclusions did not lose actuality even in our days and have the effect of prophecy. Besides these activities, he had enough time to study the culture and the art of the Far East. Even though some of his assessments and statements are debatable, the works of art he purchased on the request of the Hungarian government during his 1912 trip to the region were a substantial contribution to the Japanese collection of the Ferenc Hopp Museum in Budapest.

In the light of his activities, it is quite difficult to understand why his personality and career remains mostly unknown. Even his date of birth is surrounded by uncertainty. According to "The Life and Works of Hungarian Writers", written by József Szinyei in 1914, and "The Dictionary of Hungarian Travellers", written by Dénes Balázs in 1993, he was born on September

26, 1864 in the Pest county village of Gyón. But Hungarian Archbishop János Csernoch sent a proposal on appointing Péter Vay honorary bishop to King Charles IV on April 21, 1917 indicating September 26, 1863 as his day of birth. Following his death in 1948, *Grand Provost at Pécs* Dénes Mosonyi wrote that “he died silently at the age of 92” (which should mean he was born in 1856). In his response, the representative of the *archiepiscopal office* acknowledged that “I am preparing an obituary notice about Count Péter Vay ...I know nothing about this prelate.” (3)

His most detailed bibliography comes from Cardinal Csernoch. (4) According to him, he was born on September 26, 1863 and became a priest on June 16, 1898 in Esztergom. He did not accept any positions within the church, “he devoted his life to the spiritual treatment of immigrants, he travelled frequently on ships carrying immigrants from Europe to America. He spent long periods of time in America, Japan, Korea and China.” Count Vay returned to Hungary not much before the beginning of World War I and did pastoral work during the war. He was appointed by the Pope *apostolic protonotar* and was given the beneficiary abbacy of Vaskaszentmárton in the diocese of Pécs by King *Francis Joseph I* in 1908. He donated his modest income from this position to charities (he wanted to renounce his remuneration in 1929, but this was not accepted by church authorities). In 1917, King Charles IV appointed Péter Vay honorary bishop of Skopje on the recommendation of *Archbishop János Csernoch*, “his majesty’s youngest chaplain”. (5)

According to his diary Bishop Péter Vay led an active social and church life during the war and visited the Axis Power countries. He left Hungary after the end of the war and left the administration of his abbacy to Count Ödön Zichy, bishop of Pécs (and later archbishop of Kalocsa) and his secretary, *Grand Provost* Dr.

Dénes Mosonyi. In 1924, he informed them the he was going from Vienna to Assisi. He settled and lived there in the *Capuchin* monastery until his death on February 28, 1948. (6) Due to unknown reasons, he retired from church and public life and his missionary activities for the last three decades of his life. His reasons for leaving Hungary are not known either. (No information about him for these years could be obtained from Assisi.)

What prompted Count Péter Vay to devote such an intense attention to Korea in his first book, "The Emperors and Empires of the East" and other works, articles and letters? The answer, which makes the reprint of his work after a hundred years necessary, comes from the author himself: "Korea is the least known country of East Asia, knowledge about it and its people is incomplete." "Korea is one of the most interesting parts of the world (7) and it would be hard to imagine a more beautiful place on Earth. Korea is the most captivating part of East Asia",—he wrote in his work "On the Eastern Hemisphere". (8) Unfortunately, his words remain valid even today, Korea is the least known Far Eastern country in Hungary. It is unbelievable that what he wrote in 1906 remains true in these days: "Korea is in the phase of rebirth. It is full with tension and contradictions", "Circumventing the normal way of progress, they are acquiring the modern achievements with great steps." (9)

He devoted distinguished attention to Korea for two reasons. As a bishop, missionary and traveller, he regarded Korea and its people as the most receptive for Christian missionary work, "I was the first to speak about Korea's importance during the 1905 Berlin Missionaries' Conference" since "who knows Korea is impressed by their religious attitude." (10) "Christian soul is the most obvious in Korea",—he wrote to Gyula Benczur, a famous Hungarian painter in his letter dated

December 1, 1902 from Seoul. (11) He returned to Korea later as well: “Finally, I am heading for Korea again, where I will have the opportunity to lay the foundations of an asylum. I will establish this asylum from my income from literary works, it will be a modest cultural institution, at least in the beginning, but I am convinced that it has a great future.”—he wrote in a letter from Tokyo on April 14, 1907. (12)

Another important reason behind his interest in Korea was that he was aware of Korea’s role in the international situation, power relations and political struggles of the age. He wrote that he had spent three years in Asia, “which made the understanding and feeling of the colonial and overseas situation easy for me.” (13) “Being here, we can fully appreciate the world political significance of the region.” (14) He had another statement which is still valid: “In Fusan (today’s Pusan), ...there is the end station opposite the pier, and the luxurious international coaches from Paris, Berlin and St. Petersburg arrive at this point, as I predicted it in the past. Fusan has really become the end station”. (15) Today, indeed, on the way to the unification of the two Koreas, one of the main stages could be the linking of the railway networks of the North and the South, the creation of a trans-Korean railway for a transcontinental traffic from Paris to Pusan.

The emotions towards and sympathy for Korea are obvious in each of Count Péter Vay’s works. He proudly wrote to Gyula Benczur that “I am the first Hungarian to have travelled across this country.” A few days earlier, on November 27 and 29, 1902, he wrote into his diary that “Korea opens up new horizons for me every day”, “I find it difficult, very difficult to leave the country, its special nature and magic has had a great impact on my emotions.” (16)

Count Vay resided in Korea during the country’s most difficult period of history: in 1902, 1907 and

1912, that is after the Sino-Japanese War in 1894-95 and the Russian-Japanese War in 1904-05. Both wars were fought on Korean soil for Korea and ended with Japanese victory. Japan occupied it and declared it to be its protectorate in 1905. In 1910 it finally annexed Korea and merged it into the Japanese empire. Count Vay could follow the events for a decade, he had ties to the main actors and the victims. He was in Seoul when Japanese Governor-General Prince Ito Hirobumi forced the Korean Emperor to resign: “the overthrowing of this unlucky Emperor during the merciless minutes during which I was present” (in Seoul). “I will never forget this horrible July night, the battle on the streets and the massacre of the Korean forces, these moments will be remembered by all those who witnessed these events.” (17) Bishop Vay knew Prince Ito Hirobumi, who was later murdered by a Korean patriot in 1909, well. “The relentless Governor General, who might have been a good Japanese patriot, was a merciless and heartless person who died because of the crimes he committed against the Korean people,”—he wrote in his lengthy notes. (18) He gives a good description of the political situation in “The Emperors and the Empires of the East”. Even though he tends to acknowledge some of the positive aspects of Japanese modernization, he summarizes his opinion in “On the Eastern Hemisphere” as follows: “despite their power and strict control, the Japanese could never retain control over this country permanently ...who knows the present Japanese attempts to transfer Korea may well lead to the reemergence of national pride. Koreans are superior to the Japanese conquerors and it cannot be ruled out that after acquiring the achievements of Japan, following its ambitious example, Korea will regain its sovereignty, again”. (19)

Count Péter Vay gives first time in Hungarian a detailed description about the mysterious and

“unknown” Korea in “The Emperors and Empires of the East”, where he arrived by ship on November 14, 1902 from China. He gives a thorough description of Korean history and the origins of its people and language. (20) His description contains some false statements, but he is right in pointing out the two most pressing problems of feudal Korea: the ongoing political struggle between parties (“as between Montagues and Capulets or Yorks and Lancasters”) and the great-power struggle for Korea between China and Japan: “both have attempted to isolate the country from the outside world.” He warned several times that the struggle has been replaced by Russian-Japanese rivalry in Korea and he felt its signs during his trips to the countryside and during his stay in the capital. (For example, in Masan, an important port at that time). He gives a detailed account of his meetings with Emperor Kojong, the crown prince, ministers and diplomats and the Korean situation in general. “Revolution in the capital”—he writes about the bloody November 1902 riots of the people of Seoul. He devotes a separate chapter to describing the traditions and customs of the people and illustrated them with his own photographs and watercolours of ethnographic value. His description of the countryside are captivating, as are the descriptions of Korean habits. He is good at noticing changes and comparing them with the positive and negative legacy of the past. He summarized his experiences before leaving Korea as follows: “Chosôn is between the unclear past and a dubious future, a victim to its internal struggles, exposed to enemies and conquering armies, exploiting colonizers. Can it find protection elsewhere than in her moral and spiritual strength and Christian belief? It can be given to her only by the Almighty.” (21)

Despite his archaic style and wording, Bishop Péter Vay’s book, after a century is an interesting piece of

work even today. His personal voice makes understanding the old-new Korea easier and helps to clear up the unfounded misunderstandings in connection with the country. His work clearly demonstrates his missionary commitment, clear political vision and his sympathy towards Korea and the Korean people.

His predictions about the Asia-Pacific region in general and Korea in particular are stunningly true after as much time as one century: “Who can foresee the influence that will be brought about by the transformation of North Asia on the people of the world?when the main workplace and arena of the world will no longer be the Atlantic Ocean, but the Pacific region, then Asia and America, Canada and Siberia will play a key role.” (22) “I have always been convinced that the Korean people and Korea have an important role to play in the future”—he wrote in 1914, one of the gloomiest periods of Korean history. (23)

This was Count Péter Vay’s message on the eve of the 20th century for the 21th century, which has made his predictions a reality. According to an Eastern saying, every creature leaves something valuable behind after his death: a tiger leaves his fur, but man can only leave his name for posterity. Let it happen to the literary heritage and the name of Count Bishop Péter Vay, our forgotten compatriot.

Károly Fendler

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ Gróf Vay A. Peter: Amerikai Naplókivonatok Utijegyzetek Levéltöredékek (American Diary and Travel Notes, Letter fragments), Budapest, Szent István Társulat (ed.) 1910., pp. 74-76. Nach Amerika in einem Auswanderer-Schiffe (Das innere Leben der Vereinigten Staaten), Berlin, Gebrüder Paetel (ed.), 1908., pp. 246-255, "hatte ich mit Mr. Roosevelt eine sehr lange Unterredung".
- ² Gróf Vay Peter: A keleti féltekén (On the Eastern Hemisphere), Budapest, Franklin Társulat (ed.), 1918. "...in Taigu... the new seminary had just done, and the home for children-orphans was built on my resources (p. 315).
- ³ Primási Levéltár (Archiepiscopal Archives), Esztergom, Index 1948, 2674/1948. April 9.
- ⁴ Ibidem, Index 1917, 2110/1917. April 20.
- ⁵ Ibidem
- ⁶ Ibidem, Index 1948, 2674/1948. April 9., and Episcopal Archives, Pécs, Letters of Grand Provost Dénes Mosonyi, September 1924.
- ⁷ Gróf Vay Péter: Kelet császárai és császárságai (Emperors and Empires of the East), Budapest, Franklin Társulat (ed.) 1906., p. 23.
- ⁸ A keleti féltekén, p. 314.
- ⁹ Kelet császárai és császárságai, p. 25.
- ¹⁰ A keleti féltekén, pp. 314-315.
- ¹¹ Országos Széchényi Könyvtár (Hungarian National Library Széchényi), Vay Péter's correspondences, 1925/64., to Gyula Benczúr.
- ¹² Ibidem, 1927/37. to dr. Elek Lippich.
- ¹³ Ibidem, 42/7. to Gyula Pekár, from January 19. 1919.
- ¹⁴ Ibidem, 1927/37, to dr. Elek Lippich.
- ¹⁵ A keleti féltekén, p. 314.
- ¹⁶ Magyar Országos Levéltár (Hungarian National Archives), Gróf Vay's Diaries, 1902.
- ¹⁷ Vasárnapi Újság (Sunday Newspaper), Vol. 56. No. 45. October 31. 1909, pp. 935-936.

¹⁸ Ibidem

¹⁹ A keleti féltekén, p. 315.

²⁰ Bishop Vay had mentioned in a footnote that “he had hoped to write a detailed and larger book on Korea’s history on the basis of archive documents and materials of scientific institutes” but because of the lack of the support of then Minister of Culture and Education in Hungary this of his plan failed.

²¹ Kelet császárai és császárságai, p. 362.

²² Ibidem, p. 8.

²³ A keleti féltekén, p. 319.

INTRODUCTION

During my prolonged stay in the Far East, I promised to send home notes whenever I came across anything interesting, or whenever I had time to do so. This is how it happened that the story of my visits to the different cities of interest, of receptions graciously granted by the various Emperors of Eastern Asia, and the chief impressions received when crossing their empires, came to be jotted down.

Naturally in these pages, written often under considerable pressure and in spare moments, I was at the mercy of circumstances, and could not dwell on all the points at such length as I should have liked to do. In short, in these narratives, destined to be confided to couriers and post offices, I was compelled to leave out much that might have been more sensational.

Some of the papers have already appeared in periodicals, and the appreciation that has kindly been shown to them, and the favourable criticism they have received, have been due to the sincerity and the absolute lack of pretension with which I have tried to treat the different subjects.

My intention was simply to note what was striking at the moment and what impressed me most vividly. I have tried to be as objective as possible, and to deal with things as they are, not as I could have wished to find them. Even in the most attractive books that have dealt with these far-off countries, there has sometimes been a tendency to adopt the tone of a mentor and to judge everything from a superior standpoint,

as if the complete difference between those remote lands and peoples and our own had been forgotten, and as if the Westerner wished to ignore a civilization which, though different from, is not less serious than his own; in short, as though this mysterious Far East, with its almost incomprehensible masses, did not possess anything at all of a higher nature and lacked a mind altogether.

Certainly it is difficult, almost impossible, for an alien to perceive their inner qualities and mental powers; at the same time we shall have opportunities in our everyday lives of noting explanatory manifestations. It is from living in the same atmosphere and from continual intercourse with all classes, high and low, that it will be given us to understand a little of what is called the soul of a land and its inhabitants.

Thus, while describing events in their simplicity, we may succeed in giving something of the local atmosphere too. This is the reason why we always read with pleasure memoirs of past generations or correspondences from far away countries or of days gone by; and why all the best descriptions in books dealing with the Far East are those unassuming and faded letters from merchants or missionaries; and why the narrative of Marco Polo, with all its *naïveté*, will remain for all ages a standard work.

Strange adventures, depicted in brilliant hues and by an exaggerated imagination, seldom help our general knowledge. Instead of adding to what we see and encumbering real facts with more or less imaginary occurrences, it is more useful to omit unnecessary details, just as the important thing in painting a landscape is to know what to leave out, so as to make the general character of the scenery clearer. This it is that constitutes the difference between the very best photograph or chromo-lithograph and a rough artistic study or water-colour sketch. In short, one ought to

strive to treat this land as its painters do their sketches, always bearing in mind their design of giving in a masterly manner general impressions more than worthless details, so as to get hold of something more than can be seen—something of abstract value in the life they are endeavouring to render.

It was life with its everyday occupations that brought me into contact with all social phases, and rendered my journey and stay of interest, and made it possible for me to see the country and people in a stronger light than if I had been an ordinary traveller. I was investigating the civilizing, charitable, and spiritual work carried on by the Catholic Church under different conditions, amongst various races. These matters I have dealt with in another volume; but even the subjects that I treated of in those unassuming pages may have acquired a certain local colour, as having been seen by one who had interests and ties with the places he wrote from, and the people he lived amongst.

During the year I passed in the countries bordering on the Yellow Sea, I had an opportunity of making the acquaintance of the greater number of those eminent persons whose names have lately been so often in the mouths of all the world. It was most interesting to listen to them and to hear their views. Though there may have been great diversity in their opinions, they were none the less instructive for that.

My departure from St. Petersburg presented the first glimpse into Orientalism. The splendour of the Imperial City, and the patriarchal condition of the lower classes, gave it a different character from the usual European capitals, and the network of interests in the metropolis differs even more. I had to stay rather longer than I had expected, and this prolongation gave me the best chance of making the amplest preparations, and acquiring the necessary preliminary knowledge for my journey across the empire.

Moreover, since as an ecclesiastic I had to obtain special permission even to get to Russia it, was therefore natural that I should have expected to find the greatest difficulties and complications thrown in the way of the accomplishment of my future journey.

Thanks to the kindness of the Tsar himself, however, all possible obstacles were smoothed over. He was personally acquainted with the journey that awaited me, but with this difference, that he made it before the railway was completed, and travelled by post. It was interesting to listen to the narrative of the sovereign, giving his impressions of the remotest portions of his empire, where he could not but come into contact with all classes of his subjects, and where he was obliged to share the vicissitudes of “inflexible circumstance,” as we so often read in official *ukases*.

His Majesty evidently took the liveliest interest in everything he saw, and gave charming accounts of his personal experiences. As in all royal tours, everything was naturally shown to him in as favourable a light as possible, and yet, apparently, the shadows had not altogether escaped his observation. Being heir to all this enormous territory, he probably traversed it full of hope of being able one day to ameliorate the general condition of his country, and to prove a true and loving “Little Father” to his folk. It is indeed a melancholy reflection that those who are generally supposed to be blindly obeyed, to have all their wishes accomplished, and whose will is imagined to be absolutely autocratic, are those who are most tied by the *force majeure*.

The little hermitage of Alexandrovsky, nestling in pine woods, with its homelike character stands, like an oasis, in the midst of Peterhof that town of palaces and splendour. The simplicity of the Imperial family is in striking contrast with the luxury of the so-called Court circle. All that one hears of the ostentation and

extravagance of Russian Court life entirely disappears when one comes to know the home of the Tsar and Tsaritsa.

Elsewhere there is undoubtedly much pomp and glitter, for the luxury and lavishness of Russian officialism is too well known to need mention here. Indeed, there is hardly a country where things are done more elaborately, and the Exchequer seems to be inexhaustible. If the administration leaves much to be desired and cannot be criticized too severely, we must allow that the officials themselves are the most accomplished men we could wish to know. Whether an official be a minister of State, with all the polish of the old régime of the eighteenth century, or a simple *tchinovnik*, a tram conductor or a railway guard, it is equally pleasant to have dealings with him.

A stay of a few weeks in St. Petersburg, filled with receptions at the residences of the various members of the Imperial family, calls at the Embassies, official visits, sight-seeing, and business of all sorts, certainly gives one ample opportunity to gain a better insight into local matters than the study of whole volumes.

It was on the eve of the war that I was there. The atmosphere was full of gunpowder, and yet nobody seemed to believe that such a thing could happen; or, even if it really came to pass, that it could have greater consequences than the annihilation of that faraway island folk, of whom the Russian world seemed to know very little. For just as they are so well informed and interested in Western affairs, that one might fancy oneself in a suburb of Paris, so they are supremely indifferent to, and have very hazy ideas of what they call the "Barbarous East."

Such was public opinion and such the tone adopted by the newspapers. M. de Witte was the only man who seemed to be of another conviction. He was just then on his way back from Port Arthur and Dalny. He

had been on the spot and realized the situation. He had planned and built Dalny with a view to having a great commercial stronghold to command the Far East, in opposition to his neighbour, Kuropatkin, who commanded the fortifications of Port Arthur. He believed that the best foundation for Russia's supremacy lay in industrial development, Kuropatkin trusted in the sword. Witte was dismissed—the rest we know.

Moscow, my next stoppage, revealed another side of the empire. The holy Moscow, the Mother of Cities, exhibited other features of interest illustrative of the mystical Slavonic soul. The Kremlin, with its gilt cupolas, is not only a monument unique of its kind, but also the expression of a nation's sentiment.

The history of the past, the aspirations of the future, are equally manifested. The glory of arms, of arts, of thought, is expressed in this Valhalla. It is the embodiment of the word "Muscovite", which means all that is characteristic of Russia. Light and shadow, brightness and gloom, virtues and vices, are equally perceptible in this marvellous city, and what is not visible is even more impressive.

All the transcendental tendencies, the shadowy mysticism, peculiar to this strange population, all that is abstract, finds new and unexpected expression within these venerable walls. Patriotism and anarchy, faith and superstition, walk side by side. Churches, shrines, and ikons are met at every corner, and before them all, large groups are on their knees, prostrated in devotion. In this same city the most terrible crimes are committed, and the same populace that seemed so repentant and contrite, perpetrates the most cruel and bloody outrages.

In fact, Moscow is an inexhaustible field of study, and not only for historical research, but also for a more certain knowledge of this paradoxical race, full as it is of inexplicable contrasts and incessant surprises.

Siberia was another mine of contrasts and surprises, and the longer I was there the more I began to comprehend the vast possibilities of this formidable stretch of country. It is a continent in itself, with all the natural advantages to enable it to become rich and prosperous. Her future development has the same chance as that of Canada, and her wealth is even larger. To say nothing of Siberia's inexhaustible mines, the land is better watered, and the timber-forests even more extensive.

The population is still slumbering in its cradle. The life they lead is archaic in the extreme. They dwell mostly in tents, lead a nomadic life, and provide their own clothing and food themselves.

They are uneducated, but not unintelligent. In fact, after having visited different camps, I was most struck with their open expression and self-reliance. But it must not be forgotten that, in contradistinction to the Slavs of Russia proper, the various tribes of the Ural-Altai race have never been serfs. They have always led a wandering, independent existence under their Hetmans.

The Baskirs and the Kirghiz are the most interesting, and are the finest specimens of Mid-Asiatic types. The Kalmuks and Ostiaks represent a more Mongolian stock. The farther we go to the East the more they resemble the Yellow race, and the Buriats and Tunguses of Trans-Baikalia are hardly to be distinguished from the Chinese.

What tremendous force is dormant in this world of Tartars! and what a shock their awakening will cause one day!

Towns like Tomsk, Omsk, Tobolsk, and particularly Irkutsk, show us the country from another side. Commercial enterprises, trade, and general progress, have taken root. They are so-called centres of civilization, but I fear that they might more fitly be called places of exploitation.

Certainly these growing towns are not wanting in praiseworthy attempts at culture, and I was especially struck by the philanthropic and charitable institutions. Unfortunately, the moral tone of this agglomerate population is deplorable, and money is spent in a reckless way.

Men, banished from their homes to such distant regions, allow themselves to be dragged down and brought to contempt, instead of trying to dominate the mass by superior character.

Manchuria was entirely under Russian rule in those days. The famous railway was in the hands of the Cossacks, although it ostensibly bore the name of the "Eastern Chinese Line", and barracks for Muscovite soldiers were dotted all over the country. The larger towns had quartered on them Russian officials under various designations, such as consuls, railway directors, bank managers, and so forth. Their influence and domination were uncontested, although apparently they were on the best of terms with the local officials. The Russo-Chinese Bank had branches everywhere, and evidently the least services rendered them were amply recompensed. This Asiatic method of colonization was not wanting in interest to the observer. Its demoralizing effect was very sad, and could not fail to bring retribution later on. For after all, political life, like that of individuals, has a moral code, by which any criminal actions are bound to find their punishment.

After crossing the Great Wall and staying in China proper, I still found the preponderating Muscovite influence. This was especially the case in Peking, where the success of M. Lessar, Resident Minister, and M. Pocadiloff, Manager of the Russian Bank, was at its zenith. The influence of St. Petersburg, which had succeeded in gaining over Li Hung-Chang, was still in full swing, and Yung Lu was a not less useful par-

tisan. He was the man of the moment, and knew how to secure, even to a greater extent than his predecessor, the sympathy and favour of the Empress Dowager.

The Court had only just returned from their flight. They had scarcely settled down again in that marvellous Palace which they had expected never to revisit. In fact, who could ever have imagined, after all the outrages against Christian Powers, that those Powers themselves should have brought back again the very people against whom they had fought only a few months before?

The diplomatic talent of the Dowager Empress must incontestably be of a high order. She was herself a foreigner—a simple Manchu girl. No less remarkable than her achievement in raising herself step by step to the highest pinnacle of power is the manner in which she maintains her position. The way in which she deals with her own provinces, and plays them off one against the other is most skilful. It will therefore not be astonishing if she sometimes uses the same methods in foreign difficulties.

The victory of the Western Powers was complete, and yet, with the exception of Russia, they did not reap any apparent advantage from it. They could come to no agreement among themselves as to the partition of the spoil, and the disappointment of Japan at seeing the territory she had formerly conquered pass into the hands of her rivals, was only too justly founded.

The situation was most interesting, the general tension being extreme. At the same time it was just this atmosphere of excitement which rendered my stay so instructive and intercourse with leading men of such great interest. Every one gained in importance at this critical moment.

Men like Prince Ching, the Foreign Minister of China and a near relative of the Emperor; his interpreter, Mr. Lee, who has such thorough knowledge of

European countries; Yan-Tsi-Kai, who represents the Chinese military spirit and believes in introducing Western methods; and Chang-Tsi-Tung, the great sage and strict disciple of Confucius—are fine specimens of the children of this vast and unknown empire.

After all, among so many interesting points in the Far East, the most interesting is man.

Situations may change, war and peace, power and decadence, follow each other at intervals, but the essential characteristics of this population will remain in their main tendencies more or less the same as long as the race endures. The expressions of national sentiment that surround us, great and small, whether apparently superficial or really striking, are human documents which must be considered with earnestness and attention, for after all it is they, more than political treatises, diplomatic achievements, or victories of armies, which will direct the natural tendencies and the relentless march of progress in and development of nations in the future. It is when observing, in all its phases, the life that surrounds us, that we can gain an approximate idea of the possibilities of the Far East.

I arrived in the Land of the Morning Calm, which might more suitably be called the Land of Continual Upheaval, when a revolution was in progress. Y-yung-Ik, Minister of Finance, was being attacked by those who sympathized with Japan. The capital was divided into two camps. Skirmishes took place in the open street. Everybody was excited, and anarchy reigned supreme.

Y-yung-Ik, whose views were favoured at the Palace, and who, on the occasion of the last riots, had saved the Emperor's life, carrying him on his back to the Russian Legation, where he remained for over a year, was in concealment in the Palace, and the mob was raging vociferously before the Imperial abode. It was a typical situation, throwing a strong light on the condition of the country.

The nation was divided into two factions: there were pro-Russians and pro-Japanese, but no pro-Koreans. This fine country, instead of constituting a guarantee of the peace of the Far East, was a prey to rivalry. Once suzerain of China, then under Japanese influence, during my stay she seemed to be at the mercy of the Slav.

It seemed to be the last flicker of the candle of Russian preponderance in the Far East. Their hegemony was not only apparent at Court and in the Ministries, but even began to be established all over the country. As in Manchuria, so in Korea, Russian soldiers and sailors, who were billeted on the country for various reasons, made themselves quite at home.

Between the Russians and Koreans there did not appear to be the same difference which separates Europeans from Orientals. The uncultured children of the Steppes amalgamated naturally with the native population. It was striking, particularly in Manchuria, to notice how the so-called conquerors began to be conquered in their turn by the land they occupied, which, indeed, in the long run, has always absorbed those who dreamed of dominating her, whether Mongol, Tartar, or Manchu. Probably what happened to the descendants of the famous Genghis Khan would have happened to the victorious Muscovite.

Arms cannot solve problems of a higher order. In spite of their superiority of military equipment, the new invaders of the Eastern Asiatic continent, the new masters of Manchuria, did not seem to be conscious of their moral duty towards their lately acquired subjects.

Instead of attempting to raise the population among whom they had settled, to a higher degree of civilization, and to inculcate nobler ideals, they were on the point of slipping down to the level of the so-called conquered barbarians.

The life and the mode of thought of the camps were low, and the moral dangers of every kind that surrounded the soldiers and officials were too great for people who, in many cases, had only a veneer of culture themselves and very little practical experience of civilizing and ennobling work, to struggle against.

After all, a state has only the right to conquer when, instead of oppressing, they strengthen and educate those weaker and more primitive than themselves. Conquest can only bear ripe fruit when it is for the general welfare.

Nations, like individuals, have their moral codes, and vocations. Nemesis must always overtake evil of every kind, and to the virtuous alone is granted the palm of final victory.

I

KOREA ON THE EVE OF THE WAR

I

The history of Korea reads like a fairy tale. The Land of the Morning Calm beyond the seas is so quaint, so very much out of the common, that we can hardly realize that all we hear of it is reality and not mere fiction.

The country, the people, and the life are all strange, and totally different from what we see and meet with in other parts of the world. I can scarcely imagine anything more impressive than for a traveller coming straight from some Western port to land in this country—one of the remotest in the East. It is as though he had set foot in a topsy-turvy world; everything is the reverse of what he has been accustomed to. Facts and ideas are antagonistic to ours; things material and spiritual seem to be governed by other rules and other natural laws.

The origin of Korea is buried in myth and mystery; its past is so varied, such an everchanging chiaroscuro, that we look upon it as legendary. Its present remains true to tradition.

Within the limits of this chapter I would like to deal with Korea from a more utilitarian point of view, and not merely to describe the traditions, quaint customs, and picturesque features of the land. My desire is to represent Korea not only as one of the quaintest

countries on the surface of the globe—a land of old-world type—but as a country in the first stage of transition.

The difference between ancient and modern Korea is stupendous; a few years seem to have done the work of centuries. Korea of the past is undoubtedly the more attractive to the traveller, but Korea of the present does not lack interest for one anxious to find in this corner of the earth something more than panoramic scenery.

The old order still catches the eye everywhere; new reforms are lost in the crowd. Outwardly everything is old, but an inward change is being effected day by day. The ancient cut and faint colour of the garb have been preserved; but new ideas are being constantly interwoven and are obliterating the old. Ancient habits and customs are dying out hourly and irretrievably, and have to give way to modern utilitarianism. The days of old Korea are numbered.

The appearance of the whole country is altered. Railways now intersect the quiet, dreamy countryside; buildings of architectural beauty, as well as humble cottages, are disappearing to make room for modern houses and factories. The charm of the scenery will inevitably vanish in face of the commercial and industrial progress. The world is moving on; it is necessary that it should, and change must follow the flight of time.

But I am glad that I am here today and not tomorrow; glad that I know Korea as it has been in the past. For who knows what future awaits her?

I shall never be able fully to describe my first impressions. Everything that meets my eye is new, that which surrounds me is unintelligible, almost mysterious. Korea and Tibet are the most isolated countries in Asia, and have, therefore, most completely preserved their ancient traditions and customs. It is only

a quarter of a century since Korea first opened her gates to foreigners. Radical changes can hardly be expected to take place within a few years; the remodelling of a country and its people is the work of many generations.

II

Korea, as we see on the map, lies at the furthest eastern extremity of the Asiatic continent. It is a peninsula in the shape of an irregular oblong. Its frontiers on three sides are formed by the Japanese and the Yellow seas, and only on the north does a short strip of land divide it from Manchuria. Its area is eighty thousand square miles. The aspect of the country is of great variety, extremely mountainous, just here and there intersected by valleys. Some of the peaks are over seven thousand feet high; but what is more striking than their height is their formation. They are all very rich in mines, and the valleys are extremely fertile, and yet Korea has been, within the memory of man, one of the poorest countries of the world. The mines have never been worked; and the ground yields just enough for daily food. Various reasons for this have been assigned. The mines have not been worked because the Government feared that the gathering together of so many workmen at far-away districts would be favourable to revolutions. A crowd was considered a danger to the reigning family. And I have been told that the cause of the scanty cultivation of the fields is that it is not worth while to have much grain stored in the granaries, for in that case it would surely be confiscated by the Government officials.

The larger rivers, like the Yalu¹ and the Han would afford excellent means of communication, but navigation is as yet practically unknown. The natural bays

could easily afford harbour accommodation for all the fleets of the world, but, except the few open ports, they are only visited by some miserable native wooden junks, and a few Japanese or Chinese fishing-boats.

The climate is excellent; cold, of course, in the winter, but bright and dry; and the heat is never as oppressive in summer as it is in the same latitudes further inland. The natural advantages are plentiful in every respect: the rainfall is sufficient to secure the watering of the fields, the snow in winter protects the ground for several months, and there is bright sunshine in the summer to ripen the most beautiful fruit and grapes; but the refreshing sea-breezes prevent it from being too hot.

The Korean flora resembles, to a great extent, ours. The best-known flowers grow there. I could say the same of vegetables, such as cabbage, carrots, beans, peas, etc., which are all plentiful. The one exception is potatoes, which, though they were imported and flourished well in the soil, were forbidden to be grown on account of their being a foreign importation. Turnips, peas, and beans are most commonly grown, and I have counted more than twentyfour varieties of beans, of different sizes, shapes, and colours, but having no taste at all, at any rate not when they are cooked in Korean fashion. Tobacco has been grown lately, and so have grapes; but the most valuable plant cultivated is the *gin-sen*, which is a Government monopoly, and is regarded as possessing the miraculous power of rejuvenating those who drink the liquor which is made of it. It is worth its weight in gold, and a little while ago the Emperor, fearing that the *gin-sen* crop was growing too plentiful and that its value would consequently decline, ordered that the surplus production should be conveyed to an island near Chemulpo² and there burned. The closed boxes were

carried in procession to the island, watched with great interest by the people, and were burned with great state. Nobody knew exactly what had been the victim of the *auto-da-fé*, but it is more than probable that the *gin-sen*, which is assumed to have met with such a sad fate, was devoted to some more profitable purpose.

Korean timber is of world-wide fame. The huge Korean forests are protected by law, and each individual Korean has certain rights to so much for building purposes, and so much for firing.

Pasture land is scarcely known, and the cultivable areas are nearly all converted into bean and rice fields.

The animal world is of great variety. Among domestic animals we find nearly all our old friends—such as the horse, a rather rough example but strong, oxen with magnificent frames, goats and pigs in great numbers. There are very few cows, as the Koreans are not great meat-eaters, and do not know how to milk, and, consequently, never use milk or butter. Sheep are prohibited by law, as only the Emperor may possess them for sacrificial purposes. Wild animals are very plentiful. The most dreaded are, of course, the tiger and the bear. There are also wolves, jackals, and wild boars. Birds are present in the greatest abundance. Pheasants, partridges, and quails are so plentiful, even to-day, that, travelling through the country, one may buy a brace for a few pence.

But the real wealth of Korea consists in its minerals. The different mountain ranges are rich in the most valuable metals: coal, copper, lead, silver, and gold are found in abundance. To this subject further allusion is made later on.

As a race the Koreans were for many years thought to belong to the same family as the Chinese, but it is now considered that they belong to another stock of the great Mongolian race. Its origin is to-day sought, not so much in the Altai, as on the slopes of the

Himalayas. There is a difference of opinion as to the route of their migration. One theory has it that they reached their present home by way of Siberia and Manchuria, another that they travelled through Southern Asia, and partly by sea, from the cradle of mankind.

With regard to their physical characteristics, the Koreans are tall, well built, and fair complexioned, with a scanty beard. They are not quite so tall as the Chinese of the north, but far better proportioned, and generally quite a head taller than their Japanese neighbours. The women are very hard workers, and their strength is exceptional. The children are regular pictures of health.

Whoever desires to form an idea of the moral characteristics of this race must penetrate to their homes and watch their daily life. Their mental and spiritual qualities can best be perceived by daily intercourse. The attempt to enter thus will not be easy, and seldom pleasant, but it will never fail to be of great and permanent interest.

The daily round of the Koreans is yet as primitive and archaic as it was centuries ago, and time seems to have left little mark on their customs and habits.

III

What are the most extraordinary things in this Hermit Country? is the question which has been frequently addressed to me since my return. The answer would be much easier to give if the question were, What are the least striking? Everything equally astonishes a stranger—country, people, customs, and daily life; every detail is characteristic, and every feature—visible and invisible—affords immense scope for observation. For the student of psychology Korea is a country full of interest.

To form some idea of the present condition of Korea it is absolutely necessary to know something of her past; to understand the character of her people one must be familiar with the conditions of life in centuries gone by.

Korea's historical origin, like that of most Asiatic countries, is shrouded in darkness. Her earliest records are legends and stories rather than serious history. Kings and gods, heroes and monsters, figure in a chaotic epic, which has preserved a few of the principal events for posterity.

The founder of the nation is supposed to be Ki-Tsze,³ a Chinese noble, who, with his soldiers and followers, settled on the peninsula in 1122 B C. But it is difficult to say how much of this is true, for the Koreans come, not from a Chinese, but from a really different Tartar stock and consequently Ki-Tsze could only have been a later conqueror. The reason why subsequent chroniclers attributed the settlement of Korea to him was probably to glorify China. A stringent law forbidding the writing of history makes it very difficult to collect any authentic facts about the past of Korea. That a record of the principal events still survives is due to a remarkable custom.

Some of the Court officials kept diaries in which they recorded everything of any importance that took place. Each related what seemed to him of interest, sealing up the rolls with great secrecy. Four copies of these records were kept in iron chests at the four different seats of government. There the documents were to remain until the then reigning family became extinct, and not until the last representative of the dynasty had departed this life might they be published.

In the absence of national historical literature foreign conquerors—Chinese and Japanese—have issued a number of books on Korea, more particularly in reference to their own conquests. It would, however, be

difficult to ascertain how far these works are to be trusted.

Only one popular Korean history is in existence which, however, is more of an illustrated nursery tale than anything else. The diaries kept by some of the noble families are more interesting, wherein they have recorded in unbroken series the events of each day, year by year.

The first reliable information we possess dates from the early centuries of our era. It is an established fact that Korea was then divided into three kingdoms—Sin-La⁴ in the south, Kao-Li⁵ in the north, and Pet-Si⁶ in the west. These early centuries witnessed constant civil wars, in which sometimes one and sometimes another of the kingdoms was victorious; but the greatest advantages were won by Sin-La in the south. In a good many cases these successes were due to outside aid. Kao-Li and Pet-Si became more than once vassals of China or Japan.

The three kingdoms were united in the eleventh century. Sin-La lost its supremacy and, with Pet-Si, was annexed to Kao-Li⁷. The king of this country was assisted by China in his expedition to the north, and in return the Mongol emperor was made the overlord of Korea. The united kingdoms were then ruled for three centuries by the Kao-Li dynasty, but their power ceased with the expulsion of the Mongol rulers from Pekin.

The emperors of the Ming dynasty, who became masters of China in the fourteenth century, also conquered Korea in 1392, re-establishing the ancestors of the present Emperor in place of the house of Kao-Li. Tao-Tso⁸, the first king, transferred his capital from Kai-Teng to Hang-Jang⁹, the present Seoul, recognizing the suzerainty of China as a protection. He adopted the Chinese calendar and sent envoys to China to pay homage every year.

Subsequent events of Korean history can be explained in the light of these facts. With the Tsi-Tsien dynasty¹⁰ she became the openly acknowledged vassal of China. The sending of envoys to do homage, the presentation of previously settled gifts, and also the adoption of the Chinese calendar afford proofs of this.

The succeeding kings managed the affairs of the country successfully, and Tormer-To¹¹ in the thirteenth century annexed several Japanese islands, but this burst of glory soon died out.

With the fall of the Mings the history of Korea reached its nadir. The conquering house of Mand-Su inundated with its troops the whole country and broke into Seoul, rendering even stricter the obligations of the tributary. The Chinese calendar became official from this time, and the Celestial Son was not only sovereign, but also managed absolutely all the private and public affairs of the king of Korea.

A good number of imperial rescripts referring to family quarrels has, to this day, been preserved, and throws an interesting light on the dissipated life of the Court of that remote period.

Korean kings stood repeatedly like criminals before their judge, and carried out the emperor's sentence to the letter. But they went further than this, even to asking the Chinese emperor for counsel in reference to petty domestic troubles, divorce cases, etc.

As a rule the sentence was light. The former Mongolian despots lost their crowns partly through over-severity. The Mings, on the contrary, were clever diplomatists, and by their tact retained Korea's goodwill.

It is therefore not to be wondered at that their memory is still held in esteem, and the administration of the country, its customs and laws, to this day represent the Ming spirit.

China's present Manchu dynasty has never been popular, although it did not attempt to perpetuate, literally, the strict conditions of its first conquest.

Since the middle of the seventeenth century Korea has never been at war with any foreign power; but though no attacks have come from without, intestine troubles have been even more marked and destructive.

The example was set by the royal family. In the absence of male issue, the relatives split into two parties, who, under the names of *Piek-Pai* and *Si-Pai*¹², have been rivals for years. Bloodshed and murder followed each other; dagger and poison were hidden under each cloak at the Court. These two factions are still in existence. The followers of Piek are for fighting and progress; the Si party, on the contrary, represent rather conservative views.

The example of the Court and of the chief officials was followed by the nobility. The principal persons of the country formed themselves into four parties. We can trace back the origin of the strife to the sixteenth century; its cause was the possession of an office. Two of the most powerful tribes claimed it, and their personal contention soon assumed the form of a general principle. Each party had its supporters until the whole country fell a victim to party strife—as was the case with the clans of the Montagus and Capulets, or between the houses of York and Lancaster of old.

After considering these premises it will be easier to understand Korea's present political situation.

We have seen that for many centuries the country was under foreign rule, governed now by China, now by Japan; generally by China, who more often than not was a very mild and lenient mistress.

Although she gave Korea a free hand in her government, she retained the exclusive control of foreign affairs; and, correctly speaking, she did not manage them at all. But no matter who the ruler was, Japan or

China, their sole object was always to isolate the country as much as possible from the outer world, to surround her with a visible or invisible wall—in the same way as their own flowery lands. This is one of the principal causes why Korea has been utterly secluded for centuries.

But here is another cause. The people, not being able to defend their country against invaders, were anxious that it should remain as unknown as possible. They went even further than that, and hid the natural treasures from their own citizens.

IV

The ancient government of their kingdom was, as in most Oriental countries, extremely complicated. The system undoubtedly shows knowledge of considerable statesmanship, China being the model. The mistakes and shortcomings lay in the execution and administration.

The absolute master and owner of the country was the king, who had by his side three ministers of the first, and six of the second rank. Each minister was assisted by one secretary of state and one councillor. The cabinet was called Tai-Sin¹³, forming the Council of State. The power of the council was only nominal, and was invested in the three ministers of first rank, or, rather, in the premier, whose office was for life. Is it to be wondered at that every means was employed to attain it?

It is worth noticing that the bearers of the title were not necessarily in power. They succeeded each other, some of them having only honorary rank.

The country was divided into eight governorships. Each governor, with powers similar to those of a Chinese viceroy, had under him vice-governors,

county judges, public notaries, collectors of taxes, etc. Considering that the eight governorships were divided into 332 provinces, the administration naturally was extensive, requiring a complicated administration.

The organization of the army was likewise well developed—on paper at any rate—the generals being distributed according to the provinces. Each governorship had its separate army corps, forts, arsenals, and stores recorded with precision. The national defence nominally numbered not less than *one million two hundred thousand* men, although not one-hundredth part of those had ever seen a rifle. All this looked very imposing in the documents placed before the king. The same applied to the forts, arsenals, and stores. The forts were in ruins, the arsenals empty, and as for the stores, they did not exist. At any rate, this was the condition of the army when the first European troops entered the country. There is probably not another land in the East—and this means a good deal—where the government was more corrupt than in Korea.

The principal offices were sold at fixed prices. To obtain one was simply a financial transaction. Of course, directly the mandarin took up his position he was anxious to recoup his expenses. Under some pretext he confiscated the property of well-to-do citizens and extorted money from the people. This system had another disadvantage—the tenure of office was of short duration, lasting altogether a few years. The holder had, therefore, to be very economical with time. The mandarins generally remained two or three years only at one place, in order not to make themselves “at home.” But the principal reason for such continual changes must have been that it was considered desirable at headquarters to sell the office to a new purchaser. So the succession went on, and one official after another devoted his energy to confiscation and robbery.

Is it to be wondered at that the people were reduced to poverty? But even those who were possessed of property lived the life of beggars, as otherwise the mandarins would have confiscated it under various pretexts.

Such was the administration of Korea for centuries. This was the condition of public life. Both action and thought were tainted. This corruption of officialdom not only drove people to beggary, but also poisoned the public morals.

The people were no longer capable of governing; they could only suffer patiently.

If government and administration were in such a lamentable condition, justice was even more contemptible. Bribery, perjury, and treachery were of daily occurrence. Envy and greed demanded and secured their victims. To be possessed of property was sufficient cause for being denounced and for confiscating the belongings of the owner, and the victim was very grateful indeed if his life was spared. The administration of justice in Korea was originally patriarchal. Any dispute between two parties was submitted to the *elders* of the village. The local council was the court of first instance. In case of non-agreement the mandarin was appealed to. The governor had to decide complicated cases. The supreme court was the minister of justice himself, and the final appeal lay to the king, who, here likewise, had absolute power in rendering justice. He condemned or pardoned at his pleasure.

Tradition has preserved some of the quaint ways employed to obtain the king's good graces or attention. As it was an impossibility to get into the palace of the king, and he never quitted it, a large drum was placed before the gate, and the applicant used to beat this drum in order to attract the royal attention.

Another way was to light a bonfire upon the top of

the surrounding hills in the hope of the king perceiving it and dispatching one of his messengers to the spot, by whom the petitioner could send his papers to his majesty.

Criminal cases were heard before the military authorities.

Here also the system was very much the same, and the procedure was equally defective. The way cases were tried was not only one-sided, but shockingly unjust. The saddest part of judicial administration was the way of obtaining the accused person's confession. Torturing is, even now, the prevailing practice, and in this, as in many other things, Korea has entirely followed China's example.

Considering the various kinds of torture, their inventive powers seem to have been inexhaustible. The most cruel torture, like the crushing of the knees or the use of red-hot irons, was prohibited long ago, and the new law ordered them to be entirely abolished; but I am afraid some of the methods of obtaining the desired evidences are still terrible.

Those who have seen the notorious dungeons of *Canton* will find the Korean prisons similar to them. Generally the courtyards of the magistrates are used for guarding the convicts. Stables are crammed with prisoners—mostly innocent. Furniture is a thing unknown, and so are all means of cleanliness.

In the Yamen¹⁴ of Judicature at Seoul I saw a few small private cells reserved for the better class. The inmate of one of these was a venerable-looking white-haired gentleman. He was, so the prison warder informed me, one of the wealthiest bankers in the town. "He squeezed" as he put it, "and now the mandarin is squeezing him."

Attorneys-at-law and jurists were not wanting, but in most cases the number of witnesses and their evidence was decisive—there being always any number of

them at hand. In fact, giving evidence meant a living to a portion of the community, who favoured those who paid best.

The methods of punishment also varied. In most cases fines were imposed, which formed one of the principal sources of revenue to the authorities. Imprisonment was rarer. In order to save the expenses of keeping prisoners who could not pay a fine, these were often given a chance to escape, or disappeared by some other means.

Capital crimes were tried by a criminal court. Decapitation was carried out in various ways according to social position. *Lèse-majesté* and treason were likewise dealt with by special authorities. In this respect severity knew no bounds. With the guilty person all the members of his family had to suffer. More than once whole clans, which were suspected of being traitors or rebels, were extirpated. Hundreds of persons perished through being falsely accused of crimes.

Such was the judicature in days gone by, and no wonder that the people lost faith in judges whose sense of justice was of the lowest standard. Things seem to be improving, but a less cruel death implies cruelty all the same.

V

How did Korea educate her sons that her rule, her justice, and her people sank so low? is a question that involuntarily suggests itself.

We must at once point out that there existed no such thing as *public education*; as regards *public instruction*, Korea entirely followed the Chinese system. As in the Yellow Empire, it was only the successful passing of the various university examinations that qualified for public positions and Government offices.

Here also training was purely classical. But while in China the national masters—Confucius and Menzius—were studied, Korea, without any regard for her history or literature, adopted, the ready material in an unaltered form. Her own authors thus found no field for their labours, and even if endowed with talent they were unable to develop it. This condition was in many respects similar to that prevalent in Europe in the Middle Ages, when colleges paid more attention to Greek and Latin than to their national language, and when students knew more about the history of Hellas and Rome than of their own country.

The Chinese system of examination is so well known that it does not require any explanation. Prior to the final examination the students gather in Pekin. There they are walled in in small cells at the examination hall, entirely isolated from the outer world.

Korean youth proceeded to Seoul. From the remotest parts of the country they came, and it was there decided whether they were qualified for office or not.

The Chinese system is perfectly democratic in its ground principles, granting the same right to every student, and considering only his knowledge. In Korea, where, quite differently from China, there is an aristocracy of birth, only the sons of this privileged class competed for the principal offices. But in this instance too, as in most other things that affected public life, corruption manifested itself. Those who paid the highest examination fees won the highest offices.

The Korean is probably one of the Tartar languages, although its grammar shows many analogies with that of the Dravidian tongues of Southern India. It is mostly spoken by the common people, whilst the court, nobles, and mandarins employ Chinese. As a matter of fact, the latter is the official language of the country, and the records, and proclamations of the King, the edicts

of the mandarins, and the judgments of the courts are, all in Chinese. No doubt Korea's long vassalage to China accounts for this; but the Chinese, as spoken in Korea, is almost a dialect, and could scarcely be understood by the Celestials, who, as is well known, are themselves often at a loss to understand each other. For Chinese differs even more in different provinces than some of the Latin languages, like, for instance, Spanish from Italian.

VI

The present Emperor, Li Hsi¹⁵, is a man of but little over fifty, and has reigned for just forty years. The son of Li Cheng Ying, he succeeded his brother, Li Ping, in 1864¹⁶. During his minority his father, Tai Wen Kun¹⁷, assumed the regency, which lasted till 1873. A man of strong will and boundless ambition, he used every means, permissible or otherwise, to further his own ends. Of narrow judgment and of most reactionary views, he has been the cause of much misfortune to his country. He opposed every innovation and reform, hated everything that was not Korean, and instigated the persecution of the Christians, causing many hundreds to be killed. The young Emperor held entirely different opinions, but all his attempts to introduce advanced ideas have been checked by the party of reaction. Hardly had he commenced his reign when he was asked by his own father to commit suicide. Later on Tai Wen Kun began intriguing against the Empress, fearing her influence over the Emperor, and he was so nearly successful in a scheme to murder her that she only escaped with her life by hiding for a whole year. She was believed to be dead, and mourning was worn by the whole country. Finally public opinion became so enraged against this

unnatural father-in-law that he was banished from Korea. His supporters however, were still numerous enough to be a cause of trouble, and in 1884 they broke into insurrection, and the Emperor, in his turn, had to flee, escaping on the shoulders of a slave. Shortly afterwards, during a state ceremony, a bomb of the most modern construction exploded, killing one of the, ministers and some of the escort. Tai Wen Kun was not present at this ceremony!

It was in the revolution of 1895 that the Empress lost her life¹⁸. Her palace was surrounded by rebels, she was stabbed, and then her body was burnt in an open space before the palace. The Emperor was more fortunate. Hidden in a sedan-chair he was taken to the Russian Legation, where he remained a guest for a prolonged stay. It would, however, be impossible to give an account of all the intrigues and plotting during the Emperor's forty years' reign. Poison has been found in the food, the palace has been set fire to, murderers have been found hidden in it; in short, it would require a whole chapter to describe the narrow escapes the Emperor has had. But even what I have said will show that Korean sovereigns are not always to be envied! Yet after the Japanese war of 1894¹⁹ the King (for till then he had been only a king, the vassal of China) declared his land to be independent of Chinese control, and elevated himself to the rank of emperor. Such are life's ironies.

But if the Emperor's public career has not been very glorious, his family life has proved even less happy. He lost his wife, a woman of more than average ability and to whom he was devoted, in a terrible manner as we have seen. The Crown Prince²⁰ has always been unsatisfactory and of no political importance. The second royal prince, who is unquestionably clever and enterprising, is considered a dangerous innovator, and so strong is the feeling against him in

his father's palace that he is obliged for the safety of his life to live in America.

The question who will succeed Li Hsi interests everybody in Korea, and is the occasion of much plotting and intrigue, but I am afraid it is one of the problems which no one can answer or even guess at!

VII

The home life of any country is always of the deepest interest. Old memoirs and diaries never fail to fascinate, more especially in the case of a country almost entirely unknown, whose habits and customs will surely be so modified as to disappear altogether and it is therefore well to preserve the memory of them for the coming generations.

A Korean home, however flimsy it may appear is a regular stronghold. It has its own traditions, and its inhabitants form a regular community of their own. Its rule is patriarchal and its organization entirely Oriental. Divided into two distinct parts, the front is occupied by the male, and the inside reserved for the female sex. However small the house may be, this rule is strictly observed; even though the division may sometimes be only a sheet of paper, its moral strength is as great as the ramparts of a castle. Conventions are stronger than stone walls.

In order to enable the reader to form some idea of Korean family life, I will give a passing notice of some of the habits, customs and institutions, such as marriage, education, occupations and recreations, festivities and funerals.

The condition of women in the Land of the Morning Calm is abominable, for they are considered as mere slaves, with no privileges or rights whatever.

In the upper classes the children of the two sexes,

as soon as they reach the age of eight or ten, are separated from each other, the boys being removed to the front part of the house where the father lives, whilst the girls are left with their mother at the back.

It is considered very bad form for brothers and sisters to associate with each other. The inevitable consequence is that family life, as we understand it, has no existence there.

The Korean regards his wife as a being far below him, and would not think for a moment of consulting her on anything of consequence. Although man and wife live under the same roof they are practically aliens to each other. But strange to say, though women in Korea have no rights, either social or within their own family circle, they are outwardly respected and addressed in terms of high esteem.

If we consider that the bride has innumerable duties to observe towards her consort, while he has none towards her, it seems only natural that the number of happy unions is strictly limited. But notwithstanding the abnormal relations that exist between the parents, the children are brought up by the mother to respect their father deeply. Disrespect towards the mother is of no consequence, but insubordination to the father is severely punished. In prison, sickness, or old age, a father can always rely on the assistance and support of his son. No virtue in Korea is esteemed more than filial devotion.

A peculiarity of a Korean marriage is that it is a matter of interest to every one except the parties mostly concerned, who see one another for the first time at the beginning of the ceremony. The parents and friends arrange the match, in accordance with their own interests, and if both parties agree and the bargain is concluded, the formalities are of the simplest. There is no religious ceremony and no legal contract. Early in the morning the best man arrives to tie the bride-

groom's pigtail in a knot on the top of his head, and this not only remains for ever as an outward and visible sign of his condition, but entitles him to be treated as a man and to enter public life. He may be a mere child, just over ten years of age, but he has no longer any right to play with his friends and must choose his associates among old men—octogenarians they may be. He has all civil rights and is expected to behave accordingly. If, on the contrary, a man is unable to afford the luxury of a home and a wife, he may reach the age of fifty, but he must still wear his pigtail down his back, has none of the advantages of a citizen, and is expected to play with kites, marbles, and such-like, and any folly he may commit is excused, as would be the naughtiness of a baby, who is not responsible for his actions.

The wedding ceremony itself is most simple. There is no going to the registry office or to church. The whole function consists of a procession, when the bride and bridegroom are conducted by their respective relations to a dais; there they are put face to face, and see each other for the first time, look at each other, bow, and the knot is tied indissolubly. The mutual surprise sometimes must be rather unexpected. But, whether agreeable or not, it is considered very bad taste to show any emotion. Without exchanging a single word, a few minutes afterwards the young bride is conducted to her home, where she is cloistered for ever. Social etiquette demands that the bridegroom shall return to the company of his young bachelor friends for a few days, which are passed in festivities, if not orgies. A honeymoon is unknown, and wedding trips have never been instituted. The young wife becomes more or less a head servant to her mother-in-law, and no visible change is introduced into the husband's daily routine. If married life begins in such extraordinary conditions, it remains equally ill-balanced

all through life. The husband has everything, the wife nothing; she has not even a name. And yet, though legally a nonentity, socially, if clever, she can attain to a certain position. Unseen, unknown, and nameless, in a hidden corner of the women's quarter, she can receive her lady friends, get all the news of the outer world, and send messages by her slaves. There have been cases when women had even decisive political influences and, like spiders, ambushed in corners, spread their nets.

VIII

The main occupation of the Korean is agriculture. It is the ground which produces everything that is necessary for life, and it is the ground, also, which is taxed principally to furnish the necessary funds for the Government. The methods of cultivation are exceedingly primitive, but the soil itself is so extremely fertile, and the irrigation so good, that the crops are quite sufficient. The women share in the cultivation of the fields, besides which they do all the domestic work, which is no mean task if we take into consideration that many functions performed in other countries by tradesmen must here be performed by them, such as the cutting of the flax, the preparing and weaving and the making of it into garments—so that they are field labourers, manufacturers, weavers, tailors, and finally washerwomen to their own husbands and households. It is the same with all the food. The poor women must first grow the rice and beans, then cut and dry them, pound them, and lastly cook them. But the principal occupation of the women of Korea is the preparing of their husbands suits of clothes. A Korean has generally two suits of white linen, each of which he wears in turn for a week. These suits are

not sewn, but stuck together, and every week the suit that was worn the week before must be taken to pieces, washed, and then glazed by beating, which last occupies almost a whole week.

The recreations of the women are very few, and, in fact, they are treated as slaves to their husbands. The men, on the contrary, have all kinds of amusements. The two great national sports are shooting with bows and arrows, and flying of kites. They are very fond of open-air gatherings, and arrange most delightful picnics, where they entertain their friends, and engage professional singers and dancers to amuse them. These singers and dancers are women who form a separate caste. Westerners find it difficult to appreciate Korean music, but I could not help liking its quaint cadence and plaintive melancholy. The songs mostly treat of historical legends and reminiscences of old days, but some, of course, are lyric²¹. Korean dancing, on account of its dignity and calm, is by far the most plastic and rhythmical of all Oriental worship of Terpsichore.

Among the old customs, birthday festivities occupy the first place, particularly when a man attains his sixtieth year²². On that day he becomes an object of admiration to the whole community, having been spared by Fate to such an age. After this day whatever he may say is listened to with great respect, even if his advice is not always followed.

But of all the social institutions funerals play the most important part. These last for days, or weeks, and even sometimes for a whole month, and mourning is observed for several years. And this observance is strict in Korea. One may even say that a mourner is buried alive, for he must cover his face, and, if he meets his friends in the street, he may not stop to speak to them or shake hands. During my stay in Seoul one of the late Empress's relations, General Ming, died,

and I never saw a more magnificent pageant than his funeral. The cortège was over a mile long, and led by paid weepers. As it wound its way along, it was the most extraordinary conglomeration of riders, dancers, children, mourners, officials, torch, lantern, and flag bearers, and, in fact, it seemed to absorb the whole population of Seoul.

Children do not receive too much attention in this far-away country. The little girls soon share in the housework, and the boys leave their mothers when they are about six, being sent first to school and then to the men's quarters, where they are carefully secluded from any kind of woman's society, even from that of their own sisters.

Any one who is interested in Korean children will have an opportunity of studying their national characteristics and natural abilities in the schools, of which there are a great many in Korea. Besides the old-fashioned Primary Schools, there are the Chinese Classical Schools, Missionary Schools, and, last but not least, the different National Schools for Interpreters. There are several English, even more Japanese and Russian, all of which undoubtedly will be of some use; and there is even a German School, and, of course, a French Interpreters' School. I must say I was deeply interested to see the scholars, neatly dressed in white cotton, sitting with Oriental patience at their desks, and pronouncing with the greatest assiduity the unpronounceable and to them unintelligible syllables. I admired the endurance and self-control of the children. If they are not quick and have not the imaginative capacity of a Japanese child, they are good, even if not so deep thinkers as the Chinese.

The houses in Korea are very small and offer but little comfort. Most of them have not more than two rooms, exclusive of the kitchen. Three-roomed dwellings are very uncommon, and without exception

are most scantily furnished. The roadside inns naturally are of the most primitive kind, and visitors are expected to bring their own provisions and bedding with them.

The staple food consists of rice and a few vegetables; people with some means eat occasionally a little meat or fish. Milk and butter are unknown. Beef is difficult to obtain, except in the capital. There is no mutton, but plenty of dog's flesh.

The principal beverage is made of fermented rice²³. Koreans, like Chinese, are fond of their pipes, and smoke a great deal.

Their dress is very ample. To be smart, you must wear two or three pairs of trousers, as many shirts, and four or five kaftans made of white linen. Sandals are the principal foot-gear.

Chess²⁴ is one of their popular games. High and low are alike enthusiasts. In fact, the Koreans have almost as high a reputation for skill in the game as the Chinese.

They are also fond of card-playing. Gambling seems to be in the blood of the Yellow races. There is no country where card-sharpers drive so brisk a business as in Korea.

In outdoor sports the Korean does not excel. His disinclination to physical effort is too strong and his nature is altogether too lethargic for violent exertion. Such mild diversions as kiteflying²⁵ and archery²⁶ he sometimes does indulge in, and, if so, shows no little proficiency.

Game is plentiful, but energy rare, and so we do not find many types of the shikari of India, but more of the trapper class.

The Koreans are a musical people. Every village has its choir—its amateur musical society. With them songs are largely used as an accompaniment to the dance. Here, at last, the Korean awakes.

The theatre proper is not represented in this country, but they have dramatic performances of a kind.

Recitations are given by a single performer, who himself plays all the characters of the story²⁷. It reminds one somewhat of the Homeric rhapsodists, or the medieval jongleurs.

IX

The last quarter of the nineteenth century has brought about some unexpected changes in Korea. The rigid isolation is gradually vanishing. Not even Chosen is able to conceal from the outer world her hidden and Hermit Land.

The first breach was made by the United States Navy. Commodore Shufeldt was the first representative of a Western Power to conclude a treaty with her²⁸. A year later the Anglo-Korean commercial agreement was ratified²⁹. Then the other European Powers came in their turn to establish diplomatic relations there³⁰. In the meantime the prejudice against the foreigner is losing a good deal of its virulence. The first steps towards international intercourse had been made.

These relations with foreign countries promise, above all, to be advantageous to commerce and industry; and considering the comparatively short period during which this influence has been at work, and the primitive conditions of locomotion, foreign trade is making unexpected progress. The receipts of the foreign Customs are steadily increasing, and whilst the returns of 1893 amounted to 7,986,880 yen, in 1898 they reached the sum of 24,702,237 yen. The latest statistics show the Customs revenues as £122,783. The total import of the last year represented £1,382,381, and the export £846,034.

Besides the capital, *Seoul*, *Chemulpo*, *Fusan*, *Gen-*

San, Mokpo, Chinampo, Masampo, Kunsan, and Song-ching are being opened to trade. The general commerce is almost exclusively in the hand of Japanese and Chinese. In this respect Japan has made extraordinary progress during the last few years. In 1897 her imports amounted to 1,911,851 yen, and those of England were 3,713,907 yen. Four years later the Japanese trade increased to 2,844,815 and England's dropped to 2,853,866. Since the Commercial Exhibition at Osaka³¹, Japan's trade with Korea has advanced even more, so that, for instance, cotton goods, once imported exclusively from Manchester, are now replaced by the fabrics of Nippon. The latter seems to be in a more advantageous position, for, considering that the distance between Japan and Korea is inconsiderable and the wages in these two countries are only one-sixth of those in English manufacturing towns, European products are experiencing more and more difficulty in competing with the Japanese in Asia. The shipping trade, too, is in the hands of Japan, and in the course of last year 3920 vessels with nearly a million tons of cargo anchored in the ports of Korea. Besides Japan and England, there is America that is seeking a new market for her exports. Of continental European countries, Germany is represented by the greatest number of articles, though of small importance and size, like nails, stove pipes, needles, chemicals, and aniline dyes. The total imports from Germany at present scarcely represent a quarter of a million marks.

The Chinese share the local trade with the Japanese. The shopkeeper belongs to one or other of the neighbouring states. As we observed when referring to the past state of Korea, her own people possess no commercial instincts. Their needs are few, and even those are supplied in their homes. Their clothes are woven and sewn by their wives. The flax grows in their gar-

dens. Every house has as much ground attached to it as suffices, more or less, for the wants of the family. More than that is not required. It is owing mainly to this patriarchal simplicity that, though the soil of the country is rich, not half of it is under cultivation.

The manner of tilling the soil is rather primitive. Up to this day wooden ploughs are used. Threshing is done by ordinary poles. Agricultural implements are unknown.

In spite of her fertile valleys, favourable climate, and cheap labour, Korea is not agriculturally developed. Of its products, rice takes the first place. There is also plenty of wheat, barley, oats, and beans. The most profitable plant is *gin-sen*³², which has already been described.

The principal wealth of Korea is undoubtedly stored in its mines. The amount of ore contained in the mountains of the country is prodigious. There are numerous ancient gold and silver mines, although their working was prohibited by law. Since the conclusion of the international treaties some of them have been taken over by foreign companies, and already, during the last few years, have produced considerable profits. In 1897 the export in gold amounted to 2,004,049 yen, in 1901 to 4,993,351 yen. But under the present conditions it is impossible to ascertain the exact amount. The mountains in the north-eastern part of the country are the richest in gold. The capital invested is mostly German and Belgian.

In addition to gold and silver, there are copper, iron, and coal mines in working, but commercial enterprise is rather handicapped by the want of means of communication.

X

Until recently Korea was not only almost devoid of railways, but had scarcely any roads. Transport by means of carts is to this day exceptional—oxen and pack-horses only being employed. Endless strings of caravans cover the whole length of the land. Seeds, timber, fuel, metal, and stones—everything is carried by cattle to its destination. But human labour is even more general and much cheaper than animal labour. It is still the man's shoulder that carries most of the load and burden. What a Korean can carry is almost incredible. Besides heredity it is only through long training that he has acquired such exceptional strength.

One of the most ancient organizations of Korea is the Pedlars' Guild. It was founded centuries ago. There are families who for generations have known no other occupation than carrying the miscellaneous pack from one part of the country to another. They wander over hills and dales from morning till night. Like their ancestors they migrate continually. It is little wonder that they should have known the inner state and life of the country better than anybody else. They were the carriers of news in Korea, and represented the Press of their land, and their influence and power still prevail. Public opinion finds in them its most direct interpreter. There is no movement, outbreak, or revolt in which they do not participate. The most important messages are conveyed through the pedlars, and it is their guild that nourishes the flames of all rebellions.

In Korea there are several fine rivers. The *Han*, watering the central provinces of the country, and the *Yalu* in the north, are the two principal ones. During a few months of the year both are frozen. Neither of them is used as a waterway. The traveller who is fond of adventures hires a fishing-barge, engages a dozen fishermen, and taking with him some old furniture

and provisions, tries to make himself comfortable in that Noah's ark. Steamers are unknown on the rivers.

Railways are now in a somewhat more advanced stage. Between Chemulpo and Seoul there is a regular train service, and the short distance of twenty-six miles can be covered with Western comfort.

Japan is at present engaged in building the great southern line as far as Fusan. A French company has obtained the concession to build the northern line. On the other hand, the work of a private company on the line leading towards Manchuria is making little headway. Still, it is only a matter of time for Korea to become a network of railways. Then her harbours will be the natural gates of Eastern Asia. Her bays in the south are always free from ice, making most excellent ports, and capable of harbouring any number of ships. Chemulpo, but more particularly Fusan, the extreme southern point of the peninsula, must necessarily become one of the termini and one of the principal emporiums of the whole continent. I do not think that those who look upon it as the Shanghai of the future are mistaken.

Besides railways, Seoul possesses also an electric tramway and electric light. Both concerns were planned by American companies, and are said to be very profitable. The new Mint is also organized on European principles. The standard money is the Japanese yen; the brass rings used formerly as small coins are being replaced by the nickel sen. The various commercial articles are steadily undergoing changes, and manufactured goods are ousting the home-made products of the small shops. Each day supplies new things and ideas. Each week marks another step on the road to progress. The work is slow, being rendered difficult by many obstacles from within and without, but it cannot now be stopped in its natural course.

Korea is at present in her first stage of transition.

The old system has collapsed, and a new order must be inaugurated. Most striking to the stranger are the antagonisms of the present day. Almost everything is in a state of metamorphosis, and it is curious to notice institutions of past centuries by the side of recent reforms. Through the ancient city gate electric cars are passing, and in the vicinity of the gabled pagoda can be seen the chimney of a factory. Day by day some Western institutions, customs, and ideas are being adopted. It looks like gradual advancement.

XI

It is barely some decades since Korea opened her doors to foreigners, and even in this short time she has introduced innovations which have shaken her to her foundations, and I fear even greater changes are awaiting her in the near future. Her ancient suzerain, China, has retired from her political arena, but Japan has taken even stronger hold of the country than ever before, and a new element has been introduced into the field by the occupation by Russia of Manchuria and the Yalu. Such was the condition of the country when in 1894 the war broke out between China and Japan. Korea obtained her independence without participating in any way in the great fight. Her king became an emperor. But all these changes were only superficial. A new internal administration could not be consolidated in a few days, and Korea's independence is only on the protocol.

The freedom of Korea was, as we saw, proclaimed with great pomp just at the moment when she had the least chance of making use of that unexpected independence. Surrounded by enemies, she had neither the moral strength nor the military force to maintain it. She was bound to follow the advice of one or the

other of her neighbours; in fact, it was only by showing herself to be of no use to her allies that she could ensure her very existence. One day it was the Chinese, the next the Japanese, then the Russians. She has always been a mere instrument in the hands of these Powers. Their influence has changed very rapidly without any apparent cause. Which of her attachments has been the most sincere, who can say? The manifestations of both were equally ostensible and complete, and the Koreans went so far as to proclaim their adherence by adopting the uniform of the favoured country for their soldiers, and the inhabitants of Seoul have had the pleasure of seeing their army parading the main streets first in the uniform of Cossacks, and then in that of Nippon.

Ever since the latter part of the nineties Japan has been showing remarkable activity. She has invested considerable capital in the country, opened banks, founded large commercial firms, built railways, and established a regular steamship service. She goes even farther and is endeavouring to instil fresh life into the people. She is trying to remodel the Korean government on Japanese principles. As to the army of (nominally) eighty thousand soldiers, of which nearly eight thousand are stationed in Seoul, it is being drilled by Japanese officers and supplied with European rifles and uniforms. Japan is establishing modern schools, and desires to transform young and old alike.

During my visit Russian influence contended with Japanese for the mastery, but in the midst of all these antagonistic fluctuations it is scarcely possible to speak of political convictions. The people dislike the Russians as much as they detest the Japanese. They resemble a man in danger of drowning, who stretches out his hand to his enemy, in the vain hope of not being submerged in the floods. Public men are divided into a great many parties and form different political groups.

Some even belong to the most reactionary of the time, while others are more favourably disposed to progress, and all of them are open to conviction where personal advantage is concerned. If the dislike of foreign nations is intense, the hatred of their compatriots who are attached to other political factions is still greater. And when the national apathy and indolence are broken through by animosity to rivals, the people become blind to reason, cruel, and bloodthirst. They have no self-control, as they have never been trained to a higher moral standard, and there is no education such as will develop their better qualities. Among all the puzzles of the present day in Korea, certainly the most important is how to bring up the rising generation. The conditions, not only of Korea but of the neighbouring states, being entirely changed, her old methods are of no practical use for the present situation. The future requires a different system. In order to face the difficulties of the present, they must bring up their children to be men; and I have been most interested to note how the children respond to a better method of training. During my stay in the country I visited again and again native, foreign, and missionary schools, and came to the conclusion that the Koreans are not lacking in the mental qualities which are required by our Boards of Education. I listened to boys of fourteen and fifteen, not only translating the classics as well as the children in our schools do, but, what was more exceptional, they showed a real pleasure in dealing with deeper questions, where logical thought and sequence of ideas were requisite. They like to study, and, to my great astonishment, I was told by the rector of our seminary that, during the vacations, many of the boys go on with the next year's course.

Their moral training is not very difficult either. The children are docile, obedient, and good-natured, and

are most amenable to religious principles. Catechists have a high opinion of their catechumens, who take deep interest in theological doctrine. As a rule, they evince a real desire to be better acquainted with spiritual matters, and, if they become Christians, conscientiously adhere to their faith and observe the religious rites. All who have lived in Korea are of the same opinion—that this unexplored country and its backward people need before all cultivation and education, and it depends entirely on those who take this great work of development into their hands whether it shall become a flourishing land and its people happy or not. And in that case, instead of the country being the seat of disturbance and war, and the inhabitants mere instruments in the hands of their enemies, the Land of the Morning Calm may deserve its name and become a guarantee for the commercial prosperity and the peace of the Far East.

Such was the general situation at the moment of the outbreak of the Japanese-Russian war³³.

XII

It is evident that Korea is yet incapable of self-government. She is dependent on one or the other neighbour. Since China fell out of the ranks of conquering Powers Japan has taken up arms as she did centuries ago. To-day it is she who is aiming at ruling Eastern Asia, as if it were her mission to awaken the peoples of Asia and to instil Western civilization into them. The movement is of great interest and of more import than we should dare to believe. Its significance is incalculable. Whether Japan will be the master who is to transform the Asiatic races is another puzzling problem. Already a considerable number of young Chinese are frequenting Japanese high schools and

colleges. Delegates are being sent from Peking, at the expense of the Government, to Japanese commercial and industrial institutions to study and to become acquainted with modern ideas.

Korea is face to face with similar problems of transformation. Who is to secure her definite leadership—Japan or Russia? The present war is more than a boundary dispute; it means the old struggle between the white and yellow races for the hegemony of Asia. On whichever side success ultimately lies, on that of Russia or of Japan, let all those who know Korea and are interested in her fate, hope that the conquerors will fulfil the duties victory involves. The little country deserves that her rulers should earnestly study her conditions and seek to improve them. Even from a merely utilitarian standpoint it will prove a better policy to develop and help than to exploit to excess or to oppress her. It is just as important that her people, who ever since their infancy have been the victims of cruel foes and the prey of bad government, should be elevated to a higher standard.

For those who like to gather knowledge, not only about the outward circumstances of foreign countries but also about their inner life, it will be of interest to know that in spite of their degradation Korea's people have preserved unimpaired the sensitiveness of their mind. They are by no means insensible to lofty ideas. They are even capable of showing some enthusiasm for higher ideals. There is hardly another nation in the East which evinces more sincere appreciation of Christian ethics and doctrines than the Koreans.

Scarcely half a century has passed since the first Roman Catholic priests began their work³⁴, and they already number about fifty parishes and over fifty thousand parishioners. The old religious hatred is gradually changing into sympathy. Recently a few orphanages were built where children, abandoned by their

parents, are being brought up and trained for some useful vocation.

The people are beginning to conceive clearer ideas about Christian virtues, and those who see under what wretched conditions the missionaries live, in what poor huts they dwell, on what scanty fare they have to live—especially when they realize that these men have left their own families, homes, and their country to educate little orphans, to help the needy, and to nurse the sick, no matter of what creed or sect, be they pagans or worshippers of the sun or of ancestors—regard this self-sacrifice with an admiration which is general and sincere.

For those who wish to form an estimate of the intellectual powers of a people, the missionary schools offer undoubtedly the greatest facilities. It is there that the natural inclinations, good or bad, find direct expression. Of all my surprising experiences in Korea—a country rich in surprises—nothing equalled my impressions of the new college and seminary at Yong-Sang. There young people of twelve to fifteen gave as precise answers to questions put to them as one could hear in the best European high schools. And there Korea's primitive children can express themselves fluently in classical Latin. It was interesting for me to get an insight into their capabilities and observe their industry. For hours they would pore over their books if the teacher would not call them away for recreation. With the inherited inclination of Oriental people for abstract sciences, they enter with delight and pleasure into any metaphysical question. I was delighted to hear how successful their training is, and how easy it is to form their minds. I saw young Korea in a new light. There I best realized the force of the maxim that the future of a nation lies in the potentialities of its youths and their sound bringing up. But education

can be of value only when carefully founded on higher morality and guided by true religion.

With such an education Chosen's children might hold in their hands one day their country's independence and prosperity.

Korea's exceptional geographical position, its natural wealth, and inborn physical strength, should tend to make her in the extreme Far East a sort of buffer state, and a bulwark of international good fellowship and established peace.

Nations, like individuals, have their moral codes and vocations. Nemesis must always overtake evil of every kind, and to the virtuous alone is granted the palm of victory.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ *Yalu* is the Chinese name of the river *Amnŏk kang*, which rises on Paektu san and flows into the Yellow Sea.
- ² *Chemulp'o* the harbour for the *yamen* in *Inchŏn*, often mistaken with *Inchŏn* by foreign writers.
- ³ Korean *Kija*, Chinese *Jizi* “Viscount of Ji” (1121 BC) is a historical person, a member of the Shang - Yin Dynasty, who escaped from China after the downfall of the Empire. He is considered to be the founder of the state *Kochosŏn* “Ancient Chosŏn”, the second period of which bore his name and is called *Kija Chosŏn*.
- ⁴ Kingdom of *Silla* (57 BC – 668 AD), the united *Silla* (668-935).
- ⁵ The Chinese name of Kingdom of *Koguryŏ* (37 BC - 668 AD) has been misspelled as if it would be an allusion to the later Kingdom of *Koryŏ*.
- ⁶ Kingdom of *Paekche* (18 BC – 660 AD).
- ⁷ The reference for the Kingdom of *Koryŏ* (918-1392).
- ⁸ The first king of the *Chosŏn (Yi)* Dynasty King *T'aejo* (1335-1408, r. 1392-1408), his original name was *Yi Sŏnggye*.
- ⁹ *Hanyang* “north bank of the Han (river)”, known also as “Hansŏng” fortress on Han”.
- ¹⁰ Th Manchu *Qing* Dynasty (1644-1911).
- ¹¹ Could not be identified.
- ¹² Correctly Korean *Pukpha* “Northern Group” and *Sopha* “Western Group”. The two political grouping fought with each other for the political hegemony almost 200 years.
- ¹³ Korean *Tae-shin* “Cabinet”.
- ¹⁴ Chinese *yamen*, Korean *amun* designation of governmental and other officies.
- ¹⁵ King *Kojong* (reigned 1863, in some sources 1864-1907).
- ¹⁶ According to other sources in 1863.
- ¹⁷ *Yi Haŭng* (1820-1898) was the Prince Regent, the *Taewŏn-gun*.
- ¹⁸ Queen *Min* was killed on 8th October of 1895.

- ¹⁹ Korean-Japanese war 1894-1895.
- ²⁰ The later emperor *Sunjong* (r. 1907-1910).
- ²¹ Cf. Korean *P'ansori* “narrative-epic-dramatic folk vocal art form”.
- ²² Korean *hwan-gap* “the 60th birthday, is one of the most important events in a man's life cycle. One who reached the 60th year completed a whole cycle of Far-Eastern Lunar calendar system. 60 years after the birth will be the same combination of the elements (five elements, five colours, the twelve animals, and the opposition of male - female).
- ²³ Probably the *sunngnyung* “hot rice water”.
- ²⁴ Korean *changgi*.
- ²⁵ Kite flying Korean *yŏn nalligi* the custom belonged to the New Moon year festivities. Magic formulas, blessings, wishes were written on the simple decorated kites.
- ²⁶ Korean *kungdo* one of the most important military skills, which has sacral character as well.
- ²⁷ Cf. Korean *P'ansori*, note Nr.
- ²⁸ Commodore R. W. Shufeldt (1822-1895) concluded the Treaty of Amity and Commerce between Korea and the United States of America in 1882.
- ²⁹ According to some sources it was signed in the same year, in 1882.
- ³⁰ Treaty with Russia and Germany were signed in 1884., with France in 1886.
- ³¹ An allusion of Vay Péter to the later 5th Exhibition in Osaka (1905).
- ³² Korean *insam*.
- ³³ The Russo-Japanese war 1904-1905
- ³⁴ The 1st Korean priest and venerated martyr, *Kim Taegŏn*, Saint Andrew (1822-1846).

II

SEOUL, THE CAPITAL OF KOREA

I have arrived safely in Seoul. It is eventide, and the moon is just appearing. In the dimness the most desolate imperial residence in the world seems still more desolate, more wretched, miserable, and forlorn.

My sedan-chair is being carried through a long street, or rather road, of small houses—but houses they cannot be called: those I have seen up to the present can at the best be termed hovels.

At last we reach the walls of the inner city—for till now we have been merely in the outer town. The wall is ragged and thorny. In front stand a number of roofed and painted gates. I almost imagine myself back in Pekin, for the picture is a replica, but in miniature. I am, however, unable in the dusk to see how much smaller it is, only the general effect is the same, stamped with the familiar Chinese characteristics.

The moon is now shining brightly, but it shows nothing new in the aspect of the road within the walls. The main street of Seoul is as deep in clay and mud as it was at the time when the “waters dried up.” Its houses have not altered; they are scarcely more than the clay huts of prehistoric man, his protection against cold or heat.

The first sight of an unknown country stamps itself on our minds in a manner unique, and I requested the bearers of my chair to walk slowly, for I did not wish to lose my first impression. There is a fascination in

the unknown—a wonderful interest attached to the unexpected. Our wanderings amongst strange peoples in the streets of a city which we have not visited before are not for the pen to describe.

Everything that is unknown is mysterious, until reality tears aside the veil, and so long as it is built up by our imagination and peopled by fantastic creations it remains to a certain extent a City of Dreams.

The streets are gradually getting broader, and the clay huts grow even more insignificant. I stop for a moment in the great square, which may be the centre of the city, but is little more than a crossroad leading into a few side-streets.

It is scarcely seven o'clock, and yet over all broods a death-like silence, a peaceful calm, as complete as one can imagine. The broad streets seem an immense cemetery, and the mean little flat-roofed houses graves. One might think it is All Saints' Day, for on each grave a little lamp is burning. A lantern hangs from the eaves of each roof, showing a yellowish flame.

But the people themselves are returning like ghosts to their homes; each robed in white—each and all mute. Without a sound they flit over the roads of the endless graveyard, until they disappear into the depths of some one of the illuminated tombs.

I have never been so impressed by any other city I have seen as I was by my first sight of Seoul. As I saw the city just now, by the light of a November moon, dark, dumb, desolate, and ghostly, it resembled some fairy city more than reality; like those storied places sung of in the poetry of almost every people, the tale of which is listened to with such rapture by the little folk of the nursery, who know nothing as yet of life's seamy side.

Such a town was Seoul to me, the first few hours after my arrival.

Next morning I was aroused by the sound of drums

and trumpets. But whose? Do they belong to the ghosts? What can have happened that the home of silence should have been disturbed by such an awful uproar?

I hasten to my window. The long street, the square, every inch of ground, is occupied by soldiers. These are short and yellow, wearing a black uniform, the black cloth of which, set off by a broad red collar and contrasted with the yellow faces, makes a motley colour-scheme almost like a chequered field. The men seem to like it. If the mixture serves no other purpose it offers an excellent target for an enemy, which was probably the idea of its inventors.

The din continues. The trumpets blare, and these black, red, and yellow little people, like tin soldiers, keep moving before me; to and fro, up one street and down another they go, like stage-property soldiers, now appearing on and again disappearing from the stage—always the same supers; but one would think they were a mighty army. And all the time the bayonets flash on the rifle-barrels, whose weight seems rather too much for the little men. The drums still beat, and fanfares ring out on the frosty morning.

What has happened? Has the coronation not been postponed after all? Is the Emperor at last inaugurating the long-awaited festivities?

I ring the bell, and a servant, dressed in white, and wearing a pigtail twisted up in a knot, enters. His long coat is of linen, his head covered by a hat of horse-hair, which resembles in shape the wire lid used to protect preserves from flies.

This quaint servant seems more surprised at my question than I at his livery.

“But the army has been reorganized by European officers. It has been taught, in the Western style, to march, manoeuvre, and kill, and for the performance of this gay farce new taxes have been raised. And

now you, a European, coming from the West, ask, with obvious irony, 'What does this all mean?'"

I can see how amusing the whole situation is, and what a ludicrous side it has. The fact of the collar being a few inches deeper, or of the colour of the tunic, does not alter the character of the uniform; it is still a distinctive mark, even in its best form, whether the mechanism which propels the bullet be new or old fashioned. The rifle always destroys, and whether a soldier is a couple of feet taller or not, whether he has a yellow or a white complexion, his calling is a rather gloomy one. For do we not consider that soldier most efficient who destroys the greatest number of lives?

Dawn now turns into morning, and the doors of the shops open one by one. Most of them are only protected for the night by mats or a few planks.

Later on the customers begin to arrive, all of them dressed in white. Men and women alike wear long linen coats (kaftans), and their lined foot-gear is also of linen; in fact, they are white from top to toe, excepting the black hat of horsehair.

Now and again I see a sedan-chair, which, however, is not larger than a good-sized box, its occupant huddled up inside. I cannot perceive any carriage, trap, or horse, in spite of the growing traffic, which, however, is perfectly noiseless. Perhaps this may account for the fact of my still being under the impression of being in a deserted city.

It is generally on the first day that we catch the most characteristic traits, or, at any rate, that the most salient features strike our imagination. While our perceptive powers are still fresh, we are able to be impressed by the smallest peculiarities.

After breakfast I go out for a stroll, and find in front of me the palace gate, outside which some soldiers are standing. Beyond it stretches a long street,

towards which I turn. This is the same thoroughfare which yesterday resembled a vast graveyard, but the houses now stand open, as the wooden wall, looking on the street, has been removed. There are a considerable number of shops, but small and mean, displaying no wares that attract my attention. Those of the cabinet-makers make the best show, consisting of small chests, inlaid with brass ornamentation, having large polished locks. These are no less quaint than they are tasteful. There seems to be a great demand for them, for in a whole row I can see nothing else. There is also no lack of fruit and seeds, but the baskets do not offer a quarter of the variety of a Chinese grocer. I do not think I saw any more shops, at least any that I remarked. They seemed small and empty, never more than a couple of customers in them.

What especially attracted my attention was the large number of sentry-boxes. Every five or ten yards you came across a box, with a stubby black-red-and-yellow soldier inside, armed!

No matter where I turn, there are sentry-boxes everywhere—to the right, to the left, in front and behind me. Can it be a fact that this army is required to keep these little folk in order?

No sooner had I put this question to myself than I became aware of a disturbance going on—some coolies, carrying vegetables, engaged in a battle royal, and two boys pitching into each other. But the private stands there unmoved. His look seems rather to approve than condemn. He is evidently not intended to keep the peace; this does not seem to be part of his duties; so the coolies may fight as much as they like among the cabbages. (The group, by the way, forms a pretty picture—the coolies in white, with the green loads on their backs, in the thick of the fray.) The smaller of the boys commences to cry, as blood is

dripping from his forehead; but the soldier is not affected by the sight of this either. I wonder if what he just muttered was that the "Red Cross" was not his business.

As I went on I heard more screaming and quarrelling, and witnessed a few more little skirmishes. It was not until now that I realized how unaccustomed I was to quarrels and fights, as in China I never saw one man fighting another—they have their thousands of years of civilization to thank for that.

Later I approach a hall which is being repaired. It has a pointed roof and broad eaves, similar to those of the palace at Peking.

A whole forest of wood is stored up there in the shape of beams. As I see with what precision the workmen make the various parts fit together, without the use of nails, I am delighted that the traditions of ancient architecture are not yet extinct.

I am now in the neighbourhood of the Royal Palace³⁵. In front of the main gate is a large square, which farther on turns into a street, with public buildings on either side. These are the Ministerial Offices, where is spun the web of the Korean Government.

Externally the palace has little to distinguish it. The façade is rather low, and the walls are mud-coated, while the gates are not much better, in the Chinese style, and crowned by tiles.

The gates, which are wide open, lead into a large inner courtyard, where there are a number of ordinary and state sedan-chairs. Crowds of servants, attendants, and coolies, are warming themselves in the sun, others are playing at ball, which they kick off and catch with their legs.

In the middle of the street one meets mandarins hurrying to their offices, magistrates and other men of consequence, most of them in chairs, or rather boxes, carried by two servants. The vehicle is covered with

a cloth, that of the better class matching in colour the servants' liveries. I have seen grey and yellow ones also. These belong to the Korean aristocracy.

The most attractive of all was the "carriage" of a noble in mourning. His chair had quite recently been covered with cloth of a yellowish hue, the same as that worn by his two servants, their coats reaching nearly to the ground. In order to give their limbs free play, these had been split up as far as the waist. But this can be nothing more than fashion, for not even the whip would make a Korean hurry. The servants also wear a broad girdle, tied up in a bow, round their waists.

When in mourning they wear straw hats, not black, but shaped like a fair-sized old-fashioned bread-basket. These have wide sloping brims, reaching the shoulders, and entirely concealing the face. In such a weird costume they strongly resemble yellow mushrooms sprung up on a summer's day. Straw sandals complete the costume.

In spite of these strange details and absurd combinations, the general effect is good; the colours, the silk-covered chair, straw hat and sandals, blend harmoniously together. Seen from a distance, they almost have the appearance of ivory knick-knacks, such as you see exhibited for sale in Japanese curio shops.

But I hear a noise in the distance, and from the direction of the western gate a motley crowd comes towards me. It must be either a funeral or a wedding. So far I cannot distinguish which. The next moment two children detach themselves from the crowd and seem to lead the procession. Their dress is glaring, of green, purple, and scarlet silk, with their dark hair encircling their foreheads in gleaming plaits. They are also decked out with flowers and butterflies.

Behind them is carried a large box, painted red, and polished. It is evidently a wedding, and this is very

likely the dowry. Now follow the dancers, in pairs, but wide apart from each other. Their costume—I cannot describe it! Almost shapeless, it consisted of skirt over skirt, kerchiefs, veils, all pell-mell and of every colour of the rainbow.

I take note of many things which to-morrow might escape me.

Street life is one ever-flowing stream. In Seoul, I observe, everybody lives on the thoroughfares, and this is probably the reason why the roads are so wide and the dwellings so cramped. In this trait the Korean is like the Spaniard or Italian, for he is never so happy as when out of doors. There he stands on his threshold, or basking in the sunny courtyards; or he lights his pipe and strolls up and down for hours. His carriage is slow and stately. I wonder where he is going, and what he is thinking of—nowhere and of nothing. I should say, “*Il flâne*.” There is no suitable word in another language for this aimless meandering. “Loitering” indicates only physical slowness, nor does even “to lounge or saunter” exactly convey the idea. Physical sluggishness and moral vacuum are not simultaneously connoted by them.

Now and again a private comes by. He is the coming man! If he learns nothing else in the barrack-yard, he certainly does learn how to walk.

His pigtail has been shorn off. At first he bemoaned it, for this antiquated head-dress of his embodied a general principle, and with its departure he was cut adrift from all his old associations and traditions; but, like the child he is at heart, he soon forgets his pigtail and its traditions along with it, and to-day is proud of the metamorphosis.

As the man of progress and of the future, he scorns the white coats, sandals, and hats, of his countrymen.

On reaching the hotel I find a gentleman awaiting me; it is the Minister of Great Britain. He has learnt

of my arrival, and is come to offer me his hospitality, my country not having a legation in the city.

The Hôtel du Palais in Seoul is new and fairly well managed, and so I did not wish to put any one to inconvenience. The bishop being away, and having no legation, I was anxious to remain my own master. We never know when we may become a nuisance to the kindest of hosts. The pleasantness of a visit, after all, depends more on circumstances than on the host or guest.

All this I frankly explained, and in the end we made a compromise in such a way as not to disturb our daily programme. I was to be his guest, but each of us was to attend to his usual occupations, and we were to meet only at luncheon time. As for the afternoons, we left everything to circumstances.

The British Legation, on the other side of the new palace, is a pretty country mansion, with a loggia, built on a bank, and enclosed by a garden. The secretary's house stands in another part of the grounds, and at the entrance a pavilion for the guards is in course of construction.

The interior is typically English, the same as we find it in the houses of the well-to-do classes, whose root principle is, "My home is my castle." Among those with whom the family life is such a fine example of domestic virtues the "home" strikes us very forcibly and with such graciousness. Indeed, the "home" idea is one of Great Britain's bulwarks.

My room was ready for me, bright and cheerful. The creeper on the balcony was still green, and my windows looked out on to the courtyard of the neighbouring palace.

In the afternoon I went to the German Consulate, and passed on the way the Temple of Heaven—a pagoda standing on a hill, with a fair double roof and in front of it a marble altar.

It is a replica, a poor one it is true, of Pekin's masterpiece, but quite pretty from a scenic point of view.

From a small house at the corner a very babel of sound issues forth. It is the inarticulate mechanical repetition of one chapter—exactly the same method our own schoolmasters used to employ for instilling knowledge.

As the door in the courtyard is open, I enter. In front of me I find a room, not more than ten feet square, in which ten or more youngsters are crowded together. There they sit on the floor, dressed in green instead of white, and their long hair hanging down in fine plaits.

Each has a big A B C book in his hand. Every word has a different letter; these they repeat, and in this way knowledge is driven into them. They pronounce everything out loud, moving the upper part of their body to right and left, backwards and forwards, all the time.

The dominie is seated in front, also squatting on the floor. His eyes are shielded by goggles of enormous size, and he wears on his head a horsehair crown.

He is wisdom personified, outwardly at any rate, and his thoughts seem to be ranging far away in the distance; and from his Olympic seat he casts an indifferent eye on his perspiring pupils. But, as a famous Chinese pedagogue says, "Chinese spelling and writing can only be mastered mechanically; the best scholar is the jackass."

The German Consulate is a new building, but by no means as comfortable as the English. The Consul-General is also entrusted with Austro-Hungarian affairs, and would look after them if there were any to look after. But I am afraid that the Viennese Foreign Office of the present régime does not quite realize the commercial interests which it might promote, and follows strictly the advice of the late Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Ct. Kálnoky³⁶, given to an enthusiastic

youth, "If you want to succeed in your career and maintain your position when once acquired, do not forget 'On n'est jamais en disgrâce pour ce qu'on n'a pas fait'". He is very courteous, and talks a good deal of Japan, where he acted as Councillor of the Legation.

From there to the Roman Catholic Mission is but a few yards. As I enter its iron grilled gate, my surprise is as great as it is agreeable, for I see before me a grand cathedral, and on either side spacious buildings standing in their own wooded grounds.

It was built on the model of one of the old cathedrals in the Netherlands—red brick, Gothic, a style which, as I invariably avow, I do not like to find in the East. But this is only a criticism due to my artistic sense. As a building, nothing can be said against it, for of its kind it is perfect. But what struck me most was its cleanliness. The stone floor was as bright as a mirror.

The bishop was away on circuit, and would not return for ten days, so Father —, the vicar, received me, and showed me over the whole little colony, the school, and convent and orphanage; but of these I will speak more fully elsewhere.

As I took my leave the sun was setting. The peaks of the encircling hills were reflected in purple tints on the topaz sky. The Mission down below, in the dell, appeared in a bluish mist, only the cathedral cresting the hill.

Returning home by a circuitous route, I find the streets even more thronged than in the morning. I glance into a few shops, but there is not much worth seeing. The furriers, who are engaged in cutting out and sewing a number of tunics, capes, and fur coats, seem to be the busiest. There are also a good many jackets and still more waistcoats without sleeves to protect the chest and back. Over these are worn white linen kaftans. No wonder the wearers look like walking eider-down quilts.

To the right I noticed a tavern, much like the Chinese roadside inn, and in the large open stable a row of small rough-haired horses were standing with straw rugs on their backs. A coolie was carrying water from the well in two brass vessels, hanging on the ends of a long pole. The pole does not, however, rest upon his shoulders, but is fastened crosswise to his back, giving man and load the appearance of a living pair of scales.

Next come some unpretentious little barracks, which, in their smallness, are after the pattern of the soldiers, a number of whom are looking out of the windows. In the absence of any better occupation, they are chewing pumpkinseeds.

Now we arrive at the curiosity shops displaying several porcelain articles, a few of bronze, many tiles, and a farrago of rubbish.

On the cross-road are some more barracks, comprised in a long low building, the little men in front of which were wearing, not only red collars, but also red dolmans. Here the cavalry are garrisoned, and a little scrap of a hussar is just galloping home. This warrior is not a whit taller than Hop o' my Thumb, his charger scarce larger than a well-developed calf of two months.

By the side of this toy hussar rattled a formidable sabre, which seemed in danger of pulling him down from his horse.

Without that impediment his seat is poor enough. On his coming nearer I see that the murderous instrument is an ordinary cavalry sword. His uniform is the most chequered I ever saw. The dolman of the Korean hussar is of a cinnamon colour, his collar and cuffs emerald-green, and his breeches stripes saffron. If the pattern of his uniform was the plumage of a parrot, the imitation is indeed most successful.

I was wandering farther on, when in front of a gate some dogs nearly knocked me down.

The streets of Seoul, like those of Peking and Constantinople, are full of them, but with this difference, that the dogs here are well-kept and strong. If a single one of these starts barking, this signal of some approaching danger is in a minute responded to throughout a whole quarter. It was so in my case. As I came too near the threshold, the guardian on duty there was under the impression that I intended to encroach on his domain. His attitude towards me was anything but friendly, and not being armed with either stick or umbrella, I instinctively stooped down to pick up a stone. This movement on my part, however, was sufficient to make him retire summarily into his own courtyard. He was perfectly in the right, and it only showed what a faithful watch-dog he was.

The Korean canine race is a subject worthy of a few words, because it affords some of the most typical figures in the streets of Seoul. I must confess I never have seen better-trained dogs than these. In the streets they are the meekest of quadrupeds, and as quiet as lambs.

A single word is quite sufficient to make the Seoul dog scamper home to his doorway. He knows that it is his duty to be there. He will lie in the little yard for hours and hours, but prefers, best of all, to take his ease on the doorstep, with his head in the street, so as not to lose sight of any one approaching. He hardly takes any notice of you, as long as you walk in the middle of the road. At most he would stare at dark-clothed people with other than yellow faces, to the sight of whom he is not accustomed, for ever since he came into this world he has seen none other than white kaftans.

But the moment any stranger directs his steps towards the house, the dog gives a growl or two, and on further approach barks as loud, as he can. He reserves his attack until you are within his range, that

is to say about a yard from him. By that time the auxiliary forces from the neighbourhood have concentrated, and you have the whole brigade snarling and yapping at your heels.

This fearsome pandemonium at last brings the master of the house, or a member of his family, to the seat of the disturbance, and a single word, or merely a sign, suffices for Cerberus to retire to a corner, wagging his tail.

Darkness has set in. Calm reigns supreme. The fresh autumnal night is silently spreading its grey veil of mist over the white city. But look! is not that the northern light breaking through the dark? In the direction of Puk-Han it begins to dawn. The sky unexpectedly flashes up, its subdued red light is getting more and more brilliant. Now flames of hundreds of torches illuminate the atmosphere. Here is another surprise, as if the many strange phenomena of the day had not yet reached their climax.

It is a torchlight procession, the like of which I have never seen before. Pedestrians, sedan-chairs, men on horseback, are coming forward in an endless string. And what a pageant this is! What effective grouping! The minutest detail has been carried out with artistic taste. The smallest traits are wonderfully harmonized, to enhance the general effect.

The procession is headed by children, dressed in white from top to toe, wearing bell-shaped head-gear. Then follow bearers of torchlights and banners, servants carrying inscriptions attached to poles, others dangling lanterns, and behind these another group burning straw plaits.

The next section of the procession consists of riders, of whom eight are entirely covered by white cloaks. You would imagine they were phantoms, if it were not that they are weeping bitterly³⁷. These are the

paid mourners, like the moaning women of ancient Rome; for it is a native funeral. A member of the Min family is being taken to his last resting-place. He is a descendant of a famous clan, a relative of the late Empress of Korea, so regal pomp is awarded him. And the funeral procession is really grand, although all dresses worn therein are of unbleached linen. The trimmings are for the most part of paper, but in such striking combinations, and designed and finished so perfectly, that we disregard the details and only admire the general effect. The group of moaning women is followed by monsters, dressed as guys, such as gruesome fables are peopled with. One wears a red, another a yellow, mask; this a green, and that a blue one. The appearance of all is awe-inspiring, their heads being adorned with horns, cockscombs, and crowns. Now more and more new groups follow, approaching in a stately way and disappearing slowly in the darkness of the night.

How long the procession lasted I could not ascertain, but some thousand persons must have marched by ere the two gilt catafalques appeared on the scene. Both were alike, resembling monumental pagodas, gabled in many places designed with the quaint originality of this people, and ornamented with all the fullness of their fancy. The two coffins, prescribed by ancient traditions, rest on pedestals in the shadow of high baldachinos. Behind the coffin walks a person wrapped in sackcloth, suggestive of the cloth worn over their uniforms by members of the society of the Misericordia in Italy. The catafalques and coffins are carried on their shoulders by thirty-two mourners, proceeding slowly and rhythmically.

But the pageant is not yet at an end. On a number of sedan-chairs are heaped up the personal belongings of the deceased. His clothes, household furniture, horses, and cows, all follow him, so that they may be

consumed as a burnt-offering by his grave-side; all in *effigy*, for they are but of paper. It is in such cheap counterfeit that the ancient traditions are being preserved by the more practical progeny of the present day. The silver coins, thrown by the riding “weepers” amongst the crowd, are like-wise make-believe, being really nothing but small discs of paper. One sedan-chair follows another; hosts of carriers and servants accompany the members of the family. There is the whole tribe; a whole brigade is riding behind the gabled catafalque. All are covered with sackcloth; even the mendicant is dressed in white—the whole procession is white. And as they turn round at the top of the hill, the effect of the picture is unique. The weeping women, the monsters, the mourners and attendants, the gigantic catafalques, and the immense crowd formed one of the strangest sights I ever contemplated. The furled banners, dangling inscriptions, open sunshades, lanterns with dim lights in the darkness of the night, formed the quaintest setting. The light of torches, the burning bunches of bulrushes and straw, are tinting in a vibrating red the long, white and ghostly procession. The beating of drums, and the droning of bagpipes, furnish the music, and the weeping women the proper chorus. This strange funeral, in fact, is the most perfect “danse macabre.”

The full moon, fuller than usual, as though anxious to light up the weird procession, is rising in a slow and stately manner behind the hills.

Her melancholy rays filter through the night, her silvery splendour intensifying the ghostliness of the scene.

The first day spent in the capital of Korea is nearing its end. Quietness penetrates the night—such profound quietness as can only be enjoyed in Seoul. The alley leading to the legation is dark and deserted. And as I

walk home I try to recall to my memory all that I have perceived and heard; all that was new to me and striking; all the contrasts and the incoherency of earliest perceptions.

No guests were bidden to dinner, and when my host put the question to me, "What do you think about Seoul?" I was scarcely able to express my thoughts clearly. What do I really think about Seoul? What about her people, her life, physiology, and atmosphere? I will write it down forthwith, ere *knowledge* spoils the glamour of first impressions, whilst every tint is shining in glaring colour, whilst every detail can be observed through the microscope of novelty.

On the last day of my sojourn here, I will look through these short notes, and, like a schoolmaster, correct in red ink any mistakes that may be found therein. Town and people will then be better known, but the charm of the first day will vanish for ever.

FOOTNOTES

- ³⁵ *Tōksu* the palace of “Virtuous long life”, originally named *Kyōngun-gung* “palace of Blessed fate”, the residence of King *Kojong* has been transferred here, after Queen Min's murder.
- ³⁶ Ct. Gusztáv Kálnoky (1832-1898), a diplomat of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, ambassador in Copenhagen (from 1874), and St. Petersburg (1880-81), ministry of foreign affairs (1881-95).
- ³⁷ The relatives and invited mourners weep with loud exclamation *aigoo*.

III

THE EMPEROR OF KOREA AT THE NEW PALACE

Since last night we have been in the midst of revolution; but it seems that a revolution in Korea is very much like everyday life in other corners of the earth, and nobody attaches any importance to it. Everybody pursues his daily task, the ordinary routine goes on in its slow and lumbering way. Official life maintains its sluggish pulsation, and to my astonishment I even get an invitation to be received in the course of the afternoon by the Emperor and the Crown Prince.

It is a calm day, calm in every respect, and the people of Seoul seem to be at rest, as I am carried by eight unusually large bearers towards the New Palace³⁸. The little *cortège* is of a strange character. My sedan-chair is covered with green silk, and, with the bearers in dark purple, makes quite a patch of colour in the whitewashed streets.

Seoul might be called the white city. The houses are white, and every living being, young and old, man and woman, is clad in white cotton.

I should really think that the absence of colour and sound is the most striking feature of the Land of the Morning Calm.

The reception takes place at the New Palace. There are four palaces in Seoul, the Eastern, Northern, Western, and the one I am just entering³⁹. I have passed a great many delightful afternoons in their magnificent

grounds, forlorn gardens, quaint summer-houses and charming pagodas.

I returned again and again to sketch for a while, or to admire the once-famous Korean art, which, I am afraid, has vanished for ever, like the famous bronze-workers, sculptors, and cloisonné makers, like the whole once-famous civilization that has left only a few magnificent monuments of its existence.

The sedan-chairs are put down before the main entrance, which looks very much like that of a suburban railway station, with its glass roof, supported by iron posts. It is modern indeed. It may be useful, but it is sadly commonplace. There is a platform, too, not to miss anything to complete the *tout ensemble*.

I am shown first into an ante-room which might be that of any small country villa, and our coats are hung on racks which have every appearance of having come straight from Tottenham Court Road. And then we step into a drawing-room, which I prefer to call a waitingroom, an exact replica of those dreary places where we are compelled to waste so many hours of our lives. It might belong to a dentist, a doctor, or a public official at home.

In the centre there is a huge table with the kind of books which nobody ever dreams of reading. The furniture is featureless, but not altogether unpretentious, and the engravings and pictures are of a sort that nobody cares for. I was told by way of compliment to the West that the Court arranged this apartment for foreign receptions, and I wonder if it was entirely without sarcasm or pardonable malice that visitors are confronted with a room that makes all the faults of modern Western taste so manifest. It was a climax of all that is banal.

Whilst waiting we are entertained by His Excellency the Master of Ceremonies, the Lord Chamberlain, and several A.D.C.'s. They all wear European uniforms, dark

marine-blue tunics, with many black and gold badges and heavily braided dark red trousers. Everything is of the best material and highly finished, apparently made far beyond Korea's frontiers. Some of the officials talk French, some English, and all are most interesting and entertaining. They have charming manners and all the natural refinements of an ancient race.

Two of them are old acquaintances. I met them years ago at Buckingham Palace, on the occasion of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. Prince Min is an accomplished man of the world. He has just built a new house on the outskirts of the city, "with all the most modern improvements," but I am rather sorry he has left his old home, lost in the maze of the inner town and buried in the shade of a few fine chestnut trees. It was such a typical old Korean home, looking outside like a hut built of mud and covered with thatch, but inside looking like a white paper box. Its tiny rooms were carpeted with silky matting, and for furniture it had half a dozen silk cushions—for ornamentation, but a single flower stand.

There is a striking contrast between this modern waiting-room and the old Korean house; a contrast of vulgarity and refinement. I am sorry to say I saw only a few of these quaint old places, and I fear that on my next visit they will all have disappeared. To pass the time, tea, champagne-cup, and cigarettes, are handed round, as they would be in any Western house.

The New Palace and its diplomatic receptions are managed by a Western lady.

There are some other Westerners holding Court appointments here, some with the title of teacher of languages, and many others under different pretexts. But few of them render services that are ever required.

The building of this New Palace is unquestionably strange and antagonistic, but I will confine myself to observing the material sides. Its conception and archi-

ture are equally incoherent; it is such an unintelligible mixture of old and new, national and foreign. Near the hall, built exactly like an old yamen, there stands a shed of corrugated iron, and a wonderful old gate leads to a passage furnished with Viennese chairs. The whole palace was built as opportunity offered, without previous plans. It came to be erected in the following way. During the last revolution, the Empress lost her life: she was dragged out of her room, atrociously tortured, and stabbed by ruffians, or, as some say, by foreign soldiers. Afterwards, her body was burned in the adjoining deer park, at the foot of the eastern hills. The Emperor himself escaped only with the greatest difficulty, in a disguise, carried on men's shoulders, as Anchises was out of the burning ruins of Troy. He never returned to those ill-fated walls, but took refuge in the Russian Legation, and remained there for a long time to be in greater security.

After this, land was secured near the legations, amidst the foreign settlement, and there the New Palace was erected. It is not completed yet, and I am afraid it will remain unfinished for many years, and offer a source of income to the commercial, trading, labouring, and idling classes of the country.

At last His Majesty awoke from his siesta and was ready to receive me. There are no ushers and no Court functionaries and little or no display. The servants who came with the message wore a red calico kaftan to the ground, with a red calico hood that looked like a domino. It is the Court livery, simple to make and cheap to buy. Calico is the national material, that everybody wears at all seasons of the year—in winter padded with cotton-wool or sheepskin. There are over 10,000,000 purchasers of calico in Korea, and it has become quite an interesting commercial question whether Japan's Osaka or England's Manchester will secure the future market.

By a little door and through a narrow passage, built of white deal boards, we get to the inner court, which is really a backyard surrounded by store-rooms and servants' sheds.

To avoid the mud it is necessary to use a pathway composed of two planks. They are narrow enough to test the skill of an equilibrist, and it may be they are put down to drill the courtiers in that useful art. On this occasion these planks are covered with narrow bright red carpet—a poor specimen of the thing usually found in “furnished apartments,” not at all conducive to comfort, and apparently only a harbour for the dust. The yard is deserted. Here and there, out of peep-holes and half-open doors, a few red-calicoed servants are gazing with inquisitive eyes, but not one of them is in attendance.

From the central building a wide, unpainted door leads into the yard. The door is open and we see a kind of hall, with its walls covered with a large-patterned blue-and-white paper, which probably lay for years neglected and unadmired in some mean shop. There is a table in the centre and a high screen behind. Squeezed in between the two stands the Emperor. I can hardly realize that I am in the presence of the all-powerful potentate—an Emperor who is more than ruler, and more even than despot, in fact, an idol in the eyes of his people. His person is sacred, his power is boundless, his word is law, and he owns everything, land and people, without restriction, his simple wish is a command.

If human hand touches him it is sacrilege, and the punishment for sacrilege is death. Even the dead body of an emperor must be lifted into the coffin by a special device. If the Emperor touches a subject, the body so touched becomes blessed. The Emperor's name must not be mentioned except in whispers. His portrait is never painted except after death, when it becomes

an object of worship in the ancestral halls. Once a foreign envoy sought to present the Emperor with the portrait of his sovereign, but the Minister for Foreign Affairs regarded the offer as an outrage and the portrait was never accepted. How very strange all these customs seem to be! But it is scarcely thirty years since Korea was still, if not the "Land of the Morning Calm" at least the "Hermit Kingdom," secluded and unknown.

My impression of the Emperor is favourable. His features are heavy, but the face is kind and his expression is benevolent. Physically he is delicate. I cannot imagine him to be a man of strong likes or dislikes and his shyness approaches timidity. He wore ancient Korean state robes of rich yellow hue, embroidered with numberless cabalistic signs.⁴⁰ Around his waist was clasped a stiff ceremonial girdle, inlaid with jade. It looked much like an iron hoop round a shrunken barrel and seemed peculiar to Western eyes, accustomed to belts that, on the contrary, grip the body only too closely.

The representative of my country, who has lived for many years in Korea, and is an excellent scholar, had scarcely time to make the necessary introductions before the Emperor opened the conversation. He was most interested in the way I had come, and hearing that I had used the overland route, his questions were inexhaustible. "When did you leave home?" "How long have you been travelling?" "What interested you most?" "What is the country like?" "What do the people do?" "What are their ambitions?" and so on. He seemed to be interested in my own country, and especially in all the different manners and customs of the West.

"Is your country a very hilly one?" "Are the people agricultural, as here?" "Is your capital a very fine one, and what is the Emperor's palace like? I hear there

are magnificent Court functions, and pageants with a great many carriages. My envoys coming, home from the European tour, gave me very interesting details of your magnificent cities and great wealth, and brought home many valuable souvenirs and pictures. I am sorry to be too old, otherwise I myself would start to see all I have heard about.”

The state coaches seemed to appeal most to his imagination, which, after all, is but natural, considering that such a thing as a carriage has never been known to the Koreans. His Majesty even expressed a wish to order one in Europe.

Question after question came, giving me scarcely time to give answers. I, of course, could not ask questions except in an indirect way, for in this respect Korea sticks firmly to the etiquette of all Courts, which provides that the monarch alone is allowed to start a new topic of conversation.

“You must have been very glad on your arrival at Seoul to find that the finest building is your cathedral? What it must have been to have built up such a high tower! and I am told its interior is beautiful. Who was your architect? How much did it cost?” I explained that it was built by one of the fathers who studied with great care the architectural books of Viollet Le Duc, and that the expense had been very limited, on account of nearly everything being made on the spot.

But he was even more interested to hear about our orphan schools close by, where nearly two hundred children are saved from misery and death. He was pleased to hear a little more of what happens outside the palace gates, to know something more about the charitable work carried out in his own country.

It was astonishing to see with what keen interest he followed my explanations.

He wanted to know my ideas concerning Koreans, and especially Korean children and the rising genera-

tion trained in our schools. I was glad to have an opportunity of expressing my satisfaction, and I told him how very much surprised I was at seeing the Korean children at work, and hearing their answers.

I could scarcely believe that boys out here could be such good Latin scholars, some of them far in advance of boys of the same age in European schools. I was even more astonished to see the real pleasure it gave them to study and to improve. To me it shed quite a new light on the Korean character and mind. What is more satisfactory still is, that when these children go back to their forlorn homes, as they do for several months each year, they seldom fail to return, and never forget what they have been taught.

Next the Emperor sat the Crown Prince, a man slightly over thirty years of age, overgrown and heavy apathetic, and lethargic in all his movements. He shows little interest in anything outside his own sphere, and scarcely any capacity for the reception of new ideas. He is married, but has no family.

But there is a younger brother who is in every respect the reverse. He is bright, clever, active, and instead of the heavy atmosphere of the palace seeks the fresh air of far-away countries. At present he is in the United States, working hard, studying and gathering knowledge, experience, and statesmanship, which may, as he hopes it will, be of use to himself and to his country.

Behind the Emperor and Crown Prince stands a huge dark figure, casting a heavy black shadow on them. His expression is stolid, and he is mute, but he watches and follows everything that goes on around us. He is the chief eunuch of the palace, a man of great importance and influence.

The chamberlains and princes accompany me to my sedan-chair when I go. Before I leave them they make an appointment for next day to show me the ancestral hall and some of the public buildings.

I must say they are all very courteous, and want to show me much that they think would prove useful to me. At last we start, sedan-chairs begin to swing, hanging from eight bearers' shoulders. A horseman rides ahead, while the legation servants and the Kisos form a guard. As we come to the large place before the palace there is a dense crowd, a faction of the revolutionists as I am told. The city is in great excitement. As we pass along we meet crowds everywhere.

Seoul is divided into two parties. One is bitter against Russia and claims the delivery and punishment of Y.-Yung-Yk⁴¹, on whom all the Imperial confidence and favours are bestowed at this moment. Another party is in favour of him and Russia. The former is for Japan—but there is no party to support their own country, to work for its independence, and to secure its freedom. There seem to be very few Koreans for Korea.

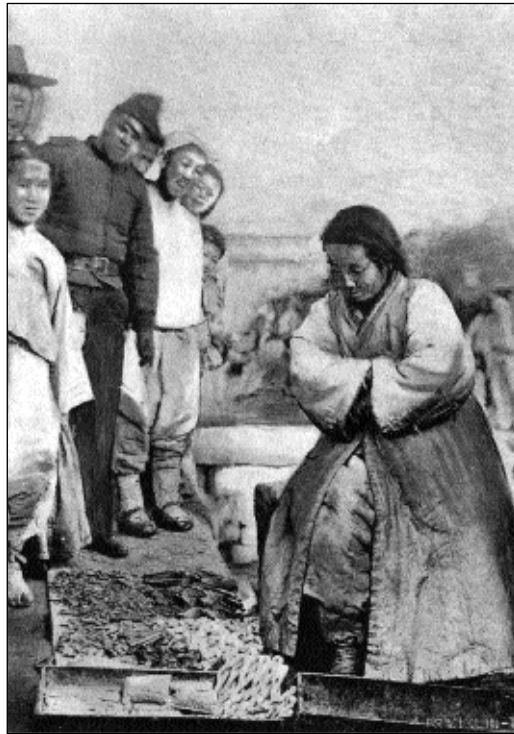
FOOTNOTES

³⁸ The already mentioned *Tōksu* Palace.

³⁹ Perhaps the following three royal palaces, beyond the already mentioned *Tōksu* Palace: *Ch'angdōk* Palace, Palace of “Illustrious Virtue”, *Kyōngbok* Palace, Palace of “Shining Blessing”, *Unhyōn* Palace, Palace of “Cloud Hill”,

⁴⁰ ...

⁴¹ Yi Wanyong (1858-1926) pro-Russian politician, Education Minister and later Foreign Minister, but in August he signed the Treaty of Annexation prepared by Terauchi Masatake, and became one the “five traitors”.



Street vendor

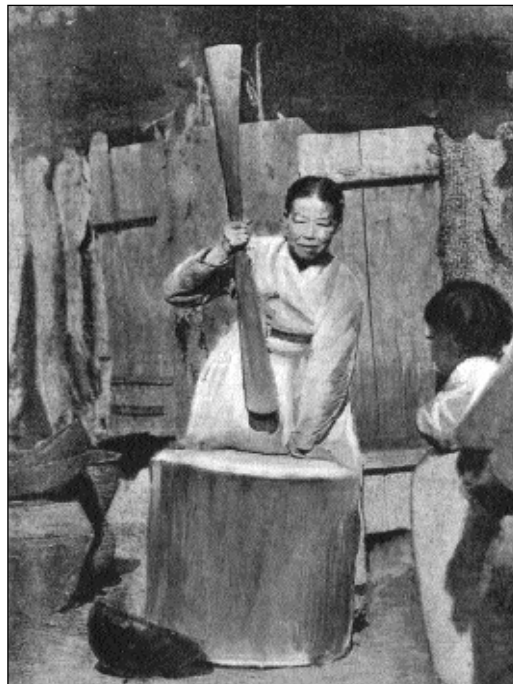
Beasts of burden





Children at play

Pounding rice





Palace of Korea's last queen

Drying sesame seeds

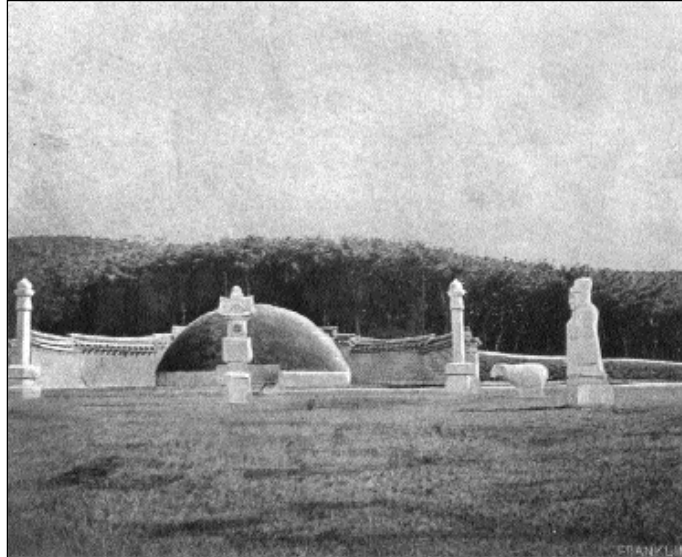




Teacher and students at school

Traditional Korean musicians





A royal tomb

Stupa in honor of Chinese empress



Japanese Embassy in Seoul



Temple of Heaven

King Kojong



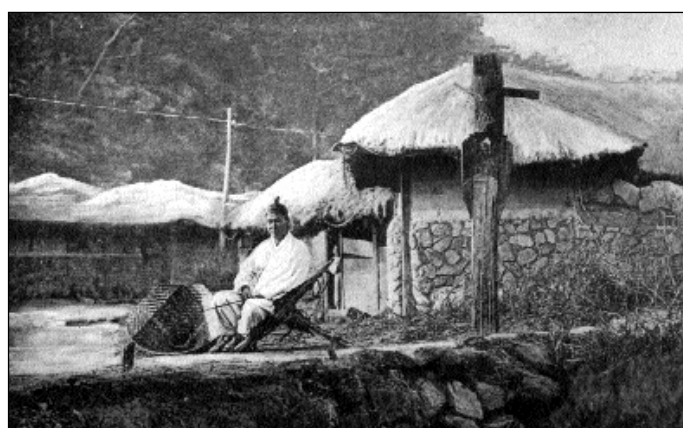


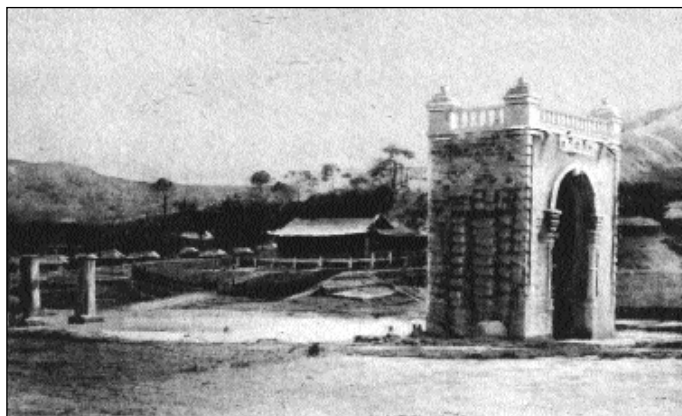
One of the four main gates to Seoul

Mt. Pukhan



Roadside lodging



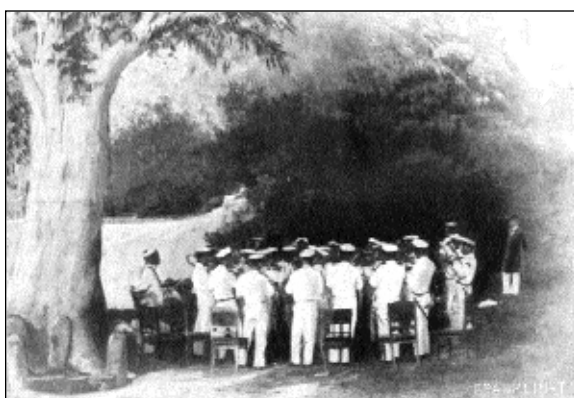


Independence Gate

On the slopes of Mt. Pukhan



Western-style orchestra





Porters using Korean-style carrying frame

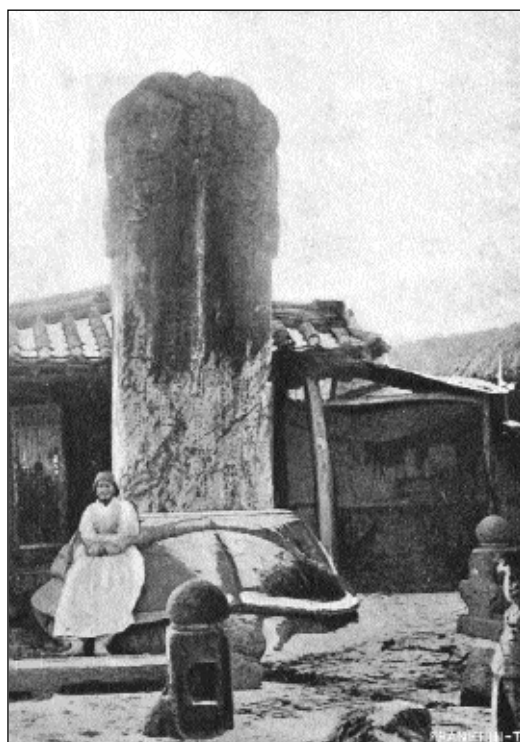


Off the coast of Incheon



The art of negotiation

Memorial stele





Crown prince Yi Iik

