

# THE BATTLE GROUND OF EASTERN ASIA

## COREA, BETWEEN THE RUSSIANS AND THE JAPS, HER QUAIN PEOPLE, THEIR ODD CUSTOMS AND SACRED HATS.



RUSSIAN SOLDIER



JAPANESE SOLDIER



THE KING OF COREA



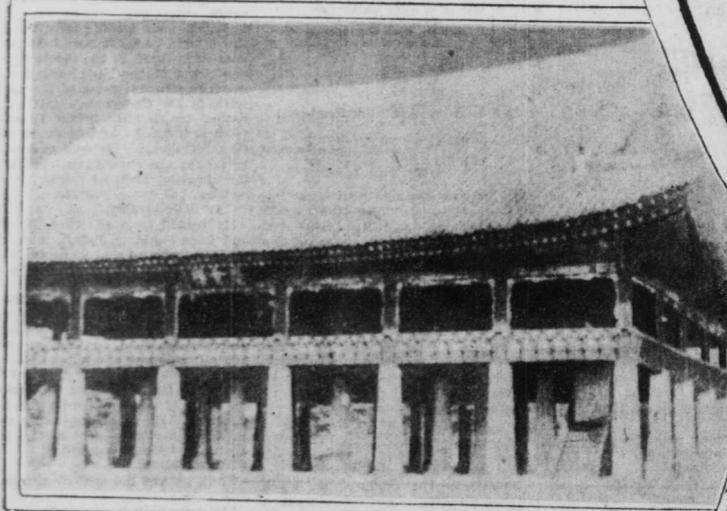
COREAN WEARING SACRED HAT



THE CROWN PRINCE



AFTERNOON TEA



THE AUDIENCE PAVILION AND LOTUS POND SEOUL



MAP OF COREA AND ADJACENT POSSESSIONS



COREAN LADY OF HIGH DEGREE



A GAME OF GO BAN

found themselves right in the midst of things.

The first and the most prominent of these advisers who had been loaned to the Koreans regardless of cost was Mr. Hoshi Toru, afterward Japanese Minister in Washington, where he became celebrated for his close study and admiration of the Tammany system of political organization. He tried to introduce the system in Tokio, the Japanese capital, and was promptly assassinated. But in Seoul Hoshi was a reformer of the most uncompromising character and made himself most cordially detested by the Koreans, as I had ample opportunity of seeing. Mr. Hoshi knew a great many things, but he had forgotten the fact, which it is especially well for reformers to recall every now and then, that Rome was not built in a day.

He made fun of the old customs of the country. He even ordered the Koreans to cut off their topknot hair adornments. He said men were not necessarily wise because they had hair growing out of their ears, and he discouraged the habit of Korean statesmen of pretending they could not walk and appearing at the councils of state supported by their bond slaves. He also ridiculed their flowing sleeves and abundant skirts, which, as he said quite truly, made it impossible for them to work; but of course that was just what they wanted. The awful fear of having some day to work was the one preoccupation of the Korean statement as long as the strenuous Mr. Hoshi remained in the land.

Time went on; one tempest after another disturbed that Korean teapot, and the one thing that became at all clear was the failure of reforms to catch on and the ever increasing hatred of the Koreans of all classes for their benefactors. Symptomatic rebellions took place in various provinces, and at last the Japanese Minister to Seoul, probably without the advice and sanction of his Government, determined upon a desperate act. One night in October, 1896, the palace was surrounded by a battalion of Japanese troops, and a body of soldiers and Japanese civilians, some, at least, wearing the disguise of Korean uniforms, entered the private apartments of Queen Min and murdered her.

The Queen was undoubtedly the head and front of the anti-Japanese party, but her death under such disgraceful circumstances did not have the result which the conspirators undoubtedly hoped from it. Russian diplomacy, of course, made the most of the opportunity. For a few months practical anarchy reigned throughout the country, and at last the King in fear of his life took refuge in the Russian legation. This was the end of whatever pretense of independence Korea up to that time had maintained.

For seven years now the only power in the country has been that of the antagonistic legations of Japan and Russia. Our efforts have been confined to seeking to induce Korea to open more treaty ports, with the double purpose of increasing our markets and as a means of life insurance to the threatened kingdom. Of course, the fate of Korea at an early day is annexation to an efficient power, and the treaty ports and treaty rights form some slight obstacle to offhand annexation, as the case of Nanchang in the Manchurian difficulty clearly demonstrates.

But up to the present these efforts have not been crowned with success. The King of Korea, who now, as though to emphasize the pitifulness of his position, styles himself Emperor, is a bright little man with a very imposing face and sympathetic eyes. He has a greater insight into Western ways and manners than any other Eastern potentate I have known, with the exception of the King of Siam, and has borne himself with considerable dignity in the many trying positions in which he has been placed by the recent course of events. However, he is not a strong man, he seems to have no power over his lethargic subjects, and probably, should war again take place about the final disposition of Korea, he and his people will, as in 1894, maintain an attitude of impassive reserve and indeed indifference to the result. The Crown Prince, whose picture is given as he beams out from the audience pavilion, is a cheerful idiot, who has, I believe, been recently supplanted in favor of another son. However, the fault seems to be in the race rather than in the individual. The Koreans have lived too long with no admixture of fresh blood.

For some years past, in fact ever since the war with China, a company in which were interested many prominent Japanese has been engaged in promoting the construction of a rail-

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BY STEPHEN BONSAI.  
UNTIL ten years ago Korea, now the storm center of the Far East, well deserved its poetic name—the Land of the Morning Calm. Then what has become the Naboth's vineyard of the Asian coast was generally referred to, when reference was necessary, as the Hermit Kingdom, and it kept severely to itself. In 1866, however, an adventurous Hamburg merchant, listening to the fairy tales of the Shanghai settlement, fitted out an expedition and tried to penetrate the forbidden land. It was generally thought that the object of the Hamburger's venture was to rob the royal tombs at Pingan, which were reputed to contain much treasure. However, he returned empty handed. Then we Americans got into a little war with the Hermits about an American schooner, the General Sherman, which disappeared up a Korean river, and together with the crew was never heard of again. Our marines and bluejackets went up the Han River nearly to the Korean capital and gave the tiger hunting battalions of the then King a good drubbing, but we did not push the war to a conclusion or insist upon the complete satisfaction and reparation which Sir Harry Parkes and some other English Judges thought we should have had.

Our want of energy was really due to the apparently well substantiated fact that the crew of the Sherman were practically pirates who had gone to Korea on a gamble in which they lost everything—including their lives. As a matter of fact the only connection Korea had at this time with the world outside was through a Chinese Ambassador who came every year from the court of Peking to the peninsula. Recently the attempt was made to show that the relations between China and Korea were those of a suzerain power and a tributary state. If they were so, at least the Koreans—certainly the people most directly concerned—were not aware of it. They had—and in a measure still have—a sentimental attachment to the Chinese, and they showed their respect for the Emperor of their neighbors by speaking to him in even more exalted honorifics than were required by etiquette when addressing their own ruler.

The duties of this Chinese Ambassador to Korea were not onerous and the Koreans lodged him free, used him very well in every way and sent him home laden with rich presents. His duties were hardly diplomatic, there being apparently at that time no business of state between the two countries worth discussing. More than anything else he was a literary agent pledged to boom the study of Confucius and to make known to the literati of Seoul the latest commentaries on the disputed or more obscure passages of the sage by the Han-lin professors.

But the mission had one business feature and served at least one useful purpose. Several thousand years ago, as we all know, the Koreans were intellectually a prodigiously active people. They had printing presses before Gutenberg was ever dreamed of, and they had monitors and ironclads twenty generations at least before Ericsson was born. This great mental activity has been followed by a period of brain weariness which is apparent the first day you arrive in Korea. Bright enough though they are when they want to be, every Korean impresses you as wishing to avoid working his brain. However, they did want to know where they were at and how the seasons passed, if this could be ascertained without astronomical calculations, which, as we know, are so wasting upon the gray matter and the nervous tissues. So the Emperor

of China sent every year by his Ambassador a calendar in which not only were the seasons set forth, but much other useful and timely advice was given. For instance, the calendar would say: "March 20 the season of the great cold ends; you can put on your spring clothes. July 10 the great heat begins; shed your wadded overalls and show your skin." The King would immediately order the calendar reprinted and have it distributed throughout the land, and so it can be said that the whole of Korea went by Peking time. The calendar did not fit in very well with the weather conditions of Seoul, and the Hermits often sweated in their wadded overalls and blouses when the warm weather had come, but like many another people, though the physical discomfort was

great, they had the proud satisfaction of knowing that they were running and dressing according to the court calendar.

During the sixteenth century Korea was invaded several times by the Japanese, and prodigies of valor were accomplished on both sides. The upshot of these wars was to engender one of the most pronounced cases of racial antipathy I have ever encountered. It is now three hundred years old and shows no signs of abating. As a result of their many invasions the Japanese remained in possession of Fusan, a little port in the southeast corner of Korea, around which they built a wall and a string of little stone forts. They held it idle many years, as the English did Calais, in France, against the time of their next invasion,

and that came in 1895, when jealousy as to their respective rights and duties in Korea brought about war between Japan and China.

One of the results of this war, in which the Koreans preserved an attitude of amused impartiality, was the introduction of the Japanese calendar in Seoul and a lot more objectionable features of the conqueror's programme. Every department of the Korean Government, which had got along so noiselessly in the sleepy old days of the Chinese misfit calendar, was now simply crowned with Japanese advisers, who had been graciously loaned to the King by his imperial cousin of Japan, though the large fat salaries they drew came out of the depleted treasury of the Hermits, who now, very much against their will,