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# A Submarine Adventure.

The “Monastery of the Ocean Seal” [\*The Ha-in-sa (\*\*\*)] is one of the most important centers of Buddhism in Korea. It is in the town of Hyup-ch’um and counts its inmates by the hundreds. Its archives are piled with wood blocks cut with Sanscrit characters and the whole place is redolent with the odor of Buddhist sanctity. But it is the name which piques our curiosity and demands an explanation. The “Ocean Seal” does not mean the amphibious animal whose pelt forms an article of commerce but it means the seal with which a legal document is stamped.

The genesis of this name may appear fanciful to the matter-of-fact western mind but we can assure the reader that it is the most rational explanation he will find, and we would remind him at the same time that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of any western system of philosophy.

Hong Săng-wŭn was one of those literary flowers that are born to blush unseen and waste their sweetness on the desert air of central Korea. Virtue is its own reward but that reward seldom takes the form of bread and butter; so while Hong was virtuous he was lamentably poor. His literary [page 146] attainments forbade his earning his living by the sweat of his brow so be earned it by the sweat of his slave’s brow who went about begging food from the neighbors. Curiously enough this did not sully his honor as work would have done.

As he was sitting one day in his room meditating upon the partiality of fortune, a strange dog came running into the yard and curled up in a corner as if this had always been its home. It attached itself to Hong and accompanied him wherever he went. Hong took a great liking to the animal and would share with it even his scanty bowl of rice, much to the disgust of the faithful slave by whose efforts alone the food had been obtained.

One morning the dog began wagging its tail and jumping about as if begging its master to take a walk. Hong complied and the dog led straight toward the river. It ran into the water and then came back and seemed to invite its master to mount its back and ride into the stream. Hong drew the line at such a prank but when he saw the dog dash into the water and cross with incredible speed he caught the spirit of the occasion and so far curtailed his *yangban* dignity as to seat himself on the dog’s back. To his consternation the dog sank with him to the bottom of the river, but as he found no difficulty in breathing and naturally felt some delicacy about trusting himself alone to the novel element, he held fast to the dog and was rewarded shortly by a sight of the palace of His Majesty the Dragon King of the Deep. Dismounting at the door he joined the crowd of tortoises and octopi and other courtiers of the deep who were seeking audience with their dread sovereign. No one challenged his entrance and soon he stood in the presence. The king greeted him cordially and asked him why he had delayed so long in coming. Hong carried on the polite fiction by answering that he had been very delinquent in paying his respects so late but that several species of important *pol il* or “business” had prevented his coming sooner. The upshot of the matter was that the sea king made him tutor to the crown prince, who studied his characters with such assiduity that in six months his education was complete.

By this time Hong was beginning to long for a breath of fresh air and made bold to intimate as much to His Majesty, [page 147] who made no objection but insisted upon loading him down with gifts. The crown prince drew him aside and whispered:

“If he asks you to name the thing you would like best as a reminder of your stay with us, don’t fail to name that wooden seal on the table over yonder.” It was an ordinary looking thing and Hong wondered of what use it could be to him but he had seen too many queer things to be skeptical; so when the king asked him what he would like he asked only for the wooden seal. The king not only gave him the seal but the more costly gifts as well.

 With his capacious sleeve full of pink coral mixed with lustrous pearls and with the seal in his hand he mounted the dog and sped away homeward. A short half hour sufficed to land him on the bank of the stream where he had entered it aud with the dog at his heels he wended his way across the fields toward his former home.

 When he arrived at the spot where his little thatched hut should be standing he found the site occupied by a beautiful and capacious building. Had he indeed lost the only place he could call home? Anxiously he entered the place and inquired for the owner. The young man who seemed to be in charge answered gravely that some twenty years before the owner had wandered away with his dog and never returned.

“And who then are you?” asked the astonished Hong.

“I am his son.” Hong gazed at him critically and, sure enough, the young man looked just as his son would have looked. He made himself known and great was the rejoicing in that house. There were a thousand questions to be asked and answered,

“And where did this fine house come from?”

“Why, you see, the dog that you went away with came back regularly every month bringing in his mouth a bar of gold and then disappeared again. We soon had enough to build this place and buy all the surrounding rice fields.”

“And it has been twenty years! I thought only six months had passed. They evidently live very fast down there under the sea.”

Hong found no difficulty in adapting himself to the new situation. He was well on in years now but was very well preserved, as one might expect from his having been in brine [page 148] for the last twenty years. But he found no use for the seal that he had brought.

After several months had passed a monk came wandering by and stopped to talk with the old gentleman. In the course of the conversation it transpired that Hong had visited the Sea King’s domain. The monk asked eagerly:

“And did you see the wonderful seal?”

“See it?” said Hong, “I not only saw it but I brought it back with me.” The monk trembled with excitement.

“Bring it here,” he begged.

Hong brought out the seal and placed it in the hands of the holy man. The monk took a piece of paper and wrote on it. “Ten ounces of gold.” Then without inking the seal he pressed it on the paper and lo! it left a bright red impress without even being wet. This done, the monk folded the paper and setting fire to it tossed it into the air. It burned as it fell and at the point where the charred remnants touched the ground was seen a bright bar of gold of ten ounces weight. This then was the secret. No matter what sum was asked for, the impress of that seal would surely bring it.

They kept it going pretty constantly for the next few days as you may easily imagine. The monk received an enormous sum with which he built the magnificent monastery and named it appropriately the *Ha-in-sa* or the “Ocean Seal Monastery.”

He went all the way to India to bring the sacred Sanscrit books and the wood blocks were cut and piled in the library of the monastery. Beneath them was hidden the marvelous seal, but Koreans say that during the last Japan-China war it disappeared. The man who holds it is probably ignorant of its value. If his eye happens to fall upon this and he discovers the virtues of the seal we trust he will do the proper thing as Hong did by the monk who showed him its secret.

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# Slavery in Korea.

We are in receipt of a number of inquiries relative to slavery in Korea and it is such a broad subject and such an important one that it seems best to treat all these questions under a single heading.

The historical aspects of slavery alone would more then exhaust our space but they must be briefly reviewed before describing the present status of Korean slavery.

At the time of Ki-ja who came to Korea in 1122 B.C. slavery did not exist in China, but when that great colonizer took in hand the half-savage denizens of the peninsula he found it necessary to enact stringent laws. Among the different forms of punishment decreed by him we find that slavery was one. We cannot but admire the line of reasoning upon which he based what we believe to be a social evil. He said, in effect; God decrees that men shall live by their own exertions, each man earning a living by his own hands and obtaining both the necessities and luxuries of existence by his personal effort. If therefore a man takes by wile or by force the fruits of another man’s industry he becomes joined to that man by a logical and moral bond. If he eats the other man’s food he belongs to the other man. Theft, therefore, was punished by slavery, the thief becoming the property of the man from whom he stole. It was possible for him to redeem himself by the payment of a million cash but even after that he must remain a discredited member of society, a social outcast. Adultery was likewise punished by slavery; but the offender, for reasons quite palpable, could not become a slave in the house of the man whom he had wronged He became a slave of the government and the king gave him to one or other of the high officials.

This continued down to the year 193 B.C. when Kijun, the last of the ancient Chosŭn line, was driven out by Wiman and fled to the southern part of the peninsula. The upheaval in the north disorganized society and slavery disappeared under Wiman’s short rule. Ki-jun however carried it south with him and introduced in into his new Kingdom of [page 150] Ma-han. It existed in a mild form in the early days of Silla through it could not have been very common; for only murderers were condemned to slavery. Meanwhile the kingdom of Ko-gu-ryŭ arose in the north. Slavery did not exist there until Ko-gu-ryŭ began the conquest of the Hyung-no (\*\*\*) tribes. These people became slaves in Ko-gu-ryŭ. So we find that at the time when Buddhism began to find a foothold on Korean soil in the fourth century a mild form of slavery existed throughout the peninsula.

One curious effect of Buddhism was to do away with slavery. The exaggerated notion of human and animal life entertained by Buddhism together with the doctrine of the transmigration of souls aroused a decided sentiment against human slavery and the institution fell into desuetude throughout Korea as fast as Buddhism made conquest of the country.

But after all Korea was united by the first king of Koryŭ in 918 and Buddhism became rampant, it began a rapid deterioration. Its spirit dropped away leaving nothing but the forms. Luxury began to sap the life of the people and slavery once more became an institution in Korea. In fact the number of slaves was enormous and many exciting stories are told of how they revolted from time to time and fought hard battles with their masters but were at last put down. On one occasion three hundred slaves had stones tied about their necks and were thrown into a river.

When the Koryŭ dynasty was overthrown and the present one was set up there occurred a certain amount of social house-cleaning in this peninsula but slavery continued up to the time of the great invasion by the armies of Hideyoshi in 1592. This great war killed off so many of the male population of Korea that when peace reigned once more a law was promulgated forbidding the slavery of males and confining it to females alone. This has continued until the present time and the great outstanding fact regarding slavery in Korea today is that there is not a single male slave in all the realm of His Majesty the Emperor of Tă-han.

 In discussing the present status of slavery in Korea, therefore, we have to do only with female slaves. And the first question is—How does a Korean woman become a slave? There are four possible ways.

[page 151] (1) Let us suppose that a woman of the middle or lower class finds that she has lost all visible means of support and must either become a beggar or a slave or else starve to death or supposing that she is in great need of ready money to bury a parent or to support aged parents dependent on her. She will go to an acquaintance and ask him to recommend her to someone as a slave. This is done and she is introduced into the house of her prospective purchaser. He looks her over, sets her to work and satisfies himself that she is competent. He then pays her forty thousand, fifty thousand or in exceptional cases as high as a hundred thousand cash for herself and she gives a deed of her own person made out in proper form. In place of a seal she places her hand upon the paper and marks its outline whereby she can be at any time identified. She is then his legal slave. The transaction does not come under the cognizance of the government but is a private contract. Formerly only men of the higher class were allowed to own a slave and it is only during the last forty years, or roughly speaking since the beginning of the present reign, that Koreans of the middle class have been allowed to hold slaves. This is one of the marked features of the rapid demolition of social barriers that has been taking place during the past four decades. It may be asked whether under any circumstances a woman of the upper classes could thus sell herself into slavery. She can do so only by disguising the fact that she is a lady born and so deceiving her purchaser, for no gentleman would knowingly buy a lady, not only because of the innate impropriety of the transaction but because he would subject himself to the most caustic criticism of his peers.

(2) The second way in which a woman may become a slave is as follows. If a man of the upper class is convicted of treason (or formerly of counterfeiting, as well) he is either executed or banished and all the female inmates of his house become slaves. They are given by the government to high officials, but as a rule it is not long before such women are liberated. They are never sold from one house to another.

(3) If a woman slave dies, her daughter takes her place and becomes a slave. She is called a *si chong* or “seed slave” as she follows the mother in the ordinary line of descent. [page 152] We shall consider below the methods by which a slave can be liberated but under every circumstance a slave dying while still unredeemed has to give her daughter, if she has one, to be a slave in her place. It is very probable that when a slave dies and leaves a young daughter this girl will go with her master’s daughter as part of her dowry when she is married.

(4) There is a fourth way by which a woman may become a slave. She is poor and finds it impossible to live. She wants a home of some kind and so voluntarily offers herself as a slave without any compensation except the food, clothes and shelter that will be given her. One would suppose that such a slave would be of a higher grade than the one who has sold herself, but the very opposite is the case. The one who has sold herself can buy herself back at any time by paying back the exact amount that she received but the slave who becomes so without pay cannot free herself by any means. She has far less rights than the bought slave.

These are the four kinds of slaves in Korea. There is a certain kind of service that is rendered by boys that does not properly come under the term slavery. Such boys are called, to be sure, *sang-no* or “common slave” but they are not slaves. They run errands and do odd jobs about gentlemen’s houses and receive in payment their food and clothing. They give no deeds, there is no compact and they can leave at any time. They are lower than the regularly salaried servant but vastly higher than the slave.

As all slaves are women it will be necessary to inquire how their marriages are arranged and what is the status of the husband. It is manifestly to the interest of the owner to have his slave marry for if she should die her daughter would take her place. In the case of a bought slave she is allowed to select her partner about as she pleases. She will probably marry some day-laborer or coolie in the vicinity. She has her little room near the gate quarters and he is allowed to occupy it with her free of cost. He owes nothing to the master of the house and does not do any work for him except of his own accord. In the case of a slave who is not bought she has not so much freedom to choose her partner as has the bought slave. Her master can let her marry or not as he wishes. The probability is that he will consent; [page 153] In the case of the slave who is not bought it is quite common after several years of work for her master to let her go with her husband, perhaps setting her up in some little business or other.

As the husband lives with his wife at the house of her master we naturally wonder whose rice he eats. She surely eats her master’s rice, but what does he eat. He has no right to eat rice that comes to his wife. He must earn his own rice and bring it in. Then the two “pool their interests” and get along very snugly. Of course if she can she will get enough rice out of her master’s bag to feed the whole family. If there are children they too eat of the master’s rice till they are old enough to work for themselves.

 We have already said that if a slave dies her daughter becomes a slave in her mother’s place. If there are several daughters the first one will take her mother’s place and the others all go free, but if the daughter determined upon should die before the mother then the master selects another of the daughters to be slave in her stead when she dies. If a woman slave dies leaving three daughters and the eldest after taking her place dies even within a month the master cannot take either of the other daughters in her place. All male children are naturally free; they cannot be enslaved. They owe nothing to the master and as soon as they can make their way alone they no longer are fed out of his bag.

 As for the duties of the female slave it is easy to imagine what they are. She does all the ordinary rough work about the house. She does the washing, brings water from the neighborhood well, goes to market and buys the vegetables, helps with the cooking, walks as a mourner in her master’s funeral procession, runs errands and makes herself generally useful. If in the country she goes into the field and works as an ordinary field hand. She is not the familiar servant of the lady of the house and she seldom acts as lady’s maid. She is never called upon to do any sewing or nursing. Her place is in the kitchen or yard and not in her mistress’ chamber.

Korean folk-lore is full of stories of faithful and unfaithful slaves. In fact it may be called one of the favorite themes. Our space does not permit us to give any of these stories in [page 154] full but a sketch of one or two will suffice to indicate their general character. The first story is of the good slave who though his master (this occurred in the days when male slavery existed) became desperately poor refused to leave him, but wore himself out in his attempts to keep the wolf away from his master’s door. One day he went off across the hills to a village on a bagging expedition and as he was passing through the woods a tiger leaped out at him and crouched in the road in the act of springing. The old slave addressed the animal calmly and asked if the tiger saw anything worth capturing in such a dried up specimen of humanity as himself, who had lost all his flesh in attempting to keep his master alive. The tiger seemed to understand, and the old slave passed on, but a moment later heard the tiger coming toward him with great bounds. He gave himself up for lost and turned just as the tiger crouched before him and let fall from his month a large nugget of pure gold; after which, with a switch of his tail, he bounded off into the woods. The astonished slave picked up the piece of gold and carried it to his master; and now that his luck had been thus strangely changed it kept on mending.

Another story is that of a wicked female slave who imbibed socialistic notions or evolved them from her own inner consciousness and would go about grumbling because her master had plenty of money without working for it, while she got none though she worked her fingers to the bone. At last she meditated revenge for her fancied wrongs. Suddenly appearing before her master with hair dishevelled and clothes torn she affirmed that she had been brutally beaten by a man living a few houses away and begged her master to avenge her. He called his men servants and sent them to the house she indicated to inquire into the matter. They entered but could find no one there, till at last they discovered a dead body lying on the floor. They hurried out but at the gate were met by two men who charged them with having killed the man in the house at the instance of their master. In spite of all their protestations and the indignant denials of their master the government decided to arrest the latter and send him into banishment. After the first excitement had somewhat passed away the master remembered that it was [page 155] his slave who had asked to have the men sent, so he began watching her. Pretending to leave the place he slipped behind the servants’ quarters and by applying his ear to a convenient crack heard her boast to her accomplice of the clever way she had gotten her master into the trap. He suddenly sprang out before her and forced her to confess that she had gotten the men to accuse him of having done the deed when she herself was the criminal. So she is executed and the right is vindicated.

# The Status of Woman.

Concluded.

We shall attempt to finish the discussion of this question in the present paper though it will be necessary to deal with the different headings very briefly. And first we will inquire as to the punishments of women.

If a man is a traitor or if he desecrates a grave the common custom until very recently has been to decapitate him and all his male relatives to the fifth remove and to execute by poison all women of his immediate family, namely his mother, wife and daughters. In certain cases the women may be merely made slaves but this is uncommon. If a woman herself meditates treason she will be poisoned. For murder a man is decapitated and his wife poisoned. If the woman is the offender she will be strangled or poisoned. For arson a man will be strangled or poisoned and a woman will be poisoned. For theft a man may be either decapitated or strangled or banished, his wife will be enslaved and the property confiscated. Such were the customs up to the year 1895, but at that time the punishment of wives and daughters for the husband’s or father’s fault was done away and a great forward step was thus taken in judicial ethics. Since that time only the offender himself has been punished.

The subject of divorce is an important one, and here the great inequality between the sexes becomes manifest. On no pretext whatever can a woman obtain a legal separation from [page 156] her husband. The only thing she can do is to run away to her father’s house or to that of some relative. In this case the husband has no redress unless he can disprove her charges against him. In that case he can demand not her person but only the cost of the marriage ceremony. This proving is not done by legal process but is a matter between the parties concerned, and their relatives. The law will not force a woman to go back to her husband’s home. It will be thus seen that divorce in its main feature, namely the getting rid of a bad husband, is possible to any Korean woman, but there is no legal document which dissolves the marriage tie.

If a man wants to divorce his wife the reason will probably be either that she has committed adultery, or that she is an inveterate gossip, or that she has insulted him, or that she is indolent, or that she does not attend properly to the sacrifices, or that she is a thief. If the woman thus divorced is a lady she has absolutely no redress, whether the accusation be just or not. If she is a common woman she can appeal to the Mayor of Seoul or to her local magistrate and can have her husband punished for driving her away without sufficient cause, if such be the case and she can prove it. If a woman is divorced or if she runs away from her husband all the children remain in his care. She cannot take any of them with her unless he permits it. If she clandestinely takes one or more of the children away he can force her to give them up.

Divorce is very uncommon among the upper class. The wife and mistress of the house is by no means a mere chattel as in Turkey or Persia. She has rights that all are bound to respect, and to divorce her requires very sound and patent reasons. She has her powerful relatives who would make it very uncomfortable for her husband should he attempt to discredit their house by wantonly divorcing her. It is a great disgrace for a gentleman to have his wife run away from him and he will go far to conciliate her and prevent such a scene. Among the common people, however, there is far greater license. Divorce is exceedingly easy and common. If a man marries and finds that the woman of his choice is not what he had anticipated he will simply send her home and get another. It is very uncommon for a woman to complain before the magistrate and have her delinquent husband [page 157] punished, for in any case she cannot go back to him and the less said about the matter the better. The utmost promiscuity prevails among the lower classes. A man may have half a dozen wives a year in rotation. No ceremony is required and it is simply a mutual agreement of a more or less temporary nature. The biblical picture of the woman at Jacob’s well who had had five husbands is precisely descriptive of thousands and thousands among the lower classes in Korea. The cost of a regular wedding in Korea is very great, averaging probably six months’ income. This is one of the main reasons for irregular connections.

Concubinage is an institution as old as history. It has existed in Korea from time immemorial. There are three main causes for it in this country, (1) If a man has no son by his wife; (2) if the wife is an invalid or a cripple or old; (3) mere luxury. The custom is prevalent both among the higher and the lower classes. A woman of the upper class never becomes a concubine, but men of the upper class take concubines from the lower strata of society.

From time to time we hear excuses made for concubinage in the case of a man whose wife is barren but the excuse is not a valid one; and for the very good reason that however many sons a man may have by a concubine not one of them can call him father, or become his heir, or sacrifice to his remains. He may have half a dozen sons by his concubines and yet when the time comes to die he will adopt a son from some more or less distant branch of the family; and it is this adopted son who will call him father, worship him dead, and inherit all his property. The sons of concubines have no rights whatever nor would a man ever think of adopting his son by a concubine as his real heir. This rule applies specially to the upper class where great stress is laid upon purity of blood, but among the common people where the restraints are very much less the son by a concubine may be a man’s heir. In this case the man and his concubine belong to the same grade of society while with the upper class man his concubine is far below him; and the children always take the status of the mother.

If a man of the upper class has one or more concubines he must keep a separate establishment for each of them. It [page 158] would be unheard of for a gentleman to introduce a concubine into the home where his real wife lives. Among the common people however the wife and the concubine may occupy the same house. Human nature is the same the world over and it is needless to say that oftentimes the result is simply pandemonium. No other one thing is so conducive to domestic discord as this evil custom. The Koreans recognize its baneful effects and condemn it, but money and leisure offer great temptations in Korea as elsewhere.

In conclusion we must say a word about the amusements of women. The commonest form of amusement is what is called *ku’gyung*. This word cannot be exactly translated but it may mean to “look see” or to “take a walk” or both combined. When the Korean says *kugyung kap-si-ta* he means, “Let’s go and take a stroll and have a look about.” Now this, in the uneventful life of a Korean woman, is one of the highest forms of pleasure. It makes no difference if she sees nothing more exciting than a passing bicycle or electric car; it is amusing and entertaining. Of course such pleasures are mostly limited to the middle class women who are less strictly secluded. Ladies amuse themselves very often by playing the *kumungo* a kind of zither about five feet long and one foot wide. Its musical capabilities are not surprisingly high. They also play the *hageum* or violin, which looks like a croquet mallet with a large head and short handle; the strings biing stretched from the end of the handle to the middle of the head. The hair of the bow is wound in between the three strings so that it cannot be removed while playing. This instrument is capable of emitting some of the most painful noises imaginable.

Korean girls are very fond of swinging, and on a certain day in spring nearly every one who can find the time is swinging. Huge swings are arranged by the people in public places but these are used only by men and boys. Korean girls have a “see-saw” of their own. It is a short board laid across a stick three inches high. The girls stand on the two ends of the board and when one comes down on her end it bounces the other one up in the air and when she comes down the same phenomenon happens at the other end. It must be far less amusing than a genuine see-saw. In the country [page 159] the girls enjoy what is called the *chul-nori* or rope game. A rope is drawn taut between two trees and the girls grasp it on either side and swing back and forth against it and sing. The Korean doll is very common and is called a *kaksi*. It is most often seen tied on the little girl’s back where it is carried as infants are usually carried in this country. Dominoes, go-bang and dice are favorite games among women though the last are used almost exclusively by ladies of the upper class.

It may be asked whether Korean women ever have titles corresponding to the western terms countess, duchess, baroness, etc. The wives of officials of the first rank, corresponding to the old time p’an-sŭ (\*\*), are called Chŭng-gyŭng Pu-in (\*\*\*\*). Wives of officials of the second rank corresponding to the old time Ch’am-p’an (\*\*) are called Chŭng Pu-in (\*\*\*) and wives of officials of the third rank are called Suk Pu-in (\*\*\*). All other women of the higher class are designated Yu-in (\*\*)

The discussion of the status of woman might be extended indefinitely but we have answered all the questions that have been proposed and touched on the most important phases of the subject.

# Reviews.

## Where the Indian came from

The *Literary Digest* of March 8th quotes an article in *The American Antiquarian* by Charles Hallock in which he claims that the racial problem of the Western Hemisphere has now been practically solved. This solution, he says, clears up not only the origin of the American Indigenes but approximately the antiquity of their progenitors. Mr. Hallock believes that the ruined cities of Central America were built by emigrants from Korea and that subsequently they scattered and became the North American Indian tribes. He says:

It is believed that the progenitors of the ancestors of the Mexicans were an Asiatic colony from Korea which was at that time tributary to China, a fact which accounts for [page 160] coincidences of dates in the first half of the sixth century. This opinion is confirmed by Chinese Manuscripts \*\*\*\* History shows that the Koreans migrated to escape tyranny, undertaking a sea voyage of nine weeks to the North-east \*\*\*\* The Koreans were certainly in communication with America as far back as the second year of the Dynasty of Tsin, Emperor of China, who declared war against Korea.

He says of these Korean immigrants that their ruined and silent cities, like those of Asia Minor, and their massive pyramids, temples and palaces vie with those of the old world. Then he remarks that

Finally came those stupendous terrestrial dislocations, emergencies, droughts, denudations, and other dynamic phenomena which punctuated the lapse of geologic time and changed the contour of the continent. By the same cataclysm which broke up the foundations of the great deep, according to scripture \*\*\* the aceqias, aqueducts and irrigating canals were destroyed or rendered useless.

Apparently this caused the scattering of these Central American Koreans and the gradual genesis of the Indian tribes.

To anyone acquainted with the Korean people, their history and civilization the above must appear the height of comedy. Does Mr. Hallock mean to say that Koreans went to America at the time of the Tsin Dynasty (255-209 B.C.) and evolved a civilization in central America which could erect great pyramids, palaces and monuments that would vie with those of Europe and all this before those geological upheavals that changed the contour of the American continent? Whom does Mr. Hallock mean by “the dynasty of Tsin, Emperor of China?” Was Tsin the dynasty or the Emperor? He speaks of the sixth century. There was a Tsin or Chin Dynasty in China at that time (\*) but it made no war on Korea as a whole. It may have had a fight with Ko-guryu in northern Korea but the notion that Koreans at that time went to America to escape tyranny is laughable. How did Koreans get by Japan if they sailed north-east? How did they get to central America if they sailed north-east? And besides all this the records of Korean history go back easily to the time of Christ and there is absolutely no intimation of any such emigration nor is there anything among Korean monuments to show that the Koreans possessed the ability to build the [page 161] massive pyramids and remains that are spoken of. They must have evolved the whole thing after reaching American, even if they went, which is more than doubtful.

We fear that Mr. Hallock’s efforts at solving the origin of the America Indian are based on too superficial a knowledge of the geography and history of the far east. We believe that the North American Indian was originally an Asiatic, an offshoot of that immense Turanian family that spread all over northern Asia and over India as well. The only rational explanation is that they reached America by way of the Kurile and Aleutian islands or directly from Siberia to Alaska.

We imagine that Mr. Hallock’s historical data are taken from Ma Twan-lin’s description of Fusang which certainly seems to be North America but it says nothing about Koreans going there and the account is altogether too vague to do more than imply that the Chinese had heard something about the great western continent. The problem of the North American Indian and the high civilization of ancient central America is not to be solved by any such simple twist of the wrist as this.

## Korea a la globetrotter

*Harper’s Monthly Magazine* for March contains an article on Seoul by Mr. Alfred Stead who, it is said, spent a few days in this city last Summer. Whether his description of Seoul is adequate or fair may be judged by a few quotations. He says the Japanese Legation is near the Old Palace which may be a reason why the King left it and went to the Russian Legation. As everyone knows the Japanese Legation is on the opposite side of the city from that palace, at least two miles away from it. He says that the present palace was formerly the residence of the Regent, which statement is fully two miles off the truth for the Regent’s place is far across the city back of Kyo-dong. “Every now and then the Emperor sends notes to the American and British Ministers politely asking them when they are going to move out into other quarters because he does not wish their presence so near the palace, and they answer equally politely that they were there when he came to this palace and it is for him to move if he is not comfortable.” Now we do not hesitate to affirm that this is a gross and libellous exggeration. His Majesty came to the [page 162] present palace for no other purpose than to be near the foreign Legations. It is doubtless true that he made overtures to the British Government to buy their legation property but is there anything improper about this? The British Government refuses to sell and that ends the matter. To say that His Majesty keeps sending notes asking the British Minister when he is going to “move out” would be amusing were it not so injurious to His Majesty, who received Mr. Stead in audience and treated him as well as he knew how, only to be held up to ridicule in one of the leading magazines of the world. We advise the Government to refuse audiences to tourists who have a penchant for airing their inchoative notions in this way and of putting in a very unenviable position a magazine that stands at the head of the world’s periodical literature. To say that the American Minister receives such notes from His Majesty is flat falsehood. And it is still flatter falsehood to say that such supposed notes would be answered in such a spirit as is implied in the above quotation. It is an insult both to the English and American Ministers and deserves the most stinging rebuke.

 The writer continues the myth that the Emperor’s name is Li Hsi. Now the word *si* or *hsi* means clan or family as we would say “He is a Smith” or “He is a Howard.” It corresponds to the “a” in these expressions. The King’s family name is Yi but the King is supposed to have no name except his imperial title until after his demise, when a posthumous name is conferred upon him. Mr. Stead shows his ability to obtain accurate information when he says that the present dynasty began 300 years ago, in which statement he was only 210 years out of the way, as the dynasty was founded in 1392. We are told that the Emperor is regarded by the people as God (not as a god). Nothing could be further from the truth. His Majesty is not given divine honors to the least degree. He exercises no sacerdotal function except in an occasional sacrifice and this statement is utterly opposed to every form of religion prevalent in the peninsula. Were Koreans to know that any foreigner had said this they would call it the rankest sacrilege.

The writer states that it is the imperial custom, in hot weather, to spend most of the time between audiences in his bath-tub. [page 163] This is the kind of statement one would expect to find in the columns of one of those newspapers whose one vocation is to tickle the public fancy regardless of facts. One would think from this that the Emperor of Korea was on an equality with some African chief. As Mr. Stead entered the anteroom before entering the Emperor’s presence we are told that all the officials prostrated themselves and again as he entered the audience chamber. If the English language means anything this means that the officials prostrated themselves before Mr. Stead. We wonder if this was the impression he wanted his readers to receive. Can anything he more cruelly libellous than the statement that the Crown Prince could not stand without a table to lean upon? Of course such statements are utterly false. The Crown Prince is in normal health and it is well known that he is a man of good average intellect in spite of the wild statements of such unmannerly guests as Mr. Stead. He says that for occasions like that which he attended the court orders up specially bad Chinese champagne. The readers of the Review may rest assured that the Korean Court does not, as this implies, take pains to belittle and insult its guests. It is false that the Emperor serves inferior wines to his guests and even if it were true we leave it to our readers to judge of the writer’s good taste in holding up to ridicule the hospitality of His Majesty, which we do not doubt he anxiously sought in order to have an opportunity to “write it up.” His statement that His Majesty is supposed to make a royal progress through Seoul once a year is entirely erroneous. His statement that sometimes a royal procession costs $700,000 a day is exaggerated twenty fold for such a procession costs from $20,000 to $30,000. It was only at the late queen’s funeral that expenses ran up into the hundreds of thousands. He says that once the champaign for the foreign representatives alone figured up to $70,000. This is also a gross exaggeration. At the time of the Queen’s funeral His Majesty built pavilions at the Royal Tomb for the entertainment of foreign guests and did things in very handsome style. The total cost for the entertainment of all the foreigners may have been $70,000 but we doubt it.

Those who know Seoul will smile to learn that the Old Palace lies close to “the Hill of Puk-han” which is seven [page 164] miles from that palace, and that on top of that hill stands a solitary tree, while in fact “Lone Tree Mountain” lies in a diametrically opposite direction and the mountain behind the palace, namely Pu-ak, is covered with trees. And so it goes on through the entire article, a tissue of grotesque exaggerations. But the most amusing of them all is the picture of the “Crown Prince” which is not the Crown Prince at all but Prince Wi-wha who is in America, and has been there for several years. It is a great pity that such a magazine as Harper’s and that such a well-meaning host as the Emperor of Korea should both be victimized by such a mendacious scribbler.

## Electric Shocks

A recent number of the *Outlook* contained an article by Rev. J. S. Gale, the Corresponding Secretary of the Korea Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, under the caption “Electric Shocks in the Far East,” giving a most amusing and racy resume of the kaleidoscopic changes that have been effected during recent years in this peninsula. He brings out with unerring skill the salient points and dresses them in such a way that though the style is distinctly humorous we read much between the lines that is as distinctly pathetic. A great critic has said that true art consists in isolating a particular phase or idea and so concentrating attention upon it as to lay bare its inner meaning. If this is true then Mr. Gale has the true artist’s touch.

# Odds and Ends.

## How Bribery Began.

This is the story the Koreans tell to show when this evil custom began. They say it was during the reign of Chung-jong Tăwang (15061548) but we have our doubts as to whether it was not known or at least guessed about long before then. They say that the Vice Minister of Law was at that time very poor and had the utmost difficulty in finding the wherewithal to feed himself and family. One of his friends, a military official, wanted to help him in some delicate way, so he had a silver image of a boy made, on which was carved the donor’s [page 165] name. This he secretly introduced into the Law official’s house. As might be expected it was very thankfully received. A few months later the father of this military friend was arrested for a serious crime but his son came to the Law official and reminded him of the silver he had received. The result was that the criminal was exonerated. In some way the facts got to the ear of the king and the Law official was cashiered. But this was the entering wedge.

## A Korean Canute

It would be hard to duplicate the case of King Canute who sat on the sea shore and ordered the tide not to come in, but Korean folk lore contains something very like it. Chöng Tu-gyŭng a Korean official was sent by the King as secret detective or O-sa (\*\*) to Ham-gyŭng Province. He was a very masterful man and liked to make everything bend before his will. One evening he entered an inn to put up for the night and after eating his supper he conceived the idea of writing a poem. As a spur to his own genius he vowed that he would complete a poem before cock crow. Now it is well known that cocks crow neither indiscriminately nor without forethought. Chöng knew this as well as everyone else. Even if experience had not taught him he should have known it from the famous poem of Ch’oé Ch’i-wun (\*\*\*) the brightest literary light of ancient Korea, which says:

In his thatch beside the river the cock crows and I know that dawn is nigh. The willow branches wave in the soft morning breeze and the setting moon makes a silver bridge across the ruffled surface of the stream. I hear the song of the fishermen up and down the stream but the white reed flowers, the moonlight and the fishermen’s clothes are all one color so I can tell that the fishermen are there only by their song.

So Chöng sat down to write his poem. The night advanced. The thoughts would not come. The characters chased each other across his brain and danced wildly in his imagination but they would not group themselves into orderly sequence. He found it impossible to force the muse. Every moment he grew angrier and more determined. He would write that poem before the cock crew. He bent to the task again and racked his brains. The hours crept on. He found at last an idea, smiled in triumph, rubbed his brush pen [page 166] on the ink-stone and—the cock crew. He threw the pen into the corner, tore the paper across and rose in a white heat of anger.

“Come here, you beggarly inn-keeper,” he screamed. The trembling host appeared with his *pajis* “down-gyved at the ankles” and consternation on his face.

“What do you mean by having such a \*\*\*\*\*\* old rooster on your place, to crow at such an unearthly hour as this? Have him out here while I wring his neck.” The goodman shuffled off muttering to himself and brought the offending fowl which then and there paid the extreme penalty for its fault.

# Editorial Comment.

The Editor of The Kobe Chronicle underestimates the value of the space in the columns of his excellent paper when he wastes it in setting up straw men to knock down. In his March 19 issue he tries to make it appear as if we had claimed that no laws of political economy are applicable to Korea whereas we distinctly stated, in the remarks which he only partially quoted, that the canons of political economy, as developed in Europe, are not universally applicable to Korea, which the Editor of the Chronicle concedes when he says that “it is quite true that the working of those laws will differ according to the density of the population the means of communication or the intelligence of the people.” What does he mean when he says “the working of those laws will differ?” He means they will work one way in one place and another way in another place; in other words they may work one way in highly enlightened Europe and quite a different way in Korea. It is pleasant to find this common ground to stand upon, which was precisely our first contention. But he should not have wasted half a column trying to show that we held that no laws of political economy are applicable to Korea.

After quoting our instance of an inland village in Korea where Japanese agents buy up the grain and export it leaving the people no option except to starve or import from abroad at heavy expense he makes the following statements.

[page 167] What induces the Japanese agent to appear on the scene? Clearly the prospect of gain. What induces the people to sell the rice? Once more the prospect of gain. Presumably the people sell to the Japanese agent because they can get more money by selling the surplus of their crop to him than they could by selling it locally. “Oh, but,” says the Editor of the Korea Review, “the Japanese agent scuds his rice down the river at practically no expense while if the crops should fail the following year that Koreans of this inland town would have to import the rice which they must have to live upon at much greater expense because it would have to be laboriously towed up stream.” But the presumption is that the Koreans of the inland town sold their rice to the Japanese at a higher price than they could sell locally or at any rate his appearance as a buyer must have tended to raise prices all around so that they already have a fund upon which they can draw to pay for the extra expenses of towage.

Now let us examine this statement, for it is a grave matter, especially as steps have been taken by the Japanese to revise the commercial treaty between Korea and Japan with special reference to this embargo business. The first error of the Editor of the Chronicle is in supposing that we were talking about a failure of crops *the following year*. The condition that he mentions has nothing to do with the present case at all. We were talking of the very year the failure of crop takes place and not of the year before. One would suppose this would not need reiteration but we will try once more, and patiently, to enlighten our esteemed cotemporary. As he knows, the rice crop is harvested in the autumn. Now let us suppose that there is one fourth of an average crop. That means that in this inland town there may be enough rice to pull the people through the winter until the barley ripens in the spring. There is *immediate need* of that rice locally and the need will continue uninterruptedly for eight months. It has nothing whatever to do with the success or failure of any subsequent crop. There is the little stock of rice and there are the people needing it immediately. Note carefully that this rice is in the hands of the farmers who are by no means the whole of the population; and probably not more than a quarter of the farmers will have any rice to sell. Those few farmers who have a surplus are glad to sell at the highest price possible. It is to them the people look for their [page 168] supply. Now a Korean agent appears from Seoul to buy up rice for the merchants at the capital. The prefect intervenes and forbids the agents from buying, for this surplus rice will barely carry the people through the winter; so the agents retire. Then comes the Japanese agent whom the prefect cannot control and he offers a lump sum down for the surplus. The farmers who have the surplus are glad to sell to him for two reasons, (1) because he pays immediately for the whole lot while if the people of the town bought it they would buy it a little at a time as their scanty income would permit, though on the whole the amount would be about the same. (2) because rice is too bulky a commodity to hide and there is always the fear of bandits during famine times. So the Japanese agent carries away the rice and within a month the people are clamoring for food. They have money to pay for it but it is gone. If their hunger did not come on till the “following season” of which our friend speaks they might import, at a heavy loss, but as it is there is no time to do it. There had been enough rice and enough money to pay for it before the Japanese carried it off but now there is absolutely nothing for them but to starve. And all this, mind you, when Japan is enjoying an unusually fine crop of rice. We affirm that it is infamous and that the Japanese authorities who forced the raising of the Embargo are directly responsible for the starvation of hundreds of Koreans. The editor of the Chronicle may talk about the laws of political economy as he pleases but he cannot hide the damning fact. He says that if the people had been prevented from selling their rice to the Japanese agents they would have been compelled to raise loans in order to pay taxes and expenses of production. This statement alone shows how competent he is to discuss the question for it shows that he does not know that in the country rice is as good as legal tender and that there could not possibly be any danger of the farmer not having money to pay the tax. So this is the question that the *Chronicle* says we “do not even try to meet.” The reason we never tried to meet it is because we supposed anyone who knew anything about conditions here would know too much to ask it.

The fact remains that the raising of the Embargo helped materially to produce a state of affairs in Korea so terrible that in one instance a mother ate her own child.

[page 169]

# News Calendar.

Two of the twenty-nine men who followed the governor of Whanghă Province up to Seoul to recover 400,000,000 cash that he illegally extorted have been thrown into jail.

On the 26th of March 15070 bags of Annam rice arrived. This is a matter of great importance, for just at present there would be great distress in Seoul were it not for this rice. In fairness it must be admitted that in the importation of this rice Yi Yong-ik has showed decided business ability.

Of all the famine stricken districts of Whang-hă Province Yun-an is perhaps the worst afflicted. Out of five thousand houses two thousand are empty. Scores of dropsical sufferers on the verge of starvation are lying beside the roads. But in spite of it the officials command the people to hand over their money. The people have appealed to the Home Department for clemency.

The Japanese Minister applied to the Korean Government for permission to erect a telephone line between Seoul and Chemulpo but the government replied that as it was already preparing such a line it would be impossible to grant permission for others to build.

The people of Im-pi in Southern Kyŭng-sang Province have petitioned the government to prevent Japanese from settling on the coast in their vicinity. These Japanese build houses and till the land and in fact are permanent settlers on Korean soil outside the treaty ports. The Koreans evidently fear that if this sort of thing begins there is no knowing where it will stop.

On the 31st of March exchange was $188 Korean for $100 Japanese yen.

The government very wisely has released the two men who were arrested for acting as money brokers.

The native papers assert that of the money paid out by the Finance Department for salaries last month one half was depreciated currency.

The reports from Su-wun state that typhus is very prevalent there and that as many as seventy people have died there in a single day recently.

Yi Yong-jik, who as was noted last month, was condemned to be banished for severe strictures which he made on the government officials has been sent to Ch’ul-do or “Iron island” off Ham-gyŭng Province to remain for three years.

Yi Keun-t’ăk must be a very busy man as he is judge of the Supreme Court, Chief of Police, second in command of the gendarmes, and Chief of the Imperial Body Guard.

The native papers state that the Chinese Minister has asked the Korean government to intervene to prevent the repetition of Korean [page 170] raids across the Yalu into Chinese territory. It seems that the tables are being turned.

The Korean government has taken into its employ four Russians. Two of them are glass makers, one an iron founder and one a weaving expert.

Japanese merchants have brought from P’yŭng-an Province 5200 bags of rice to sell in Chemulpo and Seoul.

Of the $20,000 donated by the emperor for famine relief $15,000 have been distributed in the country and $5,000 are to be distributed in Seoul.

Yi Yong-ik has in hand 52000 lbs of government ginseng which will be shortly sent to China and marketed.

Yi Han-Sŭl has put down $2000, to start a silk growing farm in Yong-pyung. Permission has been secured from the Department of Agriculture

Sim Neung-wŭn of Tong-jin has given $4,000 to help seventy households over the hard times until the barley crop ripens.

C. T. Tong Esq, formerly Chinese Consul at Chemulpo, has been appointed President of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce in Chefoo which represents merchants in eight of the provinces of China. This is called the Choo-chow Guild,

The 13th inst was set apart by the Japanese authorities as the annual memorial day to the soldiers who fell in the late war and to whom a monument has been erected on the slopes of Nam San.

On the 4th instant Yi Chă-gak the special envoy to King Edward VII coronation, together with two aides Ko Ueui-gyŭng and Kim Chohyŭn started for England. The sum of $40,000 was appropriated for their expenses.

According to the report of the Japanese Consul in Wonsan gold has been exported from that place to Japan during the past year to the amount of $1,658,495; and to China to the amount of $16,750; making a total of $1,676,245. This is an increase of $242,669 over last year.

On April 1st work was, begun on the monument that is to be erected in commemoration of the brilliant events of the present reign. There will be two stones, one in the ordinary shape and one in the shape of a large drum, with the *ta-geuk* or national emblem in the center. The cost of these together with buildings, etc, will be defrayed by a tax of 20 per cent on the salaries of all government officials during two months.

Kim Pyŭng-t’ăk of Mu-ju, Ham-gyŭng Province, has paid $120 towards the taxes of the destitute people of his town and distributed large quantities of rice to the starving.

The famine on the island of Kyo-dong near Kang-wha has resulted in the desertion of 598 houses.

Appropriations as follows have been made toward the expenses of Prince Wi-wha who is now in America: a balance of the appropriation for 1900, $8,000; and for the first month of 1902, $667.

The prefect of Mi-ryang, Kyŭng-sang Province writes the government that there is danger of a rising among the people unless one Kim Ch’ang-yul, [page 171] who is interested in a gold mine there, is not compelled to pay back $35,000 which he has taken from the people by indirection.

As we have before noted, the new monastery, the Wun-heung-sa outside the east gate has been made the chief monastery in the country and the whole system has been organized with this monastery as the governing center. The Household Department is not leaving the matter in the hands of the monks but has appointed a civil director, secretary and six clerks. This is a rather remarkable revival of Buddhist influence in Korea.

Kim Ch’ŭng-sik the superintendent of trade in Chinnampo is in trouble. Last year he urged the government to engage the services of a very wonderful geomancer living at Myo-hyang San and select a place in P’yŭng-yang for a new palace. The Emperor so ordered and gave some $20,000 for the purpose; but later suspicions were aroused regarding the affair and a detective was sent down to investigate. It was found that there was no such distinguished geomancer and that the government had been hoaxed. The result is that Kim Chŭng-sik’s honors have been taken away and his arrest has been ordered.

The commission in charge of the erection of the new monument in honor of the brilliant events of the present reign have appealed to the students of all the common schools in Seoul asking for contributions, and they are giving ten cents apiece all around.

An old Korean custom is being revived. Before the late China-Japan war it was customary for the prime minister to have a large fan called a p’a-ch’o-sŭn carried before him as he passed along the street, but this was discontinued after the war. It is now to be revived.

A clerk in the Chemulpo Korean Post Office having received two letters from a Frenchman with order for registration gave a false registration receipt and stole the letters one of which contained a check on Shanghai for $2,000 and the other a check on Nagasaki for $750. He went to China and managed to get the $2,000 check cashed but he met sharpers or thieves who robbed him of it. Then he went to Nagasaki but failed to cash the other check. Then he came home and stopped at his house in Seoul. The Frenchman hunted him up and got hold of his coat collar and asked him to explain. The fellow bit the Frenchman’s hand and managed to escape and is still at large.

The girl’s school which was founded in 1899 gradually fell into a decline but now efforts are being made to put it on a solid footing. The emperor is interested in it and has given $10,000 to prepare new buildings and it is greatly to he hoped that the school will be a thorough success.

A new tax is to be levied on tobacco and liquors throughout the country.

The government has conferred the rank of Chusa upon many wealthy men in the provinces who have been giving their private means to relieve the sufferings of the people.

A daughter was born to Rev. and Mrs. Burkwall on the 18th inst.

[page 172] The tennis season opened at the Seoul Union tennis grounds on the 18th inst.

Herbert Goffe, Esq., the British Consul at Chemulpo, left for home on leave early this month and Mr. Fox, formerly Secretary of Legation in Seoul, takes the place thus made vacant.

Four robbers entered the house of Kim Yong-je in Seoul on the 7th but Mr. Kim put up such a good fight that the rascals dropped everything they had and fled. Among the things they threw away was quite a considerable amount of loot they had taken elsewhere. This was sent to the police headquarters and returned to its owners.

The French Minister asks for payment, with interest, of $280, a debt incurred by Koreans in Paris at the time of the exposition.

It is announced that the removal of the late queen’s tomb will take place in the tenth moon, which will be in November.

The prefect of T’ă-an named Yi Keui-sŭk has distinguished himself by building a school, at his own expense, costing some $480. And helped people pay their taxes to the extent of 200,000 cash, and gave ten measures of rice to each of 300 households.

The late edicts against counterfeiting have borne fruit in the execution by strangulation of Hong Pyöng-jin and the severe beating of Yi Kön-yung and his introduction to the chain-gang.

At the intercession of several of the ministers of state Yi Yong-jik has been recalled from banishment. It will be remembered that he severely criticized the present personnel of the government.

The entire town of Mi-ryang in Kyung-sang Province was destroyed by bandits early in this month.

In Kyo-ha district the people driven by hunger began to pull the bark from trees and eat it. Some trees near a royal tomb were thus destroyed. The tomb keeper protested but the people said, “We might as will die this way as any other” and he could not stop them. Under one tree he found five dead bodies.

The governor of North Chulla Province reports that in eighteen districts in his province there are 21.363 households that are absolutely destitute; they include 41,358 persons.

A Japanese has erected a pavilion on the slope of Namsan where Koreans can go and play “go-bang” or chess. It is a sort of sporting club, each Korean giving a yen a month as dues.

In Korea there is an institution called the Ki-ro-so which may be translated “The Hall of the Elders.” If is a sort of honorary degree to which officials of the first and second grades are eligible after passing their 50th year. Previous to the time of Yung-jung Tă-wang (17241776) sixty years was the limit but at that time the age limit was lowered to fifty years. Since the beginning of the dynasty there have been only four kings who have attained the age requisite for enrollment in the list of the Ki-ro-so. Of these four the present king is one, since he has now attained his fifty-first year. For this reason the Prince Imperial has memorialized His Majesty suggesting that preparations be made for an [page 173] imposing ceremony which shall signalize the entrance of His Majesty into the “Hall of the Elders.” Therefore on May 30 all the men in Korea over seventy years old will be invited to a great feast at the palace. On June 1st all the officials will feast at the palace. The total expense will probably be in the vicinity of $300,000. As will be seen from the statement above, this is a celebration that has not recurred since the middle of the 18th century.

Since the beginning of winter the capital of South Ham-gyŭng Province has been in a state of semi-anarchy. It was caused by the oppression of the officials. In one of the many popular uprisings a *Chusa* was killed and in all 180 houses have been burned. Even at the present time there is great disaffection not only there but throughout the country.

The native paper states that the governor of Whang-hă Province has so disposed of the thousands which he stole from the people of his province that he is safe from punishment.

The Russian Minister has applied for permission to connect the telegraph line from Seoul to Eui-ju with a Russian line from Eui-ju to Peking.

The governor of Kang-wŭn Province asks for five hundred soldiers from Seoul to help guard the many mountain passes in his province because of the large number of highwaymen that infest the passes.

The Minister of Education, in view of the fact that military drill is to be introduced into foreign language schools asks that a captain be detailed to each of the schools to act as drill masters.

Yi Yong-ik was appointed Chief of Police on the 17th inst.

One hundred Japanese policemen and one hundred Korean policemen are to be appointed to act as guards at the forty stations of the Seoul-Fusan Railway.

Thirty armed robbers wrecked the village of Ku-nani, in the district of Mi-ryang, South Kyŭng-sang Province on the 2nd inst. Six of the villagers were killed and over 100 houses burned.

Cho Han-byŭk, the general superintendent of six foreign language schools, petitions the government to erect in Pak-dong a large buildirg which will house all these schools. The estimated cost is $90,000.

On the 24th of March the three villages of To-rang, To-jŭng and Nam-San in South Ham-gyŭng Proxnnce were destroyed by fire, 187 houses being burned and 20 people killed.

During the last two months 114 houses have burned in the town of Kyung-ju and three lives lost.

There counterfeiters in Kim-sŭng have been arrested and condemned to the chain-gang for life.

On the l0th instant a storm on the western coast wrecked forty Korean boats near Mokpo and thirty men were drowned.

An official of Kong-ju in South Ch’ung-ch’ung Province reports that in the town of Im-ch’ŭn a certain family was driven to such straits that for some days they fed off the bodies of two of the smaller children.

[page 174] Laws, Ordinances and Notifications OF THE Corean Government Gazette, 1901

[not scanned easily, see images]

[page 177]

# Korean History

Medieval Korea.

The records say that he was so anxious to have a son that he committed an act almost if not quite unparalleled in the history of any land, civilized or savage. Having become prematurely old by his terrible excesses, he introduced a number of young men into the palace and gave them the *entre* into the queen’s apartments, hoping thereby that his hopes might be realised. In this he was disappointed. One day while passing an hour in the apartments of his favorite, Sin-don, he noticed there a new-born babe, the son of one of Sin-don’s concubines. He seemed pleased with the child and Sin-don asked him to adopt it as his own. The king laughed but did not seem averse to the proposition. Returning to the palace he summoned the officials and told them that for some time he had been frequenting the apartments of Sin-don and that he had gotten a son by one of the women there. He knew well enough that if he proposed to adopt Sin-don’s son the opposition would be overwhelming, so he took this means of carrying out the plan. Of course it is impossible to verify the truth of this statement. It may have been a fabrication of the historians of the following dynasty in order to justify the founder of the new dynasty in overthrowing Koryŭ. The annals of the Ming dynasty say that it was the king’s son and not Sin-don’s.

In 1366 the opposition to the favorite increased in intensity and the king was almost buried beneath petitions for his banishment or death. These the king answered by banishing or killing the senders and by this means the open opposition was put an end to. The wily monk knew that he needed more than the king’s favor in order to maintain his position of honor, and so he began to take away the fields and other property of high officials and distribute them among the people in order to curry favor with them. This brought from the officials a new and fiercer protest and they told the king that [page 178] these acts would make his reign a subject of ridicule to future generations. While this did not move the king to active steps against Sin-don it caused a coolness to spring up between them.

All this time the Japanese were busy at the work of pillage and destruction. They took possession of an island near Kang-wha with the intention of fortifying it and making of it a permanent rendezvous. They landed wherever they pleased and committed the most horrible excesses with impunity. The Koryŭ troops were in bad condition. They had no uniforms and their arms were of the poorest kind and mostly out of order. They dared not attack the Japanese even when there was good hope of success. The generals showed the king the ways and means of holding the freebooters in check but he would not follow their advice, probably on account of the expense. He paid dearly for his economy in the end.

The mother of the king could not be brought to treat Sindon with respect. When the king expostulated with her and told her that the favorite was the pillar of the state she declared that he was a low-born adventurer and that she would not treat him as her equal. From that time she incurred the deadly enmity of the favorite who used every means in his power to influence the king against her. He became suspicious of everyone who held any high position and caused many of the highest officials to be put to death. He was commonly called “The Tiger.” The depth of the king’s infatuation was shown when in this same year he went to a monastery to give thanks to Buddha for the cessation of famine, which he ascribed to his having taken Sindon as counsellor. It is also shown in the impunity with which Sindon took the king to task in public for certain things that displeased him. The favorite was playing with fire. The people sent to the king repeatedly asking if the rumors of the favorite’s drunkenness and debaucheries were correct. But the king’s eyes had not yet been opened to the true state of affairs and these petitioners were severely punished.

[page 179] Chapter XI.

Sin-don’s pride.... Mongol Emperor’s plan of escape to Koryŭ . . .Mongol Empire falls Japanese envoy snubbed ....an imperial letter from the Ming court. . . .ill treatment of Japanese envoy bears fruit . . . .more trouble in Quelpart.... census and revenue Gen. Yi promoted....Koryŭ adopts Ming dress and coiffure . . Gen. Yi makes a campaign across the Yalu . .the Japanese come north of the capital....Sin-don is overthrown.... popular belief regarding him ....trouble from three sources at the same time.... a Mongol messenger.... the Japanese burn Han-yang.... a new favorite.... a laughing-stcck. . . .Chöng Mong-ju an envoy to Nanking. . . .plans for a navy.... useless army.... Ming Emperor demands horses. . . .Quelpart rebels defeated... king assassinated....Ming Emperor refuses to ratify the succession.... Mongols favored at the Koryŭ court.... a supernatural proof... Japanese repulsed... Japanese deny their responsibility for the action of corsairs.

The year 1367 saw no diminution of the symptoms that proclaimed the deep-seated disease that was eating at the vitals of Koryŭ. Sin-don even dared to flout the emperor by scornfully casting aside an imperial missive containing a notification of his elevation to an honorary position. The king continued to abase himself by performing menial duties in Buddhistic ceremonies at his favorite monastery. Sin-don added to his other claims the power of geomancy and said the king must move the capital to P’yŭng-yang. He was sent to look over the site with a view to a removal thither, but a storm of hail frightened him out of the project. Returning to Song-do he refused to see the king for four days, urging as his excuse the fatigue of the journey. His encroachments continued to such a point that at last he took no care to appear before the king in the proper court dress but came in the ordinary dress of the Koryŭ gentleman, and he ordered the historians not to mention the fact in the annals.

The Mongol horse-breeders still ruffled it in high style on the island of Quelpart where they even saw fit to drive out the prefect sent by the king. For this reason an expedition was fitted out against them and they were soon brought to terms. They however appealed to the emperor. As it [page 180] happened the Mongol emperor was at this time in desperate straits and foresaw the impossibility of long holding Peking against the Ming forces. He therefore formed the plan of escaping to the island of Quelpart and there finding asylum. For this purpose he sent large store of treasure and of other necessaries to this place. At the same time he sent an envoy to the court at Song-do relinquishing all claim to the island. In this way he apparently hoped to gain the good will of Koryŭ, of which he feared he would soon stand in need. The king, not knowing the emperor’s design, feared that this was a device by which to raise trouble and he hastened to send an envoy declaring that the expeditious to Quelpart were not in reference to the Mongols there but in order to dislodge a band of Japanese freebooters. The former prefects had always treated the people of Quelpart harshly and had exacted large sums from them on any and every pretext; but the prefect now sent was determined to show the people a different kind of rule. He even carried jars of water from the mainland rather than drink the water of Quelpart. So at least the records affirm. Naturally the people idolized him.

The year 1368 opened, the year which beheld the demolition of the Mongol empire. It had risen less than a century before and had increased with marvelous rapidity until it threatened the whole eastern hemisphere. Its decadence had been as rapid and as terrible as its rise. The Mongols were peculiarly unfit to resist the seductions of the more refined civilizations which they encountered. The Ming forces drove the Mongol court from Peking and the dethroned emperor betook himself northward into the desert to the town of Sa-mak.

 This year also witnessed the arrival of a friendly embassy from Japan bearing gifts to the king. Here was Koryŭ’s great opportunity to secure the cooperation of the Japanese government in the work of putting down the pirates who were harrying the shores of the peninsula. Proper treatment of this envoy and a little diplomacy would have saved Koryŭ untold suffering, but the low-born but all-powerful favorite. Sin-don, took advantage of the occasion to make an exhibition of his own importance and he snubbed the envoy so [page 181] effectually that the latter immediately returned to Japan. The foolish favorite went so far as to withhold proper food from him and his suite, and addressed them in low forms of speech. The same year, at his instigation, the whole system of national examinations was done away with.

Early in 1369 the first envoy, Sŭl Sa, from the Ming court arrived in Song-do. He was the bearer of an imperial letter which read as follow: --

“After the Sung dynasty lost its power, a hundred years passed by without its recovering from the blow, but heaven hated the drunkenness and licentiousness of the Mongols and now after eighteen years of war the fruition of our labors has been reached. At first we entered the Mongol army and there beheld the evils of the Mongol reign. Then with heaven’s help we went to the west, to Han-ju and overcame its king Chin U-ryang. Then we raised the standard of revolt against the Mongols. In the east we overcame the rebel Chang Sa-sung and in the south the Min-wŏl kingdom. In the north the Ho-in fell before us and now all the people of China call us emperor. The name of our dynasty is Ming and the name of this auspicious year is Hong-mu. We call upon you now as in duty bound to render allegiance to us. In times past you were very intimate with us for it was your desire to better the condition of your people thereby.”

Such was the importance of this embassy that the king went out in person to meet it. Splendid gifts were offered which, however, the envoy declined.

In accordance with the summons contained in this letter the king formally put away the Mongol calendar and assumed that of the Mings instead. An envoy was immediately sent to the Ming court to offer congratulations and perform the duties of a vassal. The emperor responded graciously by sending back to Koryŭ all citizens of that kingdom who had been held in semi-durance by the Mongols.

The criminal neglect of opportunity in driving away the friendly Japanese envoy now began to bear its bitter fruit. Many Japanese had from time to time settled peacefully in southern Koryŭ and the king had given them a place to live at Nam-hă in Kyŭng-sang Province. They now broke their oath [page 182] of fealty to the government, rose in open revolt and began ravaging the country right and left.

As the emperor of the Mongols had fled away north and his scheme for taking refuge in Quelpart had come to naught we would suppose the Mongol horse-breeders in that island would act with considerable circumspection; but on the other hand they kept up a continual disturbance, revolting and surrendering again in quick succession much to the annoyance of the central government.

In the latter part of the year 1369 the government again took a census of the arable land of the peninsula in order to make a re-estimate of the revenue to be received. This indicates that there had been a certain degree of prosperity in spite of all untoward circumstances and that the margin of cultivation had moved at least a little way up the hill-sides, and that waste land had been reclaimed. It is only by inferences from chance statements like this that we get an occasional imperfect glimpse of the condition of the common people. Oriental histories have not been written with reference to the common people.

The king had now handed over to Sin-don the whole care of public business and he was virtually the ruler of the land. Gen. Yi T’ă-jo had shown his wisdom in staying as far as possible from the capital and in not crossing the path of the dangerous favorite. He was now appointed general-in-chief of all the north-eastern territory and at the same time Gen. Yi Im-in was appointed to a similar position in the north-west. There was some fear lest fugitive Mongols might cross the border and seek refuge in Koryŭ territory. The chief business of the army there was to guard all the approaches and see to it that such fugitives were strictly excluded. In the following year, 1370, Gen. Yi Ta-jo even crossed the Yalu, probably in the vicinity of the present Lam-su, into what was then Yŭ-jin territory, and took 2000 bullocks and 100 horses, but gave them all to the people to be used in cultivating the fields.

Now that the Ming dynasty was firmly established the emperor turned his attention to Korea. He began by investing the king anew with the insignia of royalty and presenting him with a complete outfit of clothes of the style [page 183] of the Ming dynasty. He also gave musical instruments and the Ming calendar. The important law was promulgated that after a man had passed the civil examinations in Koryŭ he should go to Nanking and there undergo further examination. The king received all the emperor’s gifts and commands with complacency and soon the Ming dress was adopted throughout by the official class and more gradually by the common people. It is the style of dress in vogue in Korea today, whereas the Chinese themselves adopted later the dress of their Manchu conquerers. In this respect the Koreans today are really more Chinese that the Chinese themselves.

With the opening of 1371 Gen. Yi led an army across the Yalu and attacked Ol-ja Fortress. The whole territory between the Yalu and the Great Wall was at this time held by the Ya-jin people or by offshoots of the Mongol power. The Ming emperor had as yet made no attempt to take it and therefore this expedition of Koryŭ’s was not looked upon as an act of bad faith by China. Just before the attack on Ol-ja began, there came over to the Koryŭ forces a general who, formerly a Koryŭ citizen, had long been in the Mongol service. His name was Yi In-bok. Gen. Yi sent him to Song-do where the king elevated him to a high position. A bridge had been thrown across the Yalu and the army had crossed in safety, but a tremendous thunder storm threw the army into confusion, for they feared it was a warning voice from a deity who was angered by this invasion of trans-Yalu territory. With great presence of mind one of the leaders shouted that it was a good sign for it meant that the heavenly dragon was shaking things up a bit as a presage of their victory. Their fears were thus allayed and the attack upon the fortress was successful. Gen. Yi then led his forces toward the Liao Fortress but cautiously left all the camp baggage three days in the rear and advanced, with seven days rations in hand. The advance guard of 3000 reached the fortress and began the assault before the main body came up. When the garrison saw the full army approach they were in despair but their commander was determined to make a fight. As he stood on the wall and in person refused Gen. Yi’s terms it is said that the latter drew his bow and let fly an [page 184] arrow which sped so true that it struck off the commander’s helmet, whereupon Gen. Yi shouted, “If you do not surrender I will hit your face next time.” The commander thereupon surrendered. So Gen. Yi took the place and having dismantled it and burned all the supplies, started on the return march. Provisions ran low, and it was found necessary to kill the beasts of burden. They were in some danger from the detachments of the enemy who hung upon their rear but they were kept at a respectful distance by an ingenious stratagem of Gen. Yi’s, for wherever he made a camp he compelled the soldiers to make elaborate preparations even to the extent of erecting separate cattle sheds and water closets. The enemy finding these in the deserted camps deemed that the army must be in fine condition and so dared not attack them. Thus the whole army got safely back to An-ju.

As the Japanese pirates, emboldened by the impunity with which they could ravage Korea, now came even north of the capital and attacked Hă-ju the capital of Whanghă Province, and also burned forty Koryŭ boats, Gen. Yi was detailed to go and drive them away, which he speedily did.

The royal favorite was now nearing the catastrophe toward which his criminally corrupt course inevitably led. He was well known to all but the king whom he had infatuated. But now he began to see that the end was not far off. He knew that soon the king too would discover his knavery. For this cause he determined to use the little power he had left in an attempt to overthrow the government. What the plan was we are not told but it was nipped in the bud, for the king discovered it and arrested some of his accomplices and by means of torture learned the whole truth about the man whom he had before considered too good for this world. The revulsion of feeling was complete. He first banished Sin-don to Su-wŭn and then at the urgent advice of the whole court sent an executioner to make way with him. The messenger of death bore a letter with him in which the king said, “I promised never to move against you but I never anticipated such actions as those of which you have been guilty. Yon have (1) rebelled, (2) you have numerous children, though a monk and unmarried, (3) you have [page 185] built yourself a palace in my capital. These things I did not agree to. So Sin-don and his two sons perished.

It is said of Sin-don that he was mortally afraid of hunting-dogs and that in his feasts he insisted upon having the flesh of black fowls and white horses to eat. For these reasons the people said that he was not a man but a fox in disguise; for Korean lore affirms that if any animal drinks of water that has lain for twenty years in a human skull it will have the power to assume at will any form of man or beast. But the peculiar condition is added that if a hunting dog looks such a man in the face he will be compelled to resume his original shape.

With the opening of 1372 troubles multiplied. Nap T’ap-chul, a Mongol chieftain at large, together with Kogan, led a mixed army of Mongol and Yŭ-jin adventurers across the Yalu and began to harry the northern border. Gen. Chi Yun was sent to put down the presumptuous robbers. At the same time the Quelpart horse-breeders again revolted and when the king, at the command of the emperor, sent a man to bring horses as tribute to China the insurrectionists put him to death. But the common people of Quelpart formed a sort of militia and put down the insurrection themselves. The Japanese also made trouble, for they now began again to ravage the eastern coast, and struck as high north as An-byun, and Ham-ju, now Ham-heung. They also carried on operations at Nam-han near Seoul, but in both instances were driven off.

It is said that at this time the king was given over to sodomy and that he had a “school” of boys at the palace to cater to his unnatural passions. The people were deeply indignant and talk ran very high, but the person of the king was sacred, and his acts were not to be accounted for; so he went his evil way unchecked, each step bringing him nearer the overthrow of the dynasty which was now not far away.

Late in the year the king sent a present of fifty horses to the Ming emperor.

No sooner had the spring of 1373 opened than the remnant of the Mongols in the north sent to the king and said “We are about to raise a mighty force to overthrow the Ming empire, and you must cooperate with us in this [page 186] work.” The messenger who brought this unwelcome summons was promptly clapped into prison, but later at the advice of the courtiers he was liberated and sent back home.

It would be well-nigh impossible to describe each successive expedition of the Japanese to the shores of Koryŭ, but at this time one of unusual importance occurred. The marauders ascended the Han River in their small boats and made a swift attack on Han-yang the site of the present capital of Korea. Before leaving they burned it to the ground. The slaughter was terrific and the whole country and especially the capital was thrown into a state of unusual solicitude. The Japanese, loaded down with booty, made their way to the island of Kyo-dong just outside the island of Kang-wha, and proceeded to kill and plunder there.

The boy whom the king had called his son but who was in reality an illegitimate son of Sin-don, was named Mo-ri-no, but now as he had gained his majority he was given the name of U and the rank of Kang-neung-gun, or “Prince who is near to the king.” As Sin-don was dead the king made Kim Heung-gyŭng his favorite and pander. Gen. Kŭl Sang was put in charge of the defensive operations against the Japanese but as he failed to cashier one of his lieutenants who had suffered defeat at the hands of the Japanese the testy king took off his unoffending head. Gen. Ch’oe Yŭng was then put in charge and ordered to fit out a fleet to oppose the marauders. He was at the same time made criminal judge, but he committed so many ludicrous mistakes and made such a travesty of justice that he became a general laughing stock.

As the Ming capital was at Nanking the sending of envoys was a difficult matter, for they were obliged to go by boat, and in those days, and with the craft at their command, anything but coastwise sailing was exceedingly dangerous. So when the Koryŭ envoy Chöng Mong-ju, one of the few great men of the Koryŭ dynasty, arrived at the emperor’s court, the latter ordered that thereafter envoys should come but once in three years. In reply to this the king said that if desired the envoy could be sent overland; but this the emperor forbade because of the danger from the remnants of the Mongol power.

[page 187] The eventful year 1374 now came in. Gen. Yi Hyŭn told the king that without a navy Koryŭ would never be able to cope with Japanese pirates. He showed the king a plan for a navy which he had drawn up. His majesty was pleased with it and ordered it carried out, but the general affirmed that a navy never could be made out of landsmen and that a certain number of islanders should be selected and taught naval tactics for five years. In order to do this he urged that a large part of the useless army be disbanded. To all of this the royal assent was given. The quality of the army may be judged from the action of the troops sent south to Kyŭng-sang Province to oppose a band of Japanese. They ravaged and looted as badly as the Japanese themselves. And when at last the two forces did meet the Koryŭ troops were routed with a loss of 5,000 men. Meanwhile the Japanese were working their will in Whang-hă Province, north and west of the capital, and as to the details of it even the annals give up in despair and say the details were so harrowing that it was impossible to describe them.

The emperor of China was determined to obtain 2,000 of the celebrated horses bred on the island of Quelpart and after repeated demands the king sent to that island to procure them. The Mongol horse-breeders still had the business in hand and were led by four men who said, “We are Mongols, why should we furnish the Ming emperor with horses?” So they gave only 300 animals. The emperor insisted upon having the full 2,000 and the king reluctantly proceeded to extremities. A fleet of 300 boats was fitted out and 25,000 men were carried across the straits. On the way a gale of wind was encountered and many of the boats were swamped, but the following morning the survivors, still a large number, arrived at Myŭng-wŭl, or “Bright Moon,” Harbor where they found 3,000 men drawn up to oppose their landing. When the battle was joined the enemy was defeated and chased thirty *li* but they again rallied in the southern part of the island at Ho-do where they made a stand. There they were surrounded and compelled to surrender. The leader, T’ap-chi was cut in two at the waist and many others committed suicide. Several hundred others who refused to surrender were cut down. To the credit of the officers who led [page 188] the expedition be it said that wherever they went the people were protected and lawless acts were strictly forbidden.

The king had now reached the moment of his fate. The blood of many innocent men was on his hands and he was destined to a violent death himself. He was stabbed by one of his most trusted eunuchs while in a drunken sleep. The king’s mother was the first to discover the crime and with great presence of mind she concealed the fact and hastily summoning two of the courtiers consulted with them as to the best means of discovering the murderer. As it happened the eunuch was detected by the blood with which his clothes were stained. Put to the torture he confessed the crime and indicated his accomplice. The cause of his act was as follows. One of the king’s concubines was with child. When the eunuch informed the king the latter was very glad and asked who the father might be. The eunuch replied that one Hong Mun, one of the king’s favorites, was the father. The king said that he would bring about the death of this Hong so that no one should ever know that the child was not a genuine prince. The eunuch knew that this meant his own death too, for he also was privy to the fact. So he hastened to Hong Mun and they together matured the plan for the assassination.

U, the supposed son of the king, now ascended the throne. His posthumous title is Sin-u. An envoy was sent to Nanking to announce the fact, but the emperor refused to ratify his accession to the throne. The reason may have been because he was not satisfied as to the manner of the late king’s demise, or it may be that someone had intimated to him that the successor was of doubtful legitimacy; and now to add to the difficulties of the situation the Ming envoy on his way home with 200 tribute horses was waylaid by Korean renegades who stole the horses and escaped to the far north. When news of this reached Nanking the Korean envoy there hastened to make good his escape.

A conference was now held at the Koryŭ capital and as the breach with the Ming power seemed beyond remedy it was decided to make advances to the Mongols who still lingered in the north; but at the earnest desire of Chöng Mong-ju this decision was reversed and an envoy was sent to [page 189] Nanking to explain matters as best he could. The eunuch and his accomplice who had killed the king were now executed and notice of the fact was sent to the Chinese court.

There was great dissatisfaction among the Koryŭ officials for they all knew that the king was a mere usurper and it was again suggested that approaches be made to the Mongols. About this time also a Mongol envoy came demanding to know whose son the present king was. They wanted to put the king of Mukden on the throne, as he was of course favorable to the Mongols. A great and acrimonious dispute now arose between the Mongol and Ming factions in the Koryŭ court. But the Mongol sympathizers carried the day. This, however, came to nothing for when news came that the king of Mukden and many Koryŭ renegades were advancing in force on the Koryŭ frontier to take by force what the officials had decided to give unasked, there was a great revulsion of feeling and troops were sent to hold them in check. This was in 1376, and while this was in progress the Japanese were carrying fire and sword through the south without let or hindrance.

Pan-ya the real mother of the king came forward and claimed her position as such, but another of the former king’s concubines, Han, had always passed as the boy’s mother and she was now loath to give up the advantages which the position afforded. For this reason she secured the arrest and imprisonment of Pan-yu. It was decided that she must die and she was carried to the water’s edge and was about to be thrown in when she exclaimed, “When I die one of the palace gates will fall as a sign of my innocence and the truth of my claim.” The story runs that when she sank beneath the water this came true and all knew, too late, that she was indeed the mother of the king.

The Japanese now made their appearance again in Ch’ungCh’ŭng Province and took the town of Kong-ju. The Korean forces under Gen. Pak In-gye were there routed but not till their leader had been thrown from his horse and killed. Then an army under Gen. Ch’oe Yŭng met them at Hong san. The general rushed forward ahead of his men to attack the marauders and was wounded by an arrow in the mouth but he did not retire from the fight. The result was a glorious [page 190] victory for the Koryŭ forces. The Japanese were almost annihilated.

Some time before this the king had sent an envoy Na Heung-yu to Japan to ask the interference of the Japanese Government against the pirates, and the reply was now brought by the hand of a Japanese monk Yang Yu. It said, “The pirates all live in western Japan in a place called Ku-ju and they are rebels against us and have been for twenty years. So we are not at fault because of the harm they have done you. We are about to send an expedition against them and if we take Ku-ju we swear that we will put an end to the piracy.” But the pirates in the meantime ravaged Kangw^ha and large portions of Chŭl-la Province.

Chapter XII.

A Mongol proposal... “The Revellers”.... friends with the Mongols . . . .Gen. Yi takes up arms against the Japanese.... victorious. . . envoys to and from Japan . . .gun-powder , defeat turned into victory by Gen. Yi. . . .fire arrows... vacillation....prophecy....Japan helps Koryŭ.... jealousies.... a reckless king...Gen. Yi’s strategem .... a triumphal return... the emperor loses patience a coast guard... stone fights.... heavy tribute... the capital moved... Japanese repelled.... lukewarm Koryŭ.... a disgraceful act Gen. Yi victorious in the north...the emperor angry.... Japan sends back Koryŭ captives.... a skillful diplomat.... fine sarcasm.... a grave error.... victory in the northeast.... untold excesses... “Old Cat” ....tribute rejected.

Toward the close of 1377 the Mongol chieftain In-pukwun sent the king a letter saying, “Let us join forces and attack the Ming power.” At the same time he sent back all the Koryŭ people who had been taken captive at various times. The king’s answer was a truly diplomatic one. He said, “I will do so if you will first send the king of Mukden to me, bound hand and foot.” We need hardly say that this request was not granted.

The next attack of the Japanese extended all along the southern coast. The general who had been placed in the south to guard against them spent his time feasting with [page 191] courtezans and he and his officers were commonly known as “The Revellers.” Fighting was not at all in their intentions. When the king learned of this he banished the general to a distant island. Affairs at the capital were not going well. Officials were so numerous that the people again made use of the term “Smoke House Officials,” for there were so many that nearly every house in the capital furnished one. They tampered with the list of appointments and without the king’s knowledge slipped in the names of their friends. So the people in contempt called it the “Secret List.”

The coquetting with the Mongols brought forth fruit when early in 1378 they invested the king of Koryŭ and he adopted the Mongol name of the year. It is said that this caused great delight among the Mongols and that they now thought that with the help of Koryŭ they would be able to again establish their power in China.

After the Japanese had ravaged to their hearts’ content in Ch’ung-ch’ŭng Province and had killed 1000 men on Kang-wha and had burned fifty boats, the king did what he ought to have done long before, namely appointed Gen. Yi Tă-jo as General-in-chief of the Koryŭ forces. He took hold of the matter in earnest and summoned a great number of monks to aid in the making of boats for coast defence. The pirates now were ravaging the east and south and were advancing on Song-do. The king wanted to run away but was dissuaded. The Japanese were strongest in Kyŭng-sang Province. Gen. Yi’s first encounter with them was at Chiri Mountain in Chŭl-la Province and he there secured a great victory, demonstrating what has always been true, that under good leadership Koreans make excellent soldiers. When the Koryŭ troops had advanced within 200 paces of the enemy a burly Japanese was seen leaping and showing himself off before his fellows. Gen. Yi took a cross-bow and at the first shot laid the fellow low. The remainder of the Japanese fled up the mountain and took their stand in a solid mass which the records say resembled a hedge-hog; but Gen. Yi soon found a way to penetrate this phalanx and the pirates were slaughtered almost to man. But Gen. Yi could not be everywhere at once and in the meantime Kang-wha again suffered. Gen. Yi was next seen fighting in Whang-hă Province [page 192] at Hă-ju, where he burned the Japanese out from behind wooden defenses and slaughtered them without quarter.

The Japanese Government had not been able as yet to put down the pirates, but now an envoy, Sin Hong, a monk, came with gifts declaring that the government was not a party to the expeditions of the freebooters and that it was verv difficult to overcome them. And so the work went on, now on one coast of the country and now on another. The king sent an envoy to the Japanese Shogun, P’ă-ga-dă, to ask his interference, but the shogun imprisoned the envoy and nearly starved him to death and then sent him back. The king wanted to send another, but the courtiers were all afraid. They all hated the wise and learned Chöng Mong-ju and told the king to send him. He was quite willing to go and, arriving at the palace of the shogun, he spoke out fearlessly and rehearsed the friendly relations that had existed between the two countries, and created a very good impression. He was very popular both with the shogun himself and with the Japanese courtiers and when he returned to Koryŭ the shogun sent a general, Chu Mang-in, as escort and also 200 Koreans who had at some previous time been taken captive. The shogun also so far complied with the king’’s request as to break up the piratical settlements on the Sam-do or “Three islands.”

A man named Im Sŭn-mu had learned among the Mongols the art of making gunpowder and a bureau was now formed to attend to its manufacture but as yet there were no firearms.

With the opening of 1379 things looked blacker than ever. The Japanese were swarming in Ch’ung-ch’ŭng Province and on Kang-wha. The king was in mortal fear and had the walls of Song-do carefully guarded. Gen. Ch’oe Yŭng was sent to hold them in check. The Japanese knew that no one but he stood between them and Song-do, so they attacked him fiercely and soon put him to flight; but in the very nick of time Gen. Yi T’ă-jo came up with his cavalry, turned the retreating forces about and attacked the enemy so fiercely that defeat was turned into a splendid victory. A messenger arrived breathless at the gate of Song-do saying that Gen, Ch’oé had been defeated.