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KOREA

KOREA

THERE are a great many reasons for wanting to go to Korea, but the two strongest lie embalmed in the names by which the country has been so long known on our side of the world—"The Hermit Kingdom" and "The Land of the Morning Calm."

We just naturally wish to see these people who wouldn't see us until their gates were forced open. What was it the hermits had, that they hid it so jealously? What are they like themselves, that they so resented the rest of humanity? . . . Curiosity. That's one reason for going.

The other reason is climate; for summer weather is one of the things that Korea and its neighbor Manchuria really do best of all, and knowing this enables the traveler to the Orient to solve the problem of where to go in the dog days, whether these come at the beginning, or the middle, or the end of his trip.

Getting to Korea is so easy, too. You may leave the ship at Yokohama for the Japanese Government Railway that spins you across that delectable little country to Shimonoseki, where you take a night boat across the straits to Fusan—or a day boat, if you want to look at the islands, of which

Her Sunday School Clothes

G. T. Contre
Sept. 18/84

there is a regular Inland-Sea collection. Or you may go from Shanghai to Dairen in Manchuria and around by rail; or direct by rail from Peking. Every one of the trips is full of color and novelty even if you know the rest of the East. To see Japan, who got her art from Korea in the dim past, now running American locomotives and coaches and dining cars over American rails down her benefactor's back; to watch her extracting coal, and growing beans and silk, and putting the boys and girls through physical drill, and erecting a string of modern hotels, and turning publicity agent for her Hermit Kingdom—well, it would be worth going far to see, even if the climate was as bad as it's good!

Fusan, the south-east gateway to Korea and the one most visitors use, has a big blue breeze-blown harbor and big high bare hills behind. The main street goes through a narrow pass, and the old Korean town lies at the end of it, but if you climb Ryuto-San (Dragon Lantern Hill), all set with cryptomeria trees and a little temple for good measure, you can see both towns, one of them with wide streets and good ugly European-style buildings as a background for the smiling, hurrying, efficient but always picturesque life of transplanted Japan; the other with little houses, many of them roofed like brown mushrooms, giving on narrow streets where the stores come out of doors every morning and sit themselves down with admirable candor outside of their owners' dwellings. Korean roadways never were wide, but this makes them narrower still—yet incomparably more interesting, for all the life of the common people flows up and down like an animated travelogue.

The background of it, sartorially speaking, is white. White is the color for mourning, here as in China. But the Korean must mourn three years for his father, and for other relatives in proportion. So, in time, it became simpler for the common man just to go into white entirely. As for the common man's wife, she is never left to enjoy the "Land of the Morning Calm", because every pool and every stream is fringed around with her, beating her lord's clothes clean. When they come to pieces from sheer devotion to this cult of cleanliness for godliness' sake, she pastes them together with starch, which seems to do very well until their next laundering. Ultimate dissolution would arrive much more quickly if the clothes were not very coarse—made from nettle fibre—but, as it is, the tap-tap of the washing clubs is as characteristic of Korean dawn as the rattle of the milk wagon is of dawn in the Occident.

Here and there in the crowd on the streets, we see a real rather than a custom-made mourner who not only wears white clothes but the unbelievable hat of woven bamboo, like an inverted chopping bowl a yard across and drooping to shoulder-level, under which he who laments for his father must hide his face and smoke his two-foot pipe with its bowl the size of a thimble, *for three mortal years!*

Hats have always held a unique not to say extraordinary position in the Korean mind's eye. The every day hat of black crinoline is strange

Deaconess in the Christian Church

enough in all conscience—a tight-fitting skull cap that goes on first, a high conical crown that fits over it, a small round brim that goes on last of all, the whole tied with crinoline ribbons under the chin. Once in a while the yang-ban (Korean gentleman of the leisure class) elects to have his hat of white horse hair, or perhaps to have it enamelled in color. But even the yang-ban can wear nothing more precious on his head than the topknot, tied up like a twist of Navy tobacco, that all variations of the crinoline hat are designed to protect without hiding.

Before we leave hats, it may be as well to speak of the old-time military hats, which were blue; of the old time court hats with "ears" out at the side, to indicate that the subject's attention was directed to the voice of his sovereign; and of that sovereign's own hat with ears tied up together at the top, since he didn't need to listen to anybody but the Emperor of China (his one superior) who was too far off to do much talking. Strange to say, in such a land of millinery ecstasy, ladies have no hats at all, except the ge-sang, the little Korean dancing girl, who, of course, isn't a lady at all, being much too pretty.

But we've seen enough of Korean life for today. Let's go to Matsushima Beach, where the water is shallow and the sand white, where there are green pines and splendid bathing—good enough to have coaxed us up from the hot South. The road goes along the edge of the blue harbor where the junks drift under fluted sails, and the green islands dream above their reflections. There is sure to be a charming place where we can have tea, or a cold drink. Or instead of following the road, we may take the boat for a thirty-minute sail ourselves, to catch the breeze that flutters the awnings even on the hottest day.

While there are temples in Fusan itself and a couple of well-known monasteries nearby in the hills, it is to Keishu that the lover of visible history will want to make his pilgrimage. The Japanese say that it is like Nara, their own old capital—and what greater compliment could they give it? But there is fact hid under the compliment. For historians believe that it was from this strange old city that art came into Japan, and Nara is largely a copy—marvellously preserved—of what Korean invention achieved in the years before the Japanese had any direct touch with China—long, long before they began to invent for themselves.

The hills and valleys, the groves of wonderful old trees, the sense of ancient peace, the ruins of a period so far in the past that sometimes one can only guess what they mean—these things contribute to the charm of Keishu, a charm touched with faint sadness, whether we go to Bukkoku-ji Temple and see lovely old roofs whose walls are gone, so that we look right through them at the imperishable green of the Korean hills, pagodas and stone lanterns that were the forebears of those in Japan; or visit Ei-chi, the still pond where the Chinese workman's wife died of grief, because her husband was

His costume is Red, White, + Blue - for he's rickshaw coolie to the U.S. Consul in Seoul.

working on this same old temple, fourteen hundred years ago, and she was not allowed to go to see him inside the sacred precincts whose reflections she could watch in her pool. Neither Korean, Japanese, nor Occidental, but partaking of the nature of all humanity it is to find the temple in ruins today, and the woman's story as fresh as a flower. . . .

Sekkutsu-an, an uphill mile and a half away, is a cave temple, half-way up a mountain side, as temples so often are in Korea, and here under an arched roof of granite we may see an impressive Buddha who has survived the centuries, seated on his lotus. If we climb the rest of the way (there are seats along the path), all Korea seems stretched out below us in the still sunshine—hills and valleys, the woods around Bukkoku-ji, and far away, the sea. . . .

But all this time we've been in the neighborhood of Fusan, our entry port, while, in all probability, if we were travelling in actuality instead of in imagination, we should have left long ago for Seoul, the present capital, and the city best known to the outside world. Like everything else in Korea, it has two names, for the Japanese call it Keijo. And indeed the Seoul of today is so different from the one adventurous travellers saw twenty years ago that one feels a new name is quite in order. For we stay at the Chosen Hotel (which would be a good hotel anywhere) on the site of the ancient Temple of Heaven; we play golf out at Ryuzan; we read our English newspaper printed on the spot; we go bathing at Jinsen (which we used to call Chemulpo); we may even take a house-boat up the lordly Han River—and yet all the time there is the old Korean background, not any too changed since the days when, noticing from the surrounding hills that Seoul inside its crenelated walls was roughly shaped like a boat, the sages jumped to the conclusion that it probably *was* a boat, and forbade the digging of wells in it, for fear it should suddenly sink!

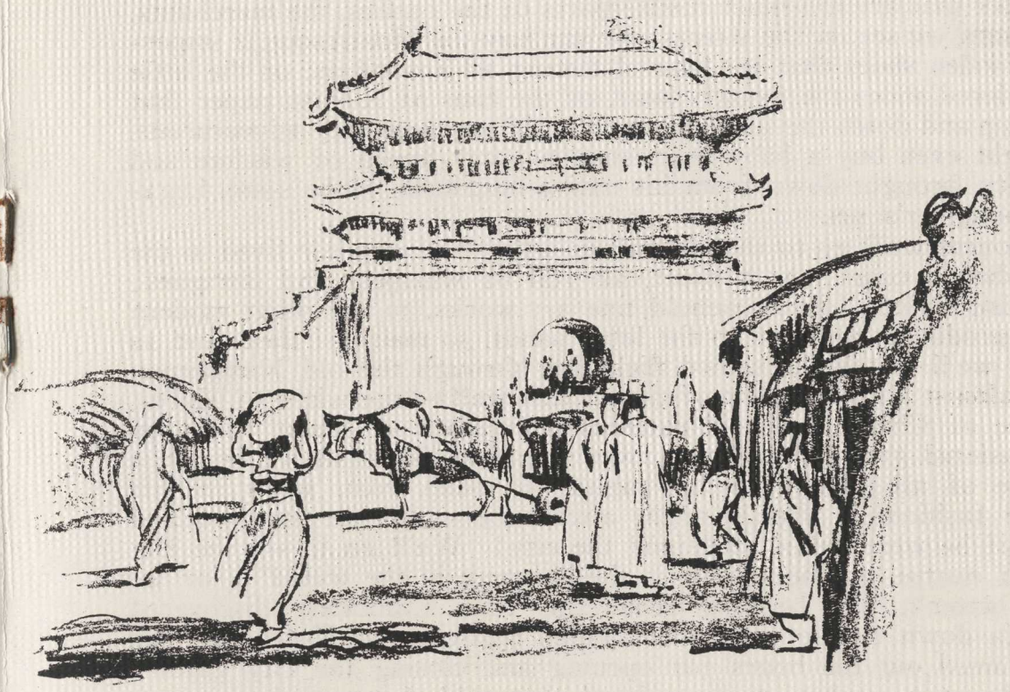
Undoubtedly we'll go shopping, not only in the speckless little Japanese shops or the branches of the Tokyo and Osaka stores, but in the Korean streets as well, where we'll find quaint things in wrought silver, inlaid iron, or that brass which is such a Korean specialty—candlesticks, cooking pots of strange shapes, and those brass-trimmed chests with the butterfly hinges that every foreigner wants to carry away. For a few cents, too, we can buy little figures made of rags

Posing for her picture

The Peasant Hat

Still in mourning for the Emperor

Baldridge TAI-KU - KOREA



The Great East Gate / Seoul /

Carrying water in the all-useful Standard Oil Cans -

and paper that are the exact counterparts of the coolies, the merchants, the women we see on the streets; we can buy the picturesque if impossible wooden shoes that we hear clattering all around us, or the little embroidered shoes the women wear, or the fans of Korean paper that flutter up and down the winding streets. If we were very adventurous, we might even buy a baby bear, such a fuzzy bunch of wisdom and absurdity, brought down from his native mountains to be some Legation youngster's pet.

Of course we'll go to the old palace, where the emperor lived in the days when a court *was* a court, all full of whispers and intrigues; we'll visit Prince Li's household fine art works, to see what modern Korea produces; we'll go to the lotus ponds, so many of them and so lovely; we'll watch the crowd flickering through the old Nandaimon Gate (almost all that is left of the ancient wall)—the white of Korea, the blue of China, the vivid patterns and colors of Japan, and even an occasional green coat put on over the head like a shawl, once the costume of all women in the capital—a man's coat, worn in this strange fashion so that it might always be ready for its lord and owner if he were called to defend the city! We'll go to see the Big Bell, of course, not because it is the "biggest in the world" (for we know better), but because from the time Columbus discovered America down to the time when Japan rediscovered Korea, the big bell boomed out the hours for opening and closing the city gates—boomed out, too, that strange signal that told the men that it was eight o'clock, time to go home, get into the house, and let the women walk abroad and enjoy themselves, free from detestable and dangerous masculine scrutiny!

Most assuredly, if we have mountains anywhere up our personal family tree, we'll want to go to Kongo-San, the Diamond Mountain, one of the most famous things to be found in Korea, and only half a day's journey from Seoul.

"In the world there are eight Kongos," a tenth century sage tells us, "of which seven have hidden themselves in the sea." But the eighth covers a hundred square miles with its serrated peaks (the Koreans say there are twelve thousand of these), and here in the folds and fastnesses Buddhism was kept alive when it was banned by the emperors in the fifteenth century. In the early days, there were countless temples and monasteries in Kongo-San, and the wealth of Korea flowed into them; even today there are fifty left, some of them easy to see, others set so perilously that the devotees they shelter seldom have any visitors but the birds. Yet here, among the awesome gorges and the flaming colors of painted rocks and blankets of flowers, live some five hundred monks and nuns who keep to the ancient ways despite the wheels of progress (which they have never heard) and the Kongo-San Hotel, with its chef and its motor bus, set down on the very doorstep of their "most illustrious world's mountain."

Choan-ji is the temple best known to tourists, and here, too, there is a little hotel, near neighbor to towering peaks and those blue halls and vermilion pagodas that shelter the monks. One day we climb through the sunshine and the silence to Clear Mirror Stand, a strange pool with a huge burnt-sienna rock behind it like a blunt finger pointing toward the sky. Here all souls are brought after death, the sages tell us, and in this pool are reflected the sins committed in life. Another day the trail beckons us to some one of the outlying monasteries—Futoku-kutso, perhaps, perched on the edge of its precipice above the gorge, or Makaen-an, largest of all, where we may take rooms and live in the heart of the mountain, on a great table land of crystal air and placid streams and flowers that flame even on the purple-blue tiled roofs. Again, we climb a dizzy peak, hauling ourselves up by an iron chain that volunteers its aid only to pilgrims who are pure of heart; again we go to see the Eight Pools in the Canyon of Myriad Cascades—Black Dragon, Lute, Blue Wave, Snow Spray, Pearl, Turquoise, Ship and Fire Dragon. And everywhere on the mountains we see traces of the ancient religion—carved Buddhas in places that must have demanded all the artist's faith and devotion even to reach; great Chinese characters engraved in the rocks to give immortality to forgotten souls, and foothold to ourselves who also climb.

All this is in so-called "Inner Kongo," while Outer Kongo, Sea Kongo and New Kongo remain for us to explore—Bambutsuso, with its thousand-foot precipice down which we look at clouds and rolling mists and mountains far below, and at the "Angels' Bathtubs," too, three peaks with hollowed tops—Kyuryu-baku with its two-hundred-foot waterfall walled in by spray-drenched rocks—Sea Kongo that one goes to visit in a junk—Yusen-ji where the fifty-three Buddhas came riding on an iron bell to alight on an elm tree and have the biggest temple in all Kongo erected in their aeronautical memory. With all these sights, natural, historical and fanciful, one doesn't wonder that this "prodigy of a mountain" as a Japanese writer calls it, is attaining great reputation as a summer resort.

But all the summer resorts aren't in Korea. Manchuria possesses some of the best. So we go on up the Korean peninsula, through

Antung on the Yalu River where the lumber rafts come down and all the wild silk worms in the world seem to have sent their cocoons; up to Mukden, that junction of three railroads and three nationalities where we are at a loss to know whether we're in China, in Japan, or in the home of the ancient Manchus who built the red-walled yellow-tiled palaces that look so strangely off at the 120-foot streets of the New Town.

To the business man, Mukden means, perhaps, the soya bean, that untiring servant of humanity and the animals that does everything from making a foundation for Worcester sauce to playing fertilizer for worn-out fields and fattener for cattle. Or else Mukden means a chance to visit the Fushun colliery, awesome hole in the ground out of which have come so many Japanese fortunes. But to the woman, Mukden means a chance to get some of the eight million pelts of all desirable Asiatic sorts that come down from the snowy mountains, destined for the world's great fur markets, reminding us of the days when "forty tigers with fur a finger long" formed part of the tribute sent to Peking. There are interesting gold and silver ornaments, too, to be bought in the shops behind those spectacularly decorated red and black and gold signs—but where in the East can't one spend money delightfully, if one has it left from the last assault of charm?

From Mukden we may go on north to Harbin—and through to Europe if the Russians were only working at railroading instead of at politics—or southwest to Peking—or south to that splendid seaport called Black Mud Hollow long years ago by the Chinese, later Dalny by the Russians, now Dairen by the Japanese. Here we'll stay at the Yamato Hotel with its Japanese roof garden, waterfalls and all, and while the man of the party learns more about the bean-cakes and bean-oil industry, and the astounding progress of Dairen as an export center, those of us who know what is really most important will take a motor over to Hoshigaura, that white-sanded beach where one may rent an American bungalow or a Japanese cottage on the very edge of blue water where the bat-winged junks go by, and be as cool as heart could desire, with stunted pine trees and delectable tea houses for Eastern atmosphere, and a tennis court and a golf course to make us satisfied we're still Occidentals.

Port Arthur, that famous old bone of contention, is only thirty-eight miles from Dairen, and it, too, has its beach at Ogan-dai where, with a mountain behind and a vast expanse of sea in front, one always has a breeze—and—servants are so cheap one realizes at last that Manchuria is our old friend Utopia under an Eastern name.

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