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Corea, the Hermit Nation

Described as a 'hermit nation' because it isolated itself from the rest of the world, Korea remained very little known to English speakers in the late nineteenth century. During his time in Japan, the American author and educator William Elliot Griffis (1843–1928), who did much to foster understanding between the United States and Japan, became fascinated by Korea and its influence on Japanese history and culture. This historical outline of Korea is compiled from printed sources and eyewitness accounts rather than from personal experience since Griffis was yet to visit Korea at this point. Despite this, and the fact that he was sometimes criticised for presenting Korea in comparison with Japan, this book was well received. First published in 1882, it contains an annotated bibliography and features maps and illustrations throughout. Griffis' most famous work on Japan, *The Mikado's Empire* (1877), is also reissued in this series.

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Corea

the Hermit Nation

WILLIAM ELLIOT GRIFFIS



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CITY OF SEOUL.

C O R E A

THE HERMIT NATION

- I.—ANCIENT AND MEDLÆVAL HISTORY
II.—POLITICAL AND SOCIAL COREA
III.—MODERN AND RECENT HISTORY

BY
WILLIAM ELLIOT GRIFFIS
LATE OF THE IMPERIAL UNIVERSITY OF TOKIO, JAPAN
AUTHOR OF "THE MIKADO'S EMPIRE"

LONDON:
W. H. ALLEN & CO., 13 WATERLOO PLACE,
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TO
ALL COREAN PATRIOTS:
WHO SEEK
BY THE AID OF SCIENCE, TRUTH, AND PURE RELIGION,
TO ENLIGHTEN
THEMSELVES AND THEIR FELLOW-COUNTRYMEN,
TO RID
THEIR LAND OF SUPERSTITION, BIGOTRY, DESPOTISM, AND
PRIESTCRAFT—BOTH NATIVE AND FOREIGN—
AND TO PRESERVE
THE INTEGRITY, INDEPENDENCE, AND HONOR, OF THEIR COUNTRY ;
THIS UNWORTHY SKETCH
OF
THEIR PAST HISTORY AND PRESENT CONDITION
IS DEDICATED.

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PREFACE.

IN the year 1871, while living at Fukui, in the province of Echizen, Japan, I spent a few days at Tsuruga and Mikuni, by the sea which separates Japan and Corea. Like “the Saxon shore” of early Britain, the coast of Echizen had been in primeval times the landing-place of rovers, immigrants, and adventurers from the continental shore opposite. Here, at Tsuruga, Corean envoys had landed on their way to the mikado’s court. In the temple near by were shrines dedicated to the Corean Prince of Mimana, and to Jingu Kōgō, Ojin, and Takénouchi, whose names in Japanese traditions are associated with “The Treasure-land of the West.” Across the bay hung a sweet-toned bell, said to have been cast in Corea in A.D. 647; in which tradition—untested by chemistry—declared there was much gold. Among the hills not far away, nestled the little village of Awotabi (Green Nook), settled centuries ago by paper-makers, and visited a millenium ago by tribute-bearers, from the neighboring peninsula; and famous for producing the crinkled paper on which the diplomatic correspondence between the two nations was written. Some of the first families in Echizen were proud of their descent from Chō-sen, while in the villages, where dwelt the Eta, or social outcasts, I beheld the descendants of Corean prisoners of war. Everywhere the finger of tradition pointed westward across the waters to the Asian mainland, and the whole region was eloquent of “kin beyond sea.” Birds and animals, fruits and falcons, vegetables and trees, farmers’ implements and the potter’s wheel, names in geography and things

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in the arts, and doctrines and systems in religion were in some way connected with Corea.

The thought often came to me as I walked within the moss-grown feudal castle walls—old in story, but then newly given up to schools of Western science and languages—why should Corea be sealed and mysterious, when Japan, once a hermit, had opened her doors and come out into the world's market-place? When would Corea's awakening come? As one diamond cuts another, why should not Chō-ka (Japan) open Chō-sen (Corea)?

Turning with delight and fascination to the study of Japanese history and antiquities, I found much that reflected light upon the neighbor country. On my return home, I continued to search for materials for the story of the last of the hermit nations. No master of research in China or Japan having attempted the task, from what Locke calls "the roundabout view," I have essayed it, with no claim to originality or profound research, for the benefit of the general reader, to whom Corea "suggests," as an American lady said, "no more than a sea-shell." Many ask "What's in Corea?" and "Is Corea of any importance in the history of the world?"

My purpose in this work is to give an outline of the history of the Land of Morning Calm—as the natives call their country—from before the Christian era to the present year. As "an honest tale speeds best, being plainly told," I have made no attempt to embellish the narrative, though I have sought information from sources from within and without Corea, in maps and charts, coins and pottery, the language and art, notes and narratives of eye-witnesses, pencil-sketches, paintings and photographs, the standard histories of Japan and China, the testimony of sailor and diplomatist, missionary and castaway, and the digested knowledge of critical scholars. I have attempted nothing more than a historical outline of the nation and a glimpse at the political and social life of the people. For lack of space, the original manuscript of "Recent and Modern History," part III., has been greatly abridged, and many topics of interest have been left untouched.

The bulk of the text was written between the years 1877 and

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1880 ; since which time the literature of the subject has been enriched by Ross's "Corea" and "Corean Primer," besides the Grammar and Dictionary of the Corean language made by the French missionaries. With these linguistic helps I have been able to get access to the language, and thus clear up doubtful points and obtain much needed data. I have borrowed largely from Dallet's "Histoire d'Eglise de Corée," especially in the chapters devoted to Folk-lore, Social Life, and Christianity. In the Bibliography following the Preface is a list of works to which I have been more or less indebted.

Many friends have assisted me with correspondence, advice, or help in translation, among whom I must first thank my former students, Haségawa, Hiraii, Haraguchi, Matsui, and Imadatté, and my newer Japanese friends, Ohgimi and Kimura, while others, alas ! will never in this world see my record of acknowledgment—K. Yaye' and Egi Takato—whose interest was manifested not only in discussion of mooted points, but by search among the book-shops in Kiôto and Tôkiô, which put much valuable standard matter in my hands. I also thank Mr. Charles Lanman, Secretary of the Legation of Japan in Washington, for four ferrotypes taken in Seoul in 1878 by members of the Japanese embassy ; Mr. D. R. Clark, of the United States Transit of Venus Survey, for four photographs of the Corean villages in Russian Manchuria ; Mr. R. Idéura, of Tôkiô, for a set of photographs of Kang-wa and vicinity, taken in 1876, and Mr. Ozawa Nankoku, for sketches of Corean articles in Japanese museums. To Lieutenant Wadhams, of the United States Navy, for the use of charts and maps made by himself while in Corea in 1871, and for photographs of flags and other trophies, now at Annapolis, captured in the Han forts ; to Fleet-Surgeon H. O. Mayo, and other officers of the United States Navy, for valuable information, I hereby express my grateful appreciation of kindness shown. I would that Admiral John Rodgers, Commodore H. C. Blake, and Minister F. F. Low were living to receive my thanks for their courtesies personally shown me, even though, in attempting to write history, I have made criticisms also. To Lieutenant N. Y. Yanagi, of the Hydrographic Bureau, of the Japanese Navy, for a

set of charts of the coast of Coreā ; to Mr. Metcalfe, of Milwaukee, for photographs of Coreans ; to Miss Marshall, of New York, for making colored copies of the battle-flags captured by our naval battalion in 1871, and for the many favors of correspondents—in St. Petersburg, Mr. Hoffman Atkinson ; in Peking, Jugoi Arinori Mori ; in Tōkiō, Dr. D. B. McCartee, Hon. David Murray, Rev. J. L. Amerman, and others whose names I need not mention. To Gen. George W. McCullum, Vice-President ; and to Mr. Leopold Lindau, Librarian, of the American Geographical Society, I return my warmest thanks ; as well as to my dear wife and helpmeet, for her aid in copying, proof-reading, suggestions, and criticism during the progress of the work.

In one respect, the presentation of such a subject by a compiler, while shorn of the fascinating element of personal experience, has an advantage even over the narrator who describes a country through which he has travelled. With the various reports of many witnesses, in many times and places, before him, he views the whole subject and reduces the many impressions of detail to unity, correcting one by the other. Travellers usually see but a portion of the country at one time. The compiler, if able even in part to control his authorities, and if anything more than a tyro in the art of literary appraisal, may be able to furnish a hand-book of information more valuable to the general reader.

In the use of my authorities I have given heed to Bacon's advice—tasting some, chewing others, and swallowing few. In ancient history, original authorities have been sought, and for the story of modern life, only the reports of careful eye-witnesses have been set down as facts ; while opinions and judgments of alien occidentals concerning Corean social life are rarely borrowed without due flavoring of critical salt.

Corean and Japanese life, customs, beliefs, and history are often reflections one of the other. Much of what is reported from Coreā, which the eye-witnesses themselves do not appear to understand, is perfectly clear to one familiar with Japanese life and history. China, Coreā, and Japan are as links in the same chain of civilization. Coreā, like Cyprus between Egypt and Greece, will yet

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supply many missing details to the comparative student of language, art, science, the development of civilization, and the distribution of life on the globe.

Some future writer, with more ability and space at command than the undersigned, may discuss the question as to how far the opening of Corea to the commerce of the world has been the result of internal forces ; the scholar, by his original research, may prepare the materials for a worthy history of Corea during the two or three thousand years of her history ; the geologist or miner may determine the question as to how far the metallic wealth of Corea will affect the monetary equilibrium of the world. The missionary has yet to prove the full power of Christianity upon the people—and before Corean paganism, any form of the religion of Jesus, Roman, Greek or Reformed, should be welcomed ; while to the linguist, the man of science, and the political economist, the new country opened by American diplomacy presents problems of profound interest.

W. E. G.

SCHENECTADY, N. Y., October 2, 1882.

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THE following is a list of books and papers containing information about Coreā. Those of primary value to which the compiler of this work is specially indebted are marked with an asterisk (*); those to which slight obligation, if any, is acknowledged with a double asterisk; and those which he has not consulted, with a dagger (†). See also under THE COREAN LANGUAGE and CARTOGRAPHY, in the Appendix.

- * History of the Eastern Barbarians. "Book cxv. contains a sketch of the tribes and nations occupying the northeastern seaboard of China, with the territory now known as Manchuria and Coreā." This extract from a History of the Later Han Dynasty (25–220 A.D.), by a Chinese scholar of the fifth century, has been translated into English by Mr. Alexander Wylie, and printed in the *Revue de l'Extrême Orient*, No. 1, 1882. Du Halde and De Mailla, in French, and Ross, in English, have also given the substance of the Chinese writer's work, which also furnishes the basis of Japanese accounts of Corean history previous to the fourth century.
- † The Subjugation of Chaou-seen, by A. Wylie. (*Atti del IV. Cong. int. degli Orient*, ii., pp. 309–315, 1881.) This fragment is a translation of the 95th book of the History of the Former Han Dynasty of China.
- * *Empire de la Chine et la Tartarie Chinoise*, par P. du Halde.
- * The *Kōjiki* and *Nihongi*, written in Japan during the eighth century, throws much light on the early history of Coreā.
- * *Wakan-San-sai Dzuyé*. Article on Chō-sen in this great Japanese Encyclopædia.
- † *Tong-Kuk Tong-Kan* (General View of the Eastern Kingdom), a native Corean history written in Chinese.
- * *Zenrin Koku Hoki* (Precious Jewels from a Neighboring Country), by Shiuho. Japan, 1586.
- * *Coreā, its History, Manners, and Customs*, by John Ross. 1 vol., pp. 404. Illustrations and maps. Paisley, 1880.
- * *The Chinese Reader's Manual*, by W. Fred. Mayers. 1 vol., pp. 440. Shanghai, 1874. An invaluable epitome of Chinese history, biography, chronology, bibliography, and whatever is of interest to the student of Chinese literature.
- * *Kō-chō Rekidai Enkaku Zukai*. Historical Periods and Changes of the Japanese Empire, with maps and notes, by Otsuki Tōyō.

- ** San Koku Tsu-ran To-setsu. Mirror of the Three [Tributary] Kingdoms, Chō-sen, Riu kiu, and Yezo, by Rin Shihei, 1785. This work, with its maps, was translated into French by J. Klaproth, and published in Paris, 1832. 1 vol. 8vo, pp. 288, of which pp. 158 relate to Chō-sen. Digested also in Siebold's Archiv.
- ** Archiv zur Beschreibung von Japan, by Franz von Siebold. This colossal work contains much matter in text and illustrations relating to Corea, and the digest of several Japanese books, in the part entitled Nachrichten uber Korai, Japan's Bezüge mit der Koraischen Halbinsel und mit Schina.
- ** Corea und dessen Einfluss auf die Bevölkerung Japans. Zeit. für Ethnologie, Sitzungbericht VIII. p. 78, 1876. P. Kempermann.
- ** O Dai Ichi Ran. This work, containing the annals of the emperors of Japan, is a bird's-eye view of the principal events in Japanese history, written in the style of an almanac, which Titsingh copied down from translations made by Japanese who spoke Dutch. Klaproth revised and corrected Titsingh's work, and published his own version in 1834. Paris and London, 8vo, pp. 460. This work contains many references to Corea and the relations of the two countries, transcribed from the older history.
- ** Tableaux Historiques de l'Asie, depuis la monarchie de Cyrus jusque nos jours, accompagnées de recherches historiques et ethnographiques, etc. Par J. Klaproth, Paris, 1826. Avec un atlas in folio. This manual of the political geography of Asia is very useful, but not too accurate.
- † A Heap of Jewels in a Sea of Learning (Gei Kai Shu Jin; Jap. pron.). A chapter from this Chinese book treats of Corea.
- † Chō-sen Hitsu Go-shin. A collection of conversations with the pen, with a Corean who could not speak Japanese. By Ishikawa Rokuroku Sanjin, Yedo.
- * The Classical Poetry of the Japanese. By Basil Hall Chamberlain. London, 1880.
- ** An Outline History of Japanese Education, New York, 1876. This monograph, prepared for the Centennial Exposition at Philadelphia, reviews the educational influences of Corea upon Japan. The information given is, with other data, from Klaproth, utilized in Pickering's Chronological History of Plants, by Charles Pickering, M.D., Boston, 1879.
- * Japanese Chronological Tables. By William Bramsen, Tōkiō, 1880. An invaluable essay on Japanese chronology, which was, like the Corean, based on the Chinese system. We have used this work of the lamented scholar (who died a few months after it was published) in rendering dates expressed in terms of the Chinese into those of the Gregorian or modern system.
- ** History of the Mongols. 3 vols. pp. 1827. London, 1876. By Henry Howorth. This portly work is full of the fruits of research concerning the people led by Genghis Khan. It contains excellent maps of Asia, and of Mongolia, and Manchuria, illustrating the Mongol conquests.
- † Chō-sen Ki-che. (Memorandum upon Corean Affairs.) The Chinese ambassador sent by the Ming emperor in 1450, gives in this little work an account of his journey, which throws light upon the political and geographical situation of Chō-sen and China at that time. Quoted by M. Scherzer, but not translated.

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- * *Chō-sen Monogatari*. A Diary and Narrative of the Japanese Military Operations in Chō-sen during the Campaign of 1594-97, by Okoji Hidémoto. Copied out and published in 1672, and again in 1849. This narrative of an eye-witness was written by the author at the time of the events described, and afterward copied by his own son and deposited in the temple at which his ancestors worshipped. This vivid and spirited story of the second invasion of Chō-sen by Hidéyoshi has been translated into German by Dr. A. Pfizmaier, under the title *Der Feldzug der Japaner gegen Corea, im Jahre, 1597*. 2 vols. Vienna, 1875: 4to, pp. 98; 1876: 4to, pp. 58.
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- * *Hidéyoshi's Invasion of Korea*. Trans. Asiatic Society of Japan. By W. G. Aston. In these papers Mr. Aston gives the results of a study of the campaign of 1592-97, as found in Japanese and Korean authors.
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- ** Consular Reports in the Blue Books of the British Government, especially the Reports of Mr. McPherson, Consul at Niu-chwang. January, 1866.
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- ** The Wild Coasts of Nipon. By Captain H. C. St. John (who surveyed some parts of Southern Corea in H.B.M.S. *Sylvia*). See chap. xii., pp. 235-255, with a map of Corea.
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- ** Korea and the Lost Tribes, and Map and Chart of Korea. Text and illustrations. The title of this work is sufficient. Even the bibliography of Corea has a comic side.
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- † La Corée, par M. Paul Tournafond, editor of *L'Exploration*, a geographical journal published in Paris, which contains frequent notes on Corea.
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ORTHOGRAPHY AND PRONUNCIATION.

IN the transliteration of Corean names into English, an attempt has been made to render them in as accurate and simple a manner as is, under the circumstances, possible. The Coreans themselves have no uniform system of spelling proper names, nor do the French missionaries agree in their renderings—as a comparison of their maps and writings shows. Our aim in this work has been to use as few letters as possible.

Japanese words are all pronounced according to the European method—*a* as in *father*, *é* as in *prey*, *e* as in *men*, *i* as in *machine*, *o* as in *bone*, *u* as in *tune*, *ü* as in *sun*; *ai* as in *aisle*, *ua* as in *quarantine*, *ei* as in *feign*, and *iu* is sounded as *yu*; *g* is always hard; and *c* before a vowel, *g* soft, *l*, *q*, *s* used as *z*, *x*, and the combinations *ph* and *th* are not used. The long vowel, rather diphthong *o*, or *oho*, is marked *ō*.

The most familiar Chinese names are retained in their usual English form.

Corean words are transliterated on the same general principles as the Japanese, though ears familiar with Corean will find the obscure sound between *o* and short *u* is written with either of these letters, as Chan-yon, or In-chiün, or Kiung-sang. *Ch* may sometimes be used instead of *j*; and *e* where *o* or *a* or *u* might more correctly be used, as in Kang-wen, or Wen-chiu. Instead of the French *ou*, or *ho*, we have written *W*, as in Whang-hai, Kang-wa, rather than Hoang-hai, Kang-hoa, Kang-ouen, Tai-ouen Kun, etc.; and in place of *ts* we have used *ch*, as Kwang-chiu rather than Kwang-tsiu, and Wen-chiu than Ouen-tsiu.

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