THE KOREA REVIEW

Volume 2, June, 1902.

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# Burial Customs.

In a short series of papers we propose to discuss the mortuary customs of Korea. The material available for such a discussion is so abundant that a volume might be filled with it but it will be best to select the main points of interest and deal with them, at the same time indicating collateral issues which may be gone into more fully at another time. The aim is to present as clear and concise a description as possible without special reference to literary embellishment, believing as we do that the readers of the Review want the plain facts in the case, free from all theorizing.

Burial customs are not uniform throughout Korea, for the poor and the low class people omit many of the finer points which are never forgotten in the case of a gentleman of means. If, then, we describe the treatment of the dead among the wealthy people of the upper class it will be simply a task of elimination to describe that of any other class in Korean society. For this purpose let us take a Korean gentleman of means, the head of a household, and inquire how he is treated from the time he is found to be dying until his funeral obsequies are completed.

When he is found to be desperately ill he is taken from his own chamber and removed to some other apartment. The Koreans have the notion that it is just possible the change may check the course of the disease. This is not akin to the custom of putting a dying man outside the house on a mat, [page 242] which many of us have observed. This latter is because the dying man will pollute the house or make it unlucky.

When this is seen to be ineffectual and the patient is nearly dead he is taken back to his own chamber and all his immediate family come in and sit in perfect silence about the room. A light piece of cotton batting is put to the dying man’s mouth that the exact moment of his death may be recorded. When the breath ceases to stir the cotton, death is supposed to have occurred, though in many cases life is probably not yet extinct.

When the man is pronounced dead a blanket is thrown over the body, but no one begins to wail yet for it might disturb the spirit of the dead which may be hovering near. An hour passes, and then the family assembles again and the wailing commences. During this process, which is audible at some distance, the sentiments given expression to are almost all in commiseration of the dead. He is pitied for having died. His virtues are not commonly recited on such occasions nor is reference made to the survivors, though there is no rule which would forbid such expressions. In this wailing no subjective elements appear. The wailers do not complain that they are bereft nor wonder how they are going to get along without the presence of the departed father, husband or brother. This first wailing lasts about an hour. At the expiration of this time some near relative, not a member of the household, or an intimate friend of the family, remains to watch the body while all the rest leave the room.

One of the trusted servants or some friendly neighbor, not of the upper class, takes in his hands an inner coat of the dead man and climbs to the roof of the house, taking his stand directly over where the body lies. This coat is made of native cotton, never of silk or any imported goods, and has probably been kept for years in the family wardrobe to be used for this express purpose. Standing thus the man grasps the collar of the coat with his left hand and the bottom hem with his right and waves it three times toward the north. At the first shake he cries aloud the full name of the deceased, at the second shake the name of the highest rank to which he ever attained, and at the third shake he announces the fact that this man is dead.

[page 243] The reason for shaking the garment is that, being something intimately personal to the dead man, it forms the credentials of the one who is announcing his death, as if he were to say, “Here, behold the inner coat of such and such a man of such and such a rank; him I announce to be dead.” The reason for shaking it toward the north is because the shadows fall to the north, it is the direction of the shades, its color being black. This ceremony is performed not only to announce to others the fact of the death but also that the spirit of the dead may hear and be sure that it has been announced. The reason for shaking it three times is because of the dead man’s *in* (\*), *eui* (\*) and *ye* (\*) which may be translated respectively, “orignial nature,” “righteousness” and “etiquette.” This important act completed, the man brings down the garment and spreads it over the dead body.

The family now reassembles and wails for fifteen minutes, after which the body is lifted from the floor and placed upon a plank supported by two boxes made specially for the purpose. The head is toward the south and is raised slightly higher than the feet, and a screen is drawn about the dead.

The next thing in order is to make the *hon-pak-kwe* \*\*\*) or “Spirit-ghost-box.” This is of wood, about a foot long by half a foot wide and high. It is supposed to contain in some way the spirit of the dead. This box is neatly papered and inside is put a paper case in the shape of a box and inside of this is a piece of paper whereon is written the name of the dead. Sometimes only blank paper is put in and rarely the name of the man and of his rank are both inserted. This Spirit-ghost-box is laid first above the head of the deceased.

After these preliminaries have been arranged a man is chosen from among the near relatives of the deceased to have charge of the ceremonies and one of the trusted servants of the family is chosen to have charge of all the funeral expenses.

All the mourners, by which we mean the members of the household of the deceased, look upon themselves as in some sense criminals upon whom rests the responsibility of the man’s death. They put aside all colored clothes and all silk and dress in plain linen and cotton. All jewelry is put away, and the hair is taken down. No boiled rice is eaten, but a kind [page 244] of rice soup takes its place. Thus habited the mourners now go to the apartment adjoining the one in which the body lies. This has been divided by a white cotton curtain and the men take their places on one side and the women on the other. Meanwhile the master of ceremonies has sent out written notices to the particular friends of the family, and now they come, both men and women, and offer their condolences. The number of notices sent out varies anywhere from fifty to five hundred. If the recipient of one of these lives within reasonable distance it is *de rigeur* for him to go and offer his respects and condolences. It is customary for them to bring small gifts of money, rice, linen, paper, candles or tobacco.

The one who is watching beside the body now takes warm water and washes it, not with a cloth but with a piece of white paper, while at the same time the family sit and wail in the adjoining room or busy themselves in giving away to needy neighbors the old clothes of the dead man. In preparing the body for burial the hair is tied up loosely, not in a regular top-knot, and all the combings, which have been sedulously preserved, are worked into the hair. All the teeth which have been extracted from the mouth of the deceased since his youth have been carefully preserved together with all his finger-nail and toe-nail parings. These are now placed in his pouch and laid beside him.

Meanwhile others have been busy making the new garments in which the dead is to be dressed for the grave. Everything that goes into the coffin is made new –the mattress, blanket, pillow, overcoat, coat, waist-coat trousers, socks, wristlets, shoes, leggings, headband, etc.

The dead is now removed to a table specially prepared for the purpose and a full meal of food is placed before the body. The relatives have by this time gathered from far and near and they all assemble in the room adjoining the dead and kneeling, the men toward the east and the women toward the west, they wail in concert. Relatives to the sixth remove are represented in this company. A pillow is brought and placed on the floor and each of the mourners comes forward in turn and bowing with his forehead on the pillow performs a special obsequy.

The “spirit-ghost-box” is then placed at the dead man’s [page 245] head and under it some of his ordinary garments together with some of his valuables. The mouth of the dead is opened and in it is placed some flour made of gluten rice. This is for the purpose of holding in place a certain “jewel” that is then put between the lips of the dead. This “jewel” is called the *mu-gong-ju* (\*\*\*) or “Pearl without a Hole.” It is, in fact, not a real pearl but is a hard substance found in the shell of the *ta-hap* (\*\*) a kind of huge clam that is found only near the mouth of the Nak-tong river. It is a rough substance and has no pearl luster. It is extremely rare. These shell-fish are taken in a net and only one in about ten thousand yields a *mu-gong-ju*. These “jewels” are not sold but are handed down from father to son as a most precious heirloom. The Koreans believe that one of these stones if laid away has the power of propagating its species by a process of division, like certain of the polyps. This observance is said to have begun with Che Kal-yang (\*\*\*), a celebrated astronomer who flourished in 1372; but, in Kippling parlance, that is another story.

The regular funeral table has by this time been prepared, on which the coffin is to be placed. It is covered with white silk. On it is placed first the mattress, then a wide-sleeved overcoat, an ordinary overcoat, a coat, a waist-coat, a pair of trousers, and a pair of linen drawers. Then they are one by one placed upon the dead body and it is laid upon the table and a screen drawn around it. Over the screen is thrown a banner on which is written the man’s name and honors and on the table beside the body are placed some of the little personal effects of the deceased, such as his ink-stone, pen and paper, spectacles and seals. This completes the first day’s work.

On the morning of the second day the professional undertaker comes in. He loosens the clothes on the body and then arranges them again with great care; after which he proceeds to tie up the body with cords made of twisted paper. One band is put about the shoulders, a second at the elbows, a third at the wrists, a fourth at the hips, a fifth at the knees, a sixth at the calves and a seventh at the ankles. In tying the waist cord which all Korean gentlemen wear he arranges the knot so that the loops resemble the character *sim*, (\*) for it is [page 246] supposed that all the *sin-suns* (\*\*) or canonized spirits arrange them that way. After this the food is again presented as before and the wailing is repeated in the outer room, only the chief mourner entering the presence of the dead. This is practically all that occurs on the second day.

The morning of the third day the undertaker brings the coffin, which is not nailed together but carefully dove-tailed and fastened with wooden pins. The outside is painted a plain black without ornamentation. The bottom of the coffin is covered half an inch deep with flour of the gluten rice. This is to form a sort of cushion into which the body will sink and so be less likely to be moved from side to side in the coffin as it is being carried to the grave. Over the flour is spread one thickness of white paper and over this are placed extremely thin pieces of board. Then come the mattress, pillow and blanket and over all two or three of the garments which have been used by the dead man. Everything being ready for placing the body in the coffin, the sons of the deceased wash their hands, or perhaps take a full bath, and then go in and place the body carefully in the coffin. The face is then covered with a very thin film of cotton batting and beside the body are placed the finger-nail and toe-nail parings and the teeth before referred to. All the remaining space in the coffin is packed tightly with the clothes of the dead man so as to prevent the body from moving about, and the cover is fastened securely on with wooden pegs. The coffin is invariably made of pine wood. The reason is fourfold. The pine, being an evergreen, is to the Koreans a symbol of manhood, for it never withers and casts its leaves until it dies. In the second place serpents and other reptiles will never go near a pine. In the third place the pine never rots at the core leaving the trunk a mere shell. In the fourth place pine wood when put in the ground rots evenly and quickly which, singularly enough, is a prime qualification with the Koreans. Anything which tends to retard the process of dissolution is considered very unpropitious.

(To be continued).

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# The Wreck of the Kuma-gawa Maru.

On the night of the eleventh of June there occurred on the coast of Korea, about eighty-five miles south of Chemulpo, one of the most disastrous wrecks that even the dangerous coast of Korea has ever witnessed. The Kuma-gawa Maru, a small steamship belonging to the Osaka Shosen Line came in collision with the Kiso-gawa Maru of the same line and sunk in about three minutes. It is too early to give out anything as to responsibility for this catastrophe. That will be the work of a naval court which will place the responsibility, but the readers of the *Review* will be glad to hear the story of Mr. J. F. Bowlby, an American citizen who was on board the Kuma-gawa Maru and who narrowly escaped with his life. The first class passengers on the boat were Mr. J. F. Bowlby, Rev. H, G. Appenzeller, and two or three Japanese gentlemen. Mr. Bowlby says that about ten o’clock that night he and Mr. Appenzeller partook of a light supper of tea and biscuits and then retired to their staterooms. Mr. Bowlby retired to his berth but did not go to sleep. His stateroom was immediately opposite that of Mr. Appenzeller and he could see the latter sitting in his stateroom reading. No whistle was blowing and the ship was apparently on her course.

Only a few minutes elapsed when without the least warning there came a terrific crash which brought Mr. Bowlby to his feet instantly and Mr. Appenzeller cried out, “What’s the matter?” Mr. Bowlby hastily drew on his trousers and coat and vest without attempting to arrange them at all and in about ninety seconds after the collision he was making for the companion-way, with Mr. Appenzeller immediately in front of him. Behind him he saw one or two Koreans coming out of the second class cabin but he believes that they never reached the deck. As Mr. Bowlby set foot on deck he saw that things were in desperate shape. The whole forward half of the deck was already submerged and the stern was lifted high out of the water. Mr. Appenzeller, who seemed to be laboring under great excitement, apparently made no attempt to get away from the ship but Mr. Bowlby leaped aft and climbed [page 248] upon the rail. He knew there was no possibility of his not being drawn down by the suction and he knew that in order to save himself from being knocked about by broken rigging and other debris it was necessary to grasp some solid portion of the ship firmly and wait his chance to come up. He therefore seized hold of a rope that formed part of the rigging and as the boat settled he looked around and saw Mr. Appenzeller standing about where he was when he reached the deck, but now up to his waist in the water and groping vainly for something to take hold of. Nothing at all was said so far as our witness knows. All this had occupied only about a minute or perhaps less and then the ship went down at an angle of something like forty-five degrees. Mr. Bowlby clung desperately to his rope until he had been drawn what he believes to have been some twelve or fifteen feet and then he felt a shock which he thought to be either the ship striking bottom or the boilers bursting. As it appeared later it must have been the latter for the water was very deep at that spot. Thinking that the suction would have subsided Mr. Bowlby let go his hold in order to rise toward the surface but he found that his right foot was entangled in a rope. He reached down and liberated his foot and then rose rapidly toward the surface. But when, as he believes, he had almost reached air he was sucked down by another eddy and it was some seconds before he could get his head above water. Mr. Bowlby has for many years been an expert swimmer or he would not have been able to keep his presence of mind under such almost desperate circumstances. When he reached the air he took two or three gasps and was then caught by another eddy and carried down again. While under water the second time he was hit severely in the back by a piece of timber but did not attempt to seize it. Upon coming to the surface again he began to swim against the current which was rapidly carrying him away from the Kiso-gawa Maru which he could dimly see but whose lights shone out quite plain, apparently a couple of hundred yards away. When the Kuma-gawa sank he had noticed that the Kiso-gawa lay almost alongside, at most not more. than thirty feet away. But the tide had carried him rapidly away. He was now on the surface swimming against the current but nearly exhausted. His hand struck a piece of [page 249] board about two feet long and eight inches wide and it helped to rest him a little. Then he found another piece about the same size. Before long a considerable piece of timber came floating down to him and he lay across it and rested quite easily but he was numb with cold and he had lost all feeling in his feet.

Meanwhile he was aware of cries for help from the direction of the wreck and knew that boats were out picking up survivors but he did not call out as yet. Soon he became aware that a life-boat was floating bottom upwards near him. A large part of the bottom was ripped off but it afforded a much better chance than the timber he was on; so with his little remaining strength he dragged himself up on the overturned boat and lay across it on his stomach. Tangled in some wreckage that was attached to his boat was the body of a Korean, evidently dead, with his head hanging down in the water and only his back showing. Before long one of the rescue boats from the Kiso-gawa came by but seeing that Mr. Bowlby was safe for the moment they left him in order to help others in worse condition. At last however they came to him and took him off the boat. He collapsed, and was taken to the Kiso-gawa Maru in a very exhausted condition. They put him to bed covered him with many thicknesses of blankets and poured hot sake into him. Of course, he saw very little of the other survivors and not being able to speak Japanese had very little opportunity to gain information. He had been in the water fully three quarters of an hour and it was morning before he was really in condition to do any clear thinking, owing to the physical exhaustion and the nervous strain.

The Kiso-gawa tried to anchor but could not do so because of the depth of the water. So she kept steaming about in the vicinity of the wreck trying to find other survivors, until one o’clock p.m. of the next day, when she turned her prow toward Chemulpo. Mr. Bowlby lost all his effects including a considerable sum of money in U.S. gold but when he arrived in Chemulpo and the news was telegraphed to the American mines in Un-san where Mr. Bowlby had been working for some years a purse of six hundred yen was made up among his friends with the generosity characteristic of the mining fraternity. This sum was telegraphed to him and on [page 250] the sixteenth he sailed on the Genkai Maru bound for America where his wife and family await him. His watch which he had on at the time of the disaster stopped at half past ten, so the wreck must have occurred a few moments before that. On the whole it seems to have been a remarkable exhibition of coolness, nerve and physical endurance, and Mr. Bowlby and his family are to be heartily congratulated upon his escape.

# Japanese Banking in Korea.

Commercially the interests of Japan in Korea are so great that they stand in a class by themselves. Of course American oil, English cotton and Chinese silk play an important part but these lines of trade are carried on by comparatively a very small number of houses and little retailing is done by the foreign houses. The Japanese trade, on the contrary, is carried on by a very large number of retail dealers all over the country who come in much closer contact with the Koreans than the other foreigners do. To be sure there are a number of Chinese retailers but in the country they are mostly mere hawkers or peddlers who carry their goods on their backs and in most cases they are mere agents of a few large houses. With the Japanese, each merchant owns his little shop, brings his family to Korea and becomes more or less of a fixture. Even the larger Chinese houses are generally only branches of firms whose headquarters are in Shanghai or some other Chinese port. They are therefore stocked and financed from those points and are so far independent of banking facilities in Korea, except for the mere matter of exchange.

With the Japanese houses it is quite different. Their sales are more rapid and the business is more “hand to hand” as one might say. Rapidity of manipulation, keenness of competition and the necessity of taking instant advantage of trade opportunities make banking facilities a matter of prime importance to them.

The same causes tend to make them more sensitive to monetary fluctuations in the peninsula. The Chinese houses being branches of firms in China hold their goods on consignment [page 251] as it were and they can sell or wait as they please. But the Japanese merchant, living, as he does, from day to day on the daily profits of his business, has no option. He must sell, let the balance of profit or loss fall where it may. This is why the rapid fall in the value of the Korean currency has worked such dire results among the Japanese. Almost all Koreans receive their income in Korean money and the amount they receive does not vary with the fluctuations of exchange; consequently the depreciation of the Korean money looks to them like a rise in value of the *yen* and consequently a rise in price of all Japanese goods. This can have but one result –damage to Japanese trade.

Now no one would be so hardy as to deny that Japanese trade has been of very great value to the Koreans. No other one thing is doing so much to bring about a higher standard of material comfort in this country. A walk through the Japanese quarter and a very superficial examination of the goods displayed there for sale will be enough to convince one of the truth of this statement. Such being the case Korea owes something to this trade and it is only a shortsighted policy which allows race prejudice and political spleen to view with complacency, if not actual satisfaction, the decline of Japanese trade in Korea.

 Korea owes it to Japan to establish a reliable circulating medium and one whose recognized intrinsic value is so far above suspicion as to render impossible the almost farcical exhibition of the last year or two. Brisk sales on narrow margins, which is the very soul of successful trade, has been rendered impossible; for between the time a merchant clears his goods at the Chemulpo Custom House and the time he opens them up in Seoul his profit may have been wiped out three times over by a jump in the rate of exchange. The fact that it sometimes, or even half the time, works the other way is no compensation, for it makes business a mere lottery, and profits depend not upon business sagacity but upon the mere cast of a die.

Another great evil that this brings about is a curtailing of the business of the banks. With a currency running frantically from one extreme to the other and every nickel needing to be scrutinized through a magnifying glass no self-respecting [page 252] bank will carry on exchange transactions in it. They will, because they must, simply ignore it. The result is that the legitimate business of exchange which should form part of the profits of banking industry is handed over to small and irresponsible parties who by tricks of the trade are able to push exchange up or down to suit their own purposes, and the evil is multiplied. The money broker thrives on rapid fluctuations -the very thing that kills the merchant. If the banks could afford to do exchange business the brokers could do no harm, for the daily quotations of the conservative banks would be a check upon the imagination of the brokers. As we see in Yokohama for instance. When the bank rate of exchange between yen and U. S. gold is 49 1/2 and you want to buy American gold the broker is bound to give you an eighth or a quarter better than the bank, and if you want to buy yen they are still bound to give you a little more than the bank. In other words the broker must always make a smaller profit than the bank. But in Korea the brokers are a law unto themselves. It is plain however that the remedy does not lie in suppressing the broker but in providing such a reliable medium of exchange that the banks can afford to make daily quotations. Then the strident voice of the broker would subside to a gentle peep, and the banks would acquire a legitimate avenue of profit.

It seems then that the real interests of Japan and Korea both demand a reliable currency. In order to secure this one of two things, it seems to us, must be done. The Korean government must be educated up to the point where it will be able to see that there can be no possible profit in minting money, if it is done honestly: or on the other hand it must be made the subject of firm diplomatic action. The difficulty of this latter course is that there can be no united action. There are powers in treaty relations with Korea whose commercial interests are practically nil in the peninsula and whose political interests are not in line with an overwhelming commercial supremacy on the part of Japan. Each power will seek its own interests in every case and it would be folly to expect any other power to whom the rehabilitation of Korea’s finances is a matter of indifference, to help in a course which would be of advantage to Japan.

[page 253] But another difficulty still besets the Japanese banks in Korea. The Japanese government, for what reason it is hard to surmise, decided to withdraw from circulation all the one yen bills and make the five-yen piece the unit of measure. Consequently all transactions smaller than five yen must be made in subsidiary coin. Now the Koreans do not take kindly to Japanese subsidiary coin. The silver yen was thoroughly acceptable and later the yen bills attained a very secure hold upon the Koreans, but the fifty, twenty and ten sen coins never went far here. The withdrawal of the yen bill was therefore a severe blow to Japanese trade in Korea and this in turn had a bad effect upon the banks. It was felt that something must be done to remedy this difficulty. The matter was taken up in earnest and Minister Hayashi in Seoul proposed to his government that the First National Bank of Japan which has flourishing branches in the various treaty ports of Korea be authorized to put out a special one yen bill for use in Korea. This is not a Japanese government note but a strictly private bank note; but its genesis and authorization and backing render it as safe a medium as the Japanese government notes themselves. When this special bank note appeared bearing on its face clear evidence of its being made for internal use in Korea alone some of the Korean officials demurred, saying that this was a trespass upon the prerogatives of the Korean government whose duty alone it is to provide a currency for the Peninsula, The Bank replied that these notes were not legal tender and no one was obliged to use them that did not wish to; moreover that they were not real money but only the equivalent to notes of hand and backed only by the reserves of the bank.

We have received from the Dai Ichi Ginko a statement regarding this suspiciousness on the part of the government toward this issue of bank-notes and from the following facts it should be plain to anyone that though there are some who still hesitate to handle them, such hesitation is quite unwarranted.

When the authorization for issuing and circulating the bank notes in Korea was granted to the Dai Ichi Ginko, the Department of Finance in Tokyo asked and empowered the Consuls stationed at the different ports in Korea to supervise [page 254] the circulation of the notes in their several localities. At the same time the different branches of the bank in Korea were instructed to furnish the Japanese Consulates quarterly reports showing the amount of notes in circulation and also the amount of reserves held for the redemption of the notes. After these reports have been carefully examined by the various Consuls the General Superintendent of the Korea branches of the Dai Ichi Ginko shall furnish the Japanese Minister at Seoul a minute report as to the amount of notes in circulation and the amount of the reserves. When this report is approved it will be published in the various papers in the different ports of Korea. Since, then, these bil1s are issued, under the strict supervision of the Japanese government whose one object naturally is the establishment of a thoroughly trustworthy currency and since every note thus issued is backed by a gold reserve equivalent to its total face value there can be no reasonable doubt as to the trustworthiness of these notes and their immediate acceptance by the Koreans. As a fact the Koreans did accept them without hesitation from the very day they were issued and the obstacles interposed by the government are rather academic than practical. One foreign representative has pointedly instructed the bank not to send it any of these notes but this will have little influence upon the mass of the Koreans, whose confidence in the financial ability of their own countrymen may possibly have been a little shaken by recent events.

# Memoir of Rev. Henry G. Appenzeller.

Rev. Henry G. Appenzeller, one of the two founders of the Mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Korea was born at Souderton, Pennsylvania, February 6th. 1858. His parents were German Lutherans and at the age of 20 he entered Franklin and Marshall college of the Reformed Church located at Lancaster. He graduated from this institution in 1882. Having previously joined the Methodist Episcopal Church, while in College he was licensed to preach and served very acceptably a small mission in connection with the First [page 255] Church of Lancaster. In the fall of 1882 he entered Drew Theological Seminary and pursued the regular 3 years course. During the first part of his course he preached at Bolton and afterwards at Green Village, the best appointment open to Drew students. In December 1884 he married Miss Ella J. Dodge; the same month he was appointed by Bishop Fowler to go as a missionary to Korea. In January he passed his final examinations at the Seminary and with his newly married wife started for their new field of labor. In May while in Japan he was graduated from the Seminary.

In San Francisco he was ordained deacon and elder in the Methodist ministry by Bishop Fowler.

On Easter Sunday April 5, 1885 he and his wife arrived at Chemulpo. At this time on account of the political disturbances and the contest going on between the Japanese and Chinese it was considered unsafe for them to stay so they reluctantly returned to Japan but in a short time the difficulties having been settled came back to Korea,

By the month of August Dr. Scranton and Mr. Appenzeller had each purchased a native house and lot. Dr. Scranton began medical work on his own compound and also assisted in the work in the Government Hospital established in April by Dr. H. N. Allen of the Presbyterian Church. Two Koreans came to him desiring to study medicine and he told them that they must have a knowledge of English to do so. They applied to Mr. Appenzeller and he began to teach them English. In August he had four pupils enrolled.. In 1886 the school had a recognized standing and was formally named by the king *Pai Chai Hak Dang* (Hall for Training Useful Men.) It had its first Session June 8, 1886.

In 1887 Mr. Appenzeller erected the brick building now occupied by the school, the first of its kind ever erected in the country. Thus Mr. Appenzeller was the first educator to come to Korea, --------------- \*In February Bishop Fowler wrote to Dr. Maclay, superintendent of the Japan Mission, appointing him superintendent of Korea and Rev. Appenzeller as assistant superintendent under his direction. In 1887 upon the return of Dr. Maclay to America Mr. Appenzeller became superintendent.

[page 256] On Sunday afternoon July 24, 1887, Mr. Appenzeller baptized one of the first Koreans who professed conversion to Christianity, and on October 2 a second Korean convert was baptized. Shortly afterwards the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper was administered. Thus began the evangelistic work of the Methodist Episcopal Mission. In the spring of that year Mr. Appenzeller nmde the first journey ever undertaken by a missionary to Pyeng-yang. After a few days’ stay there he was called back by the American Minister by order of the Government. In 1887 with Rev. H, G. Underwood of the Presbyterian Mission he started again for the far north but before reaching the Chinese border they were called back by the American Minister.

 Later he made a trip alone as far north as We-ju, which was very difficult. Between 1888 and 1890 he traveled through six of the eight provinces, touching at Hai-ju, Kongju and Fusan, covering 1800 miles.

From the time of his appointment until 1892 Mr. Appenzeller was superintendent of the Methodist Mission; for a large part of that time he also served as treasurer of the Mission which position he continued to fill until 1900.

His policy on educational lines was a very broad one, and his plans included the education of the youth of the Empire under Christian instruction and control. He believed that the Christian Church ought to be at the helm of the educational system and in this way by precept and example inculcate principles of morality and nobility. At the same time he saw the possibilities in such a position for Christianizing the youth. To that end he planned and worked for the aggrandizement of Pai Chai Hak Dang.

Yet not alone in educational work were Mr. Appenzeller’s many gifts applied. He was devoted to the evangelization of this people. He founded and cared for the First Methodist Episcopal Church in Chong Dong, Seoul, during the years of his service, seeking with all his power to make it a mighty evangelistic agency for the young. When his congregation had grown beyond the capacity of the place of meeting he decided to build a church at once beautiful, substantial and serviceable. He therefore adopted that style of architecture that is everywhere associated with the Christian [page 257] church and erected the first protestant foreign church building in Korea.

Being one of the pioneer missionaries and a man of diversified talents Mr. Appenzeller was active in the founding of nearly all of the organizations that exist among the foreign community. Feeling the need in a heathen land of drawing away occasionally from all heathen environments and in union with others of his own race, in his own tongue worshiping the Deity he took a large part in founding the Union Church and gladly opened the chapel of Pai Chai School for the services. Several times he was elected pastor and conscientiously fulfilled the duties of that position.

In the fore front of missionary enterprise stands the Bible. When the first missionaries arrived they found that Rev. John Ross, in Moukden, had translated the New Testament into Korean. They soon found however that this was very imperfect and that they must have a better translation. They then formed the Permanent Executive Bible Committee and from the first for a number of years Mr. Appenzeller was a member of this Committee. The purpose of the committee was to supervise the translation and publication of the scriptures. They elected from among the missionaries certain ones for the work of translation. Mr. Appenzeller was among the number first chosen and has held his position on the Board of Translators ever since. It was work in which he took great pleasure and was careful to attend every session he possibly could. In fact it was in going to the performance of this duty that he lost his life on the ill-fated Kuma-gawa.

Next to the Bible as an evangelistic agency comes religious literature. For the preparation and publication of books and tracts the Korean Religious Tract Society was founded and Mr. Appenzeller was elected President. This position he filled for a number of years and until very recently. In addition to this he was for a long time the custodian of the Sunday School Union and Tract Society of the Methodist Episcopal Mission. In these societies he did considerable work himself in translation and publication of tracts. He started and for four years edited and published the church weekly of the Methodist Mission called the Korean Christian Advocate, carrying it on successfully in the midst [page 258] of his other many duties. Prior to the organization of these societies, that is in the fall of 1888, having experienced considerable difficulty in the matter of printing the works that had been translated and also seeking a legitimate enterprise whereby employment might be given to boys who desired to earn their support while pursuing their studies at Pai Chai, at the request of Mr. Appenzeller, Mr. Ohlinger opened the printing establishment now called the Methodist Publishing: House. Shortly afterwards Mr. Appenzeller began the Pai Chai Bindery as an adjunct to the school. As publications multiplied a book depository was needed and Mr. Appenzeller having purchased property in a very favorable location at Chong No opened the Chong No Bookstore; at this place a large number of books and tracts are sold each year.

Although devoting his energies primarily to a host of missionary enterprises Mr. Appenzeller found time to engage in work of a secular nature for the good of the foreign community. He was one of the leading spirits among the group of influential foreigners whose counsel and example resulted in the widening of the narrow streets of the city and the building of good roads. In all such works his influence as a Christian missionary was felt after the widening of the road through Peking pass, at the ceremonies in connection with the completion of the Independence Arch, he was very much pleased at the invitation extended him to offer prayer in public acknowledgment of gratitude to God, and thus put the stamp of Christian progress on what had been accomplished.

In 1892 Rev. Ohlinger and Mrs. Ohlinger edited and published a monthly magazine in English which they called the Korean Repository. After their departure the need of such a publication was felt by the community and in 1895 Rev. Appenzeller and Rev. Geo. Heber Jones began to edit and publish the Korean Repository. For four years in the midst of many other weighty duties they continued its publication. Its influence was felt throughout all the east and it came to be an authority on matters Korean.

In his social duties Mr. Appenzeller was never lax; during his seventeen years in Korea there were very few foreigners whom he did not know personally. To further cement these ties and afford a means of recreation and a [page 259] relief from close application to duty, he advocated and assisted in the organization of the Seoul Union, an association where the foreigners and their families occasionally meet and spend an hour in mental and physical relaxation. The leading papers and magazines published in the United States are kept on file and in the summer three tennis courts are laid out.

The Korea Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society was founded in 1900. The purpose of the organization is to investigate the history, customs and life of the people of the peninsula and put such investigations into permanent form for the public. Mr. Appenzeller has for several months served the society in the capacity of librarian.

A few years after the arrival of the first foreigners, upon the death of one of the small company great difficulty was experienced in the matter of the burial of the body. The Korean government refused permission to bury near the city, and only after much pressure was brought to bear did they consent to the burial on this side of the Han river at Yang Wha-jin. At this place a large tract of land was purchased and enclosed for a Foreigner Cemetery. In all this work Mr. Appenzeller took a large part and for a number of years was Treasurer of the Foreign Cemetery Association. It seems truly a sad comment upon the frailty of man that he who did so much to secure and carefully preserve a burial place for the foreign community should find his final resting place in the wide waste of waters: and yet we know that he would think that it is all right so long as he was right with God. For in all the rush of a busy life he always made sure of his acceptance with God. A few days before his death after having passed safely through an experience in which his life was in danger he remarked that he had no fear; that if he had been killed in that trouble it would have been all right with him for he had that morning committed himself unto God as he did every morning.

We have sketched in the barest outline the events and works in the life of a truly good and great man. In all his relations with his fellowmen he was upright and straightforward and he always aimed by a cheerful, kindly manner to brighten the lives of those with whom he came in contact, while at the same time he had little patience with dishonesty [page 260] or shiftlessness. He was a loving husband and a kind father, seeking to bring his children up in the fear of God. To friends he was true as steel and those who met him for the first time found in him a courteous Christian gentleman.

To the public in his many works, he was a benefactor of high standing and his work in behalf of this people will go on producing its beneficial results for many years.

As a missionary he was capable, faithful and devoted to his work, and holds a high record. He was self-sacrificing almost to a fault. Among the Koreans it is said that he not only gave many years of service to them but also in the end gave his life; for they believe that in attempting to call and arouse the Korean teacher and the little girl under his care he could not take sufficient precautions for his own safety. In all his efforts he was moved by the highest optimism and had the greatest faith in the ultimate triumph of Christ’s church in the world. All the distinctive doctrines of evangelical Christianity were accepted by him. The immortality of the soul and the glorification of the Christian in union with “all those who love His appearing,” were pleasing themes for thought. Often in our hearing has he given utterance in prayer to this couplet:

We meet, the grace to take Thou hast so freely given;

We meet on earth for Thy dear sake, that we may meet in heaven.

Perhaps we can no more fitly close this sketch than by a quotation from a funeral address delivered by him not long ago.

“We stop in the rush of our every-day duties in order to lay in our Machpelah by the river one more body to await the resurrection morn. It is well that we should for we are forcibly reminded that we are strangers and pilgrims here below. There is no order in death. A few weeks ago one slipped from our midst ere many of us knew of his illness and now another one from whom we were separated and whose hearty laugh we did not hear is called hence. May we not say in the words of Job, ‘are not my days few before I go whence I shall not return, without any order.’ “Without any order,” and yet in God’s order. God doeth all things well and, brethren concerning them which are asleep, sorrow [page 261] not, even as others who have no hope.’ Jesus who died and rose again will bring them who sleep in him with him. And so shall we be ever with the Lord. And truly the last words of our lesson are for our comfort: “God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.’ This is the will of God and from this point God’s dealings with us his children must be viewed.”

Wilbur C. Swearer,

# Odds and Ends.

## A Look Beyond

We consider the Kobe Chronicle one of the most readable papers in the far east, but a recent issue greatly increased our admiration; for in spite of the fact that it takes missionaries so lightly it takes very pronounced and unmistakeable ground on the question of a future life. This is seen in its sober repetition of the report that the father of the Korean Emperor objects to the boring of a tunnel through a hill in southern Korea, “the view from which he greatly admires.” As the father of the Emperor, the Tai-wun-kan, passed away some years ago we find in the above statement something much more definite in regard to an intermediate state than anything we had expected to learn. This surprising insight leads us to suspect that the Chronicle’s occasional pleasantries re the missionaries grow out of its personal knowledge of the limited character of their theological training. We sincerely trust that the Chronicle will develop this line in its columns for the benefit of its readers, missionary and otherwise.

# Editorial Comment.

The foreign community in Seoul, the Methodist Mission and the Protestant Christian work in Korea have all suffered a severe loss in the death of Rev. H. G. Appenzeller. As a [page 262] husband and father he was exemplary, as a friend he was staunch and loyal, as a workman be was diligent and self-forgetful, as a Christian he was sincere and outspoken. He commanded the respect and esteem of every element in the foreign community, and very many of the highest officials in Korea have shown genuine sorrow for his untimely death. In the obituary notice will be found the various lines of work which engaged his attention showing kis broad public spirit and his active participation in every movement which looked toward the moral, intellectual, social or economic improvement of the community. It is with feelings of poignant regret that the Korea Review records his death and we extend our heartiest sympathy to his bereaved family and to the bereaved Church in Korea.

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On Sunday, June the first, Bishop D. H. Moore, Rev. H. G. Appenzeller, Rev. W. C. Swearer, Miss Melvin and Miss Moore started for the little village of Mu-chi-ne where it was intended they should hold a service in the Methodist chapeL At one point on the way the road crosses the embankment of the new Seoul-Fusan Railway and then about a hundred yards farther on recrosses it. When the party reached this point all excepting Rev. H. G. Appenzeller and one Korean kept on the regular road but these two, as they were somewhat in the rear, walked along the railway embankment which formed the chord of an arc to the point where the regular road again crossed the embankment. There was no sign of any kind warning people not to walk on this embankment nor was there anyone there to warn people not to go there. These facts have been proved by ample witness. When, however, the main body of the party had crossed the embankment at both points on the regular road and Mr. Appenzeller and the Korean had nearly reached the end of their short cut along the embankment a Japanese coolie came running along and without saying anything to the two who had walked along the embankment hurried forward to the jinrikisha occupied by the Bishop and seizing it prevented the party from proceeding. Mr. Swearer who was in advance returned to see what was the matter. Mr. Appenzeller asked the coolie to desist saying that they were not aware that they were trespassing and that [page 263] hereafter they would take good care that they all kept to the main road. This he repeated several times attempting as best he could to smooth matters over by an apology although of course there was not the slightest reason for apologizing. No fault of any kind had been committed and the coolie had no more right to detain the party than any highwayman. So they stood there, the coolie obstinately refusing to let go and yet offering no reason for the stoppage of the road nor suggesting any alternative mode of action. An apology, though superfluous, had been offered, and the party must proceed in order to get to their destination in time. As the coolie obstinately refused to release the ricksha Bishop Moore gave his knuckles a rap with his walking stick as a little reminder that a party of perfectly inoffensive citizens cannot be held up by any half-naked Japanese coolie on a public highway for an indefinite period. Bishop Moore was perfectly justified in this course, but perhaps a wiser course would have been to have left him entirely alone and waited till his slow brain took in the absurdity of the situation. As it was, the slight blow was taken as a declaration of war and the coolie screaming to his fellows in camp just beyond a little hill leaped to the side of the road seized a stone as large as his two fists and hurled it with all his might at the Bishop. The latter fortunately had on a thick pith helmet and the stone struck this and did no injury. But now Mr. Appenzeller, Mr. Swearer and Mun (a Korean helper) stepped in between the Japanese and the Bishop in order to defend the latter. The Japanese coolie was now reinforced by two or three others who were armed with clubs and things began to look serious. Mr. Appenzeller and Mr. Swearer were attempting to hold the Japanese in check at the same time moving away down the road as rapidly as possible. Mr. Swearer who is something of an expert in the “noble art of self defence” refrained from striking from the shoulder although it would have been easy to have delivered same knock-out blows; but he simply attempted to ward off the blows of the Japanese. The latter were bent on murder; whatever they may have considered their provocation their intentions were plainly homicidal. Nearby, there lay a pile of sticks and one of the Japanese ran to it and picked up an ugly weapon. Mr. Swearer seeing his intent followed in order to [page 264] wrest the stick away from him for there would have been no chance against such a weapon. Just as the coolie picked up the stick Mr. Swearer looked around to glance at the struggling party he had left and instantly the coolie delivered a murderous blow which struck Mr. Swearer in the forehead felling him to the ground and cutting a deep wound over the eye. He struggled to his feet again with the blood streaming down his face and in the distance he saw Mr. Appenzeller also covered with blood holding off the Japanese as best he could. But at this point, for some reason not apparent, the Japanese began to show signs of letting up. The party had retreated some distance down the road away from the Japanese encampment and perhaps the injuries they had already inflicted made them conscious that they had laid themselves open to grave charges. However that may be they eventually retired and the party made its way back to Seoul where Mr. Swearer’s severe wound was attended to as well as the less dangerous wounds which Mr. Appenzeller had sustained.

The matter was promptly reported to the U. S. Legation and the Japanese authorities were requested to arrest the culprits and bring them to trial. This was done and after a considerable trial during which one statement after another of the Japanese witnesses was proven to be false and so recognized by the Japanese authorities these coolies, three in number, were sentenced two of them to two months and one of them to one month’s imprisonment with hard labor. It is needless for us to dwell upon the ludicrous inadequacy of this sentence. It was a murderous and practically unprovoked assault and deserved at least five years imprisonment, and no reasonable man can doubt that if the persons attacked had been Japanese gentlemen of equal standing with Bishop Moore these scoundrels would have scarcely gotten off with less than a life sentence. Nor can anyone doubt that if the Bishop’s party had drawn arms and shot down every one of their assailants in self-defence they would have been exhonerated. Is any American citizen to be put in jeopardy of his life whenever a Japanese coolie takes a notion to hold him up like a brigand on the public highway? We believe we are voicing the sentiment of ninety-nine out of every hundred European and American residents of Seoul when we say that the sentence [page 265] pronounced upon these coolies was such as to make every foreigner consider the propriety of carrying a weapon to guard himself against murderous assault.

We take no partisan ground. We commend the efforts of Japan to extend and strengthen her commercial relations with Korea; we believe that Japan is one of Korea’s best friends; we believe the Japanese government is thoroughly in sympathy with the idea of an independent, clean, progressive government in Korea; we believe that no other can do for Korea what Japan can; we believe that Japanese coolies should be protected in all their rights; but at the same time we ask that the Japanese authorities put such checks upon the lawlessness of a certain class of their subjects that it will no longer appear that Koreans and Americans and other foreigners have no rights that the Japanese coolie is bound to respect.

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It was with consternation that the foreign Community in Korea learned of the illness of His Majesty, King Edward VII. and we shall await most anxiously the arrival of further news from London. Meanwhile preparations for the festivities which were to mark the coronation day have been postponed. We join with all others of whatever nationality in the earnest hope that medical skill will triumph and that King Edward will yet be enrolled in the glorious list of British sovereigns.

# News Calendar.

The governor of North Kyung-sang Province sent a communication to the government urging that the wall of Kyung-ju be thoroughly repaired. This is one of the great historical centers of Korea and for a thousand years was the capital of the Kingdom of Silla.

The Educational Department is having considerable trouble with truants in the common schools and asks the Law Department to “put on the screws” and collect a fine from each delinquent of one dollar a month.

The Household Department has sent to the Department of Agriculture for permit to cut some large timber in Ko-yang for use in the new Audience Hall that is being built.

The destitute in Ch’un-an, Ch’ung-chŭng Province have been given 1,250,000 cash by Yun Ch’i-so, fifteen bags of rice by Kim Kyu-hyŭn and 5,000,000 cash by Pak Sang-nă.

[page 266] On the night of the eleventh of June a collision took place between the *Kuma-gawa Maru* and the *Kiso-gawa Maru*, both of the Osaka Shosen Kaisha, about eight-five miles south of Chemulpo. Both boats were on their course at the time and as the *Kuma-gawa* did not whistle once till after the collision the officers of that boat at least will hardly escape severe censure, for if the night was foggy she should have been whistling every few minutes. There must have been some extremely careless work. Nothing conclusive will be known until the official investigation. The Kuma-gawa was struck on the starboard bow at an angle of about twenty degrees and the probability is that both boats were going at a speed which rendered it impossible for the *Kuma-gawa* to escape sinking, but no one evidently thought she would go down almost immediately. In the confusion of the moment very few of those below deck were able to reach the deck before she went down bow first. The loss of life is said to have been seventeen Koreans, six Japanese and one American. The latter was Rev. H. G. Appenzeller and one of the Koreans was Mr. Cho who has been so many years Mr. Appenzeller’s helper. Another of the Koreans was a little girl who was going to Mokpo in charge of Mr. Appenzeller. Among those saved were the captain and purser, the former of whom will have to make a very full explanation of the affair.

We have received from Mr. Morsel the following statement: “It has been said that there is a rumor in Seoul that the reason of the collision was because there are no lighthouses along the coast. As a practical mariner I would like to say that the blame cannot be thus shifted from the shoulders of the officers who were running the vessels. All evidence so far to hand shows that they lost their heads at the critical moment. Even had there been lights these could not have prevented a collision. If officers are careless the very presence of lighthouses may be an added source of danger for it might give them a false feeling of security which would lead to further disaster.” This seems to be to the point. If, as we have always supposed, lighthouses are for the purpose of keeping ships on their proper course, ships coming from opposite directions would be more likely to come close together than if there were no such lights.

Yi Kön-t’ak, Judge of the Supreme Court, resigned and Kim Chŭnggeun was appointed in his place.

Former prefects and governors to the number of sixteen have recently been arrested because of arrears of taxes unpaid and 21,646,000 cash was collected from them.

Fire distroyed ninety-three houses in Yöng-heung and 107 houses in Yö-san, in May.

Cho Heui-il and over a hundred others joined in a memorial to His Majesty on the 18th inst. urging that Lady Om be made Empress. This was the second of the same tenor. On the eighteenth T’ă Myŭng-sik and fifty others memorialized the Emperor to the same effect. Yi Munwha and over two hundred others have prepared a memorial urging strong’ ly that Lady Om be not elevated to the position of Empress.

[page 267] Koreans living near Kirin, Manchuria, have been ordered by a Chinese general to adopt the Chinese coiffure. The subject has become a matter for diplomatic action.

The Anglo-Japanese alliance has recently made a clear statement as to a few of its ideas respecting Korean matters. It advises; ( 1 ) That the Korean government advise with Japan and Great Britain in regard to important matters of foreign and domestic policy looking toward the firmer establishment of Korean independence; (2) That the army and navy of Korea be put in proper condition to give force to the efforts of the government to put the country on a firm basis; (3) If there is necessity for a foreign loan, that the Korean government place the loan with Japan, England or the United States; (4) That the employment of for eign advisers be dispensed with so far as possible; (5) That great care be taken to prevent encroachment upon Korean territory by outside parties.

There have been riots in Yŭng-an and Sun-ch’un in South Chulla pronnce but it is not yet known whether it is of the nature of a seditious uprising or whether the people are simply protesting against extortion.

Seven leaders of robber bands have been seized in Ch’il-wŭn in South Kyongsŭng Province.

A large number of former prefects from whom the government claims arrears of taxes have been confined at the Finance Department pending the payment of the money.

The Seoul-Fusan Railway Company has acceded to the government request and the tunnel at Chi-ji-dă in Su-wun will not be built.

The Seoul terminal station of the Seoul Fusan Railway will be built outside the South Gate to the east of the main road to Yong-san. About 200 houses will be pulled down to make room for it.

Four counterfeiters were caught in the act at A-o-gă outside the West Gate and $1,000 in nickels seized. The men will be executed.

An old woman of eighty years was trampled to death by a military official’s horse in front of the Military School on the 19th inst. and the *mapu* or groom has been put in the chain gang for three years.

Many people in the country say that the drought in Korea is caused by the fact that foreigners dig in the mountains for gold and the strength (*kiun*) of the mountains is taken away and secondly that the smoke from the railway engines dries up the heavens. Others say it is because the oppression of the magistrates has offended Heaven and others still that it is because of the cutting down of the forests.

In Py’ung-yang there are 126 Japanese subjects residing in sixty two houses.

At Ku-ri-gi a large business house was burned on the 22nd inst. It is said that $20,000, worth of foreign cotton cloth, silk, &c was destroyed .

In the far north there has been no rain as yet and the people demand that sacrifices be made in their behalf.

J. H. Muhlensteth, Esq. who has been Acting Adviser to the Foreign [page 268] Department has been made full Adviser. Mr. Muhlensteth’s loug residence in Korea and his intimate knowledge of Korea affairs should make him a valuable addition to the staff of the Foreign Office.

Heng Wun-sup and Chang Cha-sik of Kang-wha put down 17.500.000 cash to help the destitute people there until the barley crop could be reaped.

The Korean Society of Japan with a branch in Seoul have begun an investigation to find out the following: -(1) The amount of “cash” circulating in Korea, (2) The amount of nickels, (3) The amount of copper cents, (4) Amount of Japanese silver and paper, (5) Amount of gold product, (6) Amount of personal notes of hand, (7) Exports, imports and Customs receipts, (8) Amount of land tax, (9) Amount of rice and beans raised, (10) Population of Korea. The society has laid out a pretty heavy piece of work but one whose successful completion would be of great value.

The Japanese Government has been requested by a large number of Japanese traders to arrange with the Korean Government that Japanese be allowed to travel anywhere in Korea without passport!

Native papers state that the Emperor has ordered the payment of the $3000, demanded by the Japanese in payment for certain pieces of wreckage picked up by Koreans on the coast and used as firewood. Meanwhile the Koreans have been unsuccessful in their attempts to collect from the Japanese $276, the price of sundry bags of salt which Japanese took from Koreans on Dagelet Island and, having sold them, ran away to Japan. It is a poor rule that will not work both ways.

The name of the new Western Palace in P’yŭng-yang will be P’unggyung Kung (\*\*\*) or “The palace of Plenty and Happiness.”

Yi Kon-t’ak the Judge of the Supreme Court has resigned and Yi Yu-in has been appointed to the place.

The two parties who have taken opposite sides on the question of elevating Lady Om to the position of Empress have been silenced by Imperial order but another party has arisen whose idea is to urge that the Emperor to choose an Empress from among the Korean peeresses.

The *Japan Gazette* informs us that at the time of the collision the Kuma-gawa Maru had forty-six passengers on board of whom eighteen are missing besides eight of the crew. One American, fourteen Koreans and three Japanese passengers were lost. It is stated that a “dense fog” was the cause of the collision.

A treaty between Korea and Denmark was signed on the eighteenth of May at the Foreign Office. His excellency A. Pavloff acted on behalf of Denmark and Yu Keni-whan on behalf of Korea. The terms of the treaty are practically the same as the other treaties.

The Belgian Minister has written inviting Korea to participate in the great medical convention to be held in Brussels in September and to send for exhibit any special medical or surgical appliances that have been produced by Koreans.

The people of Su-wŭn have petitioned the government to prevent the tunneling of P’al-dal Mountain over which the wall of Su-wun runs, on [page 269] the ground that on that mountain is the tomb of Chang-jong Whang-je the great-great-grandfather of the present Emperor. The government complied by asking the railway company to alter their plan, but the matter has not yet been settled. The Japanese say that it will be very difficult to make the change.

The portrait of His Majesty has lately been painted by a Korean artist.

The foundations of the new palace at P’yŭng-yang were begun on the 23rd inst and the first pillars will be raised on the 27th of August.

Yi Pom-yun of the Home Department was sent to inspect the Korean settlements beyond the Tuman River and to see their numbers and condition.

We are pleased to be able to announce that beginning with this month we shall be able to give a complete and reliable meteorological report for Seoul, through the kindness of Dr. V. Pokrovsky of the Russian Legation. He has been provided with a fine set of instruments from the head bureau at St Petersburg including a quicksilver barometer with thermometer, an aneroid with thermometer, a psychrometer by Reignaul (consisting of a dry-bulb thermometer and a wet-bulb thermometer mounted in a tower twelve feet high and inclosed in a “cage,” a hair hygrometer and a minimum thermometer;) also a wind gauge, a pluviometer and a Benson Chronometer from London. Such a report has long been desired in Seoul and the thanks of the community are due to Dr. Pokrovsky for furnishing it.

The enterprising young governor of North Kyŭng-sang Province determined to repair the two breaches in the wall of Tă-ku. For this purpose he first levied a tax on all the forty-one prefectures of his province and then seized and imprisoned scores of men in Tă-ku and vicinity and forced them to “contribute.” No one who had a spare dollar was safe. The amount collected is said to be enormous, the most ever collected for such an object. The people say that the governor is fixed for the rest of his natural life. He is the youngest man ever sent there as governor. =

About the beginning of June the scholars of Tă-ku determined to repair the building dedicated to Confucianism, outside the east gate. A large timber was needed but could not be procured. The local magistrate ordered the head carpenter to find one. He reported that in the Talsung, an old fort noted as the former residence of the Su clan and now used as a pleasure ground, such a piece of timber could be found. The magistrate assented, thinking he meant one of the large oak trees on the embankment, but a few hours later he was horrified to learn that they had cut down the magnificent pine, over two hundred years old, which stood like a tower in the center of the fort, a highly revered landmark. The governor was so enraged that the master carpenter and his two assistants were thrown into prison and beaten, while others still fled from the city. The governor went in person to view the ruin and that night a large procession of yamen runners, with lanterns lighted, came from the old fort like a funeral procession and wailing as if for the dead.

[page 270] Father Robert of the Roman Catholic church in Tă-ku and two of the church members gave 300 bags of barley to the needy of that town this spring. The Roman Catholic church which is being built of brick and stone promises to be second only to the Cathedral in Seoul. The people of Tă-ku say that the Japanese promise to complete the railway to that point in three years. We wonder from which end.

A correspondent kindly writes to tell of “another important step in the line of progress and enlightenment taken by the Koreans. For the first time a Korean-owned steam vessel entered the port of Chinnampo under command of a Korean Captain. The Steamer’s name is the Sun-sin. Her captain has served for some years as officer aboard the *Chang-riong*.” Our correspondent hopes, as also do we, that this is only the first step toward a Korea for the Koreans.

The 18th of October will be the fortieth anniversary’ of the present emperor’s accession to the throne. It will be the occasion of lavish festivities at the Korean court. Orders have been issued for the striking off of a thousand gold medals and a thousand silver ones which will be distributed among the diplomatic corps, the foreign employees and guests and the Korean officials.

A Japanese Buddhist monk of high standing has come to Korea to inspect the monasteries of the country and establish a new one of large proportions which will be under special government patronage.

In Sa-dong, Seoul, a gentleman named T’ak Sun-il set out a feast for all the beggars in Seoul, which was well patronized. Hundreds of little rag-a-muffins swarmed about the tables and ate to their full capacity.

A new order has been promulgated whereby every house in Seoul both large and small must have a light before it.

Yi Chöng-no, lately Minister of the Home Department, has memorialized the Emperor suggesting that the title of King be conferred upon Confucius, posthumously.

The Korean Minister to Japan urges the government to pay $9500 which have been advanced by Japanese to the Korean students in Tokyo for board and medical attendance.

Two years ago a Japanese sailing vessel was wrecked off Ch’ung Chŭng Province and pieces of the wreckage floating about in the water were eventually picked up by Koreans and used as fire wood. The Japanese authorities asked that these people be brought up to Seoul for trial. This was done but they were acquitted on the ground that the salvage of abandoned pieces of wreckage constituted no trespass. The Japanese Minister now says that $3000 will be deducted from the landtax due the Korean government in Masanpo to cover the value of this wreckage!!

The Japanese gold-mining concession in Chik-san has not turned out a paying venture and therefore the concessionaires have asked the government to give them a concession at some other point.

As the condition of the Finance Department did not permit of the payment of the salaries for May, they were paid out of the proceeds from the sale of Annam rice.

[page 271] It was the intention of the government to close up the street leading to Chong-dong, or Legation Street, but the Japanese Minister urged that as there is a good deal of foreign property in that vicinity it would not be right to close a main thoroughfare. The other foreign representatives, who are still more interested than the Japanese, made a united protest; and it seems that the plan cannot be carried out.

Robbers in Mi-ryang burned thirty houses on May 10th and six people perished in the flames.

The Seoul Station of the North-western Railway will be situated at the C’hŭn-yŭn-jŭng outside the West Gate near the lotus pond. It will be remembered that this was the site of the first Japanese Legation in Korea.

Yun Yong-sŭn, the prime minister, resigned and Sim Sun-t’ak has been appointed to the position.

The number of police captains has been increased from thirty to thirty four as the former number seemed inadequate to the proper suppression of crime.

The contract of the Japanese Physician, teacher in the medical school, has been renewed for two years.

A hundred men joined in a memorial to His Majesty asking that Lady Om be elevated to the position the Empress.

An official of the Bureau of Forestry in Japan has been sent to Korea to make a report on the forests of the peninsula, after which he will go to China for a similar purpose.

The Home Department has appointed two Buddhist monks, Munch’an and Yong-o to have authority over all the monasteries of Korea.

In Sŭng-ju robbers burned thirty five houses on the eleventh of May>

We have received from the Dai Ichi Ginko in Seoul the eleventh semi-annual report of that bank which shows that there has been a net profit of $403,990.50 and that a dividend of nine per cent per annum was ordered paid. At the same time we received a neat little volume entitled “A Short History of The Dai Ichi Ginko” which gives interesting information, several pages being devoted to the operations of this bank in Korea.

In this connection we note with pleasure the arrival of Mr. Masayashi Takalci as Manager of the Seoul Branch, and this without in any way reflecting upon the long and faithful work of Mr. Matsumo Harada who is so well and favorably known by all foreign residents in Seoul. The work of the bank has grown to such proportions through the efforts of Mr. Harada that one man cannot handle it all. Mr. Harada remains as sub-manager. Mr. Takaki, upon whose arrival we congratutate ourselves, spent some seven years in America, taking his degree of A. B. from Syracuse University and his Ph. D. from John’s Hopkins, after which he took a short course in Columbia University and later at a German University.

Table of Meteorological Observations

Seoul, Korea, May, 1902.

V. Pokrovsky, M.D., Observer.

[See images]

[page 273]

# Korean History.

Medieval Korea

The year 1389 beheld some interesting and important events. In the first place Gen. Yi decided to take the offensive against the Japanese; so a hundred boats were fitted out. The expedition arrived first at Tsushima where three hundred of the enemy’s boats were burned as well as many houses; and more than a hundred prisoners were brought away. Secondly, the emperor, being asked to let the king go to Nanking and do obeisance, replied, “This having a pretender on the throne of Koryŭ is all wrong. If you will put a real descendant of the royal family on the throne you need not send another envoy to my court for twenty years if you do not wish.” Gen Yi, to show his good will, sent a messenger to the banished king and gave him a feast on his birthday. The king of the Loo Choo Islands sent an envoy to Song-do with gifts, declaring his allegiance to Koryŭ. At the same time he sent back some Koryŭ captives who had fallen into his hands. Gen, Yi came to the conclusion that if the dynasty was to continue, a lineal descendant of the royal family must be put at the head of affairs. At this time Gen. Yi was of course the actuating spirit in the government and at his desire the young king, who had been on the throne but a year and who had not been formally recognised by the emperor, was sent away to Kang-wha and the seventh descendant of the seventeenth king of the line was elevated to the seat of royalty. His name was Yo and his posthumous title Kong-yang. He was forty-five years old. This move on the part of Gen. Yi was doubtless on account of the pronounced views of the emperor. A busybody named Kang Si told the newly appointed king that Gen. Yi did this not because he cared for the Wang dynasty but because he feared the Mings. When Gen. Yi learned of this the man’s banishment was demanded but not insisted upon. One of the first acts of the new sovereign was to banish Yi Săk and Cho Min-su who had insisted upon putting the parvenu Chang [page 274] upon the throne. An envoy was also dispatched to China announcing that at last a genuine Wang was now on the throne of Koryŭ.

The officials urged that the two banished kings be killed but when the matter was referred to Gen. Yi he advised a more lenient policy, saying, “They have been banished and they can do no more harm. There is no sense in shedding useless blood.” But the king replied, “They killed many good men and they deserve to die;” so executioners were sent and the two men were executed at their places of banishment. It is said that the wife of the elder of the two took the dead body of her lord in her arms and said, as she wept, “This is all my father’s fault, for it was he who advised the invasion of China.” The records say that for ten days she ate nothing and slept with the corpse in her arms. She also begged rice and with it sacrificed before the dead body of the king.

In 1390 a dangerous conspiracy was gotten up with the view to assassinating Gen. Yi, but it was discovered in time and many men were killed in consequence and many more were put to the torture. Yi Sak and Cho Min-su were in some way implicated in this attempt though they were in banishment. It was advised to put them to death but after torture they were sent back to prison. The emperor in some way had the impression that Gen. Yi was persecuting these two men because they had prevented his invasion of China. Cho was executed but when the executioner approached the cell of Yi Sak, so the records say, a terrific clap of thunder was heard and a flood of water swept away part of the town in which he was imprisoned. For this reason the king dared not kill him but granted him freedom instead.

Under the supervision of Gen. Yi a war-office was established and a system of conscription which secured a rotation of military duty. The king, true to the instincts of his family, was a strong adherent of Buddhism and now proceeded to take a monk as his teacher. The whole official class decided that this must not be, and the monk was forthwith expelled from the palace. In spite of the suffering it entailed upon the people the king decided to move the capital again to Han-yang and it was done, but no sooner was the court [page 275] transferred to that place than the king, with characteristic Wang fickleness, went back to Song-do. The law was promulgated that women must not go to visit Buddhist monasteries. This was without doubt because the looseness of the morals of the inmates rendered it unsafe for respectable women to go to them.

The people throughout the land looked to Gen. Yi as their protector and it was the almost universal wish that he should become king. His friends tried to bring this about but they were always thwarted by the aged Chöng Mong-ju, the only great man who now clung to the expiring dynasty. He was a man of perfect integrity and was held in much esteem by Gen. Yi himself though they differed in politics. Chöng Mong-ju really believed it necessary for the preservation of the state that Gen. Yi be put out of the way and he was always seeking means for accomplishing this end.

When the crown prince came back from Nanking, whither he had gone as envoy, Gen. Yi went out to meet him. He went as far as Whang-ju where he suffered a severe fall from his horse which for a time quite disabled him. This was Chöng Mong-ju’s opportunity. He hastened to have many of Gen. Yi’s friends put out of the way. He had them accused to the king and six of the strongest partisans of the general were banished. Gen. Yi was at Ha-ju at the time and his son T’ă-jong hastened to him and imparted the startling news. The old man did not seem to care very much, but the son whose energy and spirit were equal to anything and who foresaw that prompt action at this juncture meant life or death to all the family, had the aged general carried on the backs of men back to Song-do. When he arrived, attempts were being made to have the six banished men put to death, but the coming of the great dictator put a stop to this. T’ă-jong urged that something must be done immediately to save the family name, but the father did not wish to proceed to extremities. The brunt of the whole business fell upon T’ă-jong and he saw that if his father was to become king someone must push him on to the throne. The first step must be the removal of Chöng Mong-ju. Nothing could be done until that was accomplished.

Gen. Yi’s nephew turned traitor to him and informed Chöng Mong-ju that there was danger. About this time Gen. [page 276] Yi gave a dinner to the officials and Chöng Mong-ju was invited. The latter decided to go and, by watching the face of his host, determine whether the report was true. When T’ajong saw Chöng Mong-ju come to the banquet he knew the time had come to make the master move. Five strong men were placed in hiding beside Sön-juk bridge which Chung had to cross in going home. There they fell upon him and murdered him with stones, upon the bridge. Today that bridge is one of the sacred relics of the kingdom and is enclosed by a railing. On the central stone is seen a large brown blotch which turns to a dull red when it rains. This is believed to be the blood of the faithful Chöng Mong-ju which still remains a mute reproach to his murderers.

This dastardly deed having been committed, T’ă-jong conferred with his uncle, Wha, and they sent Gen. Yi’s eldest living son, who is known by his posthumous title of Chöngjong, to the king, to demand the recall of the banished friends of the general. The king was in no condition to refuse and the men came back.

Gen. Yi mourned sincerely for the death of Chong Mong-ju for he held him to be a loyal and faithful man, but his son saw to it that the friends of the murdered man were promptly banished. Even the two sons of the king who had sided with the enemies of Gen. Yi were banished. Gen. Yi was asked to put some of the friends of Chöng Mong-ju to death but he sternly refused and would not even have them beaten. Yi Săk was again banished to a more distant point, the property of Chöng Mong-ju was confiscated and so at last all opposition was effectually silenced.

The energetic T’ă-jong next proceeded to have the king make an agreement or treaty of lasting friendship with his father. The officials opposed it on the ground that it was not in keeping with the royal office to swear an oath to a subject, but the king who had doubtless been well schooled by the young intriguer agreed to it. Gen. Yi was very loath to go and receive this honor at the king’s hand and it was at last decided that the king should not attend the function in person but should do it by deputy. The oath was as follows:--

“If it had not been for vou I never could have become king. Your goodness and faithfulness are never to be [page 277] forgotten. Heaven and earth witness to it from generation to generation. Let us abjure all harm to each other. If I ever forget this promise let this oath witness to my perfidy.”

But soon the king began to see the ludicrousness of his position. His sons had been bannished, himself without a particle of power and the voice of the people clamoring to have Gen. Yi made king. The pressure was too great, and one day the unhappy king handed over the seals of office to the great dictator Gen. Yi T’ai-jo and the Wang dynasty was at an end. The king retired to private life, first to Wŭn-ju , then to Kan-Sung and finally to San-ch’ak where he died three years after abdicating. The dynasty had lasted four hundred and seventy-five years in all.

END OF PART II.

PART THREE.

MODERN KOREA 1392-1897

Chapter I.

Beginning of the new kingdom... name Cho-sŭn adopted... prophecies ...a man hunt... a royal dream... the wall of Seoul built... capital moved... diplomacy in the north... Buddhism... three ports set aside for the Japanese....plot discovered...back to Songdo... king T’ă-jo retires.... death blow to feudalism... Chongjong abdicates...T’ă-jong’s sweeping reforms... copper type... sorcerers’ and geomancers’ books burned... T’ă-jong’s claims to greatness... Se-jong reigns....his habits... literary work... Japanese islands attacked....gradual suppression of Buddhism....trials for capital offenses...numerous reforms... wild tribe punished... the far north colonised. .. .Japanese settlement in the south.... origin of Korean alphabet...king Mun-jong dies from over-devotion to Confucian principles.

It was on the sixteenth day of the seventh moon of the year 1392 that Gen. Yi ascended the throne of Koryŭ, now no longer Koryŭ. He was an old man, far past the age when he could hope to superintend in person the vigorous “house-cleaning” that the condition of things demanded. He called about him all the officials whom he knew to be personally loyal to himself and placed them in positions of trust and authority. Those who had contributed to his rise were rewarded, and a tablet was erected in the capital telling of their merits. He liberated many who had been imprisoned because of their opposition to the Wang kings and recalled many who had been banished.

It was not long before a message came from the emperor saying, “A man can become king only by the decree of Heaven. How is it then that the people of Sam-han have [page 280] made Yi king?” In reply the king hastened to send an envoy to explain matters and to ask the emperor whether he would prefer to have the new kingdom called Cho-sŭn, “Morning Freshness,” or Wha-ryŭng, “Peaceful Harmony.” The emperor probably thought there was a great deal more morning freshness than peaceful harmony in the peninsula; at any rate he ordered the former name to be adopted. It was the doubtful loyalty of the Wang kings to the Chinese throne that made it easy for king T’ă-jo to smoothe over the displeasure of the emperor. The seals of the Koryŭ kings were then delivered over to China and new seals received for the new dynasty.

According to unwritten law, with the beginning of a new dynasty a new capital must be founded, and king T’ă-jo began to look about for a new site. At first he determined to build his capital at Kye-ryŭng Mountain in Ch’ung-ch’ung Province, and he went so far as to begin work on it; but it was found that in the days of Sil-la a celebrated priest, To-sun, had prophesied that in the days to come Yi would found a capital at Han-yang, and one of the Koryŭ kings had planted many plum trees at that place and as fast as they matured had them mutilated, hoping thus to harm the fortunes of the Yi family; for the Chinese character for Yi is the same as that for plum. Tradition also says that the king had a dream in which a spirit came and told him that Kye-ryung San was reserved for the capital of a future kingdom which should be founded by a member of the Chöng family. Two commissioners were thereupon sent to Han-yang to make surveys for a palace site. It is said that a monk, Mu-hak, met them at Ha-yang and told them that the palace should face toward Pă-gak Mountain and Mong-myŭk Mountain (the present Nam-san,) but they persisted in making it face the south. “Very well” the monk replied, “If you do not listen to my advice you will have cause to remember it two hundred years from now.” His words were unheeded but precisely two hundred years later, in the year 1592, the Japanese hordes of Hideyoshi landed on the shores of southern Korea. This is a fair sample of Korean *ex post facto* prophecy.

The courtiers urged the king to destroy the remaining relatives of the last Koryŭ kings that there might be no [page 281] danger of an attempt at revolt. The royal consent was given and a considerable number of those unfortunates were put in a boat, taken out to sea and abandoned, their boat being first scuttled. The king thought better of this, however, before it had gone far and ordered this man-hunt to be stopped.

As the emperor still seemed to entertain suspicions concerning the new kingdom the king was fain to send bis eldest son as envoy to the Chinese court where he carefully explained the whole situation to the satisfaction of his suzerain.

An interesting prophecy is said to have been current at the time. The king dreamed that he saw a hen swallow a silk-worm. No one could explain the meaning of the dream until at last an official more imaginitive than discreet averred that it meant that Kye-ryŭng would swallow Cham-du. Kye means “hen” and Cham-du means “silkworm’s head.” But Kye-ryong was the site of the future capital of the next kingdom according to prophecy, while “silk-worm’s head” is the name of one of the spurs of Nam-san in Seoul. So the interpretation was that the new dynasty would fall before another founded at Kye-ryong, by Chöng. The poor fellow paid for this bright forecast with his life.

Cho Chin was charged with the work of building the wall of the new capital. To this end, in the spring of 1391,119,000 men were brought from the provinces of P’yŭng-an and Whang-hă and they worked steadily for two months. In the autumn 89,000 men came from Kang-wŭn, Chŭl-la and Kyŭngsang Provinces and finished it in a mouth more. The whole circuit of the wall was 9,975 double paces. At five feet to the double pace this would give us about nine and a half miles, its present length. It was pierced by eight gates, the South Gate, or Suk-nye-mun, the East Gate or Heung-in-mun, the West Gate, or Ton-eui-mun, the Little West Gate, or So-eui-mun, the North-east Gate, or Chang-eui-mun, the Water Mouth Gate, or Kwang-heui-mun, also called the Su-gu-muu, and finally the Suk-chang-mun, a private gate at the north by which the king may pass in time of danger to the mountain fortress of Puk-han. At the same time a law was made that dead bodies could be carried out of the city only by way of the Little West or the Water Mouth Gates. Neither [page 282] of these “dead men’s gates” were roofed at first but were simply arches.

Immediately upon the completion of the wall the court was moved from Song-do to the new capital and the new palace was named the Kyŭng-bok Palace. By this time the news of the founding of a new dynasty had spread, and envoys came from Japan, the Liu-kiu Islands and from the southern kingdom of Sam-na. It will be remembered that the Mongols had absorbed a portion of the northern territory of Korea, especially in Ham-gyŭng Province. This had never come again fully under Koryŭ control, so that now the new kingdom extended only as far north as Ma-ch’un Pass. Between that and the Tu-man River lived people of the Yŭ-jin tribe. The king sent Yi Tu-ran to give them a friendly introduction to the newly founded kingdom of Chosun, and he was so good a diplomat that soon he was able to form that whole region into a semi-independent district and in course of time it naturally became incorporated into Chosun. The Koryŭ dynasty left a heavy legacy of priest-craft that was not at all to the liking of the new king. The monks had far more power with the people than seemed consistent with good government. Monasteries were constantly in process of erection and their inmates arrogated to themselves large powers that they did not by right possess. Monks were not mendicants then as they are today. Each monastery had its complement of slaves to do all menial work and the law that declared that the grandson of a slave should be free was a dead letter. The first of a long list of restrictions upon the priesthood was a restatement and an enforcement of this salutary law which made hereditary serfdom impossible.

Before his accession to the throne he had succeeded in putting down the Japanese pirates, at least for the time. He now placed high military and naval officials at all the great Southern ports, who offered the people still further protectionHe also set aside the three ports of Ch’e-p’o, Yŭm-p’o and Pu’san-p\*o (Fusan) as places where Japanese envoys and trading parties might be entertained. At these places he built houses for the accommodation of such guests.

King T’ă-jo had a numerous family. By his first Queen, Han, he had six sons, of whom the second and the fifth later [page 283] became Kings of Cho-sŭn, with the posthumous titles of Chöng-jong and T’ă-jong respectively. By his second Queen, Kang, he had two sons, both of whom aspired to the crown but without hope. They were named Pang-sŭk and Pangbon. Their ambition led them astray, for now in the sixth year of the reign they conspired to kill their two rival halfbrothers and so prepare the way for their own elevation. They secured the services of two assassins who made the attempt, but being foiled they lost their heads. It was well known that the two princes were at the bottom of the plot, and the king, knowing that even he could not protect them from justice, advised them to make good their escape. They fled but were caught just outside the West Gate and put to death.

The courtiers were all homesick for Song-do and the king himself probably missed many of the comforts which he had there enjoyed. Merchants had not as yet come in large numbers to the new capital and the number of houses was comparatively small. It must be noticed that with the change of dynasty it was taken for granted that the citizens of the old capital were loyal to the fallen dynasty and so the people of Song-do were not allowed to move to Seoul in large numbers. That city was reserved as the residence of the friends of the new regime. Song-do has ever been considered less loyal than any other city in the country and the rule has been that no native of that city could hold an important office under the present government. But at first, the new capital was hardly as pleasant a place to live as the old, and so the king gave the word and the whole court moved back there for a time.

 We are told that king T’ă-jo was heartily tired of the constant strife among his sons as to who should be the successor and he decided to resign the office and retire to his native Ham-heung. His choice of a successor fell upon his oldest living son, Prince Yong-an, better known by his posthumous title Chöng-jong Kong-jŭng Tă-wang. The army and the people all desired that his fifth son. Prince Chong-an, who is generally known as T’ă-jong, who had been so active ‘ in helping his father to the throne and who was as energetic and enterprising as his brother was slow, should become their [page 284] ruler. When they heard that they could not have their will there was an angry demonstration at the palace. This led the retiring king to advise that after Chöng-jong had ruled a while he had better resign in favor of his brother, the people’s choice.

King Chöng-jong’s first act was a statesman-like one. He commanded the disbanding of the feudal retainers of all the officials. A few who rebelled at this as an encroachment upon their rights were promptly banished, and the rest submitted. Thus the death blow was struck at feudalism in the peninsula. It never gained the foothold here that it had in Japan, for it was thus nipped in the bud. The weakness of the fallen dynasty had been that one or more of the officials had gathered about their persons such large retinues that they succeeded in overawing the king and making him a mere puppet. But this was not to be a feature of the new regime, for King Chöng-jong by this one decree effectually stamped it out.

The retired king seemed to be determined not to be disturbed in his well-earned rest, for when his sons sent and begged him to come back to the capital and aid the government by his advice, he answered by putting the messenger to death. Later, however, he relented and returned to Seoul.

T’ă-jo’s third son, Prince Pang, was jealous because his younger brother had been selected to succeed king Chöng-jong, and so he determined to have him put out of the way. To this end he conspired with one Pak-po, but the plot was discovered, Pak Po was killed and the prince banished to T’osan in Whang-hă Province. T’ă-jong himself, the prospective king, seems to have chafed at the delay, for we are told that King Chöng-jong’s Queen noticed his moody looks and advised her lord to abdicate in his favor without delay, before harm came of it. So King Chöng-jong called his brother and handed over to him the seals of office and himself retired to private life with the title Sang-wang, or “Great king.”

It was in the centennial year 1400 that T’ă-jong, whose full posthumous title is T’ă-jong Kong-jŭng T’ă-wang, entered upon the royal office. He was a man of indomitable will, untiring energy and ready resource. It was he who really [page 285] entered upon the work of reform in earnest. T’ă-jo had been too old and Chöng-jong had lacked the energy. The year 1401 gave him an opportunity to begin these reforms. The land was suffering from famine, and the king said, “Why is so much grain wasted in the making of wine? Let it cease for the present.” When he found that the people would not obey he said, “It is because I myself have not desisted from the use of wine. Let no more wine be served in the palace for the present.” It is said that this practical appeal was successful and the people also desisted. From the earliest times it had been the custom for the monks to congregate and pray for the cessation of drought, but now by one sweep of his pen the king added another limitation to the prerogatives of the monks by forbidding the observance of the custom. Large tracts of land were also taken from the monasteries and given back to the people. The king hung a great bell in the palace gate and made proclamation that anyone who failed to have a grievance righted by the proper tribunals might appeal directly to the throne, and whoever struck the drum was given instant audience. This privilege was seldom abused for it soon became known that if a man did not have right clearly on his side his rash appeal to the king brought severe punishment.

For many a decade letters had languished in the peninsula, and now with a view to their revival the king ordered the casting of copper types and provided that, as fast as new characters were found in the leading Chinese works, they should be immediately cast and added to the font. The authenticity of this statement cannot be called in question. It is attested by all the great historical works both public and private. The method of use was such that the types were practically indestructible and large numbers exist and are in active use to this day. So far as the evidence goes these were the first metal type ever made, though xylography had been known since the very earliest time.

In 1406 the emperor sent an envoy asking that a copper Buddha on the island of Quelpart be brought to Seoul for the king to do obeisance to it, and that it then be forwarded to China. The king, however, refused to bow before it. During this same year the law was promulgated forbidding the [page 286] imprisonment of criminals for long periods of time. It also beheld the execution of all the brothers of the Queen. We are not told the reason of this but we may surmise that it was because they had been implicated in seditious proceedings.

In 1409 the Japanese, Wŭn-do-jin, was sent to the Korean court to present the respects of the Japanese sovereign. The kings of Koryŭ had set aside large tracts of land in Whang-hă Province fur hunting purposes. These by order of king T’ă-jong were now restored to the people and they were ordered to cultivate them. In 1413 the land suffered from a severe drought and the courtiers all advised that the monks and the female exorcists and fortune-tellers be called upon to pray for rain; but the king replied, “Buddhism is an empty religion and the exorcists and fortune-tellers are a worthless lot. If I were only a better ruler Heaven would not refuse us rain.” He thereupon ordered all the sorceresses, fortune-tellers, exorcists and geomancers to deliver up the books of their craft to the government and a great fire was made with them in front of the palace.

King T’ă-jong’s great sorrow was his son the Crown Prince, Yang-yŭng. This young man was dissolute and worthless. He would not pursue the studies prescribed by his tutors but spent his time in hunting, gambling and in less reputable pursuits. The people cried out against him and made it known that it was not their will that he should reign over them. The father saw the justice of the complaint and the young man was banished to Kwang-ju and the fourth son, Prince Ch’ung-nyung, was proclaimed heir to the throne.

King T’ă-jong retired in 1419 in favor of this son Ch’ung-nyŭng who is known by the posthumous title Se-jong Chang-hŭn T’ă-wang.

T’ă-jong had been a radical reformer and worked a revolution in Korean life similar to that which Cromwell effected in England. His greatness is exhibited in three ways. (1) He was the first king who dared to break away utterly from customs whose only sanction was their antiquity. (2) He was wise enough not to force all these radical reforms at once, but spread them over a period of nearly two decades. (3) He recognised that a king is the servant of the people. It may be in place here to call attention to a peculiar custom of the east.

[page 287] We refer to the custom of surrendering the throne to a successor before one’s death. The benefits of this custom are soon cited. The retiring sovereign becomes the tutor of the incoming one. The young ruler has the benefit of his practical suggestions and of his immense influence. He thus does away with much of the danger of revolution or rebellion which so often accompanies a change or rulers. If the new king proves inefficient or otherwise unsatisfactory it is possible, through the father’s influence, to effect a change. In other words the young ruler is on trial and he undergoes a probation that is salutary for him and for the people as well. It also helps greatly in perpetuating a policy, for in such a case the father, knowing that his son is to assume the reins of government while he still lives, takes greater pains to initiate him into the secrets of government and in forming in his mind settled principles which, while they may not always perpetuate the same policy, at least ensure an easy gradation from one policy to another. This perhaps was the crowning feat of T’ă-jong’s greatness. He knew enough to stop while his success was at its height and spend some years in teaching his successor how to achieve even a greater success. Let us see how these principles worked in the case of this new king.

The young king began in a modest way by consulting with his father in regard to all matters of importance. The retired king had taken up his quarters in the “Lotus Pond District” where he was at all times accessible to the young king and where he took cognizance of much of the public business. The new ruler was characterized by great evenness of temper, great astuteness and untiring diligence. He is said to have risen each morning at dawn.

He ordered the making of musical instruments, including metal drums and triangles. Under his supervision a clypsehydra was made and a work on astronomy was published. It is said that with his own hand he prepared works on “The five rules of conduct,” “The duties of King, Father and Husband,” “Good Government and Peace,” and a work on military tactics. The custom of collecting rare flowers and plants and growing them in the palace enclosure was done away and it was decreed that no more of the public money should be squandered in that way. He built a little straw [page 288] thatched cottage beside the palace and compelled the officials to attend him there in council. He put a stop to the evil practice of letting concubines and eunuchs meddle with state affairs, for when one of his concubines asked him to give one of her relatives official position he promptly banished her from the palace.

In the second year of his reign, 1420, the king showed his partiality for literature and literary pursuits by founding a college to which he invited thirteen of the finest scholars that the kingdom could furnish, and there they gave themselves up to the pursuit of letters. In the early summer the dreaded Japanese again began their ravages on the coasts of Korea. Landing at Pi-in, Ch’ung-ch’ŭng Province, they easily overcame the local forces and marched northward along the coast into Whang-hă Province. They there informed the Korean generals that they did not want to ravage Korea but that they were seeking a way into China. They lacked provisions and promised to go immediately if the Koreans would give them enough rice for their sustenance, until they should cross the border into China. Forty bags of rice were given to them, but when the king learned of it he was displeased and said, “When they return we must destroy them.” The southern provinces were put into a state of defense and Gen. Yi Chong-mu was put at the head of a punitive expedition. It is said that a fleet of 227 war vessels and an army of 107,285 men rendezvoused at Ma-san Harbor. They were provided with two month’s rations. This powerful flotilla sailed away and soon reached the island of Tsushima. There it burned 129 Japanese boats and 1939 houses. Over a hundred Japanese were killed, twenty-one prisoners were taken and 131 Chinese and eight Korean captives were liberated. The fleet then sailed toward Japan and arrived at Ni-ro harbor. There, the records say, they lost 120 men and so abandoned the enterprise. This is good evidence that the numbers of the army are overestimated, for a loss of a hundred and twenty men from such an immense force would not have caused an abandonment of the expedition.

The emperor sent a messenger asking for the four jewels that are supposed to come from the bodies of good monks when they are incinerated.