

"Hermit Kingdom" of Corea



Kneading Bread in the Street.

(Prepared by the National Geographic Society, Washington, D. C.)

Corea, the first part of mainland Asia to come under Japanese control, has in large part received its material from western civilization at second hand through Japan. And in spite of the American type coaches and even dining cars that are now drawn in modern express trains over heavily ballasted railroads, and the trolley cars, telegraph lines and electric power stations that are encountered by the visitors to the chief cities, Corea in many ways still preserves the quaintness of its "Hermit Kingdom" days.

It was only in 1882, a generation after Commodore Perry opened up Japan, that Corea, or Chosen, by making a treaty with the United States, gave up officially its policy of exclusion. Foreigners took up their residence with official sanction at Chemulpo, the seaport of the capital, Seoul. Even with this foothold, however, the unwelcome visitors pushed their way but slowly into other parts of the kingdom; and as late as 1897 only a relatively small portion had been visited by white men. Now Japanese influence and Japanese explorers have gone everywhere in the "Land of Morning Calm," and only the wilderness along the Manchurian border remains relatively unknown.

European clothing is no longer a curiosity in Seoul, but still the old garb of the natives greatly predominates. The first feature to strike the visitor, in fact, is likely to be this matter of clothing. The universal adoption of white, the singular hats, the footgear, all strike the note of quaintness. White clothing is the emblem of mourning in Corea, as it is in Japan and China; the mourning period is three years. On the occasion of the death of a royal personage the entire population was required to put on white. This custom is said to be accountable for the people having adopted white clothing for ordinary wear, that they might be ready for the inevitable when it should come, either in their own or in the royal family.

Queer "Pill-Box Hats."

The ordinary hats of the Corean men are absurd little "pill-box" affairs, shaped in general like American stiff straws, but with high small crowns which cause them to sit on the top of the head as though adults were wearing the hats of children. To add to the bizarre appearance, these little hats are tied in place under the chin with plain black tape. Men of wealth often wear a loop of beads, the ends attached to the sides of the brim and the loop hanging in front to the waist.

Many years ago—long before the "western barbarian" reached the shores of Chosen—the Coreans were noted among their Chinese and Japanese neighbors for the skill and taste displayed in textile manufactures, and the products of their looms could be found side by side with their pottery in all the markets then open in the East.

By the slow but sure degradation of wars, insurrections and invasions manufactures and arts in Corea gradually lost their value in both quality and quantity, until today her people, rich and poor alike, are dependent upon China and Japan for a large percentage of their clothing and pottery.

There is, however, one branch of manufacture, the working of bronze, in which Corea easily leads, the use of this metal for domestic purposes being peculiar to this country. The bronze, which is of good quality, hard, and takes a good polish, is of an alloy of copper and tin, with a small percent of zinc and a trace of iron. The bronze spoons, with which every family is liberally supplied, are models of grace, as are the hibachi or fire-pots, which are largely exported to Japan. These graceful bronze bowls are applied to every domestic use imaginable. The same material is used in the manufacture of tobacco pipes in universal demand, and much taste is displayed in their ornamentation.

Seoul an interesting city, with its population of over 300,000 dominates the cities and towns

of Chosen, and has only one population in size, Ping-Yang, with a population of about 175,000. The main streets of Seoul are wide and well laid out. The stores generally are but one story, hardly deserving the title of buildings. The means of conveyance over the roads, for the most part unpaved, is rickshaws, drawn by boys who are swift and tireless.

The street scenes of Seoul offer great variety for the kodak, the burden-bearers of both sexes furnishing a constant change of scene; most of them being willing victims, entirely satisfied with a small tip. At the wood market on one side of the main street the patient steer is seen reclining under the weight of a load of logs which would cause a wagon to groan, and one wonders how he will ever regain his footing when his master makes a sale and the time comes to deliver the goods. These animals appear to thrive under their burden-bearing, being sleek and well kept.

How They Make Bread.

The native bread of Seoul does not seem very attractive to foreigners after they have seen the process by which it is made. However, if its excellence was alone dependent on the thoroughness with which it is kneaded, the bread which "mother used to make" would suffer by comparison. After mixing the dough is placed on a board in the road in front of the little bakery. Then two stalwart Coreans proceed to pound it with great mauls. It is not claimed that the quality of the bread is improved by the addition of impurities in the way of insects and dust which naturally result from the open-air treatment, but if one objects to eating it, a native will quote a proverb which, being interpreted, runs: "He who would enjoy his food should not look over the kitchen wall"—a maxim not without force in countries occidental.

A visit to the imperial palace brings up mental pictures of more golden days in Corea. The buildings and grounds are extensive; a handsome park standing on a small island is surrounded by a lotus pond, a wealth of trees adding to the beauty of the place. During the reign of the old emperor, his fear of assassination was so great that it is said 300 bedrooms in the palace were kept constantly in readiness for him, no one knowing which one he would occupy on any night.

Protected by a Great Wall.

One of the most enjoyable trips from Seoul is by rickshaw past the Peking or Independent gate through a picturesque road winding among the mountains. The construction of the great wall of Corea at this point appears a marvel of engineering skill, so seemingly inaccessible is this mountain fastness. Proceeding about two miles, one passes the water-gate, where the wall crosses the river and where in time of attack the iron gates in these great arches were let down to protect the city. The view of this crossing is one of the finest in Corea.

Another ride of three miles takes the traveler to the White Buddha. In the solitude of this wilderness, far from the highway, beside a clear mountain stream, stands a great boulder, on the face of which, carved in relief, is the sitting figure of Buddha.

Seoul possesses what is believed to be the third largest bell in the world. In shape and general outline it is of Japanese type. In fact, the Coreans claim that the bells of Dai-Nippon were modeled after those of Corea. The climate of Corea is not very different from that in similar latitudes in the United States, from New York to North Carolina. Structurally the houses are interesting, for the Coreans have anticipated our hot-air furnace by many hundreds of years. Every house is raised a foot or two above the ground, and a wide fire runs beneath the floor, emerging at the other end in a tall chimney, made in the north from a hollow log. When a fire is built at the entrance to the fire, the smoke and heat are drawn beneath the house, keeping the rooms warm during even the coldest days of winter.

THE WHITE ROSE

By MILDRED WHITE

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"The white rose grew high on the old stone wall, just above one's reach. It was a tempting, taunting rose, perfect in unfolding beauty, and it haunted its perfume and swayed in the sun."

"And because it was provokingly beyond reach, men strove to claim it, but the flower still bent, as though aloof in its purity, beyond each claiming hand."

The girl ceased reading, and glanced smilingly down at the child.

A young man on the step below them looked up at the girl.

"And that," he said, "is life, the white rose of one's desire, always just beyond reach."

As he spoke he turned his face toward the farther end of the summer hotel veranda, where a charming woman sat among her admirers. This worldly, fortunate young woman was very lovely in soft, white chiffon. Her skin was a sort of pearly white, too, and the pale, blonde of her hair gleamed like an aureole.

The young man's gaze bent upon her long and dreamily. And presently the young woman arose and came passing him on the stair. With a careless nod, she went on down the garden path, an eager escort at her side.

"I suppose," said Bruce Webster, slowly, "that every man has in life his white rose."

"And every woman, too," said the girl softly, her eyes on him.

"I don't like that story," spoke up the child, "it has no end."

"I have to finish the stories for Muriel," the girl explained, "or she is not satisfied."

The girl wore no chiffon, but her simple linen was spotlessly white, and neither was she an heiress, this sweet-faced young person, nor a favored guest of the hotel. She, herself, could not quite define her position in the Webster household.

Muriel, her charge, had grown beyond the need of a nursemaid, and Rhoda Brent could not be called a governess. Muriel called Rhoda her "friend," which was, perhaps, the best name of all.

Muriel's uncle gave a quick impatient sigh. "Don't mind me," he said, "go on and finish your story."

"Then one sunshiny day," the girl went on obediently, "a young and earnest knight clambered up the stone wall. Once he lost his footing, but bravely climbed on toward the white rose. He was determined to triumph, you see, in its possession. Its perfume seemed to touch the knight's lips as he sadly gave up the quest—and then, as he slipped back to the ground—well, what do you think?" asked Rhoda.

The child leaned eagerly forward.

"The white rose," finished the girl, "was lying at his feet."

"What did the knight do then?" questioned Muriel.

"Picked it up and wore it, of course," her uncle answered, "next to his heart."

"That was a beautiful end," the little girl said. "And now please carry me up to bed, Uncle Bruce."

Laughingly the young man granted the request, and up the long stairs the three went together. Later, Rhoda Brent, coming alone down to the moonlit veranda, found Muriel's uncle one of a group surrounding the lovely woman's chair. She was singing, this admired and favored guest, and the lonely girl thought the soft charm of the voice in accord with the charm of her person.

On the upraised face of Bruce Webster was an eager light.

Little Rhoda, unseen, retraced her steps. In her own room with the child's even breathing coming from the direction of that second white bed, the girl knelt in the moonlight before an open window. "I must go away," she whispered. "I thought that I might grow not to care for him." She smiled sadly at the futility of the thought. "My white rose, high on a hard stone wall."

Below, a man's figure came from the shadow into the moonlight. The still glorified face of Bruce Webster was lifted to hers. He came nearer, and stepped lightly up the porch trellis.

"My white rose," begged Bruce, "come down to me please, if but for a moment."

Wondering, her heart thrilled at the sound of those unbelievable words, Rhoda went as one in a dream into the garden.

"I had to ask you tonight," the man said. "I could not bear the suspense longer. I know how unworthy I am of all your sweetness, O little white Rhoda, and I have not the money that I should have before asking. That's what held me back—but if you will give me the slightest hope, how I will work and strive. But, of course, he caught himself quickly, "you don't care. Else, why have you avoided me?"

"Land sakes!" Aunt Molly gasped a feeble chuckle as she wiped the perspiration from her face and lowered her weary body into a convenient chair. "I never in my life see folks have such a good time."

Advertising Strategy.

"What's the idea of this big sign here reading 'Go slow, Danger'? Why, the road is perfect and without a turn for miles."

"That was the happy thought of a publicity expert. He put up the big billboard you see over there on the side of the road, and the danger sign is merely to make motorists slow up so they'll have a chance to read it."

AUNT MOLLY

By ETHEL A. LYONS

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"My, but I'm tired!" Mrs. Symmes sank down wearily in the patent rocker in Aunt Molly Magee's parlor. "I mustn't stop a minute. I've been going night and day trying to make this fair a success. The church needs the money so badly. You'll wash dishes for us, of course, Mrs. Magee?"

"Of course I will—not!" Mrs. Symmes jumped.

"For twenty years now"—Aunt Molly grasped the arms of her chair with two plump hands and bent forward— "I've washed dishes at every banquet and supper and Sunday school picnic in this town. If you want me to help sellin' things I'll go—but I won't wash dishes."

"Oh, I'm so sorry," Mrs. Symmes was all sympathetic consternation. "I never knew you felt like that. But about the booths—why—er—I don't know. There's nothing left but the aprons, and Mrs. Lucas has always had them."

The night of the fair found Aunt Molly resplendent in her best black silk and rhinestone brooch, presiding over the aprons.

Mrs. Symmes in the cramped little church kitchen, nervously endeavoring to keep hot a half-dozen chicken pies on the little two-by-four cook stove, and hoping that Aunt Molly wouldn't bungle things too badly, was started into leaving her post by a hilarious shout from the outer room. She glanced out the door to see Mr. Conroy, proprietor of the village market, strutting about, his bulky form swathed in a checked gingham apron of large proportions.

"Oh, dear," said Mrs. Symmes to Aunt Molly. "Mrs. Magee, why ever did you sell that apron to Conroy? I make one like that every year so that old Mrs. Lane will buy it. She never can get things big enough."

"There, now, don't you worry," soothed Aunt Molly, her face aglow. "I made him pay me five dollars for that apron, and if anyone can pry old Conroy loose from a five-dollar bill I say do it."

"Cora Whipple, you come here," Mrs. Symmes felt herself dismissed as a rosy-cheeked girl came at Aunt Molly's bidding. "Cora, don't you ever make fudge for Ervin? You needn't blush, but next time you just wear this pink fudge apron and see what happens. No, a dollar's enough, I guess."

"Elsie, bet your ma'd be just tickled to death with one of these little sewing aprons for her birthday. This white one with the ruffles is mighty cute, too. You want 'em both? Good!"

"Here, Miss Symmes, you buy this old cloth fudge and you won't drown your self when you wash dishes, like you always do."

Aunt Molly knew her "line" and her customers. At 8:30 she was sold out. Complacently she began counting her spoils.

"Oh, Mrs. Magee!" wailed pretty Millie Burke, hurrying across from the fancy work booth, "would you help us with those vanity bags?"

"Sure I'll help, but you ought to've known better than to make them, in the first place. All the girls may not have gingham aprons, but you should know that all those as would use 'em has vanity bags already. Here," she thrust the box of money toward Millie. "You finish counting that. Here comes Doctor Armistead, as the young doctor's little, dark figure appeared in the doorway. "Bet you 10 cents I sell him that old-rosé bag for \$2. Just suits his complexion." With a chuckle she was away.

"Well, what do you think?" An hour later Millie Burke burst into the kitchen, weak from laughter. "Aunt Molly has sold every one of those bags; we haven't a thing left but canned fruit. And Doctor Armistead and Judge Peterson—oh, just come and see." She drew Mrs. Symmes outside. Uproar and feminine shrieks greeted them.

Mrs. Symmes stared—every male face in the crowd was a work of art. Rouge and eyebrow pencil, lipstick and powder had all been applied with a lavish hand. Conroy's row-hued countenance was a gleaming white; someone had used an eyebrow pencil with great diligence on the judge's bald spot; Dandy Smithson's erstwhile blond mustache had turned a brilliant carmine.

"How much? How much?" Aunt Molly had turned auctioneer. Her strident voice was heard above the hubbub. "How much am I offered for this can of peaches? You, Judge, how much? Remember, not one bite to eat for anybody till the last thing's sold. How—"

"Great guns," groaned the judge, "pack up the whole business, woman, and send it to the old ladies' home. I'll pay the bill!"

With a mighty cheer the crowd made a rush for the supper room.

"Land sakes!" Aunt Molly gasped a feeble chuckle as she wiped the perspiration from her face and lowered her weary body into a convenient chair. "I never in my life see folks have such a good time."

ONE GOOD TIME

By FLORENCE MELLISH

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Avis Maine looked drearily out of her third-story back window at the dreary succession of back yards. Avis was tired. She was despondent. Madame Racine had been sharp with her over a pucker-faced frowning. The other girls had rallied her about the defalcation of Percy Gaylord.

It was not that Avis had really cared so much for Percy, but his brief period of apparent devotion had made a dash of brightness in her drab life, and when he had gone lightly away, announcing the carefully concealed fact of his engagement to the pretty Vermont teacher, Avis had settled down into the dullness of despondency. She looked back at the bleak years.

She glanced at the gas jet. How easy it would be! It might pass for an accident and, in any case, there was no one to care. Minnie Slocum might miss her a little at first, and the girls would say, "How dreadful!"

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HAD TO HAVE THE PASSWORD

Without It, Nobody, Commanding Officer or Any One Else, Could Pass That Sentry.

After the preliminary challenge the sentry had ordered the commanding officer to advance with the counter-signal. But unfortunately the latter had forgotten it.

"Come, come, sentry," said the C. O., somewhat testily, "you know me, don't you?"

"Yes, sir, but I've got to have the password."

"You obey all orders of the commanding officer, do you not?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then why not let me pass at once?"

"Because, sir, the corporal gave me strict orders not to let any one, man, woman or child, pass this post unless they say 'Sarotoga,' and if you can't do it you'll have to go around some other way."—The Leatherneck.

Success.

The Sunday school teacher was doing his best to inculcate lessons of altruism, and had taken as his example the case of two little boys, one of whom was always ready to grab, while the second was willing to share everything.

"Now, children," he finished impressively, "which of these two boys will grow up into the successful and respected man?"

And as one voice the class answered: "The guy that gits!"—American Legion Weekly.

Allen Jones, Res. Phone W. 204

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