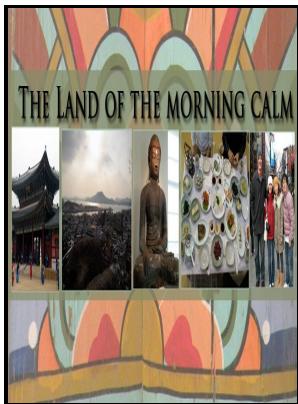


Corea, or, Cho-sen, the land of the morning calm

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Corea; or, Cho

I have often seen young girls and old women wear a curious fur cap, especially in winter, but this cannot be said to be in general use. The woman of Cho-sen gets, to my mind, less enjoyment out of life than probably any other woman in Asia.

Corea; or, Cho

The Corean inns—and there are but few even of those—are patronised only by the scum of the worst people of the lowest class, and whenever there is a robbery, a fight, or a murder, you can be certain that it has taken place in one of those dens of vice. Once she hit the poor man so hard—by mistake—that he fell down in a dead faint, upon which the soldier ran for his life, while she, jumping like a tiger at him, caught him by the throat, spinned him round like a top, and floored him, knocking him down on the ice. A man of a higher position follows them.

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First, there is the mound in the centre as usual, but nearly twice the size of that which covers a poorer person.

Corea; or, Cho

The arrangement, though more complicated, is not dissimilar to that used for the same purpose, by women in Holland, or to that for carrying milk in many parts of Switzerland. The road, wide though it be, seems to belong solely to him. The Japanese women dress, of course, in their national kimonos, and just as it is in Japan the fashion to show a little of the chest under the throat, so in Cho-sen the same custom is adopted; with the result that many are carried off by bronchitis to the next world.

Corea; or, Cho

A SINGER A few words must be added about that special class of women, the singers, who, as in Japan, are quite a distinct guild from the other women. From sunrise until sunset this goes on, unless some stranded cloud happens to appear on the horizon, when the credit of such a phenomenon is awarded to their diabolical howls, and cash subtracted from landed proprietors as a reward for their having called the attention of the weather-clerk.

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These women chalk their faces and paint their lips; they wear dresses made of the most expensive silks, and, like people generally who have sprung from nothing and find themselves lodged among higher folks than themselves, they give themselves airs, and cultivate a sickening conceit. In the history of the relations between Corea and Japan this province plays indeed a very important part, for being nearer than any other portion of the kingdom to the Japanese shores—the distance being, I believe, some 130 miles between the nearest points of the two countries—invasions have been of frequent occurrence, especially during the period that Kai-seng, then called Sunto, was the capital. The great difficulty travellers visiting the capital of Corea experience—I am speaking of four years ago—is to find a place to put up at, unless he has invitations to go and stay with friends.

Corea; or, Cho

To all appearance, the generality of men seem here dressed alike, with this difference, that some are dirtier than others; occasionally one has an extra garment, but that is all. He went in, holding the bamboo in front of him, and pausing at each step. Now when veneration comes into play, the extraordinary, as a rule, soon takes the place of the ordinary, especially in the Eastern mind, which is rather addicted to letting itself be run away with by its imagination.

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