

Author's Prefatory Note.

My four visits to Korea, between January, 1894, and March, 1897, formed part of a plan of study of the leading characteristics of the Mongolian races. My first journey produced the impression that Korea is the most uninteresting country I ever traveled in, but during and since the war its political perturbations, rapid changes, and possible destinies, have given me an intense interest in it; while Korean character and industry, as I saw both under Russian rule in Siberia, have enlightened me as to the better possibilities which may await the nation in the future. Korea takes a similarly strong grip on all who reside in it sufficiently long to overcome the feeling of distaste which at first it undoubtedly inspires.

It is a difficult country to write upon, from the lack of books of reference by means of which one may investigate what one hopes are facts, the two best books on the country having become obsolete within the last few years in so far as its political condition and social order are concerned. The traveler must laboriously disinter each fact for himself, usually through the medium of an interpreter; and as five or six versions of each are given by apparently equally reliable authorities, frequently the "teachers" of the foreigners, the only course is to hazard a bold guess as to which of them has the best chance of being accurate.

Accuracy has been my first aim, and my many foreign friends in Korea know how industriously I have labored to attain it. It is by these, who know the extreme difficulty of the task, that I shall be the most leniently criticised wherever, in spite of carefulness, I have fallen into mistakes.

Circumstances prevented me from putting my traveling experiences, as on former occasions, into letters. I took careful notes, which were corrected from time to time by the more prolonged observations of residents, and as I became better acquainted with the country; but, with regard to my journey up the South Branch of the Han, as I am the first traveler who has reported on the region, I have to rely on my observation and inquiries alone, and there is the same lack of recorded notes on most of the country on the Upper Tal-döng. My notes furnish the travel chapters, as well as those on Seoul, Manchuria, and Primorsk; and the sketches in contemporary Korean history are based partly on official docu-