

The ambition of every Korean gentleman is to live in the Metropolitan City, for there he may indulge in pleasures to his heart's content, and also stand a better chance of obtaining an easy and lucrative position. Here too lives His Majesty Li H'oung, the lord of the 10,000 Islands. He is nearly forty-four years of age, having been born on July 25th, 1851. He succeeded King Khoul Khong in 1864, and was married to a noble lady of the Ulin family, ten months his senior. The Hereditary Prince, their son, came of age last January, and the King's father is still living. The Korean Monarch has a variety of titles, such as "Son of Heaven," "Father of His People," etc., but all his grandeur did not prevent him from requiring the consent of China for his accession and for the choice of his successor, besides paying a heavy annual tribute. Hitherto he has been completely under the thumb of his Chinese suzerains, on whose example his life is modelled. He is as invisible to his people as the Chinese Emperor himself, and the ruler of the Hermit Kingdom is a veritable hermit from the outside world. When the King goes out all windows must be closed in the streets through which he passes, and it is treason for any of the inhabitants to look at him or mention his name. This of itself is sufficient to show the despotism of the king, and will prepare us to accept very literally the statement of Mr. G. M. Curzon when he says : "The Government itself, or in other words the King, who is the Government, is always in debt, and the financial assistance which in moments of embarrassment he is never loth to accept from interested parties, whilst it does not enable his exchequer to recover financial equilibrium, still further mortgages the fast dwindling resources of national wealth and independence."

Cheumulpo, the chief trading sea-port on the west, is the residence of a British Consul, and the station of an English religious mission.

The Queen of Korea thinks a great deal about her health. She lives in constant dread of some disease which will prove fatal. A lady physician is therefore accommodated with a suite of rooms in the royal palace, and is obliged to visit the Queen every day. When Her Majesty is the least indisposed she must always remain within earshot. The doctor's salary, however, is £3,500.

The Koreans are a kind-hearted people, though extremely lazy, and in this respect present a marked contrast to the restless Japanese and the industrious Chinese. They are said never to wash themselves ; but twice in their lives they are washed, when they are born, and after they are dead. However they are very particular about their wearing apparel, and delight in appearing beautiful externally. Their principal items of expense are laundry, tobacco, and hats. The Korean hats are marvellous.