

and Chinese can supply their troops with all sorts of modern munitions of war. They have millions of dollars invested in war material, and their soldiers and marines are armed with the newest and latest inventions. As it is now it looks as though China would, in such a case, have the friendship and support of the king, but there is much dissatisfaction with the government here Seoul, and the Japanese would not lack friends or followers. The king, in fact, can't help himself, as regards China. He has borrowed money from the Chinese government and all of his customs receipts have been mortgaged to pay the interest on the debt. The king is so much in debt and so hard pressed for money that whether a war occurs or not he is bound to open up Corea to foreigners. He has a wonderful kingdom, filled with enormous resources, and it will pay American speculators to keep their eyes on the mining and railroad possibilities of this land.

Corea is, perhaps, the least understood land in Asia, and it is one of the most wonderful countries on the face of the globe. I paid my first visit to it six years ago, only a short time after it had been opened up to the world. About fifteen years ago no foreigner could land on its coasts, and shipwrecked sailors were forced to stay in the country, for fear they might carry news of it to the barbarous people of Europe and America. During my stay in it, I have traveled many miles over its mountains and valleys, and I expect to push my way, if possible, right through the interior of the country to the west coast. I have visited many of the countries of the world, but this is the queerest and the least known. There is little information in the books of travel concerning it. There are no guide books whatever. It is like no other country, and every day I hear new and strange things about it and its people. It is going to be a very important country in the eyes of the world. Its people are of their own kind, and Gen. Clarence Great-house, the American adviser of the king, tells me that the land contains between sixteen and twenty millions. This is about one-fourth of the population of the United States. It is, in fact, more people than there are in Spain. It is half again as many as there are in Mexico, and three times as many people as can be counted in the state of New York. These people are scattered over a territory of about one hundred thousand square miles. Take your map of Asia. Look at the northeastern part of it, and you will see the peninsula of Corea hanging down like a nose from the lower corner of Siberia and the Chinese province of Manchuria. This peninsula is of about the same shape as Florida or Italy, and it has something like the area of the latter country. It is between four and five hundred miles long, and from its extreme north to the southeast coast the distance is about the same as that between Cleveland and New York. At no place is it much wider than between New York and Washington. The sea surrounding it is peppered with rocky islands, and its lower coasts are only a day's sail from Japan.

#### THE COREAN GOLD MINES.

Whatever be the outcome of this trouble with Japan and China it is bound to result in the opening up of the country, and the character of the land

and its resources will be matters of interest. I have traveled over much of Corea and I have asked questions about all parts of it. It is made up of mountains and valleys. There are a few large plains, but the valleys are as fat as the low lands of the Nile, and the mountains are filled with all sorts of minerals. The gold mines of Corea turn out from two to three million dollars' worth of dust and nuggets every year, and practically nothing but placer mining is done. All of the gold belongs to the king, and I hear it whispered that his majesty has a great quantity of bullion stored away in his palaces. Not long ago it was a necessity that some money be raised at once to complete the electric plant which is now being put into the palace, and there was practically nothing in the treasury.

Forty-seven thousand dollars had to be gotten, or the work could not go on. The king was especially anxious that that there should be no delay, and he sent to Mr. Power, the American, who has charge of the electric lighting, two boxes of gold dust and nuggets. These came from the palace to Mr. Power's house, the distance of at least a mile, without a guard, and it is a question whether the porters who carried them knew what they were bringing. The gold was packed in pine boxes, and these were hung upon a pole which rested on the shoulders of the two men who carried them. The only man who went with them was the Corean interpreter of Mr. Power. They were opened when they reached the house and were found packed full of gold dust and nuggets. The nuggets were of all shapes and sizes from that of the head of a pin to lumps as big as your fist. There were two lumps of solid gold of this size and another was as thick as the palm of a man's hand and of about the same shape. It was of such a nature that it could not have been rolled far by the water, and it must have been found very near the side of the original lode. This gold was sent by Mr. Power to the mint at Osaka, Japan. There was 175 pounds of it, and it assayed eighty-seven per cent gold and about ten per cent silver. It was sold to the Hong Kong and Shanghai bank for \$47,000, and the money was applied to the part payment of the electrical machinery which is now supplying his majesty with light. There is little doubt but that the mountains of north Corea are full of gold, and a great deal more is probably gotten than is generally supposed. The Corean citizen has no security of property, and the possession of money always brings the officials down upon him, and they suck at his vitals till the money is squeezed out of him. Every now and then a native will come into the establishment of the the American firm at Chemulpo and will pay for what he wants with gold dust which he takes out of a pipe stem or from a belt which he has bound about his body under his clothes. Often men want to turn the gold into Corean cash, and it is by no means safe for them to have it found upon them. The mines are worked under a superintendent, who probably gets a big slice of the output. By the aid of modern mining machinery there is no telling what they will produce. At present not even blasting powder is used to get at the quartz, and the rock is broken by building a fire against it, and then when it has become hot water is thrown upon it, and this cracks

the quartz. Such bits as can be gotten out are laid on a flat stone, and big round rocks are rolled over them again and again to crush them, and at least fifty per cent of the gold is lost. There are no pumps, no quicksilver and no chemicals. Such of the gold as is gotten comes from washing the sand and crushed rock with water in hand pans, and in the winter the rock is crushed and boiled to free it of gold.

There are large copper mines in different parts of Corea, and a great deal of this is dug out, smelted and used in the manufacture of brass ware. Brass is more used perhaps than any other metal. The eating utensils, including dishes, spoons and chop sticks, are made of it, and all of the washbasins of the country are of this material. The quality of the brass is superior to that which I have seen in any part of the world. It takes a polish like gold, and it is wonderfully bright and pure. None of the copper is, I believe, exported, and the same is true of the coal. The Corean coal mines, which lie near the big city of Ping Yan, about 100 miles north of Seoul, so Dr. Appenzeller, one of the best posted missionaries of the country, tells me, are rather coal quarries than shafts. The coal is dug from the top of the ground, and it is taken out at the minimum of expense. It is a fine anthracite, and it would bring right here in the capital from \$10 to \$12 a ton. A big trade could be carried on in it to the different parts of China and the east. As it is, Japan sells millions of dollars' worth of coal every year, and the mines which I visited last month in north China were disposing of from 1,700 to 2,000 tons of coal a day. The coal that comes to Seoul, however, goes chiefly to the palace, and the mines await practical men to turn their dusky lumps into veritable black diamonds.

Agriculturally considered the country is very rich. Not one-twentieth of it is cultivated, and the fact that the officials take the greater part of the crops removes all incentive to work, and the people farm only enough to keep them alive. Almost anything that can be raised in the United States can be raised here, and rice is grown side by side with wheat and barley. There is plenty of good grazing land, and the cattle are very fine and form the beasts of burden of the country. I don't think the people are naturally lazy. They are strong and well meaning. They have a fair idea of justice and right and their civilization is by no means a barbarous one. With security of property and incentive to work they could easily be taught to accumulate money, and if the foreigners are allowed to take hold of the mines and build railroads Corea will in a short time approximate Japan in its progress. It has been several times on the verge of giving concessions to foreigners, and only a short time ago the king had agreed to such a proposition. An American, Mr. James R. Morse, who had spent years in Corea, and who is the chief partner of the American firm now doing business here, was called from New York to Seoul to see the king about the matter. He was a thoroughly responsible man in every respect, and he had at his back some millions of American capital. He came to Seoul, and after a time got the promise of such concessions as would have