

THE DESERET WEEKLY.

Truth and Liberty.

No. 9. SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH, AUGUST 18, 1894. Vol. XLIX.

Written for this Paper.  
KIM OK KIUN.  
(Copyrighted by Frank G. Carpenter, 1894.)  
SEOUL, Corea, July 17, 1894.



NE of the causes of trouble between Japan and China, and the beginning, in fact, of the present rebellion in Corea, was the assassination of Kim Ok Kiun at Shanghai.

Kim Ok Kiun after his famous conspiracy in Corea fled to Japan, and he was for a long time under the protection of the Japanese government. He was inveigled over to Shanghai, and was there assassinated by a friend of the King of Corea. Japan almost claimed him as a subject, and she thought that his murderer and his remains should have been carried to Tokio. Li Hung Chang aided the Coreans in transporting them to this place, and the maltreatment of the body of Kim was probably foreseen by Li Hung Chang when he gave the order for the Chinese vessel of war to carry the body to Corea. This country is a strange mixture of barbarism and civilization. It is almost incredible that these people, whose souls are full of poetry, whose tastes are, I believe, naturally refined, and who pride themselves on being disciples of Confucius should act in the way they did with Kim Ok Kiun. His body was brought here to Corea. It was cut into pieces and the different parts of it have been carried over the country and hung up as a warning to traitors above the biggest gates of the largest of the Corean cities. Seoul went mad with joy when the news came of the assassination. Business was suspended, and the court devoted itself to feasting and dancing. I am told that 150 of those frail professional maidens known as gesang or dancing girls were brought into the palace in a single night, and when I came here the other day from Chemulpo I passed one of these almond-eyed beauties going back home after her carousal at the capital. She was on horseback, riding astride, and she had a couple of servants with her.

The tale of Kim Ok Kiun's life and

death reads more like a romance of the dark ages than the story of actual doings in this year of our Lord eighteen ninety-four. It will have a great influence upon Corea's future, and in it are comprised events which have materially affected the governments of this part of the world. China and Japan are mixed up in it, and it is largely the cause of the war clouds which are now hovering over Asia. Russia is deeply concerned by it, and England is now trembling at the possibility of its results upon her Indian empire. This little land of Corea is the key to Eastern Asia. If the czar gets his hold upon it, China will probably be subjugated by the Russians, and a door will be opened for a Russian army into Hindoostan and Burmah. Corea is within only a few hours' sail of Japan. It is separated from China by a wall of stakes. The lower boundary of Siberia touches it, and Russia, Japan and China would all be glad to call Corea theirs. The most famous statesmen of the Japanese empire were, it is said, behind Kim Ok Kiun's rebellion, and it is charged that a Japanese led the rebels in the fights with the king's troops of a few days ago.

The rebellion of ten years ago and the rebellion of today are in the interests of modern progress, as far as the Japanese are concerned, and there is no doubt but that Corea will come out of the fight in a better condition than she has ever been in the past. Kim Ok Kiun got his idea of changing the Corean government and of the introduction of western civilization through his residence in Japan. He saw what had been done there, and he tried to play the same game in Corea. Less than a generation ago Japan was in almost as barbarous a condition as China is today. It was ruled by feudal lords, and their soldiers went about maltreating the common people as they pleased. The mikado was merely a puppet in the hands of the navy, and the real ruler was the commander-in-chief of the troops. Now Japan is one of the civilized lands of the face of the globe. It has a postal system as good as ours. It has adopted the national banking system. Its common schools and universities are everywhere. Its people have their parliament and every Japanese has his rights. The cities turn out newspapers by the million a year, and property is safe. The country is making money. It is one of the richest on the globe, and its public debt is practically nothing. The story of its change is the most wonderful page of history. There is nothing like it. In the space of less than thirty years it has jumped further on the road to civilization than any other nation has done in centuries, and

today it is more civilized than any country outside of Europe, except the United States. It has a fine army and a powerful navy, and it is a giant which may make China, notwithstanding her millions, kneel. This revolution was accomplished by Japanese statesmen, men who held such positions as Kim Ok Kiun held in Corea, and it was from them that Kim got his idea of revolutionizing his own country.

Corea, like Japan, was for years shut out from the rest of the world. Foreigners dared not land upon its shores. No one knew anything about the land, in fact, until twelve years ago, when our own Admiral Shufeldt made the first treaty and opened the country to the civilized world. Commodore Perry, you know, opened Japan, and the fact that America was the first to open Corea and that it has always been friendly to the country is one of the reasons why the king would like to have the United States step in and help him in his present trouble. Before Corea had been opened, however, Kim Ok Kiun had told the king of the wonderful changes that were going on in Japan. He had fled there secretly in order to study its civilization, and, in connection with another Corean named So Kwang Pom, had spent some years in the country. They came back with the idea of inducing the king to adopt the new civilization. At this time, however, the king's father was practically the ruler of Corea. He is a bad man, and he hates Christianity and western methods. He killed thousands of native Christians, and he charged Kim with trying to induce Christianity into Corea. The result was that Kim came near losing his head, and he had to flee. The king's father, in fact, fomented a rebellion, and during this the Chinese troops were called by him into Corea nominally to protect the kingdom. He had all along favored China, and during this rebellion he tried to have the queen killed. He failed in this, and it was through her family and friends that the revolution did not succeed and the king was made the real ruler of the people. The king's father was banished. He has since returned to Corea, and I saw him riding in state the other day through the main street of Seoul.

After the rebellion was over Kim Ok Kiun and So Kwang Pom came back here. They aided, I think, in making the treaty with the United States, and began to plan for the introduction of modern civilization. Ambassadors were sent to Washington, and they returned full of new ideas and schemes for the modernization of the country. The chief of these ambassadors was Prince