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KOREA UNDER JAPAN

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"If the lips are destroyed, the teeth get cold." This is a literal translation of a Korean proverb, Chinese in origin. The Chinese orator and diplomat in the feudal period of the Chow dynasty who originated this epigram conceived, long before the birth of European nations, the principle of balance of power as necessary to the peace and independence of nations contiguous in territory. At the opening of the twentieth century Korea was the lips and China was the teeth. Now the lips are destroyed, and the unprotected surface of the Chinese teeth are exposed to the corrosion of Japanese aggression. Every Chinese who carries the welfare of his fatherland in his heart ought, therefore, to study with vital interest the recent history of Korea, for there we find the example of what may befall China, unless the present tendency of Japanese imperial expansion on Asiatic mainland is checkmated either by China herself or by a concerted action of Western powers in the Eastern theatre of international politics.

In destroying a nation—if the destruction be complete—two things are essential: economic subjection and spiritual massacre. The former is a comparatively easy matter as its execution is based entirely on physical force, but the latter requires time and assiduous effort on the part of the conquering nation. Japan, profiting by the experience of the colonizing nations of the West, is applying in Korea a method, the most unique and effective known in the history of imperial conquests. When Bismarck wanted to Prussianize Poland, he moved several million Germans into German Poland to help assimilate the Poles. Money was appropriated by the German government to buy land from the Poles for these new comers. The Poles clung to their lands and refused to be assimilated, with the consequence that the price of land in German Poland went up and the Poles became prosperous. Japan pursued the same policy in a more efficacious way. The Oriental Colonization Company was organized under the direction of the government, and is supported by an annual subsidy of 500,000 yen

(\$250,000) from the imperial treasury. Its purpose is to colonize Korea with Japanese who are unable to make a living in Japan proper. A Japanese emigrant is given free transportation to Korea, and is provided with a home and a piece of land together with necessary implements and provisions when he gets there. He is expected to pay back to the company in three or four years what he thus receives. For this purpose the Japanese government in Korea confiscated all public lands formerly under the control of local communities, and all lands owned by Buddhist temples and cultivated by Buddhist priests. But these were far from being enough to meet the demand. Korea has an area of 80,000 square miles inhabited by 15,000,000 agricultural population. The Oriental Colonization Company tried to buy lands from the Koreans, but the Koreans refused to sell them. Here the government aid was brought in. All financial machinery in Korea is controlled by the Bank of Chosen, a government bank in Seoul. This powerful financial institution through its branch banks and agencies called in all the specie in the country and made the land practically moneyless as far as the circulating medium was concerned. Cash the Koreans must have to pay taxes and to buy the necessities of life. The only way they could get money was to sell their real estate. The value of land dropped to one-half, in many localities as low as one-fifth, of its original value. Then the Bank of Chosen sent out agents all over the country and bought the land for tens of thousands of Japanese emigrants sent over by the Oriental Colonization Company. This process has been repeated time and again. The Koreans know the game of the government, but they have no means to counteract this government speculation. Technically, the Japanese government in Korea has never carried on a wholesale confiscation of individual property, but this governmental speculation is nothing short of confiscation. Already more than one-fifth of the richest land in Korea is in the hands of the Japanese, and the amount is increasing steadily.

In commerce and industry, the Japanese have the complete monopoly. While Korea was independent, all nations enjoyed equal commercial privileges. Now the Nipponese tradesmen practically drive out all other nationals and have the market to themselves. The Korean merchant cannot compete with his Japanese competitor because of the preferential treatment shown by the government. All the rights to develop the resources of the country are given to the Japanese, and Korean enterprise, even of the humblest sort, is insidiously hampered by the Japanese. Thus the Korean people are

reduced to industrial serfdom, and are forced to submit to Japanese rule through economic pressure.

The Korean has a proud history and a civilization of four thousand years back of him, and he is unwilling to abandon his traditional culture under any circumstances. Something more than mere economic pressure and political domination is needed to extinguish the soul of Korea. History and literature are the records of past achievements, and language is the medium of expression that gives birth to the pregnant genius. The Japanese statemen fully appreciate the importance of this triple support of national consciousness. They made a systematic collection of all works of Korean history and literature in public archives and private homes and burned them. This is undoubtedly the greatest injustice that the Korean people have suffered at the hands of the Japanese. Korean scholars consider this as an irreparable loss second only to the destruction of the Alexandrian Library by Omar in 640. Priceless treasures have been destroyed in this needless vandalism of the Japanese. All Korean periodical literature—from local newspapers to scientific journals—has been completely stamped out. In order to create in the West a favorable impression of their rule in Korea, the Japanese government has a subsidized organ, the *Seoul Press*. This daily, published in English, disseminates only the kind of news that the Japanese wish to have known in the West. It is an official *camouflage*. This publicity channel is further strengthened by the *Annual Report on Reforms and Progress in Chosen*, a well illustrated volume published in English by the government, and sent out gratis to all great men and large libraries in America and Great Britain. These publications picture vividly the “contentment and prosperity” that the Japanese rule is bringing to the Koreans. And what they say usually find echoes in the West through a few men who have been decorated in Japan with gold war medals and the insignias of Rising Sun. These men take delight in returning the favors that they have received in Japan by singing the glory and grandeur of Japanese Asiatic policy, and by picturing Japanese administration in Korea as a “benevolent assimilation.”*

The Japanese language has been made the official tongue, not only in official documents but also in schools and public gatherings. Here the Christian church stands as an obstacle. A vast majority of Korean Christians cannot read Japanese, and the church services cannot be intelligibly conducted in a foreign tongue. To curb the

* G. T. Ladd, “Annexation of Korea: An Essay in Benevolent Assimilation,” *Yale Review*, n. s. 1:639-56, July, 1912.

spreading influence of Christianity and to completely crush out the one obstacle to the denationalizing of Korea, the Governor General Terauchi (now premier of Japan), in 1912, instituted what is known in the church annals of Korea as "The Persecution of the Church." Prominent church men, leaders in Korean thought and education, were charged with conspiracy and put in prison, and their activities ended. Prominent American missionaries were brought in the trial as being connected with the conspiracy to assassinate the governor general of Korea. Here, however, the Japanese overstepped themselves. Their charges against the Korean church aroused considerable criticism in the West, and when they saw that their attempt was producing a reaction, they stopped the persecution of the Korean Christians, and satisfied themselves in limiting the activities of the church. At present there is a pending negotiation between the Japanese authorities and the missionary body in Korea concerning the missionary schools in the peninsula. The mission schools in Korea have been deprived of their former rights under the old Korean administration, and are denied the privileges that Christian mission schools enjoy in Japan proper. They are insidiously discriminated against by the Japanese authorities on the ground that they serve as the hiding places of Korean nationalism.*

Under the pretext of unifying the educational system of Korea and bringing it up to a "higher standard," the Japanese government in Korea passed educational regulations which forbid religious services and the teaching of history, geography, and the Korean language in all the schools in Korea. Furthermore, they provide that all Korean schools shall be under the strict supervision of Japanese educators, and that the Korean children shall be taught to salute the Japanese flag and worship the Japanese emperor's tablet. Korean students who go to Japan to complete their education are advised to attend trade or technical schools, but they are practically barred from higher institutions of learning. It is almost impossible for a Korean student to specialize in such subjects as law, history or economics in the Imperial University at Tokio, and no Korean student is permitted to go to Europe or America to finish his education. "Korea has been Prussianized," says Tyler Dennett, who has visited the East twice, once as a magazine writer, and later in connection with the Centenary Commission of the Methodist Episcopal Church. "Japan has even gone so far as to forbid Korean students to come to the United States to finish

* A full discussion of the negotiation between the Japanese authorities and the missionaries in Korea concerning the school regulations is given by Arthur Judson Brown in *International Review of Missions*, VI: 74-99, January, 1917.

their education. The Prussianizing of Alsace-Lorraine never went to such an extreme as that.”*

The tragedy in the case of the Korean is that he suffers the fate of a conquered race, alike with the Poles and the Bohemians, yet his plight is unknown to the outside world. Japan knows the value of honorable intentions in the public opinion of the West, so she, through the clever manipulation of publicity propaganda, has created an impression in the West that she is a gallant knight that guards Asia from the European dragon. She compares her position toward Korea and China with that of the United States toward the Philippines and Mexico, and has announced, through the Lansing-Ishii agreement of last year, her imperial policy in the East as the “Asiatic Monroe Doctrine.” The same policy that undermined Korea—the policy of an opportunist with all its necessary accompaniment of deceit, cajolery, intimidation, and treachery—is in full operation in China. In the same manner as she professed to guarantee the political independence and territorial integrity of Korea up to the very eve of the destruction of Korean independence, Japan now declares that “Japan not only will not seek to assail the integrity or the sovereignty of China, but will eventually be prepared to defend and maintain the integrity and independence of China against any aggressor,” as Viscount Ishii puts it. Indeed, it would be the greatest of all tragedies in the world’s history, should China, the oldest of nations and the cradle of Oriental civilization, follow the footsteps of Korea into the pit of national destruction. Will China awake to the impending danger before it is too late?

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* Tyler Dennett, “The Road to Peace, via China.” *Outlook*, 117:168-69, October 3, 1917.

