

KOREA



CHINESE SOLDIERS.

KOREA & HER NEIGHBOURS

A Narrative of Travel, with
an Account of the Recent
Vicissitudes and present
position of the Country

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WITH MAPS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

SECOND IMPRESSION

IN TWO VOLUMES—VOLUME I

LONDON

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET

1898



PREFACE

I HAVE been honoured by Mrs. Bishop with an invitation to preface her book on Korea with a few introductory remarks.

Mrs. Bishop is too well known as a traveller and a writer to require any introduction to the reading public, but I am glad to be afforded an opportunity of endorsing the conclusions she has arrived at after a long and intimate study of a people whose isolation during many centuries renders a description of their character, institutions, and peculiarities especially interesting at the present stage of their history.

Those who, like myself, have known Korea from its first opening to foreign intercourse will thoroughly appreciate the closeness of Mrs. Bishop's observation, the accuracy of her facts, and the correctness of her inferences. The facilities enjoyed by her have been exceptional. She has been honoured by the confidence and friendship of the King and the late Queen in a degree that has never before been accorded to any foreign traveller, and has had access to valuable sources of information placed at her disposal

by the foreign community of Seoul, official, missionary, and mercantile; while her presence in the country during and subsequent to the war between China and Japan, of which Korea was, in the first instance, the stage, has furnished her the opportunity of recording with accuracy and impartiality many details of an episode in Far Eastern history which have hitherto been clouded by misstatement and exaggeration. The hardships and difficulties encountered by Mrs. Bishop during her journeys into the interior of Korea have been lightly touched upon by herself, but those who know how great they were, admire the courage, patience, and endurance that enabled her to overcome them.

It must be evident to all who know anything of Korea, that a condition of tutelage, in some form or another, is now absolutely necessary to her existence as a nation. The nominal independence won for her by the force of Japanese arms is a privilege she is not fitted to enjoy, while she continues to labour under the burden of an administration that is hopelessly and superlatively corrupt. The *rôle* of mentor and guide exercised by China, with that lofty indifference to local interests that characterises her treatment of all her tributaries, was undertaken by Japan after the expulsion of the Chinese armies from Korea. The efforts of the Japanese to reform some of the most glaring abuses, though somewhat roughly applied, were undoubtedly earnest and genuine; but, as Mrs. Bishop has shown, experience was wanting, and one of the Japanese