Chiuai was the fourteenth mikado of the Land of the Gods (Japan). His wife, the empress, was named Jingu, or Godlike Exploit. She was a wise and discreet lady and assisted her husband to govern his dominions. When a great rebellion broke out in the south island called Kiushiu, the mikado marched his army against the rebels. The empress went with him and lived in the camp. One night, as she lay asleep in her tent, she dreamed that a heavenly being appeared to her and told her of a wonderful land in the west, full of gold, silver, jewels, silks and precious stones. The heavenly messenger told her if she would invade this country she would succeed, and all its spoil would be hers, for herself and Japan.

"Conquer Corea!" said the radiant being, as she floated away on a purple cloud.

In the morning the empress told her husband of her dream, and advised him to set out to invade the rich land. But he paid no attention of her. When she insisted, in order to satisfy her, he climbed up a high mountain, and looking far away towards the setting sun, saw no land thither, not even mountain peaks. So, believing that there was no country in that direction he descended, and angrily refused to set out on the expedition. Shortly after, in a battle with the rebels the mikado was shot dead with an arrow.

The generals and captains of the host then declared their loyalty to the empress as the sole ruler of Japan. She, now having the power, resolved to carry out her daring plan of invading Corea. She invoked all the kami or gods together, from the mountains, rivers and plains to get their advice and help. All came at her call. The kami of the mountains gave her timber and iron for her ships; the kami of the fields presented rice and grain for provisions; the kami of the grasses gave her hemp for cordage; and the kami of the winds promised to open his bag and let out his breezes to fill her sails toward Corea. All came except Isora, the kami of the sea shore. Again she called for him and sat up waiting all night with torches burning, invoking him to appear.

Now, Isora was a lazy fellow, always slovenly and ill-dressed, and when at last he did come, instead of appearing in state in splendid robes, he rose right out of the sea-bottom, covered with mud and slime, with shells sticking all over him and sea-weed clinging to his hair. He gruffly asked what the empress wanted.

"Go down to Riu Gu and beg his majesty Kai Riu O, the Dragon King of the World Under the Sea, to give me the two jewels of the tides," said the imperial lady.

Now among the treasures in the palace of the Dragon King of the World Under the Sea were two jewels having wondrous power over the tides. They were about as large as apples, but shaped like apricots, with three rings cut near the top. They seemed to be of crystal, and glistened and shot out dazzling rays like fire. Indeed, they appeared to seethe and glow like the eye of a dragon, or the white-hot steel of the sword-forger. One was called the Jewel of the Flood-Tide, and the other the Jewel of the Ebb-Tide. Whoever owned them had the power to make the tides instantly rise or
fall at his word, to make the dry land appear, or the sea overwhelm it, in the fillip of a finger.

Isora dived with a dreadful splash, down, down to Riu Gu, and straightway presented himself before Kai Riu O. In the name of the empress, he begs for the two tide-jewels.

The Dragon King agreed, and producing the flaming globes from his casket, placed them on a huge shell and handed them to Isora, who brought the jewels to Jingu, who placed them in her girdle.

The empress now prepared her fleet for Corean invasion. Three thousand barges were built and launched, and two old kami with long streaming gray hair and wrinkled faces, were made admirals. Their names were Suwa Daimi? Jin (Great Illustrious, Spirit of Suwa) and Sumiyoshi Daimi? Jin, the kami who lives under the old pine tree at Takasago, and resides over nuptial ceremonies.

The fleet sailed in the tenth month. The hills of Hizen soon began to sink below the horizon, but no sooner were they out of sight of land than a great storm arose. The ships tossed about, and began to butt each other like bulls, and it seemed as though the fleet would be driven back; when lo! Kai Riu O sent shoals of huge sea-monsters and immense fishes that bore up the ships and pushed their sterns forward with their great snouts. The shachihoko, or dragon-fishes, taking the ship's cables in their mouths towed them forward, until the storm ceased and the ocean was calm. Then they plunged downwards into the sea and disappeared.

The mountains of Corea now rose in sight. Along the shore were gathered the Corean army. Their triangular fringed banners, inscribed with dragons, flapped in the breeze. As soon as their sentinels caught sight of the Japanese fleet, the signal was given, and the Corean line of war galleys moved gaily out to attack the Japanese.

The empress posted her archers in the bows of her ships and waited for the enemy to approach. When they were within a few hundred sword-lengths, she took from her girdle the Jewel of the Ebbing Tide and cast the flashing gem into the sea. It blazed in the air for a moment, but no sooner did it touch the water, than instantly the ocean receded from under the Corean vessels, and left them stranded on dry land. The Coreans, thinking it was a tidal wave, and that the Japanese ships were likewise helpless in the undertow, leaped out of their galleys and rushed over the sand, and on to the attack. With shouting and drawn swords their aspect was terrible. When within range of the arrows, the Japanese bowmen opened volleys of double-headed, or triple-pronged arrows on the Coreans, and killed hundreds.

But on they rushed, until near the Japanese ships, when the empress taking out the Flood-Tide Jewel, cast it in the sea. In a snap of the finger, the ocean rolled up into a wave many tens of feet high and engulfed the Corean army, drowning them almost to a man. Only a few were left out of the ten thousand. The warriors in their iron armor sank dead in the boiling waves, or were cast along the shore like logs. The Japanese army landed safely, and easily conquered the country. The king of Corea surrendered and gave his bales of silk, jewels, mirrors, books, pictures, robes, tiger skins, and treasures of gold and silver to the empress. The booty was loaded on eighty ships, and the Japanese army returned in triumph to their native country.

(The end)

William Elliot Griffis's short story: Jewels Of The Ebbing And The Flowing Tide

By William Elliot Griffis