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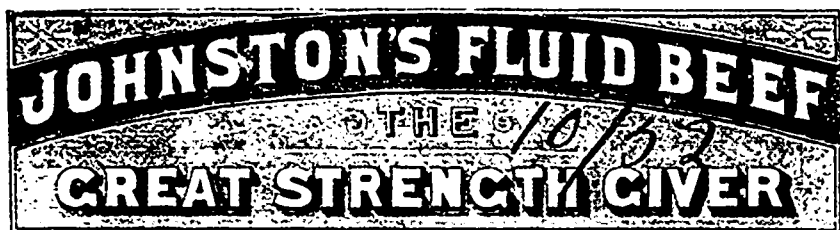
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THE MISSIONARY WORLD.

KOREA AND HER RELIGIONS.

The kingdom of Korea stands related to the Empire of China very much as the United States stand related to Great Britain. Not, of course, as respects their relative power or importance, but simply from an historical point of view. Many centuries ago the peninsula of Korea was inhabited by a race of men who left no records of themselves, and whom we call aborigines in default of any knowledge of an anterior race. This, to a certain extent, can be said of the American Indian. Again, Korea, in early historical times, became an asylum for Chinese refugees. In course of time these refugees obtained the ascendancy over the aboriginal inhabitants, and formed a kingdom, tacitly considered to be a vassal of China. The two races, living in such close relations, were slowly amalgamated, which resulted in the gradual estrangement of the little kingdom from the authority of the mother country. In coming from China the refugees and emigrants brought with them the traditions and customs of that empire. It is to one of these imported customs that we desire to direct attention. All the great Asiatic religions were from time to time imported from China. Each had its period of growth, of supremacy and of decline. The only one that came to stay for any great length of time was Confucianism, which is indeed, if such an expression may be allowed, the least objectionable of any of the religions, of the East. Of Shintoism and Taoism there are no traces left. Buddhism still struggles for existence, although it is confined to certain monasteries scattered about the country, and has no following among the masses. But for many centuries the people have been devoted Confucianists, observing its fundamental tenet of ancestor worship with the utmost punctiliousness.

One might ask why it is that Confucianism holds its own so powerfully, holding to-day as high a place in the minds of these people as it did a thousand years ago. I think it can be easily explained. In the first place, it is based upon a real and powerful feeling, that of reverence for parents, a thing good in itself and worthy of praise, but very dangerous when made to answer the demands of the religious nature. The founder of Confucianism seems to have been a deep philosopher in this, that, recognizing the mysticism and the essential powerlessness of the ancient Hindu religions, he was bound to offer something which should have in it a reality, something tangible, and he fixed upon the "filial feeling" as being the highest and most sacred reality. Using that as a basis he worked out his system and launched it upon a long voyage.

We have called it dangerous, and so it is, for half truths are more dangerous than entire falsehoods. Perverted truth does more harm than direct falsehood. It is what makes Mohammedanism more dangerous than Buddhism, for the former makes Christ one of its prophets, while the latter is wholly mythological. A second reason for the power of Confucianism is, that it has no priests, no temples, nothing that would make it liable to become an establishment. We think it has become evident that established religions are comparatively short-lived. It is surely so in the East. Suppose, if you will, that a certain emperor of a certain dynasty should make Buddhism the court religion, and compel the people to adopt it. It would have a phenomenal growth, for obvious reasons; but suppose further that a new dynasty should come in; it is morally certain that in the general political housecleaning that political religious institutions would go by the board. It is a rule in the East that new dynasties shall have things as different as possible from the old. The natural conservatism of the people renders changes in many directions impossible. But to give a concrete example:

Each time there has been a change of dynasty in Korea the capital of the country has been changed, and no one from the old capital allowed to move to the new one. It is probable, then, that a court religion would not survive the change. But Confucianism, or ancestor worship, has none of that pomp and circumstance, that gorgeous ritual which endear some forms of religion to the heart of princes. It, therefore, survives the dynastic changes to which others would succumb. Another reason, derived from the last, is, that the total absence of temples and priestly orders render unneces-

sary those heavy religious taxes upon the people which are necessary in the case of other religions. It may be objected that the voluntary giving of money creates an interest that makes the devotee even stronger in his adherence. But that objection does not hold here where the masses are engaged in a hand-to-hand fight with poverty. The few pence that they spend in the simple rights of ancestor worship are all they can spare, and nothing but fear could extort more from them. There are various other reasons why ancestor worship holds such a prominent place in the East, but let one more suffice.

It appeals to a side of man's nature that is always open to approach, and that is clannishness. It is the most subtle form of flattery. Confucianism is no religion, properly speaking. It is merely a makeshift. It presents itself in a flattering form, at the same time basing itself on a real affection of the heart, and claims to satisfy the religious sentiment. But it only acts as an anaesthetic to the conscience, convincing, not by the cogency of its real nature, but by the power of collateral and adventitious advantages, in view of which the man loses sight of the essential need—a soul religion.

In spite of these reasons it must be confessed that the great majority of these people are Confucianists because their fathers and their fathers' fathers were such. Custom rules here to an extent that is never imagined by those who have not seen it. Not one man in a million, we venture to say, is a Confucianist on any purely rational or philosophic grounds. Independence of thought or a speculative tendency would be considered evidences of lunacy. Custom is the criterion. Schiller's words may have been applicable to Europe, but they are vastly more so to Asia:

Out of the common is man's nature framed,
 And custom is the nurse to whom he clings;
 Woe, then, to him whose daring hand profanes
 The honoured heirlooms of his ancestors.
 There is a consecrating power in time,
 And what is gray with years to man is God-like.

We have said that Confucianism is the least objectionable of all the Eastern religions, and at the same time the most dangerous. It is dangerous in that it appeals most directly and forcibly to the superficial man, and for outside reasons is most likely to maintain its power; but, on the other hand, it is the least objectionable from the Christian standpoint, and for this reason, that it does not satisfy the religious nature to any extent. Why? Because there is in it no element of faith. It requires no faith in its devotees. It must be admitted that the element of faith is what makes any religion powerful. In other words, the religion must be higher than the man, beyond him, or it will not hold him. In breaking down the bulwarks of Confucianism, then, the principal thing is to get through the wall of custom, and to present a real, living truth for the moral nature to take hold upon. There will be little then to unlearn, for, until that moment, faith will have been asleep. But in the mysticism of the Indian, religious faith has been exorcised, and the task is a double one, destructive and reconstructive. With Confucianism it is mainly constructive.—Prof. H. B. Hulbert, of the Government School, Seoul, Korea.

RAJPUTANA.

The following letter from the Rev. Wm. F. Martin, a young missionary at Rajputana, India, giving his first impressions, will be read with much interest:

I wish to give you, in this letter, some account of my first itinerancy, which has been exceedingly interesting to me, as you can easily understand. To preach the gospel of Christ to Christians is no small privilege. You may imagine what it is to a young missionary to speak of the love and power of the risen Saviour to men who have never heard His name before, or who only connect it in some way with the European.

Deoli is surrounded by a great extent of country in which we are free to itinerate without the risk of overlapping on the sphere of any other missionary. One hundred and fifty miles from Chitore eastwards, and as much from Tonk, south to Jhallawar, we may claim in the meantime as our parish. I hope we may soon have some one to dispute, or rather to divide, the claim.

Our tour took in the cities of Tonk, thirty-six miles north-east, and Bundi, thirty miles south-east, of Deoli, and although it does not