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THE HERMIT NATION AND ITS KING.

The last of the hermits among the nations has opened its doors, and come out to see the world and invite in its neighbors far and near. These neighbors have not been slow to accept the invitation and already we have, especially from missionary sources, many interesting accounts of the country and its people. Although a dependency of China, Corea has always been looked upon with covetous eyes by the Japanese and for many hundred years battles between the two countries have from time to time been fought on the peninsula. In the beginning of the 17th century, however, the Chinese obtained the supremacy; but while exacting tribute they did not otherwise interfere with the government of the country, so that from that time until just now, the country has been able to maintain its desired seclusion.

The story of the first introduction of Christianity into Corea is most interesting. Just one hundred and two years ago, among a number of Coreans who had been sent with some tribute money to Peking was a young man named Lee. This young man was fond of mathematics and while in Peking applied to the Roman Catholic missionaries there for some books upon the subject. They gave him what he wanted and some religious books also, the reading of which soon led to his conversion. Delighted with the new faith he had found, he, on his return, began diligently to spread it among his friends, and in less than five years his converts, it is said, numbered four thousand. Soon these new converts felt that they were in need of better instruction and they sent for a priest to come and live among them and be their teacher. For a time all things went well; but when the question was raised among them as to whether it was right to continue the long venerated worship of their ancestors, the authorities grew alarmed and a severe persecution arose, and many of them were put to death. But though since that time, persecutions have raged at

greater or less intervals down to the present day, the country, it is said, has never been without one of these missionaries, hiding while the storm raged, and preaching when the persecutions ceased.

The story of the opening up of this strange land is too long to be gone into here, but a

few facts may be mentioned. The Regent who ruled during the minority of the present king was a strong conservative and it was largely owing to his influence that the country was so closely shut against foreigners. The young king, Li Hi, however, had more advanced ideas and when he

got the power into his own hands, his friends the Liberals were put into office and of course a marked change in the Government was the result. Thus was the way opened and when Li Hung-Chang the great Chinese minister brought his influence to bear, the matter was soon accomplished.

The ex-Regent did his best to make trouble and in July, 1882 the mob rose, and several Japanese were killed and for a time it was thought that it would result in serious difficulty between China and Japan, but things were shortly settled and the ex-Regent banished to China. In May, 1883 a treaty between Corea and the United States was signed, and a little later treaties were signed with England and Germany.

One sad drawback in these treaties is that there is no provision made for the entrance of Christian missionaries into the country. The cause of this, and indeed of all the persecutions there during the last hundred years, has been the false claim of the Roman Pontiff to temporal power. The Coreans know nothing of the difference between Roman Catholic and Protestant, so that when a Christian missionary makes his appearance they at once conclude that he has come to overthrow their kingdom and set up another under the sovereign of the country from whence he comes, and so the thing of which the Coreans have apparently the greatest dread is that by any means Christianity should be brought to their coasts.

But the way for the Gospel in Corea, though slowly, is just as surely opening up. About six years ago an Embassy from Corea visited Japan and three of them, during their stay, called upon Mr. Tsude, a converted Japanese, who told them about Christianity. Before leaving Corea they had given their oath that they would not take back the Scriptures, but they were delighted to find that Christianity was not as bad as they had heard it was and on their return they told a Corean nobleman, named Rijutei what they had learned. Now Rijutei was a personal friend of the king of Corea and in



LI HI, THE KING OF COREA.