

## A JEWISH COLONY IN HONAN. \*

THE Christian missionary goes to heathen lands as bearer of Heaven's light to people who walk in darkness and in the shadow of death. Once settled in his sphere of labour, and knowing the true condition of the people to whom he has been sent, it is soon apparent that the darkness is more dense, and the degradation more appalling than he ever thought it was. Yet, in many regions, when careful inquiry has been made, traces have been found of other men who have preceded him, bearing with them also light from the Divine Source. It is interesting to follow out the lines of inquiry which are thus suggested, though it often happens that there are many questions raised which cannot be satisfactorily answered. In the search for information on one subject, it is not an uncommon experience to have facts connected with others thrust on the attention, and interest in the work thus deepened. In collecting items for an article on Honan, the writer was agreeably surprised to find repeated references made to a colony of Jews located in that Province, and in the hope that some of the information thus obtained may interest the readers of the JOURNAL this article was undertaken.

The first colony of Jews is said to have entered China during the Han dynasty period, (B. C. 202,—A. D. 264.) This was the formative period of Chinese polity and institutions. The founder of the Han dynasty—*Lin Pang* or *Kan Tzu*—is honoured for having begun the custom of competitive examinations for office, while his successors developed literature, commerce, arts and good government, to a degree unknown before in eastern Asia. When it is borne in mind that the Jews have for many centuries been regarded as the money making race of the world, it is interesting to note the period of their arrival. It cannot be said with certainty, however, that it was love of gain that drew the Jews towards China. They may have been driven from their native land by the cruelty of their oppressors, and led to seek in far distant China a place of refuge where the tyrant's sway was unknown. In all probability they travelled through India on their way to China. The earliest settlers are supposed to belong to the restoration from Chaldea, as they had adopted the era of Salencus, adhered to many rabbinical customs, and had in their possession portions of the prophecies of Zechariah and Malachi. It

---

\* For many facts concerning this Jewish Colony I am indebted to the writings of Rev. Drs. Wells Williams, and W. A. P. Martin.