



KING OF COREA.

the work done by the Protestant missionaries, and less than two years ago spoke to Bishop Ninde, of the Methodist Episcopal Church, North, "those memorable words, which the churches cannot and must not forget, 'Send us more teachers.'"

GRADES OF SOCIETY.

The people may be roughly divided into three classes: The *upper*, composed of officials and the descendants of such; the *middie*, consisting of merchants and others able to keep slaves and hire labor; and the *lower*, embracing all employed in any form of manual work. To this class distinction is largely due the characteristic lack of industry, together with its resultant impoverishment of land and people. The higher orders look upon labor as debasing and altogether beneath their dignity. For the lower classes, on the other hand, there is little encouragement to work, any acquirement over and above that necessary for a bare subsistence being considered fair prey for official seizure.

But a better day has dawned. The trial referred to in the following incident, much less its result, would have been impossible under the *regime* of even two years ago. General Han, the Minister of Justice, was one day last autumn passing, in his chair, through the streets of Seoul, when a ragged native stopped him and presented a written complaint against the magistrate of Sang-Yang. "The complainant belonged to the humblest and lowest class of Korean peasants, the magistrate was a man well known and influential in the capital, backed and supported by some of the highest officials. General Han, however, immediately took cognizance of the complaint, and had the magistrate, who happened to be in Seoul, arrested. He sent to the distant district for witnesses, and after a careful trial, the magistrate was not only found guilty of having most outrageously robbed the poor peasant under the guise of law, but also of committing many other extortions and robberies, and was forced to make full restitution to the peasant, condemned to receive a hundred blows and to be imprisoned at hard labor for life."

Coreans are as a race distinct from both the Chinese and Japanese. They are taller than the latter, and although not so stalwart as the former, they have a much more dignified bearing than either. In appearance, too, they are more prepossessing. We seldom see among them any likeness to the expressionless face of the Chinese or the grinning,

uneven features of the Japanese. Few handsome women, however, are seen, and in striking contrast is the strong, erect and hard-visaged Korean housewife with the diminutive and shuffling but comely and bewitching Japanese damsel. All have long, straight black hair, and although the men never shave, they have usually a thin, *dar : mous-tache* and an Eastern-pointed beard.

DRESS.

The native dress is unique, not only in color, but in cut. All who cannot afford to dress in silk wear cotton or hemp; but whatever the material, the color is invariably white—the symbol of mourning. Its universal adoption dates back, they tell us, to a time many centuries ago, when several successive kings died at short intervals, and the people, finding it impossible to afford new mourning suits so often, resolved to be always prepared for such a requirement. Now when a sovereign dies the only change made is in the head-dress—the ordinary black hat and head-band being replaced by white ones. The men all wear enormously baggy pants, folded about the waist and ankles and bound fast with girdle and garters; a short double-breasted jacket, tied at the side with strings, and over these a voluminous starched coat, which reaches almost to the feet. Over this, again, officials often wear a thin sleeveless coat, usually dyed black, brown or blue. Mourners only are now privileged to wear the large sleeves (pockets) worn by all "gentlemen" previous to the coming of the Japanese army in the summer of 1894. They were at that time ordered to discard them with a view to effacing at least one of the signs of caste distinction. The ordinary outer dress of married women who have borne children consists of one or more short petticoats, all but concealing the pantaloons, which terminate just below the knees, and a short bodice which covers the shoulders but leaves the breasts entirely exposed. The jacket worn by those who are not mothers is longer, reaching down to where the skirts are bound about the waist. The higher class women wear overskirts which touch the ground, so that their dress is not so very different from that of Western women. The head-dress varies with every rank and station of life. Court officials, soldiers, yamen-runners, mourners, etc., all wear characteristic hats, but bachelors, coolies, women and children wear no head-dress whatever. The head-band and hat most commonly worn are delicate gauze-like structures, made, according to the station of the wearer, of silk, horse-hair, or bamboo finely fibred and painted black. The hat resembles in shape that worn by Welsh market-wives, although the crown is slightly less conical. It is always tied beneath the chin with ribbons or strings of beads.

LITERATURE.

The Coreans have no literature in their own tongue, although they have had for over four hundred years an alphabet which is simpler and much nearer perfect than our own. It has never, however, come into general use and very few can read. This is largely accounted for by the fact that it is regarded with contempt by the haughty but influential *literati*, who consider that nothing but a knowledge of the Chinese ideograph, introduced fifteen hundred years ago, constitutes education. The books of Mencius and Confucius are as much revered and as assiduously studied in Korea as in China, and it is not too much to say that the whole social order of the kingdom is purely Chinese.