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HOW THE GOSPEL WAS FIRST PLANTED IN COREA.

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In a recent letter written from Corea, by a missionary, he says, "This island is far less attractive than Japan, as a mission-field. It is not a great empire, with a great history; but a weak people, surrounded by strong and avaricious neighbors. Yet the Coreans seem frank, intelligent, and companionable, and inclined to be religious. Introduce Protestant Christianity, and they will believe."

Within the past five years, this has been attempted,—i.e., the introduction of Protestant Christianity,—and the belief that the Coreans would readily receive the Gospel has been in a measure verified. This populous peninsula, which for many years was closed against all European nations, and during the administration of the late Regent was the scene of such bloody persecutions of the native Christians, is now thrown open, not only to trade and Western civilization, but also to the introduction of the gospel. Missionaries are freely permitted to take up their abode in any of the Corean cities or towns, and no hindrances have been put in the way of their efforts for the evangelization of the people. On the contrary, the present king, now in his thirty-fourth year, seems earnestly to desire the good of his people, and lends his aid in the establishment of schools and Christian missions.

In many respects, Corea seems a nation prepared for the Lord. They have, in our day, really no national religion; i.e., none that is indigenous to their country, or specially enthroned in their affections. For though nominally Buddhist at the present time, this wide-spread system was not introduced into Corea till the middle of the fourth century; and, to win its acceptance, the Buddhist priests found it necessary to claim the local deities as previous incarnations of Buddha, and the new religion as only an advanced form of the old. The ruse succeeded; and for all these centuries, this hoary superstition has had full sway among these simple-hearted Coreans, though with some commingling of Confucianism and Taoism, the natural out-growth of their constant association with their Chinese neighbors. From

the early planting of Kishi's colony, about the beginning of the Christian era, the Coreans seem to have taken kindly to the Chinese—in part because of the gentle way of the poet courtier Kishi, and yet more for the many arts of civilized life he brought with him to the "Hermit-land." For hundreds of years the Coreans continued to reap the good fruits of the seeds of wisdom and knowledge planted by Kishi. But in process of time quarrels arose; and the Chinese and Japanese vied with each other in oppression and extortion against the poor Coreans, whose territory lying just between these rival powers, leaves them seemingly as helpless as is the grist between a pair of crushing mill stones.

Now Corea claims to be independent, and boasts a young sovereign who is brave enough to think for himself, and to seek for his people growth in knowledge and in ex-

posed, like Lydia's, to receive the gospel of salvation as soon as it is made known to them?

Among many efforts made during the present century to carry the gospel into Corea, and with little apparent success, one seed of sacred truth was planted by a little Chinese lad, shortly before Corea was opened to missionary effort; and this, so far as we know, was the first in all the Hermit-kingdom to spring up and bring forth fruit to the glory of God.

This little boy's name was Ah-Fung; and he had been taught at one of the mission-schools at Ningpo to read the Bible, and go to Jesus in prayer, whenever he was in need of help. His father, who was a converted Chinese, took Ah-Fung, when he was about nine years old, with him on one of his trading expeditions to the Corean capital. In a riot that occurred on the

poor, unloved wife of this rich officer felt very sorry for the forlorn child, and tried to comfort him as well as she knew how. She had never been happy in her married life, and was glad of any object to divert her mind from her own loneliness and sorrow, besides pitying the gentle-spoken lad, who seemed like herself in having no one to love. After a while, God gave her a dear little baby girl; and the young mother grew very fond of it, seeming to smile less sadly, and sometimes to be almost happy. Ah-Fung was always with them; and, as he soon learned to speak the Corean language, he often attempted to tell his gentle young mistress of the Saviour he loved and trusted in. Then, as he caressed the bright-eyed, beautiful baby, or swung its silken cradle to and fro, to keep off the flies, he looked forward to the time when he might fold the tiny, dimpled hands, and teach his dear little



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playmate to say "Our Father." But the baby was yet too young to learn the precious name of Jesus, and the heart of the fond, girlish mother grew too full of joy in her darling, to leave room for any other love. So she did not care to listen to Ah-Fung's story of Jesus and His salvation; but only smiled sweetly and said, "Oh, yes, it is very nice, I dare say; and you can tell the baby by-and-by, when she is older. But I am too happy now to listen or think about your Jesus." The little lad thought it strange that anybody should be too happy or too busy to think about Jesus; but none of them knew how it was to end, or understood God's purposes of love and mercy toward the sweet young mother and her beautiful babe.

As the months wore on, the lovely flower, so bright and beautiful to the loving mother, withered in her arms, and was borne away

callence. Buddhism is no longer so heartily accepted as formerly, and its haughty priests cannot, as they once did, lord it over the bodies and souls of a down-trodden people. A missionary, recently writing from Seoul, the capital of Corea, says, "There is not one Buddhist temple within these city walls, and some of the Coreans say that Buddhist priests are not allowed to enter the city." And thus, as they are being weaned from former superstitions, may we not hope that the hearts of the poor Coreans will be

street, the little boy got separated from his father, and by some mishap was stolen, and concealed by the thief till his father left the city. Then the rogue pretended that the little lad was his orphan cousin, and sold him to the governor of the fort, who in turn presented him to his wife, to wait on her and attend her as a page when she went out in her sedan. Ah-Fung was at first very unhappy, and wept and prayed day and night; but he trusted in God, and felt sure that all would be right in the end. The

by the "reaper Death." Then, in her great loneliness and sorrow, she recalled the words of her little page, "about Jesus and his love," and she asked him to tell her the story again. Day after day did this Christian child talk to his beautiful young mistress of the tender, compassionate Saviour, who loves little children, and makes them always happy in his own bright home, far away; while the sorrowing mother seemed never to weary of listening to the oft-told tale. "Did he love my baby?" she asked

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