

be the reaching out of the spiritual in man to other spirits over and above him, the Korean too is religious. He has his sacred books, he kneels in prayer, talks of God and the soul, and has some conception of a system of rewards and punishments, according as a man may deserve.

Fear and Superstition.

Their religion is a strange one, a mixture of ancestor worship with Buddhism, worship of spirits, divination, magic, astrology and fetishism. Their religion is one of fear; they have been called cowards; but can we wonder at this when we remember that they believe that devils and all kinds of malignant spirits surround them on every hand and follow them wherever they go. They know of no escape from them as long as they live, and so their lives are one long torture of apprehension. There are believed to be personalities in every tree, in the hills and rivers, in disease, under the ground and in the upper air.

Mineral Wealth.

So strong has this belief in hill and mountain spirits of evil been, that although Korea is rich in coal, iron, copper, silver and gold, for many hundreds of years no mining was attempted because of the supposed sacred character of the hills and the danger of disturbing the spirits inhabiting them and calling down their vengeance on the people. Since other nations have gained a foothold in Korea, mining is being extensively carried on, and other resources of the country, fishing, agriculture, etc., are being rapidly developed.

Ancestral Worship.

Another form of religion is ancestral worship, borrowed, no doubt, from China. This is the keystone of Korea's gateway to happiness and success. To be a faithful ancestor worshipper means to them all blessings, success and happiness, but to neglect it means the closing of all doors to light and hope.

Mourners.

When a death occurs in a Korean home the members clothe themselves in sackcloth, with ropes tied about waist and head, and dismal wailings are heard on every hand. All colors are set aside, as color denotes pleasure, joy or delight; the home remains unswept, and desolation reigns supreme.

The mourner must wear string shoes, as leather means ease and comfort. He can hold no office and must go about wearing an immense hat which hides the face of the sky from his guilty gaze. He says, "Because of my transgressions my parents have died, and when he writes a letter he signs himself J. Kim, sinner."

Poor souls, what a comforting message the missionary has brought to them in the words of the apostle: "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again even so them also that slept in Jesus shall God bring with him."

The Women.

I might say much more of many of the quaint customs of Korea if time permitted; but before closing my paper I must tell you something of the life of the women of Korea, which is a sad one before the gospel comes with its message of hope and cheer. While the women of Korea are not degraded and oppressed to the degree they are in other heathen countries, their lives of strict seclusion and abject submission to their male relatives makes their lives full of sadness and gloom. A Korean woman belongs absolutely to her husband, and while not always cruelly treated, still if it should please her lord and master to abuse her, she has no hope of redress.

Girls.

In some parts of Korea the girls are betrothed very young, in fact very often in infancy, although they do not usually marry earlier than seventeen.

Marriage Arranged by Parents or Guardians.

In other parts of Korea the betrothal comes at a later age, usually between the ages of ten and fifteen. Long before a girl reaches a marriageable age she must live in the seclusion of the women's quarters. All marriages are arranged by the parents or guardians of the contracting parties, and the young people have no part, save to carry out the plans of their elders. When a lucky wedding day has been selected the bridegroom sends to his fiance gifts consisting of female clothing, pieces of cloth and also sweets. When they have been received and acknowledged the ceremony has been half performed. When the bridegroom is permitted to put up his hair in manly style, but not until the day of the marriage is he allowed to assume the dress of a man. A Korean bachelor of seventy is regarded as a child, dresses as a child and treated as a child. Marriage usually takes place three days after the gifts are received by the bride, and these three days are very busy ones for her, for out of pieces of cloth sent her by the groom, she must herself and without assistance, fashion the elaborate robe which he wears on the wedding day, and which is his first adult garment.

Women Kept in Seclusion.

The making of this garment means that she with the assistance of any other wives he may marry, or already has, will make all the clothing required by him, his children and other relatives. The marriage is celebrated with much long and tedious ceremony, followed by a time of noisy feasting, ending in bride and groom joining in worship before the ancestral tablets of their respective ancestors. In every Korean home of any pretension the women's apartments are in the most secluded part. They open into a garden, never on the street, and although she may pass as much of her leisure time as she wishes in this garden, she is as much shut in from the outside world as a nun in her cell. The girls and women may have books and writing materials but are not permitted to attend school.

The Korean woman is held as inferior by all her male relatives, especially her husband, who, while he expects her to perform most of the manual labor of the home, as well as making all the clothing of the family, yet regards her as unfit for him to eat with or to treat in any way as an equal.

How the gospel of Jesus has come to lift up the womanhood of Korea, as well as every other nation when the gracious beams of the sun of righteousness have penetrated.

Susceptible to Christian Teaching.

In no other country has the gospel made such marvellous advance as in Korea. Only a few short years since the entrance of the first missionaries, and today Korea is very largely Christian.

The period of transition which the country has been passing through, the entrance of outside nations, the passing of the old customs, the forming of new and higher ideals and customs is largely responsible for this.

The heart of the Korean in this time of unrest and upheaval is singularly open for the message of the gospel. As he feels the old foundations crumbling he longs for something unchanging on which to rest, and feels the sweetness of the blessed invitation, "Come unto me and rest."

The Koreans make splendid converts, earnest, thoughtful and intelligent and possessed of an intensely missionary spirit.

A Race of Missionaries.

As soon as the Korean is saved he at once gets to work to win others for Christ. They have been called a race of missionaries. They show an eagerness for the gospel that has been shown by no other people. Many of them, travelling even a hundred miles to hear the truth or obtain a copy of the scriptures, and as they go from place to place carrying the good news, the weak has advanced rapidly. They are very liberal givers and although most of them are very poor, many, if not most of their churches, very soon become self-supporting. This too has had its effect in the rapid spread of the gospel. But one idea seems to possess her leaders now—not one of war, politics or railway expansion, but one of evangelization to win Asia for Christ, to sound the gospel call to all these dusky millions, to say peace and good will to the downtrodden races of Asia. This is a large idea for so small a people, but it is a great one. Shall we not be interested in it too; and being interested shall we not lend a helping hand?

BORROWING TROUBLE.

We have said to several recently "didn't we have a beautiful winter." Almost invariably they would say, "Oh, yes, it was wonderful; but you will see if we don't have to make up for it later on by having a cold, wet summer."

Ungrateful creatures; instead of thanking the Lord for present blessings.

Would not we have the time of our life if they had the ordering of the weather. I fear this habit is not confined to a few by any means. A great many of us are guilty along this line. It may be the preacher. He worries lest there will not be an appreciative congregation after he has spent so much time on his sermon, when lo, at his arrival at the church he finds a goodly number. He has lost just so much nerve power.

Another borrows trouble lest those children she has tried to teach forgets some part of the recitation at the missionary meeting. She gets a nervous headache, all for nothing, as it turns out, for everything goes along beautifully—the meeting was really a success.

Let us consider for a moment. Of whom do we borrow trouble? for we could not borrow unless we have someone to borrow from. No one will answer. They all of one accord will say—not I. I haven't loaned trouble to anyone. And then when no one will own up, we put it on satan; if he does deny the charge we will not believe him, for his reputation is not of the best.

After we have found out from whence it came, let us resolve to have nothing more to do with it, but rather to have a more simple faith in God, casting all our cares and burdens upon him, for He careth for us.

These imagined troubles show a lack of faith and causes the great heart of our Lord to yearn over his children.

After we have ceased to borrow trouble, the wrinkles will be smoothed away from the brow, we will enjoy a more contented life, and we will learn to live by the day—trusting Jesus, that is all.

I. M. K.

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