

Bishop Ridel,
Bishop of Philippolis, Apostolic Vicar of Korea:
according to his correspondence

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Letter from His Grace Monseigneur Le Coq, Bishop of Nantes

Nantes
June 23, 1890.

Reverend Father,

You propose to publish soon the Life of Bishop Ridel. I am extremely happy to hear it. His life is the life of a saint. It is moreover presented by its author in a form full of charm, in a simple and noble style, in perfect harmony with the beauty and dignity of the subject. This work will be read, no doubt, with keen interest and great edification. This will be your best reward, the only one that you have aspired to.

By birth, Bishop Ridel belongs to the diocese of Nantes. His name is already inscribed in letters of gold in our religious annals, and his memory, shrouded in veneration, will remain engraved in our hearts. Korea and Brittany occupied a large place in his affections; from above, we may believe, he looks down at them and blesses them again.

Accept, dear Father, with my congratulations, the assurance of my affectionate devotion to N.-S.

+ Jules, Bishop of Nantes.

Letter from Monseigneur Bécél, Bishop of Vannes

June 21, 1890

My dear Father,

My pastoral visits have not yet allowed me to read the Life of Bishop Ridel. Canon Gorel spoke to me of it with praise. I hope that your work will spread in my diocese, where the venerable missionary bishop came to die, in the midst of his family, whose mourning and consolations we shared.

All those who knew and loved this heroic apostle will be grateful to you, as I am, for bringing him to life in these edifying pages.

I am pleased to congratulate the author, full of talent and goodwill, of the remarkable portrait reproduced at the beginning of the volume.

I bless you, dear sir. Believe in my religious devotion.

+ Jean-Mary, Bishop of Vannes.

Preface

This is the story of a bishop whose memory must be dear to the children of Brittany and whose name recalls a life of heroic virtues. Bishop Ridel is the model of a man who counts on God for everything and on God in everything; he is the Christian enamored of the love of souls, who goes to meet them as far as love goes, in spite of fatigue and privations, in spite of perils and death; he is the saint who, wanting to be a man of God, conforms his will in all things to that of his Master. Add the solicitude and prudence of the pastor, the gentleness and fidelity of the friend, the tenderness of the father, and you will have the portrait which we have sketched with wholly filial piety. To carry out our task with dignity, it would have been necessary to have “the eye which can see the large characters, the hand which can trace the large tables”. Our hero deserved them.

Apostles of the stamp of Bishop Ridel are, as Louis Veillot once said, “the spring of the Church; they make her relive her earliest days. Enriched by their ardent and victorious virtue, she shows them to the world, which believes it has impoverished her; better than the ancient Roman, she says: “Here are my jewels and my beauty.” But they are also the poetry, the enthusiasm and the honor of our century. They are above all the folly of the cross.

Thus appears to us the valiant bishop of Korea, white-haired before his age, bent under the weight of labor and crowned with all the halos of the apostolate, lacking only martyrdom.

His life is a life of struggles and contradictions; it is the Cross: it is not a triumph.

During the last years of Bishop Ridel’s life, a wind of freedom began to blow over the unfortunate Korean mission. Already the holy bishop foresaw the day when he would be able to return to his people, when he would publicly preach Jesus Christ to them. At this dream of his heart he quivered with joy. But the Franco-Korean treaty, negotiated since 1882, was not concluded until 1886, and ratified only in 1887. God had called his servant back to him on June 20, 1884. Bishop Ridel therefore did not see his efforts crowned on earth: he sowed in suffering and in tears; in heaven he will obtain that his successors reap in abundance and joy.

Since the month of June, 1888, a French chargé d’affaires has resided at Seoul, and yet Korea is still only half open to the preaching of the Gospel. France, in its treaty with this small State, has forgotten only the missionaries, that is to say, those of its children who came first to this barbarous people, to carry with the Gospel its name and its love. However, the new commercial relations have made a large breach in the impassable barriers of this country. Let us hope that religious freedom will soon pass entirely through them.

At this moment, the interior of Korea is still a forbidden country; the missionaries exercise their ministry there only in the deepest secrecy. In a few ports only they can show themselves, put on the ecclesiastical costume and acquire real estate like foreign merchants. Thanks to this clause of the treaty, Seoul, with the great joy of the Christians and the great astonishment of the pagans, has an Orphanage and a hospice. There, since the month of July of last year (1888), four Sisters of Saint-Paul of Chartres have devoted themselves to the service of several hundred children and old people.

Formerly the voice of Mgr Blanc reached the friends of France: it was a cry of hope, but also of distress. The venerated successor of Bishop Ridel has just acquired a magnificent piece of land on the hillside overlooking the capital of Korea. It is now a question of raising a church to Jesus Christ there. One understands the joy of the bishop who can raise the flag of the divine Master above a pagan capital, above the temples of the idols and the residence of the king. But what pain at the sight of destitution which does not allow him to offer God a temple worthy of his majesty, under the gaze of a people who will judge God by his temple!

The voice of Mgr Blanc came to us; we try to answer it today by dedicating to the first church of Korea the fruit of this work.

Book 1

Chapter 1

Childhood of Felix Ridel. - His calling. - Death of his mother. - His first communion. - College of Notre-Dame des Couëts. - Prediction of M. de Courson. - Felix at the Major Seminary of Nantes. - His vacation at Vannes. - Saint Sulpice. - Bishop Jacques tests the vocation of the future missionary. - La Remaudière. - The Foreign Missions Seminary. - M. Ridel is destined for the mission in Korea.

Felix-Clair Ridel was born on July 7, 1830, in Chantenay, a small industrial town located on the banks of the Loire, at the gates of Nantes. He had the invaluable advantage of belonging to a truly Christian family. In this blessed home, religion and honor held first place. His father built modest launches in the Crucy shipyards, his probity earned him confidence and esteem. His mother was the model of mothers, and in the education of her children her ingenious delicacy equaled her tender devotion. Unwilling to lose any opportunity of forming them early in virtue, she spoke to them by her actions and accustomed them to do good by doing it herself.

Thanks to this education, peace and happiness reigned in the family. Despite their seemingly very different characters, a sweet and unalterable friendship united the four children: Louis, Mary, Joséphine and Félix. The gentleness and exemplary docility of the eldest very often moderated the ardor and petulance of the youngest. Later, the child, having become a missionary, will return with an inexpressible charm to these memories of his early years; he will be happy to recall in his letters the example of his parents, the advice of his brother. He will always regard them as a source of graces and blessings. If the liveliness of young Felix made it his duty for his mother not to lose sight of him, by his excellent disposition he became for her the object of distant but already very sweet hopes.

At the first awakening of his intelligence, she carefully deposited in his soul the seeds of the most tender and the most solid piety. From then on, too, young Felix had the liveliest confidence in Mary; he will show her the most filial love until death.

It was to this pious mother that he owed his vocation as a missionary. This thought was particularly close to his heart and, almost at the end of his life, bent under the weight of a glorious apostolate, he still recalled this memory, with a very naive grace, for one of his nieces who asked him for a story about being a missionary.

“A long time ago: it was in 1837 or 1838, in a small house located on the edge of a large river lived a family made up of father, mother and several children... The youngest, nicknamed Boiling-Blood, seemed to have invented perpetual motion. One day, sitting near his mother, he was no doubt waiting for one of her pretty tales which would keep him wise, when suddenly he saw a blue book on the table.

- Mother, he said, are there any stories in this book?

- Yes, my son, it's a book that tells stories, stories of missionaries.

“What are missionaries?”

“They are priests who go very far, among peoples who don't know the good Lord.”

- What? there are men who do not know the good Lord! But they won't be able to go to paradise? And the little children and their mothers will not see the good Lord?

“That's why missionaries leave their families, endure all kinds of suffering and go far away among savage peoples to preach to them the truths of holy religion.

“Are there many who leave like this?”

“There are a lot, but not enough. They ask that we come to their aid!...”

“These words returned a thousand times to the thought of the young child; they had made a deep impression on his soul. Something took shape little by little in him. Peoples who

do not know the good God!... who cannot go to heaven because they have no one to show them the way!...

- But everyone knows, and we have to tell them, that if they sin they will go to hell; and that on the contrary, if they do not commit sin they will go to paradise. Oh ! someone must go tell them.

Then he added with all the enthusiasm of his heart: "Mother, mother, I will go, I too want to be a missionary."

For all answer, a tear rolled down the cheeks of the mother and fell on the forehead of the child whom she held pressed to her heart, saying; "Poor little darling!" That kiss and that tear were the dew from heaven on the germ from which this vocation sprang.

Since then it has only developed and grown. The child was thinking that the wild lands his mother had told him about were located over there, beyond the river. For him, the world was all that the horizon embraced; also, to go among the abandoned peoples, to be a missionary, seemed to him the most natural and the easiest thing.

It was around this time that his pious mother gave up her soul to God. Felix was then nine years old. Despite his young age, this painful event left an impression on his soul that neither time nor distance ever erased. Twenty years later he recalled this cruel memory thus: "This scene is deeply engraved in my memory; I have often entertained my mind and my heart with it. It was night, I was with my father, when our sisters came running up with loud cries. I can still see you, my dear Louis, prostrating yourself to pray near our mother. I will always remember that terrible night! How sad! we no longer had a mother here below! And, since then, we have had to endure this cruel deprivation! It was near her that I had taken the resolution to be a missionary, a child's resolution, it is true; but from then on I had my goal, I had my secret."

Little by little day dawned in the mind of the young child; the grace of the good God, deposited by the hand or rather by the love of a mother, grew and triumphed over all difficulties.

Thus disposed, Felix looked forward with joy to the great day of his First Communion and carefully prepared to receive the God of the Eucharist in his heart. The church where he was baptized saw him unite for the first time with his Creator and swear loyalty to him. No one has been more faithful.

From that time his desire to be a missionary became more ardent, and it was with the intention of realizing it one day that, towards the end of September 1843, he presented himself to Father Muray, superior of the ecclesiastical college of Notre-Dame des Gouëts.

Felix gave himself entirely to the accomplishment of his duties. Nothing stopped him, neither fatigue nor pain. However, if his gay, frank character, enemy of all that was not honest, if his goodness, which excepted no one, soon earned him the affection and esteem of all his fellow students, his ardent nature and almost fiery needed to be moderated.

During the first two years of college, he had for professor M. l'abbé Baumier. This eminent priest was not a man to lose patience and become discouraged in the presence of a pupil who sometimes showed a greater exuberance of life than was required by the rule. His penetrating gaze soon discovered the riches of this beautiful soul and knew how to distinguish in him precious qualities for the future. He followed in the footsteps of this bold, enterprising child, and did so well, by his charity, his playfulness, his firmness, that he finally got the better of him. From then on, mutual trust was established between master and pupil, with great profit for the young man.

The year which followed the departure of M. Baumier was rather painful for Felix. His nature, imperfectly softened, was too soon deprived of the wise direction of this master. An excessive ardor, the sympathy that he had created among his comrades inspired fears in some professors, perhaps a little timorous.

They wrote to M. de Courson, who had encouraged his admission to Couëts. The venerable Superior of Saint-Sulpice answered: "The child's face struck me; he will make a good

priest. Have no fear in this regard.” Truly prophetic words, which do honor to the perspicacity of M. de Courson and to the excellent nature of him who was the subject of them.

It was, however, only a passing cloud. During the last years of his humanities studies, Felix had for teachers two men remarkable for their intelligence, their devotion and their piety.

The memory of MM. Aguesse and Lagrange is still alive in the diocese of Nantes. “Aided by their encouragement, their advice, the young humanist returned with ardor to work, to the formation of his mind and his heart.

“It was thus that the four years of the minor seminary passed, without remarkable incident, but also without cooling of the first fervor. On the contrary, one noticed in him a precocious maturity and an increasingly marked revulsion for what is not right, honest and virtuous.

“The stay in the philosophy seminary and in the major seminary will complete this priestly education.

“Fully assured of his vocation, he had but one thought, to devote himself body and soul to the service of God and the Church.

“Nothing seemed to him beyond his strength, he was ready to leave everything: a family of which he was the soul; very dear friends whose memory he will never lose; his country that he will not stop loving for a moment. Beneath an energetic exterior, he had a very loving soul and the sacrifice of his affections was not the least merit of his apostolate (From a biographical note by M. l’abbé Lahue, fellow student of Mgr. Ridel.)”

The account of the Annals had told him of the privations, the pains, the tortures which await the missionary beyond the seas; but these readings, far from moderating his desires, inflamed them on the contrary. “One must be so happy,” he said, “to go to the good Lord, with one’s head in one’s hands.” However, in the month of October, 1856, he seemed to hesitate for a moment. The life of his masters, of the holy priests of Saint-Sulpice, this life, made up entirely of meditation, prayer and work, seemed to him full of attractions, made a deep impression on him. To follow Jesus, to run with him after the lost sheep, and to crown a life of sacrifices with the supreme immolation, what an ideal! But the virtues of his masters showed him Jesus in Nazareth, and he wondered if this hidden life would not be more meritorious for him and consequently more pleasing to God. This thought first determined him to enter the seminary of Saint-Sulpice to study the designs of God for him.

In this illustrious and holy house, he was quickly appreciated. The venerable director, M. Icard, entrusted to him, among the young girls who were preparing for first communion, the least fortunate in the eyes of the world. It was his beginning in the apostolate. He put all his dedication into it. “You should have seen him, always smiling, taking care above all of the poorest, the little ones, the disinherited, reaching out to them, led by his spirit of faith and by the goodness of his heart, which, all his life, focused on those who suffer. All his children have grown up, dispersed in the big city or elsewhere; no one has forgotten him” (From: Funeral oration for Bishop Ridel, by Father Th. Mainguy.

To this same catechism, a young Brazilian gentleman, M. de Macédo-Costa, also gave his whole soul. Having become a bishop, he was, like M. Ridel, to suffer harsh captivity for the name of Jesus Christ. “Wonderful rapprochement of these two confessors of the Faith, who moved the world by the simple account of their sufferings, and recalled in the middle of the nineteenth century the beautiful and proud language of the ancient martyrs. They parted as the apostles of old: one to evangelize, at the cost of unheard-of fatigue, the savages on the banks of the Amazon, the other to go and face, on the lands of Korea, the terrible laws brought against the Christian name.” (Biographical Note, by Father Lahue.)

M. Ridel had to wait for the hour appointed by God. The holidays brought him back for a few weeks with his family. They no longer lived on the banks of the Loire, but at the very

bottom of the gulf called Morbihan in Breton. For several years the port of Vannes had opened up more easily to coasters: shipyards under construction were never empty. M. Louis Ridel then built numerous luggers and tide hunters there, which soon gave way to *briks* and schooners. It was there, in the modest dwelling where he breathed his last, that M. Ridel tasted the joys of the family, enlivening his father's home with his joyful humor. His people were not the only ones to enjoy the amiable seminarian. Although his birth brought him to the diocese of Nantes, the seminarians of Vannes formed a friendship with him, the memory of which moves them each time they are reminded today of the name of M. Ridel. The morning brought them together to hear Mass, and very often for walks in the neighboring countryside or beside the gulf. Later, we will find in the missionary of Korea the vivid images, kept by him in the bottom of his heart, of this Morbihan with its green islands and fast currents, which he crisscrossed more than once on a light boat with his young colleagues. .

After a year of reflection and study, Father Ridel's determination was irrevocably taken.

From an early age, the cry of the hungry asking for bread had moved his heart. Now his wishes are fulfilled; God gave him the order to go and satisfy those who are hungry. "Ita, go." This powerful word which for nineteen hundred years has cast the heralds of the Gospel on all the paths of the earth was distinctly heard. He therefore asked the diocesan authority for permission to follow his attraction. Bishop Jacquemet deemed it prudent to test his vocation; he advised him to wait and sent him to exercise the functions of the holy ministry in a small parish. The inhabitants of La Remaudière still treasure his memory.

A soul of vigorous temper, Abbé Ridel saw in the order of his bishop the expression of the will of God. He submitted to it, taking advantage of this ordeal to prepare for the fatigues of the future. Nothing cost him. For God, for souls, he felt ready for all sacrifices, to sacrifice himself. To the privations he had not chosen, he added others, prolonging his fasts beyond measure, taking long walks, never listening to the pleas of his tired body, testing his strength like a wrestler before a fight.

The ordeal was not very long, but it sufficed to bear witness to a vocation that all the signs already made certain. Granted at last by his bishop, Abbé Ridel fixed his departure for the Seminary of the Foreign Missions Society for August 1, 1859.

"This news," an aspiring missionary wrote to him at the time, "does not surprise us; what surprises us more is not having seen you here sooner. For a long time everyone had made you a missionary. You preferred to wait for the hour of divine Providence, you did well. It must be the good Lord who calls us and brings us to this house. Here we left our parents, our dearest friends. We breathe more easily the grace of God. It is a joy to think that our only hope is in God, that he alone must henceforth be our father, our mother, our brother, our friend."

The Foreign Missions Seminary is the great school where the apostle, before going to fight the battles of Jesus Christ, comes to learn to die for the name, for the glory and the love of God. By crossing the threshold of this house, the future missionary strips himself of all that he holds dearest in the world. He dies first to his family; he leaves it, and probably it is forever; it no longer belongs to him. He dies to his homeland; soon he will go under other skies where nothing will remind him of his native country. He must finally die to himself, that is to say to all the delicacies of soul and body, for he will have to live without an assured asylum, without a stone on which to lay his head, and perhaps to be without a confidant and without a friend.

The seminarian of the foreign missions, in order to conquer nature and kindle in his heart the flame which will no longer be extinguished, submits himself to a life of sacrifice. His days pass with masters who have themselves gone to the ends of the earth, bearers of the good news. He immerses himself in the lives of the saints and martyrs who occupied his place before him; he contemplates and admires these instruments of all shapes used by the executioners to cause death or to inflict horrible tortures. In the hall of the martyrs are the swords which struck his brothers, the cangues and the chains which they carried, the cords and the whips which tore

their flesh; the linen stained with their blood. This sight familiarizes him with the idea of torture and prepares him, with the grace of God, to endure even martyrdom without failure.

In this holy asylum Abbé Ridel found happiness. However, the joy of belonging to God alone did not prevent him from feeling the bitterness of separation and the immense emptiness which was hollowing out in his soul. In his letters he simply admits it to his parents, to his friends; but he always has a word that calms the pain, a balm for the still bleeding wound. This is how he wrote to his revered father, five months after the separation:

“I think of you! Every morning, at Holy Mass, your name comes first to my lips, because it is first in my heart. Ah! my very dear father, we are separated, and doubtless forever. This thought is very painful for me and makes my heart feel the deepest wound, but the hope that in heaven we will meet to love God and live happily together, that is what sustains me, what gives me strength and courage. to accomplish God’s purposes for me and respond to his call. I seem to see in heaven that good mother whom I knew too little, but loved so much. She watches over us, she prays for us. We are the object of her care as when she was on earth in our midst. I seem to hear her voice calling us and inviting us to share her happiness.”

As the hour of departure approaches, the future missionary redoubles his fervor and piety. He aspires more and more to this life of immolation of which his soul has tasted the first fruits.

The superiors have recognized his virtues and his zeal, despite the veil of humility which shelters them. On July 2, 1860, he wrote to his family: “God has just called me in a more special way to work for his glory and the salvation of souls. I learn my destination. I’m going to Korea, north of China. I will leave by the Red Sea, before the end of this month.” This is pretty much the content of this letter. One would say, reading it, that the one who writes it is unaware of the grandeur and the perils of this post.

Korea devours its apostles. Alone at the extremity of the East, it still remains separated from the rest of the world by an impassable barrier. Under penalty of death, no foreigner can set foot on its soil; none of its inhabitants, except in exceptional and determined cases, may cross its frontier. If the storm throws a Chinese junk on the Korean coast, the castaways themselves are watched so that they have no connection with the natives. To penetrate into this country so rigorously closed, has long been the object of a series of efforts which the missionaries alone have seen crowned with success. From the year 1788 to 1860, the history of the Church of Korea can be summed up in one word: bloody persecution. Almost all the missionaries died at the hands of the executioners, after the most horrible tortures. Such is the mission of Father Ridel; such is the post entrusted to his intrepid courage.

On July 26, he left for Marseilles, in the company of M. Calais, who was to endure the same fatigues, run the same dangers, and reap the same reward in the same field as the father of the family.

Chapter II

Marseilles. - France's Last Farewell. - From Marseilles to Alexandria. - Stay in Cairo. - The Cairo to Suez Railway. - On the Indian Sea. - Hong Kong. - News from Rome. - Long live France. - A decorated missionary without a government pension. - From Shanghai to Chefoo. - Boarding of a Chinese junk. - Beginning in the apostolic life.

Marseilles. - This city nonchalantly seated on the slope of a hill which extends to the sea, offers a spectacle of which no other city in France can give an idea. But this wharf crowded with sailors of all nations and a multitude of walkers and laborers, these wide streets lined with tall houses and sumptuous shops, these splendid promenades, this tumultuous port have only a mediocre attraction. for the passing missionary. The crowd he rubs elbows with has interests so different from his own that he finds himself alone in the midst of it.

M. Ridel's visits were to the old cathedral and to the venerated sanctuary of Notre-Dame de la Garde. There he poured out his heart at leisure into Mary's heart and gave vent to his tears. Who will tell of the pain and anguish of one who goes into exile, at this supreme hour, on the very threshold of the fatherland!

On the point of leaving the land of France, before this departure which he thought had no return, he wanted to say a final farewell to those he had left. Here is how he expresses his feelings where the love of family harmonizes so well with the love of God:

"It's eleven o'clock in the evening, tomorrow I'm leaving France. Once again I want to tell you how much I love you. You have understood, haven't you, the reason that takes me to other skies? God spoke to my heart, I obey him because I have the desire to be more useful to you and to contribute more to your happiness. I have always believed that as a missionary I would sanctify myself more quickly and that then my prayers would be more pleasing to God, my actions more likely to advance me on the road to heaven and to lead you there. I desire very ardently, very sincerely your happiness on earth. But when I think of your salvation, of your eternal happiness, I no longer have an expression to translate my thoughts. Once again, my beloved, once again, from France, I hold you close to my heart. Goodbye."

Already large clouds of smoke are swirling above the *Valetta*, a beautiful 800-ton ship. It is on board that the missionaries take passage. Thanks to M. Ridel's diary, we will easily follow him during this long crossing.

The shore recedes and gradually disappears. Soon it is nothing more than a white line between the blue of the sky and that of the sea. The rudder pointing to the east, the ship speeds towards "these shores where the waves are warm, the sky pure and the sea dazzling." The ship is moving at full steam, but one would believe it to be motionless, were it not for the ribbon of foam raised by the propeller and which disappears on the horizon.

"On deck reigns the sweetest gaiety. After having lunched with beefsteaks and roast beef, the passengers smoke the calumet on the forward deck. My companions start writing. For me, in the open air, my ideas go flying away and the wind takes my thoughts away. I don't want to hold them back, because the wind is blowing from the southeast. Everything is flying towards France, and I feel that each moment that takes me away from it increases my love for her, for the friends and relatives I leave there."

On July 31, Malta appears in the middle of the evening mists. A little later, in the moonlight, the passengers stroll along the port, curious to see the number of inhabitants lying in the streets and in the public squares.

The next morning, at two o'clock, a shrill whistle announces the departure.

The *Valetta* is sailing towards Alexandria. The monotony of this great crossing is interrupted only by the visit of a small bird. This visit is recorded in the journal of the young missionary and with what grace!

“I was alone on the deck of the ship when he came, the poor little thing, weak and helpless, lost in the middle of the seas, to rest trembling on the prow of our ship. I called it very naively, I already loved him, I would have liked to give him shelter, for I looked upon him as a happy messenger who brought me good news of those I left behind. What became of it?”

On August 3, at daybreak, the lookout signaled Alexandria, which seemed to rise from the bosom of the sea. Our travelers only passed through this crowd of Egyptians, yellow or black, shouting and grimacing. At 10 o'clock, the railway takes them to Cairo, where they will have to stay until the next day.

“If in these regions,” writes M. Ridel, “the curiosity of the traveler is satisfied, it is not without fatigue, for all the errands are done on the back of a donkey, the only kind of omnibus in this country.” When night falls, the mosquitoes, probably enticed by the smell of fresh meat, pounce on the unfortunate newcomer with an unimaginable relentlessness.

Are a few hours of insomnia for a missionary worth anything more than a happy memory? But how to reproduce his emotion and his joy, when at dawn, at the holy sacrifice of the Mass, he saw the Child-God in his hands? There too, eighteen centuries earlier, Mary and Joseph had carried him in their arms and held him close to their hearts! After having been loved and adored in these places, Jesus again became the fugitive and unknown God there.

From Cairo to Suez, there are only a few stations where a few employees responsible for maintaining the track live; every day they are brought the necessary water, for they do not have a spring or even a cistern. From time to time a caravan appears crossing the burning sands of the isthmus. On all sides the plain unfolds as far as the eye can see, silent, monotonous. Towards the middle of the day, the dunes appear as if surrounded by great lakes: as one approaches, the inundation recedes and disappears.

Suddenly the machine, with its long whistles, disturbs this immense solitude. And little by little the travelers realize that instead of continuing their journey they are retracing their steps. Has the wind piled sand on the track? have we raised any alarm signals? “Don't worry,” the train has stopped; the driver gets out, picks up a small black object from the sand, hits it two or three times on his knee and then puts it on his head. It is quite simply his cap, which travelers do him the courtesy of coming to pick up with him. This little line shows you enough how one travels in the desert.”

The *Malta*, a two-thousand-ton ship, was waiting for the missionaries at Suez to carry them to Hong Kong.

On board, there are only Englishmen and 200 crewmen, all black. English conversation, English diet, black faces; what more do you need to give the French spleen? If the days seem long, the nights are delicious. So, as the missionaries stroll the deck, a sweet joy floods their souls. The moon half illuminates the ship; the stars twinkle in the firmament; the fairly strong breeze makes harmonious sounds playing with the slightly agitated waves. Heaven and earth both seem to sing their evening hymn in honor of the Most High. It was after one of these walks that, on August 15, M. Ridel, retiring to his cabin, composed the following lines:

“Oh! the beautiful day! Our hearts had rejoiced the day before, and at dawn we thought of our good Heavenly Mother. But on board, how sad! This day is like any other, and the party is happening indoors. In the evening, at table, we are silent; our eyes and our hearts speak to each other. We think of the sweet country of France. Then, after having walked in the light of the stars, we retire. Soon our cabin lights up, and the image of Mary appears radiant in the middle of the lights. Alas! with our wishes, our prayers and our canticles, it was all our hearts could to tell the august Queen of Heaven and of France our ardent and filial love.

“For long hours, sleep cannot close our eyelids. With what emotion,” he wrote the next day, “I bring back before me the past! In 1856, I was in Vannes: it was for the last time that I celebrated this festival in Brittany; in 1857, I was at La Bruffière, all the faces of smiling friends appear to me like a sweet vision; in 1858, I tasted, on such a day, the joys of the holy ministry

at La Remaudière, in the midst of this population so devoted and so good; in 1859 I was in Paris, and in 1860 here I am on the Indian Sea, on my way to Korea. But here, no party, no solemnity, and above all no holy sacrifice! But it is for you, oh my God; this privation, I offer it to you, I want you in return to fill me with your graces and your favors.”

On August 30, the missionaries arrived in Hong Kong. Twenty years before, this island was only an arid rock; it is now a big city, half Chinese, half European. In this place, where poor fishermen had with difficulty amassed a few coins, since the Treaty of Nanjing one hears all day only the noise of piastres and dollars. When M. Ridel arrived, France and England still had their armies in China. Assuredly, nothing is more justified than the demands of jealous Albion, who wanted her flag to be respected by the subjects of the Son of Heaven themselves. Above all, nothing is more just than the claims of France; she called China to account for the French blood she had shed. The missionary's notes on this subject are full of interest:

“French and English troops are still in the north; they were to bomb Peking on October 4th. The Chinese are cunning, and they have deceived the ambassador in every way; they mostly deceived them by amusing them, by pretending to treat. But, basically, it was to wait for winter, which would force the allies to withdraw. There were several meetings. *The Europeans have always been victorious. They will be again, because they have the tactics and the courage on their side. But the Chinese are as cunning diplomats as they are, and they will always know how to get out of trouble. - The Chinese will always be Chinese, and they will deceive and steal as much as they can.*”

It was also during his stay in Hong Kong, a stay that lasted two months, that he learned of the defeat of the papal army at Castelfidardo, a glorious defeat equal to the most dazzling victory. At this news, the deepest pain invaded his soul and tears flowed from his eyes. “I cry like a child,” he said, “I cry with this good Father. With what happiness I would give my life to make a spark of joy shine in his soul! The fate of these brave children taken away from the affection of their families, from the hope of their country, seems to him very enviable. He already sees their names immortalized in the splendors of the Church, and he places palms and crowns in their hands and on their foreheads: How great they are! they're so cute! what glory for them, for their families, for our country! Our Brittany was well represented; may she be proud of her children! No, it has not degenerated; its former glory is still its present glory. It is still worthy of its old reputation and its old motto: *Potius mori quam foedari.*”

M. Ridel, a lively wit, a loving heart, a laughing soul, sows in his story a host of gracious anecdotes full of good humor, that truly French quality which he possessed to the highest degree. By omitting them, one would deprive this physiognomy of a saint of its usual expression, amiability.

During these two months, which seemed very long to him, he had made the acquaintance of a young Annamite who answered to the name of Pierre. One day, in one of his excursions, he took him as a traveling companion. For a long time they had been wandering along the shores of the sea, admiring the magnificent spectacle it presented to their gaze; its waves, all azure, sparkling with light, rose and fell in turn, and caused one to spurt out one upon the other like a dazzling silver lava. This breaking of the wave, which dies rolling on the beach, had an indefinable harmony for his ear. This spectacle, this music reminded him of his childhood games on the threshold of his father's house, on the banks of the Loire, and later, his boat trips on the Morbihan. Soon he noticed that he was at the foot of an almost sheer pile of rocks. Retracing his steps was not easy, for during his reverie the sea had risen. Suddenly, an idea sprang from Pierre's brain. He had been told about the Crimean campaign. “Father,” he cried, “the Malakoff, the Malakoff is ours!” And there he is, helping himself with his feet and his hands, and climbing these steep rocks. “Oh! what a terrible example! because,” adds M. Ridel, “immediately I answer Pierre: ‘Yes, my captain, yes, Pierre, to the attack!’ and soon I was ahead of him. During our perilous ascent, I had the curiosity to turn around, but I was frightened to

see myself suspended almost vertically above the waves. Arriving at the top, Pierre began to frolic and shout like a child: ‘Father, we have taken the Malakoff, the Malakoff is ours, long live France!’ One must be four thousand leagues from one’s homeland to know how much this cry of “Vive la France!” filled the soul of the missionary with joy and emotion.

“The day before our departure,” he wrote again to his brother, “M. Calais and I went, in the company of Bishop Pellerin (Apostolic Vicar of Northern Cochin China) to visit the *Japan*, a large transport ship. The commander, after showing us his ship, asked His Grace who were the two young priests accompanying him, and the bishop replied in his Breton accent: “They are two missionaries *de Corée*. “Yes, major,” replied one of us, with a familiarity that could be excused by the paternal kindness of Mgr. Pellerin, “yes, *decorated*, but without a government pension.”- The author of this joyous reflection has been recognized. He adds: “It was very true, since we wore our cross on our chest, waiting for it to please God to put it on our shoulders.”

The two missionaries from Korea only passed through Shanghai, where one of their colleagues, M. Joanno, joined them with a Korean pupil. Thanks to the last treaty of Peking, which grants Catholic priests free movement throughout the empire, they were able to embark on December 19 for Chefoo. It was aboard the *Echo*, a French ship, that they made the last stage of this long voyage. From Chefoo a Chinese junk was to transport them to the coast of Korea. There, a Korean boat sent by Bishop Berneux would meet them and introduce them to this dear mission, where their colleagues had been waiting for reinforcements for so long. The difficulty would be to meet this boat. There was indeed a place and a fixed time, but a Chinese sailor would no longer be Chinese if he became exact.

The vessel which was carrying, not the Church of Korea, but part of its fortune, had scarcely left Shanghai when a Chinese junk, pushed by the wind and the current, swung across its iron hull. The unfortunate junk, despite all possible diligence, could not avoid this collision. In the blink of an eye she was submerged and torn to pieces by the *Echo*’s propeller.

It was a horrible sight: the castaways buried in the deepest darkness, rolled by the raging waves, uttered cries of distress. The boats are immediately launched; but the sea is stormy and the waves are violently sweeping the deck. The thick darkness, the wounds of these unfortunates paralyze the efforts and the devotion of the crew; only six of them can be saved. The others remain engulfed in the waves. This misfortune casts consternation among sailors and passengers. Moreover, the continuously turbulent sea, the icy wind, the snow falling in large flakes add to this mourning their note full of sadness. After three days of such navigation the missionaries arrive at Chefoo¹.

On the shore, M. Landre extends his arms to them. For several months this apostle had also been waiting for God’s hour to enter Korea. So here we have the little auxiliary troop that divine Providence has sent to Bishop Berneux.

It is Christmas Eve, which the messengers of the Good News approach in these parts. There are three feet of snow on the plain, the surrounding mountains are all white, and the shores of the sea are covered with ice. Like Mary and Joseph, they have traveled and they arrive at the threshold of their mission, the day before the big day, just in time to offer the Child-God their homage and their adoration. The next day, Jesus, the redeemer of men, would leave heaven again for the stable in Bethlehem.

Already the Korean missionary can have the hard experience of the labors and privations of the apostolic life. His home consists of two buildings covered with thatch. These two buildings have only one floor, no other partitions than those he was obliged to make with straw and rushes. The first serves as a kitchen and a common room. What a pompous name for a small retreat where four seated people are cramped! In the second there are four small bedrooms, each

¹ The small town of Chefoo is situated on the seashore at 119° 4’ 45”meridian of Paris, and 37° 52’ northern latitude; which makes it 8 hours ahead of Brittany

of which is large enough to hold a trunk and the mat that serves as a bed -, the poor chapel and finally the refectory where there is often only a little spoiled biscuit for the meal.

This little house with its windows decorated with paper and its fragile partitions offers only a weak shelter against the wind which threatens to overthrow everything and the snow which sticks in icicles on the clothes; but it is the asylum of peace and gaiety. There, they study the Korean language as much as they can, and practice eating the Chinese way. It is M. Ridel who, with his joyous spirit, gives us the description of this charming interior. "Do you remember those sticks that you saw in Paris and which replace your prosaic fork in China? We are starting to use them. The art of eating with these little sticks is quite difficult. You have to learn like a little child. Well, the first time, I was very clever; I ate like a big child, like a real Chinese. It seems that my fingers are a bit from this country."

In the same letter he wrote again: "Last Sunday, the wind was blowing violently, and the snow was falling in large flakes. We were all gathered around the hearth, but the heat escaping from it was not enough to melt the snow that was pouring through the slits of the ill-fitting window. Suddenly, a gust more violent than the others knocked down our door at our feet and swept four windows outside. In an instant we are covered with small ice cubes which stick to our clothes. Impossible to be in a better situation to take the consequences. The adventure seemed pleasant to me and, to share my joy, I began to shout: Fire! And quickly to work, to put the door back on its hinges, to block the window with mats. This work finished, our cook tells us that it is impossible for him to prepare our supper in the hearth of his kitchen; the pot is under the snow. Also, there is no bread. Impossible to go three hundred paces. What to do? With many syllogisms and a little imagination, each of us tried to persuade the stomach of his neighbor that he was sated, and everyone was happy. The apostle adds with touching simplicity: "The same thing has happened to us several times."

Do you now want to know the secret of this gaiety? "Here I taste a joy, a peace, a happiness that I did not know in France. How good it is to belong to God, to belong to him entirely! How sweet is his service, how light is his yoke! I have left, it is true, all those I love, but Jesus, for whom I made this sacrifice, always remains with me. He is now a faithful friend to me, a beloved brother, a Father full of tenderness. Every morning, despite my indignity, he rests on my heart. When I have a heart-to-heart conversation with Jesus, I tell him of those who are there, on the other side of the world, of my beloved family, and of this other family of friends whose memory will follow me. everywhere. I then pray to Jesus to raise his hand and bless them. The great strength, the great consolation, the great joy of the missionary, there it is!"

Such M. Ridel appears to us here, such he will be until the end. His beautiful soul retains all its freshness and serenity in the midst of trials. Adversity, far from bringing it down, lifts it up and grows it. Oh! how noble, how great, the soul which strips itself of everything to take up the cross of Jesus Christ and walk in his footsteps! No, this soul is not a slave, it is a queen: "*Servire Deo, regnare est.*"

Chapter III

The King of Korea goes on the defensive. - M. Ridel leaves China. - The Chinese boat. - The Goddess Pusha. - Chinese crew. - The Korean boat. - Arrival in Korea. - Reception of Bishop Berneux. - His episcopal palace.

While the apostles of the good news were preparing to enter Korea, the first news of the European expedition to China was learned in this kingdom. The devils from the West, the Koreans said, came on many ships; they want, with thousands and thousands of soldiers, to invade the empire of the Son of Heaven. The court was in consternation. It wondered anxiously how it would resist the threatening scourge. One of the principal ministers presented in a memorandum to the king the means of averting it.

At first it was feared that the defeated Emperor of China might take refuge in Korea. To avert this danger, the minister advised that all the roads the Emperor might take should be fortified. These preparations for war would terrify the Son of Heaven and save the nation. The second danger, more real than the first, was the possible invasion of the bandits who inhabit the Nasan-guk, that is to say, the immense expanse of forests and wastelands which separates Korea from Manchuria. The remedy proposed for this evil resembled the first. It was necessary to establish fortresses and bar all the passages.

Finally, the supreme danger was the invasion of the devils from the West. For, according to the author of the memoir, the Europeans are the ruin of kingdoms, the destroyers of the most flourishing cities, the propagators of an abominable religion and the most perverse customs. "But," he adds, "Europeans are only formidable at sea. Their guns are bigger than ours, it's true; but they do not even have a bow in all their armies. How will they hold up against our archers? They have sometimes been victorious in plains, where nothing opposed their progress; but in our mountainous country, if we take care to organize soldiers and build some forts on the roads which lead to the capital, we will easily repulse them. Formerly, they had only two or three ships; it now appears that they have at least ten; but what can a few thousand men do against a nation like ours?"

"The depth of the purposes of God! If, at that moment, a simple French boat had presented itself, demanding for religion the same freedom which had just been stipulated in China, they would have hastened to grant everything, still happy to be free at this price. God did not want it. (Charles Dallet, *History of the Church of Korea*; volume II, page 469.)"

While the King of Korea was putting himself on the defensive and renewing the edicts of persecution which had already been so disastrous to Christianity, the little boat of the missionaries, under the protection of Saint Joseph, was sailing towards the shores of this inhospitable country.

On March 11, she sailed away from Chefoo, and the next day, after a navigation thwarted by the winds and the sandbanks, she arrived at Weihai, the last Chinese station. There, contrary winds, but much more still the bad will of the shipowner, kept her for eight days.

M. Ridel takes advantage of his free time to give us a description of the basket that will carry him from China to Korea: "It is 8 meters long and 2 meters wide. The top is flat and the deck rimless; the slightest wave can penetrate it. This voyage would not be without danger if Saint Joseph were not at our helm. Our cabins are aft; you go down there through an opening which looks very much like a chimney; it's a gymnastic exercise that you do quite well with a little practice. To communicate with each other we crawl, because it is impossible to stand on our knees. It is lying on our beds that we accomplish our duties of piety and that we take our meals."

There is a small bedroom on the bridge, but it is even narrower; moreover, it is the temple of Poussa (Mazu?) to which the sailors take care to offer twice a day three sticks which

they call fragrant. Indeed, they spread in consuming a foul odor. Poussa is a small, three-inch-tall wooden maid; it is she who swells the sails of the boat, disperses the threatening clouds, it is she who will lead the frail skiff without accident to the port of Merin-to. . .

The legend of Poussa is curious. One day, say the poor Chinese, the father and brother of this goddess, after building a boat, set out to sail the ocean. Suddenly, a violent storm arose and the ship sank. To operate the rescue of her shipwrecked parents, the little old woman began to drink water from the sea in despair. She drank so much and so much that her father and her brother came on dry feet from the bottom of the sea to kiss their liberator.

It would be difficult to get an idea of the sailors who drive the missionaries' boat. They are there, smoking their opium, stretched out on their beds, their gaze half extinguished. They spend their days in mind-numbing drowsiness and torpor. With them, of the man there remains only the beast. The captain and owner are barely 28 years old; and yet they are already yellow old men, with foreheads covered with wrinkles, with faded and emaciated features, whose bodies, trembling and without strength, bend towards the grave.² What a dreadful crime of which England is daily guilty! Thanks to its infamous traffic, it can embellish its capital, pay its mercenaries and cover the immensity of the seas with its ships. But can the civilized world ignore that England murders as many men as it piles gold coins in its coffers?

Let us again leave it to our missionary to tell us the end of this perilous expedition:

“During the crossing, one of our sailors stubbornly wanted to speak French. We first teach him to count to ten, and as he repeats everything we say to him, we add the invocation: “*O Marie conçue sans péché (O Marie conçue sans péché, priez pour nous qui avons recours à vous: O Mary conceived without sin)*. Very joyful, he goes off to repeat it to his friends, and when he is at the helm, he repeats: “*O Malie conçue sans pessé, pliez poul nous ti ahons recouls à vous.*”

“All are very curious; at our mealtimes they come running like children. To one we offer a potato, to the other a piece of meat, and they leave satisfied. But here is our owner who arrives with all Chinese dignity. What will we give him? One of us removes from a jar, with equal gravity, an enormous pickle which he presents to the owner of the ship. The latter, very proud of this distinction, retires very happy, and he considers the gherkins delicious. When we read our breviary or recite our rosary, they still come close to us and move their lips to imitate the sound of our voice. Finally, on March 19 we set sail for Korea; two days later, we arrive fortunately at the island of Merin-to (an unidentified island, also names in Dallet), the meeting place. After four days of waiting, the Korean who was on guard on deck suddenly exclaimed: “Fathers, here is our boat.” He had, in fact, just seen a Korean boat which had rapidly passed in front of ours; but its crew had begun to make great signs of the cross when they saw at our mast a blue flag on which stood out a white cross.

“When this news reached us at the bottom of the hold where we were huddled, we made our preparations while waiting for the night to come and envelop us in its shadow and allow us to pass from the Chinese junk to the Korean boat.

“Towards evening, the sky was covered with heavy clouds, and the sea became threatening. Soon a storm raged. It is therefore as castaways that we are going to approach Korea. The sounding gave only a few fathoms, and the junk was still dragging its anchors. God was watching over us.

“The waves, despite their fury, could not engulf this fragile skiff that we had called “Providence”. Indeed, little by little, the winds died down and we were able to regain the open sea. But our provisions were exhausted, and for more than three days, we had for food only a little seaweed and biscuit attacked by worms, of the kind that, ten months before, the general-

² We should not generalize too much about those who steered the missionaries' boat. Not all of them smoke opium, and many, without being brave, are nevertheless good sailors).

in-chief had forbidden to give to the French soldiers.

“We were already in despair when, on Holy Thursday, towards evening, a Korean boat appeared on the horizon; she was heading towards us. Our captain, brave like all the Chinese, began to tremble; he ordered the sailors to prepare the guns. We were going to have a naval combat; the difficult thing was not to laugh at the seriousness with which our people tried to mount their guns on a kind of picket that served as a lookout. Fearing that the noise of the gunpowder would waken the boat that was coming towards us and put it to flight, we had to persuade our captain not to use his gear, first because he would badly, and then because a boarding battle seemed preferable to us.

“But soon the little boat, after having circled twice around us (it was the agreed signal) led our junk behind the rocks of Merin-do. Bishop Berneux’s envoys boarded us and presented us with a letter from His Lordship, a sign by which we were to recognize our true guides. The moon was rising at this moment, and the brave Koreans, dressed in their long white robes, looked like ghosts illuminated by the rays of the moon filtered through the clouds.

As soon as they embarked, the four missionaries descended into a small cabin barely two feet high by five or six long and as wide. They then proceeded to their toilet: from head to toe it was a complete metamorphosis.

The crossing from Merin-do to the shore of Korea was a torture for them which lasted ten whole days. Lying on a bit of straw they are forced to live in this cage, piled on top of each other. Without this precaution, in the midst of the comings and goings of the Korean boats which skimmed past their boat, they would infallibly be recognized.

From time to time, the chorus of a Korean song reaches their ears. The sailors repeat it, accompanied by their only musical instrument. What music! A half of coconut placed in a bucket of water, and on which they strike with redoubled blows. The song is worth the music. They also hear the prayers that the whole crew addresses to the God of the Christians and to the Immaculate Virgin. Then they no longer think of their sufferings, but tears of joy flow from their eyes. The captain has gathered around him all his men, and is reciting the rosary with the most touching confidence. Because for him, as for the missionaries, it is simply a question of his head.

As they approach the shore, the torture of the missionaries becomes more and more intolerable. The mats have been piled up over the hole which serves as their refuge and they are barely breathing. The captain recites another ten rosaries, and trusting in the divine protection of Mary, he advances courageously towards the customs boat. What Mary keeps is well kept. He first addresses the customs officers and shows them the certificate that he paid the tax. They without mistrust exchange a few words and return to their posts.

The small boat with its precious load then enters the river which leads to the capital. At nightfall, the sky is veiled, and the deep darkness favors this holy expedition. For five hours there was a continual struggle against the current, a struggle which ended with the taking possession of the Kingdom of Korea in the name of the Holy Church, on Easter Saturday at midnight.

“Shod in straw shoes, and our heads covered with a huge-rimmed hat, a lantern in our hands, we followed our couriers.

“Suddenly an almost sheer mountain rises in front of us. Our people lead by example. Feet, knees, hands, elbows, everything helps us in this ascent. We are regaining our strength, and our hearts are leaping with joy, because this land that we almost embrace is the land of Korea! We soon come to a narrow and steep path that leads to the capital. We had already been walking one after the other for some time, sometimes measuring the full length of our bodies against the ground of our new country.

“We were exhausted, because for a month, ever huddled in the bottom of the junks, we hadn’t walked. But the joy of throwing ourselves soon into the arms of our Father gave us

courage and strength. Finally around three o'clock we enter the home of one of our guides where a Korean soup and a glass of rice wine were waiting for us. After having smoked the pipe of hospitality, we resumed our journey through the suburbs of the capital, when, at the bend in a narrow street, we met an individual whose appearance and countenance did not tell us anything good. Our first guide immediately began to swear at his compatriot, and the latter, in response, sang a bacchanalian song. As for us, we dared neither cough nor look up. Soon this man took a deserted street and let us continue our way: it was a satellite making its rounds.

"Finally we pass through the great Western Gate and after having crossed some dirty and tortuous streets, we find ourselves in front of a gate which opens in front of us to let us pass and closes immediately behind us. How to say our joy! we were at the feet of Bishop Berneux and Bishop Daveluy. No, no, were we to live a hundred years, we could never forget this welcome with its most paternal tenderness. At this moment gratitude and happiness made our lips helpless, tears of joy flowed from our eyes and our hearts were filled with the most delicious intoxication. How beautiful they seemed to us in this humble retreat, the two representatives of the Vicar of Jesus Christ, with their shoulders already bent under the weight of labor and their hair whitened long before their time!"

"It was solemn," writes Mgr Daveluy, "It was joyful, this beautiful day! After walking almost all night, four new confreres arrived before dawn at the residence of Bishop Berneux. I had the good fortune to be there, and no words could tell you the impressions one feels in such circumstances: they are compatriots, friends, aides, brothers, among others M. Ridel, who at his departure had seen my youngest brother. Te Deum... Magnificat..." For a few moments, the first outpourings were given free rein, but in low voices, the doors and windows hermetically closed. Bishop Daveluy then celebrated Holy Mass, to thank God for the success of the expedition and to ask that the four newcomers would soon be true apostles.

A room fifteen feet long by eight wide and seven high, a room which becomes, according to necessity, a chapel, a study and recreation room, a dormitory and a refectory: this is the whole episcopal palace of the Bishop of Capsus.

It is easy to get an idea of the furnishing of this dwelling. No chairs or armchairs. We sit on the floor, legs crossed like tailors in Brittany. This position is very painful at first, and we can't wait to see the meal finished.

To turn the refectory into a dormitory, nothing could be simpler. Each of the missionaries wraps himself in a blanket, puts a small piece of wood under his head as a pillow, and falls asleep like a blessed soul who the next day wakes up in the house of God.

What a touching spectacle is that of the Korean missionaries gathered in this palace! around their bishop! Like the Apostles in the Cenacle, they prepare themselves through meditation and prayer for the great battles they are about to wage. Not that they doubt success, but they need strength and courage, because they know that in the struggles of Christianity it is not the loser but the winner who must die. They know that whoever wants to plant a cross on an unfaithful land and make it flourish, must water it with his sweat and his blood. Blood is the fertilizer this earth needs to produce immaculate lilies and the palms of martyrs. They know that to transform these enslaved peoples, lying in the mire, who only know the ax of the executioner and the ignoble staff of the satellite, into free men who will bear inscribed in their hearts and on their foreheads the character of children of God, they know that one must suffer and die. This is why missionaries pray, why they meditate before parting.

This life of the missionary in Seoul is the life of the best days, the life of the days of rest, of vacation. Soon, during his apostolic wanderings, he will flee the light and the society of men. He will be tracked by them like a beast through the mountains and forests. He will suffer from heat, from cold, from hunger, from thirst. And when he will have, at the cost of a thousand fatigues and a thousand dangers, visited his Christians scattered over a route of 400 leagues, he will be happy not to have died of fatigue, not to have been torn by the teeth of the tigers, and to

enjoy a few moments of rest on the bare earth in a miserable hut.

Chapter IV

The people of Korea. - Appearance of the country. - Climate. - Productions. - Scholars. - Vasselage of Korea vis-à-vis China. - Relations with Japan. - Relations with the European Powers. - Introduction of Christianity in Korea. - M. Ridel's district. - Letter from the Missionaries to the Sovereign Pontiff.

Before following M. Ridel in his apostolic journeys, it seems useful to say at least a few words about this country which is still so little known. Korea is a large peninsula located northeast of China. It borders with the provinces of Liaodong and Manchuria, and extends on the side of Japan, from which it is separated by a sea strewn with islands. The number of its inhabitants is estimated at twelve million, and its area half that of France. The country is covered with mountains. "Wherever you set foot," writes a missionary, "you only see mountains. Almost everywhere you seem to be imprisoned between the rocks, squeezed between the sides of hills, sometimes bare, sometimes covered with wild pines, sometimes thick with brush or crowned with forests. First of all you see no way out; but look carefully, and you will end up discovering the traces of some narrow path which, after a more or less long and always painful walk, leads you to a summit from which you will discover the most uneven horizon. You have sometimes, from the top of a ship, contemplated the sea, while a strong breeze raises the waves in an infinity of small mounds of various shapes. It's a bit like the spectacle before your eyes. You see in all directions thousands of sharp-pointed peaks, enormous rounded cones, inaccessible rocks, and farther away, at the limits of the horizon, other still higher mountains, and so it is in almost all the country. The only exception is a district which projects into the Western Sea, and is called the plain of Naepo. But by this word plain, do not mean a plain and developed surface like our beautiful plains of France, it is simply a place where the mountains are much lower and much more spaced out. The soil, which is otherwise fertile, is intersected there by a large number of canals, and its products are so abundant that the Naepo is called the granary of the capital (Dallet, Introduction to the *History of the Church of Korea*; vol. I, page 3)."

These mountains, especially those to the south, contain abundant mines of gold, silver and copper. But the Korean government, no doubt fearing to arouse the greed of its powerful neighbors, prohibits any exploitation under the most severe penalties.

Although Korea is at the same latitude as Malta and Sicily, in winter the thermometer often descends, in the north, below -25° centigrade.

In the valleys, we harvest rice, wheat, rye, millet, tobacco and vegetables of all kinds, but very insipid; we still find there almost all the fruits of France; the flora is also very varied. In spring, the hillsides and fields are dotted with primroses, lilies, peonies, lilies of the valley, wild roses, azaleas, etc. But almost all the flowers lack fragrance, as the fruits lack flavor.

Game abounds in Korea; in return, bears, wild boars, and especially tigers claim many victims every year. However, the missionaries fear them even less than the insects and vermin which are, in this country, a veritable plague of Egypt. "In some localities, it is physically impossible to sleep inside houses during the heat, because of the cockroaches; the inhabitants prefer to sleep in the open air, despite the proximity of the tigers. The cockroach gnaws at the surface of the skin, and makes a painful sore that takes time to heal. These animals multiply with prodigious rapidity, and the Korean proverb says: "When a female cockroach lays only ninety-nine eggs in one night, she has wasted her time" (Dallet, Introduction to the *History of the Church of Korea*; volume I, page 8.)

Like the Chinese, like the Japanese, the Koreans are in possession of a certain literary culture. We find in them the same respect for science, the same enthusiastic reverence for renowned philosophers. The scholars are considered as the people's tutors, and consulted on all difficult matters. The highest dignities are accessible to them; if they renounce them, their credit

is all the greater with the king and the ministers.

M. Ridel will later give us the opportunity to talk about the Korean language. It would be difficult to say what the literature of this people is, because the old books have fallen into complete oblivion, and almost all of them have disappeared. Today no more new books are written. A few novels, a few collections of poetry, stories for children and women; that is just about everything.

The Koreans, placed between China and Japan, fought for a long time for their independence. Unfortunately, towards the end of the eleventh century, internal wars favored their powerful neighbors. Since that time Korea has been a vassal of China, it pays tribute to the Celestial Empire and its kings receive the investiture of the emperor.

In 1636, two parties were vying for power in Peking: the Ming and the Manchus. The king of Korea sided with the Ming, who were defeated. The Manchurians invaded Korea and came to Seoul to dictate their laws. They made the tribute more onerous and forced the king to recognize himself no longer the vassal, but the subject of the emperor.

Since 1636 the Korean people have had the good sense not to renew too unequal struggles, they have even always affected to make themselves as small as possible and to put forward their weakness and the poverty of the kingdom. By this means, peace has been preserved, and the history of the last centuries is confined to palace intrigues.

A few years before the Chinese invasion, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Koreans had seen their country sacked by the armies of Taiko-Sama, Emperor of Japan³. Following this expedition, they recognized themselves as tributaries of the Empire of the Rising Sun. The tribute was paid until 1868. At that time, Korea took advantage of a revolution which broke out in Japan to shake off the yoke. She refused to recognize the Mikado and to pay the tribute. Engrossed in the civil war and the great reforms it was carrying out in its administration, the Japanese government put off until better days the care of its revenge.

In 1875, M. Hanabousa, ambassador of the Mikado, concluded a treaty with the Korean government which suppressed the tribute, but opened two ports to Japanese trade.

The first official relations of Korea with a European power date from the year 1846. Previously, Lapérouse in 1787, the English Broughton and Maxwell in 1797 and 1816, had explored the coasts of this country; but their attempts at negotiations were useless. On the death of Bishop Imbert, in 1846, Admiral Cécile proposed in the name of France to conclude a treaty with the Korean government, he sent his proposals to the king; they remained unanswered.

Commander Lapierre came the following year, commanding the frigate *La Gloire* and the corvette *Victorieuse*. But a storm threw his two ships ashore, and the crews landed, shipwrecked, on a small Korean island.

In 1866, a French squadron arrived in Korea to avenge the massacre of two bishops and seven French missionaries. We shall see what the bulletins of Admiral Roze, commander of this expedition in which M. Ridel took a very active part, are worth.

As we have already said, the Korean government wants to preserve the independence of the country at all costs and does not authorize the stay of any foreigner; it is a social dogma. Only Catholic priests have defied this. At the end of the sixteenth century and at the beginning of the eighteenth, isolated attempts took place without much result. Later, from 1794 to 1801, Father James Zhou, the first priest of the episcopal seminary of Peking, exercised the holy ministry in this inhospitable country and crowned by martyrdom a life full of works and merits.

In 1812, the Korean neophytes begged the Sovereign Pontiff to sympathize with their abandonment and to send them pastors. This letter was delivered to the Vicar of Jesus Christ in his prison at Fontainebleau. He could only pray and expect more favorable circumstances from God's mercy.

³ Not the "Emperor" but Toyotomi Hideyoshi (豊臣 秀吉, 1537–1598)

It was only in 1837 that the first European priests entered Korea. Mgr Imbert, with two missionaries as companions, then reached the center of the country. He first triumphed over prejudice, disarmed hatred and began to reap the first fruits of his apostolate. Suddenly the government is frightened and decides to crack down. The missionaries are hunted; their heads are put at price. All who shelter them risk perishing like them. Mgr Imbert and his two priests, MM. Maubant and Chastan, surrender to satellites; they are put to death on September 21, 1839.

Six years later, in a new attempt. Mgr Ferréol and M. Daveluy resume the task of the martyrs.

In 1857, Mgr Berneux, successor of Mgr Ferréol, MM. Pourthié, Petitnicolas and Féron arrive in turn. Finally, we have just seen at the price of what dangers and what fatigues the newcomers bring to their brothers the help of their intelligence and their devotion.

We left them in the residence of Bishop Berneux. Fifteen days had already passed in prayer and recollection; they had to think about leaving.

The day before the separation, before sharing the kingdom, they proclaim Mary Queen and Guardian of Korea. From that moment, the city of Seoul, where the vicar apostolic lived, became the district of the Immaculate Conception. The district of the venerable coadjutor Bishop Daveluy bears the name of the Nativity. To M. Féron falls the district of the Assumption; to M. Joanno, that of the Annunciation; to M. Landre, that of the Visitation; to M. Calais, that of the Purification. MM. Pourthié and Petitnicolas are in charge of the Saint-Joseph college; M. Ridel obtains as a share the province of Chungcheong-do, called the district of the Presentation. But soon illness having tried the missionaries and death reduced their number, Mgr Daveluy and M. Ridel were obliged to share all of southern Korea. And it was especially in the Gyeongsang-do that our apostle had to display all his zeal. This district is by far the most populous and the most rugged. Here is how Bishop Daveluy describes it:

“The Gyeongsang is to the southeast. If I did not fear a false judgment, I would call this province the Auvergne of Korea. There is in many of its inhabitants a character of charming simplicity. But there again, mountains, rocks, snow, nothing is missing. Imagine a road between two mountain ranges; everything is steep, the snow covers a few bushes sown here and there. A severe rock forms the background of the painting. The road is only a series of rocks and stones that one traverses with great difficulty and not without having a heavy heart. Everything is ice and fills you with dread. But, on the other hand, the sight is gladdened by a thousand pictures of a charming asperity. Here, it’s a stream that rolls lightly under the ice its little trickle of water; further on, it has swelled and forms into a torrent whose bubbling waters make the echoes of the rocks resound. In the middle of these waters are rocks of all sizes which form so many islands, astonish the traveler and multiply the cascades to infinity. All this takes place in the midst of the most complete silence. One hears only a few cries of admiration, or else the redoubled cries of the servants carrying or raising a poor animal who can’t stand any longer. Yes, it is a beautiful horror, a savage beauty, and there, in the midst of the mountains, the rocks, the waterfalls and the ice, is all that nature, on the day of her most horrible fertility, could sow on the ground.”

This province also has a character apart. Habits there are much simpler, mores less corrupt, and old usages more faithfully preserved. In return, it is in this region that Buddhism has the most followers. They are very attached to their superstitions and difficult to convert; but when grace has touched them, they are steadfast in their faith.

Before the little Church of Korea dispersed throughout the kingdom entrusted to his care by the Vicar of Jesus Christ, Mgr. Berneux wanted to protest his love and unshakeable attachment to the chair of Saint Peter. He therefore wrote in his own name and in the name of all his missionaries, these touching lines:

“Most Holy Father,

“We were overwhelmed with unspeakable grief, when, by the letters recently brought from France, my confreres and I learned what blind men, impelled by an impious rage, have dared against Your Holiness and against the Apostolic Chair.

“Forgive us for the liberty we take to write to Your Holiness at a time when you are agitated by terrible anguish and filled with so much bitterness. Filial love compels us to lay at your feet the expression of sadness that fills our hearts, and the assurance of the prayers that we constantly offer to God, to the Immaculate Virgin Mary. From the depths of these distant regions, we cannot, as they say unanimously, all the bishops of France have done, raise our voices to defend the rights of the Holy See; but we keep lifting up our hands and our hearts to heaven, praying that the Lord will arise, that he will dissipate your enemies, and that in his mercy he will become your shield and your defender.

“In the midst of all your sorrows, Your Holiness will certainly have experienced some consolation in learning that absolute freedom, not only to embrace, but even to preach the faith, has been assured in the Chinese Empire by the triumph of the French and English armies, so that in the future there is no longer any fear of persecution.

“As for the mission in Korea, no one seems to be concerned with it; but the government of this country knows perfectly well what has happened in China, and as it trembles to see the Europeans declare war on them, we have for the future a serious hope of peace and tranquility, and consequently, abundant successes. The persecution that had erupted over the past year has completely ceased. The field we have to cultivate is blooming again, and this year we have baptized nearly 800 adults.

“Prostrate at the feet of Your Holiness, kissing them with filial love, the Apostolic Vicar and the missionaries of Korea humbly ask for the Apostolic blessing.

Chapter V

The mourning costume. - M. Ridel goes to his district. - St. Joseph's College. - A Korean interior. - Isolation of the missionary. - The master of languages. - Korean graduates.

This duty accomplished, the missionaries put on their mourning clothes. For the Korean, the grieving man is a dead man. He has no right to see anything, to hear anything that can distract him from his pain. When traveling, instead of the ordinary headdress, he wears a huge straw hat, the brim of which comes down to shoulder height. He holds in his hand a sort of gray canvas fan fixed on two sticks, in order to cover his face when he meets someone. The mourning garment is of coarse yellow cloth, and loose enough to be put on over the ordinary habit; it allows only the feet of the wearer to be seen. This costume presents missionaries with an easy, complete disguise, without which it would be impossible for them to stay in Korea.

Dressed in this way, the missionary must flee all society; he can hardly raise his eyes to the sky, and if he is questioned, it is best not to answer. On the way, in the inns, he retires alone to a room or isolates himself in a corner, and communicates with no one. Another valuable advantage in a country where the inventor of the brush is still waiting for his patent: with this suit, you are not afraid of mud, because both are the same color. We don't fear the rain either, since the hat on our head is a real roof. Finally, adds M. Ridel pleasantly, when duty calls from one end of the district to the other, one can cross the highest mountains buried under snow, pass through the loneliness of the forests, without fear of the tooth of the hungry tigers; for, swaddled in this coat, one no longer has the appearance of a man, but of an itinerant house.

These preparations completed, Bishop Berneux once again clasps his dear missionaries to his heart and blesses them. Alas! this paternal embrace and this blessing were to be the last for many.

M. Ridel took the road to Pan-ja-ri (?), a small Christian village situated forty leagues away. For five months, he will study the language and customs of his new homeland.

Hardly on the way, he realizes that his prolonged stay at the bottom of the boats, that the fatigues of the retreat and the lack of air have taken away all his strength. He therefore resigns himself to using a sedan chair to get to his post.

In Korea, a sedan chair is a kind of stretcher on which the traveler places himself by crossing his legs. This vehicle is at first only inconvenient, but soon it becomes unbearable; in return, we always have it at our disposal.

Since his departure from Shanghai, the missionary had seen neither a flower nor a blade of grass. So it was with a kind of intoxication that he saw the sun rise beyond the mountains. He never tired of admiring the dark, motionless forests in the distance, and, very close to him, those droplets of dew sparkling like diamonds, which hung from each leaf, from each stem of greenery. Soon fatigue and pain made him see only narrow paths embarrassed with brushwood. After four days of walking, which were more like four days of torture, they stopped at Saint Joseph College.

Let the name 'college' not mislead the reader. A college in France nowadays is a spacious house, full of sun in winter, shade in summer, surrounded by a vast enclosure. It is movement and life; life in full bloom. In Korea, it is a miserable mud hut, covered with straw, hot in summer, cold in winter, open to the winds and the rain. Garden, furniture, library are unknown things here. Even life is suffocated, because the slightest movement could become suspicious. This is how the students of Saint-Joseph, the hope of the mission, by devoting themselves to study, make the harsh apprenticeship of the apostolic life.

To go from the college to the Pan-ja-ri village, M. Ridel makes use of a new kind of mount, ridiculous in France, royal in Korea: "We erected, he says, a seat on the back of a cow. This animal served me as a vehicle through the hills and valleys, as a boat to cross the torrents,

usually shallow, but very wide. On the sixth day I reached the end of my journey.”

You have no doubt seen, scattered here and there on the moors of Brittany, wretched huts covered with thatch, with lame doors, badly joined skylights, the interior of which is smoky and muddy. Well, reduce the beauty and solidity of these hovels still further, and you will form a fairly accurate idea of the village dwellings of Korea. Small openings, closed by latticework paneling and covered, for lack of glass, with a sheet of paper, serve both as doors and windows. Thanks to the skill of the Korean carpenter, the inhabitants, although crammed into their narrow rooms, run no danger of asphyxiation: the wind has its free entry.

Let’s enter the home of our missionary for a minute. We will not admire the details of his palace without interest. Don’t laugh, because he lives with a rich man whose house is well worth thirty francs. You can have a house for four francs. With three thousand francs, one is very rich. So leave your sandals at the door, otherwise your ignorance of customs would astonish everyone. Take care not to knock your feet against the roughness of the ground and to break your skull against the framework, because the slabs, the floors, the ceilings are unknown to Korean architects.

Now squat down with your legs crossed; here is a mat which will serve you as a seat and, when night comes, as a bed. Mealtime strikes, don’t disturb yourself, you already have your chair, and now a small round table, a foot high, is placed in front of each of you. Here, everyone has their own. Two bowls are placed there: one filled with rice is the bread of the country; the other full of broth, for in your honor there is a party at home. Then, on five or six small trays, real baby toys, smoked marshmallow leaves, squash, roots unknown in Europe. That’s not all, there is plenty today. Koreans make great use of salted meats. We are therefore served dry fish, slightly spoiled, with all sorts of herbs preserved in brine, which for the palate of a European have only pungency and bitterness.

Perhaps you are also wondering how such a badly closed apartment retains such gentle warmth, despite the wind blowing through the cracks in the doors and windows? There is even in the whole upper part of the room like a bluish vapor, of which the nose and the eyes are also affected. Could we in these mountains have found a way to make smoke without fire, for there is no appearance of a fireplace? If you weren’t so inclined to make Europe the cradle of all inventions, you would have already guessed that our apartment is heated by a radiator. It is true that smoke sometimes comes out in copious puffs through the cracks in the floor, but what is the thing in the world that does not have its drawbacks?

In this life of destitution, of work, of privations of all kinds, the most painful sacrifice for M. Ridel is the continual confinement to which he is condemned. For six months, he is locked in a hiding place without ever breathing the fresh air. However, if, by chance, the pagans are far from the village, and if there is no danger for the Christians who have welcomed him, he can, from the bottom of a ravine, cast his eyes on the azure of the firmament, and breathe for a few minutes a fresh and pure air.

To break the monotony of such an existence, he has only prayer and study. “Studying,” he wrote to one of his friends with that gaiety that never left him, “studying is very simple: we listen, we hear, we understand and we speak.” The most difficult thing is to make one’s tongue and throat more flexible, to arrive at this harsh, jerky, always aspirated pronunciation.

“Oh! what good masters are the zeal of souls and the love of God! Under their direction, there is no need for grammar or dictionary. We overcome everything. Besides, in spite of all these miseries which often are real sorrows, it is impossible for a man who carries so high the feeling of his sublime mission to be discouraged, especially when he sees himself face to face with devotion and heroism of these brave Christians. Many of them have known greatness, but they have trampled it underfoot, because they presented too many obstacles to their salvation. Despite the prestige and rank they had at court, they came to these mountains to live miserably on the fruit of their labor. To reach heaven, fatigue, deprivation, suffering, destitution and even

death seem to them easy to endure.”

M. Ridel’s modesty prevented him from noticing that in portraying these heroic Christians, he faithfully reproduced the physiognomy of the man who ended his letter thus:

“Deep in my heart, I still feel the same love for those I have left behind, but not abandoned. In heaven, in heaven we will meet; let nothing stop us. Why don’t all men make every effort to serve God, to win Heaven?! . . . For us, dear friend, O thousand times dear friend, to serve God, to go to Him, to lead all souls, let this be the motive of all our actions, of all our thoughts, of all our sighs. God! Heaven! that is all. The rest is mud, smoke, nothingness.”

An apostle so hungry for the love of God and the salvation of souls did not experience insurmountable difficulties or obstacles. We will undoubtedly see with pleasure how he was initiated into the secrets of this language which he will soon speak as the language of his native country, and of which he will set out the principles with a precision and clarity which will cause the admiration of the scholars of Europe.

“When I arrived at Pan-ja-ri, the Christians came successively to consider me, and returned mute as they had come. I could have compared myself to the lion in the Jardin des Plantes. A few days passed in this way, when, one morning, I saw a very well-dressed old man enter my room; he greeted me and looked at me attentively. Then, putting his hand to his nose, he said to me: Hko. I guessed right away that he wanted to teach me a word; I repeated Hko; I seem to have mispronounced it, for he immediately resumed: Hko with a strong aspiration. I tried to imitate him by stretching out my neck and grimacing; I doubtless failed again, for he repeated the unfortunate syllable several times. Finally, with an air of discouragement, he put his finger on the eye and said to me: Noun; I repeated Noun, and the triumphant old man pronounced that other syllable which is understood in all countries: Ah! Then he said to me: Ip, showing me his mouth; I repeated Ip. Putting his hand on his ear, he said to me: Kouï; I repeated Kouï. The old man was satisfied; he called the master of the house, and spoke to him aloud for a few moments. In the conversation, I understood the words: Hko, Ip, Kouï. He explained to him how to teach me. Then he continued his lesson by giving me the words of everything that could be seen and touched; I pronounced them and, so as not to forget them, I wrote them down in a notebook with the translation.

“Soon everyone knew the method, and everyone came to tell me new words; I could not inscribe them them all, even less learn them. The very small children themselves had taken up this habit, and I saw a little girl of two years old who passed in front of my door, holding a leaf of grass in her hand. She stopped in front of me and said: Namoul. I heard very well, and I put the word Namoul in my notebook, and next to it the translation: grass. This resulted in a small error, as with many other words; later I was very surprised when I was served a dish of namoul, that is to say, according to my translation, a dish of grass. I made the remark, and after many explanations, I learned that namoul did not mean grass, but vegetables.

(The same adventure happened at the same time to one of M. Ridel’s colleagues. While taking his lesson, he was quite surprised to see that all the objects of European origin translated into a single word. He showed his knife, and the master said to him: Mollao; his watch, Mollao; a stoup, always Mollao, and the good astonished missionary wrote this word which means: “I don’t know.”)

“The old tutor often came back to give me lessons; he was a mandarin who had been ambassador to China. To live as a Christian, he had left the court and taken refuge in these mountains.”

So much zeal, so much ardor at work was not sterile. Seven months after his arrival in Korea, M. Ridel began the administration of his district. Already he could hear a few confessions.

Before leaving the Christians who had received him with such touching cordiality, the missionary wanted to go to the neighboring village to thank the old man who had devoted

himself to instructing him. It was there that he witnessed a scene that will not lack interest for our schoolchildren in France.

“I had just arrived at the Nams’ home when I heard from the side of the road the sound of two flutes. The children came out very happy. It was a young man who had just passed his baccalaureate exams. He walked following the custom, preceded by two musicians, who played in his honor, and thus made known his success. “Go get him,” the son of the old Mandarin said to a slave, “we are going to amuse Father.” I was then taken to an apartment where I could see everything without being seen.

“In Korea, the new bachelor, until his return home, is at the disposal of all the former bachelors he meets on his way; he must submit to their whims without showing the slightest displeasure. When he has undergone these ordeals, he is invited to dinner, and he can then continue on his way.

“The one I saw had to answer a host of questions, it was a real test. The examination finished, he was ordered to dance, to pirouette to the sound of the flutes, to shoot from the bow to the right, to the left. After this exercise, they made him a mustache on the left with India ink. All this to the great outbursts of the audience, especially the children, who had flocked to this spectacle from afar. Finally, they blindfolded him and ordered him to wash, but the water he was served was still India ink. The spectators could not contain themselves, but the young man remained impassive. He was then allowed to wash himself, and was declared a good bachelor.”

Chapter VI

M. Ridel begins the administration of his district. - "Ponghuma is dead!"- Devotion of the missionary. - Naepo. - "Pagans in Brittany!"- A Korean Aesculapius. - A storm in the village of Tsin-Pat. - Apprehension of the Koreans. - A hyphen between Korea and Brittany.

On the day of the Feast of the Dead, around ten o'clock in the evening, M. Ridel bade farewell to the brave inhabitants of Pan-ja-ri and set out. After a short stay in the village of Jinpat, which was to become for some time the center of his operations, he began the administration of his district.

The task is hard and beyond his strength, but it is not beyond his courage and his zeal. He is in a hurry to reach these Christians who are waiting for him. To reach them, he hides during the day, often at the bottom of ravines or forests; he travels at night for fear of being recognized and covers very long distances advancing by impassable paths. The ground is covered with a thick layer of snow and for all footwear he has only rice-straw sandals. Almost sheer mountains bar his way; to climb it, it is necessary to help oneself with the elbow and the hand; the descent is also full of perils. Nothing stops him.

Now his wishes are fulfilled and the dream of his life is realized. These long journeys, these incredible fatigues are no more painful than the very administration of the Christian villages. No sooner has he arrived in a village than the faithful gather around him, eager to listen to the pious exhortations he gives them, through his servant. Then the examination of conscience is done in common; confessions begin and continue well into the night. At two o'clock, he offers the holy sacrifice of the Mass: "I lead the way," he says, "because I don't think the missionaries of Oceania are obliged to hide like us and to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice as soon as possible." Finally it is time for meditation and the recitation of the Office. It is also necessary to examine the catechumens, to instruct them, to encourage them, to judge the tests, to scold and sometimes to punish. How often has our dear apostle fallen exhausted, to succumb to sleep either in inns or on the side of the road!

One evening, overwhelmed with fatigue, the missionary was sound asleep, when he was awakened by a piercing cry. In the blink of an eye, with the Christians of the village, he is out of the cottage. At this moment the darkness is thick, the cold is sharp; the snow is falling in large flakes. Is it a lost traveler calling for help? Is it a tiger approaching? The cry is heard again, but this time more distinctly. "Ponghuma is dead," it said, "Ponghuma is dead!" Ponghuma was the name of a Christian whom the Father had administered the previous night. A friend of the deceased had come from far away, despite the darkness of the night and the inclemency of the weather, to announce this news to the Christians of the surrounding area and ask for their prayers. Above all, he came to announce this misfortune to the Father so that the latter, the next day, would pray for this Christian at the memento of the Mass. Hearing this cry, the Christians repeat: "Ponghuma is dead!" and they immediately retire to the Father's room. There, kneeling on the mat, they recite the Office of the Dead while awaiting the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice.

M. Ridel, in ending this account, simply adds these words which go to the bottom of my heart: "I could not restrain my tears. Alas! I did not know then that, four days later, I was to hear from my country a piercing cry which would announce to me at the same time the death of my best friend and the death of my most tenderly beloved father!"

After seventy-five days of such fatigue, the missionary returned to his residence to take a necessary rest. The excessive cold, the prolonged vigils, the forced marches, the privations of all kinds had exhausted him. A high fever which constantly covered him with profuse sweat weakened him even more. He had been suffering for several days, when a Christian envoy came to tell him that, sixteen leagues away, M. Joanno was dangerously ill.

Hearing this painful news, he got up immediately, tried to walk, but his strength betrayed him. However, he did not want his suffering to be a reason for not responding to his colleague's call. He had himself carried on a wretched stretcher and for two nights traveled thus under the snow to reach the patient. Thanks to the good care of the Christians, the condition of the man who had been thought to be dying had improved. The presence of a friend, his enlightened attentions produced a happy reaction; in a few days the danger was averted.

It was March 1862. At that time, the Korean mission was flourishing. The zeal of the missionaries, the piety of the neophytes, the relative peace which was enjoyed, the latest events in China, all promised an abundant harvest. But the workers succumbed to the work.

In fact, it had not been three weeks since M. Ridel had returned to Jinpat when he saw Mgr d'Acônes enter his house. The venerable coadjutor came to tell him that illness was reducing M. Landre to the most complete inaction, and at the same time he entrusted him with the administration of a large part of the district of Naepo.

The missionary, who had just visited almost all of southeastern Korea, immediately took his travel stick and headed for Naepo, located to the west. The road ahead is long; it is necessary to cross the whole province of Chungcheong-do, and pass through its capital Gongju. But what do fatigues and dangers matter to him? is he not the child of Providence and the workman of God? What God keeps is well kept. The finer the sheaf of the reaper, the more magnificent will be his wages. This thought gives him something like a renewal of life and gaiety; so, in the charming account he gives us of this peregrination, strewn with pains and perils, he completely forgets to speak to us of his sufferings and his fatigues.

"The Koreans," he wrote to his family, "are very slow on the road; they have with it a serious and affected air which would give rise to laughter. A true noble must always look up and down, he must nonchalantly wave his arms from which hang large sleeves. It is with this approach that I cross the cities that are on my way. I succeeded wonderfully; as soon as a pagan appears, I veil my face according to etiquette, and who will see if I am black or white. Also, far from recognizing me, everyone takes me for a great character on a mission -

"Naepo is quite a different kind of district. It is a very fertile plain. The capital resembles all the cities of the kingdom; the houses are earthen and thatched, the streets are narrow, dirty and badly maintained. The whole city is surrounded by very thick ramparts; there are even, on the top of these ramparts, cannons which do not seem bad; tired of their old services, they seem to be sleeping...

"One day I was traveling very quietly on the edge of the sea. The islands thrown here and there made me dream of my native land; I saw again the island of Arz, the Ile-aux-Moines, Saint-Gildas, Arzon, Locmariaquer; but I was looking for their steeples in vain, when a well-known voice pulled me from my reverie:

"Father, pagans!

"What? pagans in Britany!"

"I couldn't believe my ears; however, I had to quickly abandon the dream for the reality, and resume my journey."

Isn't it touching, this reverie of a big heart which, forgetting for a moment the preoccupations with which it is besieged, finds in an unknown country, the illusion of the fatherland?

The missionary had already visited fourteen Christians when he went to M. Landre's, at the extremity of the district of Chungcheong-do. For several days he lavished his care and consolation on the sick. This pious duty accomplished, he returned to his poor lodging at Tjin-Pat.

It was May, the sky was leaden, the heat excessive. On the way M. Ridel had to experience several storms which developed in him the germs of an illness from which he nearly died. Let him tell about this new ordeal with his usual good humor.

“The Christians around me were sorry to see me downcast, pale and weak. They sent for one of their doctors who did his best to fight the disease. He made me take small pieces of stone reduced to powder, then a mercurial substance of the most beautiful red color. Alas! all these remedies were powerless. He then resolved to try the great method, acupuncture, which consists of drawing blood out with the help of a needle. He made fifteen openings to me and the blood flowed profusely. This operation, said the Korean aesculapius, is intended to refresh. This opens the skin, so that the wind can pass inside. This explanation seemed to me rather singular: but science had spoken⁴

Divine Providence had its sights on the dear patient; so, thanks to the prayers of the Christians who assisted him, thanks to his robust constitution, he recovered little by little; it was during his convalescence that he wrote the following letter to his brother (July 6, 1862):

“For nine days, the rain has been falling in torrents, but yesterday I thought I was in the deluge. Without the rain, the continual zigzag of lightning and the terrible din of thunder would have made my mountain a real Sinai. I dreaded all day rolling together with my house to the bottom of the valley. The Christians had another concern; they said: “If the storm continues, the mountain will not be able to resist.”

“After the storm, came fine weather. Today we have 32° centigrade and 65° in the sun. I cannot stay in my apartments; so I go up to a magnificent esplanade and sit in the shade of the tall trees in my garden.

“My apartments! no need to describe it to you. The esplanade and my little garden! it is a small earthwork three or four meters long, sheltered from all prying eyes by three trees on the mountain. Moreover, today I fear nothing, the pagans are in the plain, all occupied with their rice fields. And then don't I have there, near me, my faithful Rigolo who would warn me at the approach of the slightest danger? That poor joker! he's a big clumsy, dumb as a goose, and yet I love him. He often licks my hand, he always shows up wagging his tail. To show me his friendship, he does a thousand contortions that he would like to make graceful.

“It's two o'clock in the afternoon, I've been up for ten hours, and you in Brittany have barely opened your eyes. The sun that I have seen for so long will now greet you. It will caress your little house with its soft rays and ripen your wheat. Right now I see it and you see it too, it seems to me that it's a hyphen between us

“Come, dear brother, come and sit down beside me, there, on this stone which I had placed for a friend. This place has always remained empty. Here, my only friend, my only companion, is my Guardian Angel. My beloved colleagues are too far away to come, without serious reasons, to this desert country. I only have friends in France.

“Come then, my brother, come here, close to me, and look: here, at our feet, are the four houses of my village; they are home to about thirty Christians. These roofs that you can see further on are the sheds where tobacco is dried, the sole livelihood of these poor mountain dwellers. This tree that gives us shade is a wild chestnut. These flowers that I have sown, these amaranths, these balsams, are a memory of the fatherland.

Look now everywhere: mountains, mountains, and always mountains; such is all of Korea. Do you see that big wood surrounded by walls over there? It is there that the general, the governor and the mandarin of this province live. Several times I have passed near their homes, but I have not yet paid them a visit.

“Now look up to the sky. What azure! what clarity! Isn't it the beautiful sky of Italy? For me, I prefer it with its veil of gray clouds; it then reminds me of my Brittany, and I think I breathe in the perfume of the heather. If the underside of the sky is so beautiful, what is heaven like in the brightness of God?”

⁴ M. Ridel is obviously mistaken in calling the operation which he undergoes acupuncture, because in acupuncture a single drop of blood generally comes out with each insertion, and that is all.

Towards the month of October following, the holy missionary recommenced the administration of his district. We will not repeat here the story of his sufferings and the numberless privations he had to endure. Let's just say that it happened to him more than once to cover up to nine or ten leagues in the snow in one go, to have his feet or hands frozen, that he then had to use his energy, his iron will, to reach the goal. But, in return, this daily sacrifice made the action of grace powerful on these persecuted populations; the work of the apostle was fruitful.

After traveling about 360 leagues to bring the consolations of his ministry to 3,229 souls, he noted with joy that he had heard 2,318 confessions, baptized 72 adults and 177 children, finally blessed 44 marriages.

In the month of March 1863 he was preparing to take some rest, when a double ordeal came to sadden his heart:

"I was to finish my administration around Palm Sunday. M. Joanno was then in a part of his district fairly close to my residence, and we had agreed to meet at my house. I was getting ready to prepare everything for Easter, so that our meeting would be as agreeable as possible, when I received a letter telling me that he was very ill, three hours away. I immediately ran to him; he did not seem excessively tired, and yet the state of his chest made me fear some imminent catastrophe. We talked long enough. Twice I was obliged to leave him for a few hours to go and minister to the sick; I came back immediately. On the eve of Easter, I found him so dejected that I gave him extreme unction, and I spent the night with him. During all this time, he did not stop praying, from his lips escaped frequent ejaculatory prayers and warm aspirations towards his God. The danger increasing, I resolved to say Holy Mass immediately after midnight; he received with unusual fervor the Holy Eucharist as viaticum; then he dozed off, and did not recover consciousness during a long agony which lasted nine whole days. On Monday, April 13, around noon, he twice raised his eyes and his arms to heaven and began to smile. What did he see? About two o'clock he had a very serious crisis; I recited the prayers of the dying. Finally, in the evening, around half-past seven, he gently and without any movement surrendered his beautiful soul to God."

To this letter, dated the first days of September, is attached the following postscript: "I reopen my letter under the impression of the greatest pain. Our poor mission is cruelly tested. The workers are not enough to work, and they are taken from us one after the other. May the holy will of God be done! blessed be his holy name!

"M. Landre, this brother so good, so zealous, so pious, has left for a better world. I had been called to him a fortnight before, on account of a high fever which had attacked him; but, at the end of a few days, the fever having disappeared, I left him in full convalescence and beginning to regain his strength. It was agreed that he would join me on September 20; but, on the 16th, a Christian came to tell me that he had died the day before, carried off in a few hours by an epidemic disease. I set out at once, and I met Mgr Daveluy beside the body, who, at the first news of the danger, had come rushing, but had not been able to arrive until two or three hours after the death of this dear friend. We mingled our tears, adoring the inscrutable designs of God on our poor Korea. Pray and ask people to pray a lot for us and our Christians."

At this moment, from whichever side one casts one's gaze on this land fattened with the blood of martyrs, the harvest seems ripe. The persecution of 1860 which drove Christians to the ends of the kingdom was the storm which carried the divine seed to the four winds of heaven.

- The number of Christians increases; the catechumens barely regenerated by the holy water of baptism strive in their turn to win their parents and their friends to Jesus Christ. Very often, the missionary is forced to moderate the ardor of his neophytes who already display their faith publicly. Indeed, we see them, in the south, giving their funeral ceremonies all the brilliance they can. In broad daylight, the cross shines at the head of the procession; the Christians then parade, a candle in their hand, reciting psalms aloud, under the eyes of the

pagans who contemplate with astonishment such a new spectacle.

But alas, the reapers succumb! However, the ripe wheat, the vermilion bunch, must not be corrupted and lost. The task of our missionary will be painful; but the rougher it is, the more radiant it is. For the health of his soul, he needs the bitter taste of sacrifice. "We need help," he writes, "not for us but for souls. The more fatigue there is, the more pain there is, so much the better for the missionary!"

God wanted to satisfy this hunger for souls. He was entrusted with most of the Christian communities that death had left without a pastor. All of southern Korea became his share, so much so that his confreres took pleasure in giving the name of Lower Britany to this part of the Mission.

The good missionary only rested for a few weeks. He was eager to see his children and the orphans he had just adopted. "*Vive Dieu,*" he cried, "I am going to fight during the winter at 80 leagues from my residence, and at 40 leagues from any colleague. The campaign will be long, it will be difficult, so much the better! is it not at the height of the fray that the brave soldier likes to find himself? I will take my weapons, my thickest cuirass, and my brazen helmet. Let the devil come after that!... My heart rejoices and is full of joy. If they knew all the charms, all the delights that one finds in this struggle against Hell, in this fishing for souls, how many priests would devote themselves to the work of the missions!"

So much courage and piety was the admiration of Christians. "The Father," they said, seeing him climb the steepest mountains, "the Father has legs of steel, but he no longer has flesh on his bones. The brave Father! he eats, like us, dog, raw meat and salted fish..."

In fact, M. Ridel, since his entry into Korea, tried every day to adopt the Korean diet. He even endured this daily mortification with so much gaiety that the Christians did not suspect the repugnance he had to overcome. "I must get used to the customs of my new country," he said laughingly, "I must even like them; my health is at stake." We now understand the influence of a soul of this stamp on these new and ardent minds, which the progress of our civilization has not yet blunted.

In the month of January 1864, 70 Christian communities had been administered, 2,100 confessions heard, 99 adults and 165 little children baptized, 50 marriages blessed. After a few days of rest, which were rather days of retreat spent in the company of Bishop Daveluy and M. Calais, he resumed his journey full of perils.

Four months later, M. Ridel had visited 98 other Christian communities: he noted with happiness that 3,400 Christians had been reconciled with God, that 119 adults and as many children had received the grace of baptism, and approximately 76 the sacrament of marriage. To accomplish this great work, the missionary had traveled more than 600 leagues since the beginning of winter. Such a statistic dispenses with all praise.

Chapter VII

Change of government in Korea. - Situation of the missionaries. - Entrance to Seoul. - A first communion in Korea. - Journal of the missionary. - M. Ridel dangerously ill.

On January 15 of that same year, 1864, the King of Korea died at the age of 32. This prince succumbed, like almost all his predecessors, victim of his excesses and debauchery. His early years had been spent in exile in Ganghwa. In 1849, when he was called to the throne, the ministers found him covered in filth, his face smeared with the juice of a melon he was eating heartily. They washed him and took him surprised to the capital. The weakness of his government, his deplorable negligence had reduced the people to the most dreadful misery. Seeing himself dying without a direct heir, he adopted a 13-year-old child.

Under the reign of this new king, we will later witness serious events that will mark an epoch in the history of Korea. But during his tutelage, power actually passed into the hands of his father, proclaimed regent of the kingdom. Until then this prince, in spite of his ferocious character which made him formidable even to the pagans, had shown himself hostile neither to religion nor to the missionaries. His wife had learned part of the catechism, recited a few prayers every day, and had even had Bishop Berneux ask for Masses of thanksgiving for the accession of her son to the throne. A strange thing and a fatal omen! His first act on coming to power was to drive out the former ministers and replace them with the most bitter enemies of the Christian name. This event made the situation of the missionaries all the more perilous, as their presence in the country was no longer a secret to anyone at court.

However, thanks to the salutary fear always inspired by the last war with China, the ministers did not yet dream of venting their resentment. A few threats of persecution were heard here and there, but it was like the sound of a thunderstorm in the distance; the slightest wind could deflect it.

So there was no need to worry too much. So M. Ridel, after having finished the administration of Naepo, thought it would not be too rash to go with his servant as far as Seoul.

Korean missionaries are always accompanied by a Christian who helps them in their apostolate. The one our missionary had chosen was a man of rare virtue, of unflinching devotion. His name was Andrew Yi. We will have the opportunity to get to know him better. In the meantime, it will not be without interest to hear from M. Ridel the story of this trip to the capital.

“Before entering the city, we went to see a catechist who lived outside the walls, but we found the door closed, and we did not know where to direct our steps, when Andrew said to me: I remember the road that leads to the bishop’s house; we can go there without a guide. This thought smiles at me. It was very pleasant for me to surprise Bishop Berneux in this way.

Although it was daring to pass through the great southern gate at this hour, fearing that a hesitation might cause us to be noticed, we set out. Andrew walked in front, I followed him, with an uncovered face and dressed like him. We met a lot of people and especially gangs who were strolling around telling each other the news of the day. It seemed to me that everyone was looking at me; I was not very comfortable, but I put on a good face.

“After ten minutes of walking in the middle of the crowd, we arrived at the door, in front of and on each side of which there were about fifteen soldiers. They examined all the passers-by. If I had foreseen this new difficulty, I certainly would not have attempted this too bold step. It was too late to back down: I put on my most determined air and passed under the eyes of the soldiers without being noticed. Once through the door, we were soon in front of the Bishop’s house. Andrew thought he recognized it, but we couldn’t find the entrance. We went and came back quite embarrassed. Fortunately the street was deserted. Andrew finally sees an open door; he enters, asks for information, and comes back saying to me: “It’s here.” Instead of making our solemn entrance through the door of the master of the house and the noble guests, passing

through that of the servants and slaves, we enter triumphantly into the kitchen.

“Monseigneur, informed of our arrival, wants to go to the salon, when he suddenly sees us in front of him. Surprised, he asks us how we got into his episcopal palace. We recount our adventure: “That’s good,” he said, “provided that no one has seen you.” Fortunately it was easy to calm him down.”

We have already described this room, which Bishop Berneux cheerfully called his palace, and which served as a dormitory, refectory, drawing room and chapel. It was there that our apostle with several confreres took a few days of rest for the first time.

These missionaries shut up in this miserable little room, where they can only show themselves or speak in a low voice, don’t they seem to be in prison rather than on vacation? These days of seclusion are painful, but they are also full of charms. What joy for the exile to see a friend again! What joy to hear his voice and to speak in French of the beautiful country of France!... What music for the ear and for the heart!

The hours of rest are counted. Several children from Jinpat and neighboring villages are getting ready to make their first communion. They are waiting impatiently for the Father to prepare for this great action.

The missionary comes running.

Let us listen again to the charming account of this feast: “I had these little children go on a six-day retreat. It was a novelty for them and for all their relatives. These children, fourteen in number, disposed of themselves with the greatest fervor.

“The feast was as solemn as it can be in this poor country. The walls of the church, or rather of my room which took its place, were lined with white paper and decorated with engravings. The altar was carefully decorated. People especially noticed the crucifix, the four candlesticks and two large images placed on each side of the tabernacle. The children had put on their best clothes and their parents, amazed, moved, were crying with joy. It was the first time that there were so many ornaments for a Christian ceremony in Korea.

“After Mass, I invited all the children to dinner. I had bought 7 chickens which provided the feast: one of those big sheds in which the Christians dry their tobacco served as a banquet hall. I went for a moment to see how my guests were carrying out their duties, and I noticed two little girls who had eaten all their rice, leaving aside their portion of chicken.

“What?” I said to them, “Did you eat your rice alone? Why didn’t you eat your chicken; Isn’t it good?”

“Oh!” they tell me, “it is excellent, but we want to save it for our mother who has never tasted anything so good.”

“I admired this response and the good heart of these children. In the evening we had another small ceremony: renewal of baptismal vows, consecration to the Blessed Virgin. This day left good memories in the hearts of all those who had participated in the celebration.”

A few weeks later, the small village of Jinpat was in sadness. The Father was leaving to resume his apostolic journeys. It would take too long to follow him for several months through the Christian communities scattered over the mountains. Let us content ourselves with reproducing here a few pages from his diary.

“November 21, 1864, Gyeongsang-do district; Feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin. - I did my retreat for the month. My thoughts flew to France, I thought of the beautiful years of the seminary. On this solemnity, each one renews his clerical promises. I did the same. How easy it is here to give oneself entirely to God!

“This festival is that of my district, I wanted to make it solemn. I adorned my room, my church, with all the pictures large and small that I found. The Christians, seeing my work, said: “How beautiful it is!”

“Yes! beautiful in destitution and poverty.

November 25. “Today awful road. For four or five hours we had snow up to our knees

and sometimes much more. We climbed two high mountains by a badly marked path on the edge of an abyss. We had to cling to everything and crawl in the snow; I was drenched in sweat. Arrived at the top, an icy wind seizes us; impossible to take a moment of rest, we must move forward. Now my feet and half of my legs are frozen. My sandals, my stockings, my feet seem like a lump of ice, which the heat of the room is melting little by little, but not without pain. I am seized with a violent headache, I hasten to hear the confessions, for I mistrust the fever.”

December 20. (Tjin-Lan (?), near Gongju.) “For five days, I have been suffering from chest irritation which gives me no rest day or night. I have great difficulty hearing confessions, and speaking, even in a low voice. Here, neither medicine nor doctor; I abandon myself to Providence. I would need rest, to take it, I would have to walk forty leagues, but above all deprive a multitude of Christians of the benefit of the sacraments. Is it possible?”

January 17, 1865. (Province of Gyeongsang-do.) “Today I spent nearly three hours on the seaside. It is the most delicious walk I have taken in Korea. I saw Daemado (Tsushima), a Japanese island, and beyond, the seas. I penetrated by thought into the kingdom of Japan which has given so many martyrs to the Church, so many saints in paradise. Looking at these shores and islets, breathing in the strong smell of the sea, I remembered the walks of yesteryear on the banks of Morbihan. If I had had the *Stella Maris*, with what pleasure I would have sailed on this wave gently agitated by a light breeze! I picked up some shells, and for a moment I took myself for a Parisian on the coast of Brittany.

“Tomorrow is the first day of the Korean New Year. I am going to spend three days here, because customs forbid travelling. Being noble, I must more than any other respect these customs. So far, I haven’t had an accident. I pass easily among pagans without arousing their suspicions; I have a bit of a Korean figure. It is true that, in these parts, one imagines that Europeans are extraordinary, fabulous men, who have neither legs, nor arms, nor heads.”

March. (Jeolla-do Province) “On our way to the village of Poulpara-Tji (?), we saw tiger tracks on the snow. These footprints, the width of a plate, announce an enormous animal. There are also bloodstains all along the road which indicate that the animal had carried off its prey. Soon, the path crosses a very thick thicket whose shrubs and lianas make access difficult; there, the tracks diverge from the road. We follow them for some time out of curiosity and we arrive in a clearing where it seems that a battalion of tigers has taken up their antics. It’s just, I think, the family of the big tiger who came to take part in the feast. We leave this horrible place to continue our journey. At the end of this immense forest, the path meanders in the bottom of a ravine; on each side rise high mountains whose edges are cut into laces; here and there rise boldly enormous rocks which resemble the spires of our cathedrals. Arrived almost at the top of the highest mountain, we are in Christian country.

“Confessions last all day, and most of the night. Long before dawn, I have the happiness of offering the Holy Sacrifice. Here at least, we are quiet and safe, the tigers stand guard.”

The last stages of this long administration are even more painful than the first. The snow falls more abundantly and makes the roads impassable. The missionary’s long-soaked clothes freeze on his body, and in the vicinity there is no Christian village where he can find shelter. On the last day, the wind blows with such violence, the cold is so sharp that no one dares to travel, and the pagans say when they see him pass with his servant: “Oh! Look, these nobles have certainly just heard of their father’s agony to travel in such weather.”

Such fatigues had a result easy to foresee; on the following May 5, M. Ridel ended his diary thus:

“Arrived at Kai-Tji-Ri, I felt a violent headache; nevertheless I heard confessions for three days; but on the fourth, in the morning, I could not get up, and I told my servant that I would not celebrate Holy Mass. It was Palm Monday. I was extremely weak, and I lost all feeling. Andrew watched over me night and day, and not knowing what to do, rejected all the remedies that everyone wanted to administer to me. You do not know the Father’s temperament,

he said, and instead of doing him good, you could make him sicker with your remedies. I don't know any either, but I prefer to let nature act and pray to God to preserve it for us. I regained consciousness from time to time and I know that once I said to Andrew: Do you think I'm about to die? "I don't think there is this danger already, he replied, but the father is seriously ill and will do well to prepare for any event. That's about all I was able to understand during the nine days that this illness lasted. Andrew had informed M. Féron, who hurried. He arrived on Easter day; I could recognize him. His presence did me good, and some of the remedies that he was able to administer to me, got me out of danger. Soon I went into convalescence."

These few lines reveal to us, better than any words, the soul of M. Ridel. His body is harshly handled, illness squeezes him, his strength abandons him, but his lips never lose their smile, his soul retains its peace, its serenity.

Chapter VIII

Bloody persecution. - Arrest and death of Bishop Berneux, Bishop Daveluy and seven missionaries. - Andrew Yi. - Dangers run by M. Ridel. - Hideout in a Korean cottage. - Children preparing for martyrdom. - Andrew's farewell to his family. - M. Ridel joins M. Féron. - When one is afraid of men, one is not afraid of tigers. - The spring famine. - M. Calais.

The hour of persecution has come. A cry of pain resounded in this poor mission which already gave such beautiful hopes. All the great men of the kingdom resolved to destroy Christianity in Korea. They take their measures so well, they put so much ardor into executing their fatal designs that one fears seeing them realized before long. But the holy Church has for her the guarantee of a divine promise; and an experience almost twenty centuries old has shown the world that, everywhere and always, it draws from the blood of its martyrs a more generous sap and a new youth.

The court of Seoul, in the month of January, 1866, was composed of hateful men, capable of the most violent measures against the Christian religion. They only awaited the favorable occasion to issue their bloodthirsty edicts; but at this moment the agitation was extreme in the kingdom. The Russians, who since 1860 had been advancing little by little towards the northern frontiers, had just made a sudden appearance at Wonsan, a Korean port on the Sea of Japan.

The invasion seemed imminent. To avert these misfortunes, a Christian, John Nam, M. Ridel's former language master, prompted by clumsy friends, wrote to the Regent: he explained to him that the two bishops alone could avert the peril which threatened Korea.

This letter, which highlighted the French missionaries, was carefully guarded. The two prelates were immediately summoned to Seoul. Bishop Berneux was then very far from the capital, in the northern provinces, where that same year he had baptized more than 800 adults; Bishop Daveluy was at Naepo. Both thought it wise to comply with the wishes of the court, and they waited until the end of January for an audience with the prince regent.

At the beginning of February, the venerable coadjutor, tired of waiting, left the capital again to continue his apostolic work, but without going very far.

In the meantime, the Russian sailors had returned to their homeland, carrying away for their government the most flattering compliments of the Korean ministers and the finest hopes for the future. The panic they had caused had gradually dissipated when suddenly a letter arrived from Peking, via the Korean embassy, announcing that throughout the Chinese empire Christians were being put to death. This news was like the spark that ignited the powder.

At court there was only one cry. "Hate to the Europeans! no alliances with them, or the kingdom is over! Death to all Western barbarians, death to all Christians!"

On February 10, Bishop Berneux was arrested and thrown into prison. A few days later, the venerable bishop saw MM. de Bretenières, Beaulieu and Dorie. On the 28th of the same month, MM. Petitnicolas and Pourthié fell into the hands of the satellites. They had been found at their post, at Saint-Joseph College. Finally, on March 12, it was the turn of Mgr Daveluy, of MM. Aumaitre and Huin.

On the filthy straw of their dungeons, the missionaries were radiant; day and night, the echoes of their prison repeated their prayers and their hymns. It was the joy, the joy of the martyrs in the vestibule of paradise (M. Aumaitre had entered Korea in the month of March 1863, MM. de Bretenières, Huin, Beaulieu, Dorie, in the month of June 1865).

The glorious death of these apostles was the signal for the bloodiest persecution. Soon a multitude of Christians were going to pay God the same tribute of blood and gather in heaven

the same glory and the same happiness⁵

Before their death, the missionaries had to undergo the last two tortures and dislocation several times. We will not do this long and painful story here. A friend, a brother-in-arms of these holy victims acquitted himself magnificently of this task.⁶

We will only follow our missionary in the midst of the dangers he will run.

M. Ridel was in the district of Gyeongsyang-do, 100 leagues from the capital and about 70 from Jinpat, his residence, when the first rumors of the persecution reached him. Nevertheless, he continued on his way, without paying too much attention to these rumors, which at first seemed rather vague to him. But on arriving at Daegu, the chief town of this district, he learned that Christians had been put to death at Gongju. This last town is three leagues from Jinpat. The danger therefore became pressing. Already the satellites were traversing the country – extraordinary movements were taking place in the villages; they spoke only of denunciations, of prison and of death.

The storm rumbled more and more. The catechists of the Christian communities who had not received the visit of the Father, came to meet him, and declared to him that the Christians could no longer meet together, nor receive him without great danger. At the same time a letter from Bishop Daveluy informed him of the sad state of the mission.

Bishop Berneux and three missionaries had just been thrown into prison.

Doubt was no longer possible, the persecution was general. M. Ridel hurried back to his residence, taking all possible precautions. The first seven days of the journey passed without incident; but from the eighth, the difficulties followed each other all along the road.

It was March 6, 1866, M. Ridel still had thirty leagues to go. “We had barely made a few li,” he writes, “when we saw a Christian arrive from our village; he was Andrew’s brother-in-law.

At Jinpat, all was quiet; but there was no longer any doubt that at Gongju numerous Christians had been arrested and that several had already been put to death.

A little further on we met three individuals who seemed to be prefectural employees.

One of them, passing near us, looked at me and said to his comrades:

“Here is a European passing.”

“Never! replied another, are there any Europeans here?”

“I assure you he’s a European.”

As they moved away, we could hear no more. In other circumstances, we would not have paid much attention to these words; but at this moment they did not fail to worry my companions very much.”

In the evening, we had to take refuge in an inn. There, a new alert. We escaped with fear. The next day, a river bars the way; it is necessary to have recourse to a boatman. But the situation is complicated: at the same time as the fugitives a government courier arrives.

“I am the last to enter the boat,” continues the missionary, “and I turn to the front so as not to be recognized.”

The conversation begins:

“I,” said one of the passengers, “I’m a courier, I’ve just come back from Jecheon, on

⁵ In Korea, before the death sentence is brought against a Christian, the executioners make him undergo all sorts of tortures. They put into them a refinement which makes nature shudder: the dislocation, the sawing of the legs with a horsehair cord, the puncture of the sticks, the plank, are the most common torments. The sticks are the size of ‘a man and bigger than his arm. Four valets surround the patient, all hitting him at the same time with the point, in the hips and on the thighs. The board, is a piece of wood four or five feet long, wide from six to seven inches, thick an inch and a half. From the first blows the blood spurts out, the flesh is detached and flies in shreds. At the tenth blow, the board resounds on the bare bones.

⁶ Fr. Charles Dallet has related the martyrdom of the two bishops and the other French missionaries. This account, vibrant with interest, can be read in his *History of the Church of Korea*, volume II, pp. 521-558.

business with those rascals of Europeans who were caught in the capital.”

“Are there any at Jecheon too?”

- Yes, replies the courier, there were two; I took the order to the mandarin of this town to take them, and they were arrested.

“And have you seen them?”

- Yes, I saw them: there is one who is very tall, his whole face is covered with a beard that goes down to his waist; the other, less tall, has a very bushy black beard, much shorter than that of the first; but when he tugs on it, it lengthens and becomes just as long.”

“He described them with such precision that it was easy for me to recognize M. Pourthié and M. Petitnicolas.”

During all this conversation, the Christians did not breathe a word, the missionary tried to put on a good face, but he had to fear that the saddened faces of his companions would arouse suspicion, when someone asked:

“Were their wives also arrested?”

- They do not have any.

“But how do they do their housework?”

- Ah! I do not know; go ask them.

These last words made the Christians laugh, and prevented them from noticing their too visible sadness.

“What are they going to do with these Europeans?”

- I do not know. They took them to the capital to reunite them with those we had already taken.

- How are they made?

- Like us: they have arms and legs.

“Do they speak Korean?”

- Yes, they can easily make themselves understood.

- Oh ! the beggars, how did they learn it?”

The boat finally landed on the opposite bank, M. Ridel alighted first and continued on his way.

The sound of the bells which the courier wore in his belt told him that all retreat was impossible. At the same time, in front of him, appeared a big village that he had to cross. Now, there was a fair that day. Moreover, his description had been given everywhere, with orders to arrest him immediately. He knew he would be condemned to death.

The situation was critical. So he advised the three Christians who accompanied him not to expose themselves any longer and to leave him alone. “You see,” he said to them, “what danger threatens us. The bishop and the fathers who were in the capital were arrested; you have just learned how those at the college were seized; you know that they are looking for the others, and that if they happen to recognize me, they will arrest me with all those who accompany me.”

These generous Christians protested against the priest’s desire and resolved to share his fate.

They arrived in the village, and a small inn opened to receive our dear travellers.

“As we were exposed,” says M. Ridel, “to the gaze of all passers-by and as I always traveled with my face uncovered, like a true Korean, Andrew feared that in this circumstance my face would betray me; he motioned for me to lie down. I obeyed with pleasure: tired from the road and the emotions of the day, I lay down, turning my face towards the wall. Near me, Andrew and his brother-in-law were chatting about this and that while waiting for the rice to be prepared.

“We had just executed this manoeuvre, when I heard my people, who remained at the door, who, opposing the entry of two pagans, said to them:

“Nobody can go in, because there are nobles in these rooms.

“Bah! nobles? Isn’t this a public hostelry? Can’t everyone get in? We will enter.”

“Indeed, they come in and settle down in the middle of the room. I didn’t know what to think of this din, but hearing the words, understanding the audacity of these people, the thought came to me that they were satellites which had recognized me and were entering to take account of the position and ensure my person.”

The missionary and his companions remained impassive. The rice was prepared, it was brought, and according to Korean custom, everyone sat down to his table and ate his meal with the casualness of the happiest people. This conduct caused them to pass unnoticed.

The meal finished, it was necessary to leave the village and cross all the market which extended along the road. How to avoid the stares of all this crowd of merchants? Andrew grasped the difficulty very well and had a bright idea. He led the donkey carrying the luggage. The Father and the three Christians followed him, one after another, according to the invariable Korean custom.

They thus entered the middle of the market. Immediately the children noticed the donkey and ran to look at it, for it was a Chinese donkey, very rare in Korea. At this sight all exclaimed:

“Oh! the beautiful donkey from China! come and see the beautiful donkey.”

All the merchants turn and follow the donkey with their eyes, saying: Here! a beautiful Chinese donkey passing by!

When they took their eyes off it, the missionary had already passed, so that, being able to see him only from behind, they did not recognize him. Thus the donkey, by her kindness, attracted all eyes and received all the compliments.

“Our journey,” continues M. Ridel, “because of the difficulties and obstructions of the road in the middle of an agglomerated crowd, had lasted a good ten minutes. When we were a little distant away, we laughed heartily, and gladly repeated the cries we had heard: “Oh! The beautiful donkey! Here! a donkey from China! come and see the Chinese donkey!”

“We were moving away from the market, slowly climbing a fairly steep hill, when, at the top of the hill, without any preamble, we found ourselves face to face with a procession of mandarins. Two valets preceded the noble personage, who sat in his chair, examining the travelers. Five or six servants followed him and a praetorian on horseback brought up the rear.

In Korea, when you meet a great character, it is polite to hide your face. I seized my fan, and I hastened to laugh at the new adventure. I would have liked to keep my fan until after the passage of the praetorian, but unfortunately the duties of politeness do not extend until then; so that I appeared uncovered before this functionary, who looked at me attentively. His surprised look did not escape Andre’s perspicacity. However, he continued on his way without saying anything.”

As we approached Gongju, the danger became more threatening. The road was crowded with soldiers and business people. We had just learned of the arrest and death of Bishop Berneux and three missionaries; no one was unaware that other Europeans were roaming the country. But M. Ridel’s task was not finished, Providence was watching over him.

The following night, he arrived with Andrew at his residence in Jinpat. There, three days passed. He took the opportunity to administer the sacraments to the Christians who wanted to be ready for any risk, and to bury in the mountain the compromising objects as well as the money of the mission.

On March 12, he set off again, going, without knowing where, to seek refuge. Andrew accompanied him, with his family and a certain number of Christians.

In the evening, the village was invaded by the satellites of the capital, which had the order to arrest the European and all the people in his service. Unable to seize the person of the Father, they pillaged his dwelling, broke what they could not take, and even sold the house to a pagan, who immediately settled there.

Let's let our charming storyteller speak again:

"We were able to send several times to the place where we had hidden the money on the mountain, and thus prepare ourselves the means of subsistence. We had not carried this money with us, as for even a modest sum of a hundred francs a porter is needed. We had alerts several times. To hide us more easily, the master of the cottage which served as our shelter, made a hole in the ceiling, and by means of a rope, it was quite easy to climb up to the attic. This was not to Andrew's taste, "because," he said, "you can't even cough at ease there."

On Easter Tuesday our courier arrived and told us that Bishop Daveluy and two fathers had been executed on Good Friday.

This news shocked the Christians.

"But," they said, "they are going to kill all our Fathers; What are we going to become?"

"We couldn't get any news of the other Fathers. We had been told several times of the death of one of them; but nothing more uncertain than this information. In that time, I even learned that I too was dead. Indeed, one day when Andrew and I were huddled in our attic, because a stranger had just been introduced into the room above which we were hiding, we heard in the middle of the conversation the following words:

"As for Father Yi (the Korean name of M. Ridel.), after having fled from his village, from Jinpat, he was wandering alone on the mountain, when he came across an old charcoal oven; he huddled there, and as no one came to him, he died of hunger."

"The news was pleasant; and in short, it pleased everyone, because the rumor of my death could spread and stop the search. Our days passed like this.

"At night everyone was together, and we were so crowded that no one could move without disturbing their neighbor. I slept for eight days next to a man who, having typhoid fever, had lost all feeling and was spitting at random.

"During the day, on the contrary, everyone went to the fields, and we remained under the care of a seven-year-old child. Endowed with great sagacity, Augustine (that was the name of our young sentry), amused himself outside the village, warned us of the arrival of strangers, and answered them wittily without ever letting anyone suspect the treasure he was keeping guard over."

Andrew's children were allowed to go out in the evening and take the air outside the house before going to bed. Thus one evening, the missionary overheard the following conversation: it was Easter Tuesday, we had just learned of the death of Bishop Daveluy.

"The satellites," said little Anna, a 12-year-old child, "the satellites roam all the countryside and look for the Father who is hidden here. They are also looking for all the Christians: thus lately they have taken a whole village; they tied up all the women, one after the other; they took them to the city, where they were beaten to make them say that they were not Christians.

"Soon they will come to take the Father with papa and mamma; we will also be taken away, we will be told: Renounce religion, or else I will cut you into pieces. What will we do?"

"Me," said the older one, "I'll say: do as you like, I'll follow Papa's example, I won't renounce the good Lord."

"But they'll cut off your head!"

"Well, I'll go to the good Lord," repeated this charming child.

"And you, Augustine?"

"I," replied Augustine, "will say to the mandarin: 'I want to go to heaven; if you were a Christian, you would also go to heaven. But why do you kill Christians? They don't hurt anyone. If you put them to death, you will go to hell.'"

Then Anna, hugging her two brothers in her arms, said to them:

"Good, very good, we must not renounce the good Lord, we will all die, and we will go to heaven with papa and mamma and the Father. But for that we have to pray to the good Lord,

because we will be hurt a lot. They will tear out our hair, our teeth, our hands; they will hit us with a big stick, and the Father says that if we haven't prayed well, we won't be able to stand it. So let's say our rosary."

Anna and Venant (the eldest boy) immediately began to pray.

This little girl, who found eloquent words in her heart to exhort her brothers, was educated and pious. Besides the knowledge ordinary to Christians, she knew quite well the history of the Old and New Testaments and could talk about Abraham and Joseph, whose story interested her very much. One day she went to find the Father and said to him:

"I know my catechism, my morning and evening prayers, the mysteries of the Rosary, the Way of the Cross—like adults. I also recite the acts before and after Confession and Communion; I also know the symbol of Saint Athanasius. What else can I learn? Tell me."

Her father was worthy of her. One day when the Creed of Saint Athanasius was read before him, which is very well translated into Korean, he suddenly made this comment:

"*Kereun nyang pau*. Here is a nobleman who had wit! he says everything in very few words, has not omitted anything and it is not long."

What an example this humble family, become poor to remain faithful to God, gives to so many Christians who forget in the sweetness of an easy life the study of religion and the greatness of their duties! (*Semaine religieuse de Vannes*. Biographical note on Mgr Ridet by M. l'abbé Nicol.)

"I spent forty-five days in this retreat, envying the fate of our martyrs, doing penance for my sins which deprived me of the happiness of sharing their fate and above all meditating on these words: "Thy will be done on the earth as in heaven"! I had been able to find *Le Parfum de Rome* and in rereading these beautiful pages in my long days of leisure, I found in them striking pictures of our present state. Are we not, in Korea, in the time of the catacombs?"

However, it was necessary to think of leaving this asylum, which every day became less safe.

Andrew began by sheltering his wife and children.

Nothing is more touching than his paternal recommendations, and despite the loneliness and destitution of these poor Christians, nothing more solemn than their farewells which could be the last.

"My dear Anna," said this good father to his daughter, "it is for you that I fear the most; always cling to your mother, don't leave her. If they take her to put her to death, say that you want to die with her, that you will always be a Christian."

"Yes, Dad, I promise you," replied the little girl. Then she knelt down, bowed respectfully to her father, whose heart was deeply moved; but his impassive noble Korean face showed nothing.

Venant, the eldest of the boys, had already placed himself in front of his father.

"You," he said to him, you are the eldest, take good care of your sister and your little brothers, obey your mother, and above all, oh! never renounce your baptism."

Venant bowed silently. When he rose, one could read on his face that an energetic resolution had been taken, and that he would be faithful to his father's recommendations.

Then it was Augustine's turn, and finally the mother's.

"Courage," said Andrew to his wife, "I commend our children to you, above all make them good Christians. Put all your trust in God, he will not abandon us."

- Yes, replied the courageous Christian, "we will place all our trust in God. He alone can save us. As for you, always accompany the Father, do not abandon him. May God protect you!"

Such were the farewells of these Christians whose hearts were broken. Everyone thought they were going to martyrdom, everyone encouraged each other and veiled their pain.

For some time past Providence had placed another Christian in the service of M. Ridet. His name was Gang, and he fulfilled the perilous and delicate function of courier. He was a man

of great energy, full of prudence and discretion. It was he who discovered M. Féron's retreat and allowed the two missionaries to meet again. Since the departure from Jinpat, he directed all the journeys. Knowing all the roads, even the smallest paths, he always walked ahead, his ears straining, his eyes on the lookout. His scorched face, his fixed stare, gave him a somewhat terrible air, which shielded him from all suspicion. This rugged Christian, of noble stock, had become a poor volunteer; he had left his wife and his children, and every day exposed himself to a cruel death, to preserve, as he liked to say, "a Father in the Church of Korea."

One day when he was wandering the roads to learn the news, while doing the job of mending old hats, he met John Choe, nicknamed the Little Old Man. After a fairly long conversation, the two finally recognized each other.

"I," said the latter, "I live with Father Gwon (M. Féron)."

"And I," replied Gang, "I know Father Yi's hiding place, I am his courier."

M. Féron was hidden seven leagues from M. Ridel. The meeting was decided. The meeting place was a Christian village located halfway, on top of a high mountain. Preparations for departure were hastened, and the guest whom they were about to leave was urged to remove all compromising objects from his house. But unfortunately his negligence in conforming to these wise prescriptions soon brought great misfortunes upon him and his family.

We set off. The courier went ahead to show the way, the Father came next, and Andrew brought up the rear. The missionary, who had not been out for more than two months, found himself quite incapable of climbing these steep mountain paths.

"Every moment," he said, "we took a wrong step and put our foot next to the right place. The darkness of the night enveloped us like a shroud. We had to walk on the small roads that intersect the rice fields. We had great difficulty in maintaining ourselves on this narrow path; several times we slipped on the muddy ground. Soon we lost sight of our route, and here we were, Andrew and I, splashing about in the middle of the rice field, sinking as we made an effort to get up.

"The driver extends his stick and fishes us out; thus we can rejoin the path, and all keeping in line by our sticks, we follow each other without fear of separating, and thus cross this dangerous passage."

During this time, Andrew consoled the Father by saying to him: "Our too white clothes bothered me a lot. Why white clothes when you want to hide at night? at least we just gave them a shade we can't complain about."

The fugitives soon arrived at the top of a mountain. The sky cleared little by little and was dotted with stars. Old Gang ordered a halt. In this wild, inaccessible place, they could only meet the persecuted.

At this moment, the missionary felt bitterness and sadness invade his soul. His gaze plunged into the night, towards the south. He seemed to see again there those long paths which he had sprinkled with his sweat, and on which he had often left the bloody imprint of his feet. He foresaw the tortures of the soul and the body of these poor Christians, his own, whom he had given birth to Jesus Christ at the cost of so much pain. He remembered their joy at his arrival among them. With what resignation they accepted the heaviest trials when he showed them heaven beyond the earth!

How dear were these mountains covered with snow and so difficult of access, these mountains which reminded him only of fatigue and suffering! There was his homeland, there was his family: to leave them was exile, and his broken heart guessed that the exile would be long. The appearance of an enormous tiger came to tear her away from these sweet memories. The animal, astonished to meet such a company, uttered a horrible mew which made the mountain resound, and disappeared: "It's funny," said Andrew, lighting his pipe, "though you're afraid of men, you're not afraid of tigers." The guide thought it prudent to flee as quickly as possible.

Andrew was right, they had not so much to fear from the ferocity of the tigers as from the fury of men. However, a trifle could give them away: the sound of the pebbles they rolled under their feet, the dry grass they rustled.

It was especially at the entrance to each of the villages that had to be crossed that the situation became more perilous. We know, in fact, that the Koreans feed on the flesh of the dog, and that each family, for this purpose, feeds a large number of them. So hardly had they entered the smallest hamlet when they heard themselves greeted by a fanfare of barking.

After strong alarms, they finally arrived at the end of their peregrination, at two o'clock in the morning. What happiness and what joy for the two missionaries! They embrace and fall on their knees to thank God. Neither of them hoped to see each other again. From now on they would be two to console and support each other in the midst of this collapse of the most cheerful hopes.

Until then, having received no news from M. Calais, they believed him to be dead in the mountains, and thought they were the only survivors of the Korean missionaries.

The first impressions having passed, M. Féron related his adventures and the difficulties he had had to overcome during those troubled days. Escaped as if by a miracle from the search of the pagans, hunted down by them on all sides, wandering from mountain to mountain, he had arrived at this village, where he had received the most cordial hospitality. He had lost everything, even his breviary. All he had left were the poor clothes that were rotting on his body. "I can say," added M. Ridel's worthy companion, "that I walked from miracle to miracle, going where I didn't want to, not going where I wanted to. Oh! in a dark and suffocating hiding place, that one feels close to the good Lord! one would not gladly exchange such an existence for any other."

The missionaries' retreat was safe. The Christian woman who offered them this shelter, despite her destitution, despite the danger she was running, felt so happy and so proud of the deposit which the Lord entrusted to her care, that they remained there for nearly two months.

The provisions of rice were soon exhausted, it was necessary to resort to barley which was still very green. The poor Christians of the hamlet made it their food, but with the best will, European stomachs refused to support such food. M. Féron had quite a bit of money, but it was impossible to get rice; never, in this moment of famine, could a poor man have bought any in the village without arousing suspicion.

People of this condition usually do not have enough money for it; they must content themselves with grassy millet or barley, or, in the meantime, tighten their belts; this is called, in Korea, the barley passage, the spring famine.

Here, on this subject, is a little anecdote that M. Ridel told later: One day, the queen mother had brought together the young girls of the great families for a competition. She wanted to know which one had the most spirit, in order to call her to the honor of marrying the crown prince. The Koreans report that there was among them a young girl who shone with her spirit. Among other questions, the queen proposed this:

What is the most difficult passage to cross? as we would say in French: what is the most difficult cape to turn round?

The young girl answered: it is the barley passage.

The queen mother and all present were amazed at this response. Because in fact, in Korea, when the rice is exhausted and you have to wait without any provisions until the barley harvest, that is to say several weeks, this passage is very difficult.

About June 15, the two missionaries received a courier who had been looking for them for a long time. It was M. Calais who sent him to them, to inform them that he was still living, and to indicate to them the place of his residence.

He, too, had experienced the most extraordinary adventures. Pursued, tracked, living for eight days in an impenetrable thicket, a veritable den of tigers, spending the night under the

stars, sleeping on the bare earth, and feeding on grasses and roots which he gathered from the mountains, even arrested twice, he was surprised to still be alive.

From then on, the missionaries were able to correspond with each other. By mutual agreement, they decided that one of them would go to China to bring the news of these serious events, to ask for other confreres to replace the martyrs, and to collect all the help that was needed.

Chapter IX

M. Ridel is ordered to return to China. - Dangers of departure. - The Korean crew. - The Korean junk. - Arrival at Chefoo. - Astonishment of the Koreans. - Bishop Ridel informs Admiral Roze of the Massacre of the missionaries.

According to the regulations of the Foreign Missions Society, M. Féron, the oldest of the three surviving missionaries, became the head of Christianity. As such, he reserved the honor of remaining among the Christians to support and encourage them, and begged M. Ridel to return to China.

The missionary received with tears the order to leave his dear Korea; but God spoke, he obeyed.

They immediately set about finding a boat to cross the sea; for a long time all their searching was in vain. Moreover, too much insistence addressed to the pagans presented the danger of arousing their suspicions. The missionaries were already in despair when Providence offered them the opportunity they were looking for. They learned, in fact, that some Christians in the neighborhood of the capital, believing all the Fathers to be dead, had formed the project of going to China themselves to announce what had just happened. The junk was ready: they were to leave as soon as they had collected the necessary money for the provisions. The missionaries immediately informed these generous Christians that one of the Fathers would be on the trip and that he would bear all the expenses of the boat.

The preparations were soon completed, and rendezvous given in Naepo, at the bottom of that gulf which Admiral Roze, a few days later, baptized with the name of Prince Jerome.

To reach the place of embarkation, it was necessary to cross the district of Gongju to the city of Onyang. M. Ridel took eight days, or rather eight nights, to cover this journey, which was nothing but a long series of alarms and difficulties. Arrived at the village of Pang-ha-si-ko, he took leave of M. Féron, and of poor Andrew, who was detained by an illness. It was with a broken soul that he received their farewell.

“I was leaving,” he wrote a few days later, “with the hope of returning soon; Andrew, whose family was safe, shared the same hope. Alas! How inscrutable are the designs of God! who would have thought then that I would remain so long away from this dear mission? who would have thought that I would never see that brave Andrew again, who, two years later, died for God in the prisons of Seoul? who would have thought that the persecution would redouble in violence and drench the blood of a multitude of Christians in this poor land of Korea?”

The satellites were everywhere, guarding all the roads; the customs were more vigilant than ever and the soldiers of the capital requisitioned the boats to transport the materials intended for the palace that the terrible regent was building. There were so many dangers that had to be avoided.

The missionary hid in the bottom of the boat. The Christians who were to accompany the Father set sail long before dawn; but the wind did not blow, and for three days the missionary remained in his hiding place, deprived of air and movement. Because at any moment the satellites might appear and hail the fugitives.

Finally, little by little, they come out of these islands which border Korea, and the last lands disappear in the distance.

Never had the companions of the Father made such a journey. They saw only the sky and the immensity of the seas; the poor sailors gazed in amazement at this vast horizon. “But Father,” they said, “when we get there at the end, what will become of us? won’t we fall into the abyss?”

These naive reflections give us an idea of the missionary’s crew. Let’s take a look at the ship he commands.

It does not resemble those beautiful French vessels which sail the seas and carry far away the power and the wealth of our country. Nor does it resemble those Chinese junks built so solidly that they can resist the fury of the winds and face the storms so frequent in these parts. Imagine a boat made entirely of fir, the nails of wood, not a single piece of iron in its construction: sails of woven grass, ropes of straw, a wooden anchor with a stone at the end to make it sink; the slightest wave dismantles the rudder, and the diligence of two Koreans is not enough to remove the water which enters from all sides through the cracks. How will this miserable raft be able to cross this sea so often upset by the storm and land on the shores of China? M. Ridel will tell us:

“At the time of departure, I called my nacelle “the *Saint-Joseph*”, and I fixed on the mast a large medal which I carried on me. I put the Blessed Virgin at the helm and Saint Anne in lookout. For any nautical instrument we had only a small compass; I taught our pilot how to use it. I had no map, but I knew the latitude of our starting point and I also remembered that of Chefoo where I wanted to land. It was very vague, but we were counting on Providence.

On the second night we had a gust of wind that pushed us a long way in the right direction; the wind blew in spurts from right and left. The sea swelled and hit the sides of the boat. The masts, shaken violently, groaned under the strain of the sails; the rudder barely resisted; the ship creaked and filled with water; you couldn't see a stone's throw away in the dark, and a torrential rain was pouring down. It was only a gale, but for our skiff it was a real storm. The following night we again ran into the same dangers. I admired the courage of my pilot. He remained the two nights at his post, not wanting to give up his place before the storm had passed, and faithfully following the direction I had given him.

Finally the wind stops, the clouds dissipate, all that remains is the rolling, and soon the east on fire makes us predict a beautiful day. Where were we? where had we been pushed by the storm? This was the question we asked ourselves when a sailor pointed out a black spot; little by little it grows bigger; it is land in the direction we had taken; no doubt, it's China. Then a European ship is reported; it comes toward us. I order to pass close by, and I hoist a tricolor which I had taken care to prepare before leaving Korea. It was a fine three-master; I have since learned that it was from Saint-Malo, and came from Chefoo. As I pass, I give him a very big haloo. The captain, who was watching us attentively, very surprised to see the French flag flying on such a singular boat, which was not even Chinese, answered me in the most gracious manner; then on his order the flag is put up. I waited anxiously; it was the flag of France; three times it rises and falls to greet us. Impossible to describe to you what passed in my heart. Poor missionary, for six years I had not seen any compatriots, and at this moment, lost in the middle of the seas, without knowing the route, I would have liked to join this ship; but her sails, swollen by a favorable wind, had already carried her a great distance.

“It was a great consolation for us. All my sailors who had never seen a ship were in awe. “Father, are these Christians? Oh! what fine canvas they use to make “sails!” how beautiful it is! how big! Is this ship from your nation? If he came to our land, everyone would run away; it would take our country and force the king to give freedom of religion.”

“Soon I recognized the coast; it was the port of Weihai, from where I had left six years before. We were on the coast of Shandong, in the direction of Chefoo, where I wanted to go. We had therefore arrived in a straight line, as well as the best ship could have done with all her nautical instruments. How good a pilot is the Blessed Virgin! We only had a few leagues left, but the contrary wind did not allow us to land that day.

“On July 7 in the morning, we saw the port, and at noon we anchored among the European ships. We went down surrounded by a crowd of Chinese who made us procession and looked with astonishment at our strange costume.”

The news M. Ridel brought produced a great sensation in the European colony, where he found the warmest reception. He had hardly landed when a rich Catholic merchant, M.

Fergusson, offered him the most cordial hospitality. The Korean sailors were delighted; they never tired of contemplating this newly built European house. "If the King of Korea, they said, had such a palace! Father, are the churches bigger...?"

But their admiration knew no bounds when they entered the interior; the beds, the chairs, the armchairs, the use of which they had to be taught, were marvels to them. Why, they asked in amazement, why bridges to lie down and to sit on, but the floor is not pierced? A mirrored wardrobe obtained the greatest success; it was a veritable mystification, some advancing, retreating, or else gesticulating, laughing heartily, while others made sure that there was no room behind, nor any hidden personage.

A few days later, at Tianjin, Admiral Roze was much astonished to see a man dressed as a Korean come towards him, whose emaciated features announced long privations. His astonishment redoubled when he heard this man dressed in such a strange fashion speak to him the language of his country and say to him: "Admiral, I am French, a missionary from Korea. On the orders of my superior I fled this country on a small boat, to announce to you that, by the command of the King of Korea, nine Frenchmen, my Bishop, his coadjutor and seven of my colleagues, were massacred, under the one and only pretext that they were Europeans and Christians. Of the whole mission in Korea there are only three missionaries left, Fathers Féron and Calais, hunted down at this moment like wild beasts, and the one who has the honor of bringing you this painful news."

The officers surrounded the missionary with respect and care; the admiral received him with the greatest kindness and promised to go immediately to the assistance of the two French missionaries who were exposed to death.

He was getting ready to leave, when the commander of the squadron, M. de la Grandière, sent for him to Lower Cochinchina to put down a revolt which had just broken out there. Nevertheless, he promised to make the projected expedition on his return,

M. Ridel returned to Chefoo, where he remained until the middle of August. At that time, the Koreans who had brought him expressed the desire to return to their country. He let eight of them go, and with the other three went to Shanghai to await events. Three weeks later, Admiral Roze having learned that the insurrection was appeased, invited him to go to Chefoo and to be ready to accompany him to Korea.

He left in haste, and arrived on September 10 on board the frigate *La Guerrière*. A few days later he was heading back to Seoul.

Poor missionary! his life is agitated like the foam on the surface of the wave, like the withered leaf that the autumn wind pushes and repels. Again he moves away from the shores of China; he will see again his beloved mission. His heart then expands, blossoms and finds these inimitable accents: "O my Korea! blessed land, land watered with the blood of martyrs! I left you for a moment for the good Lord, I'm coming back, I'm coming back. May I, in my turn, become for you a pleasant-smelling burnt offering!"

Alas! many times he had to approach the shore and salute the mountains of this inhospitable land from afar before entering it.

Chapter X

French expedition to Korea. - For the first time, Mass is celebrated freely there. - Aspect of the environs of Seoul. - The official narrative. - The truth. - Results of the expedition. - M. Ridel goes away a second time from his mission. - The news of the latest events in Korea reaches the Foreign Missions Seminary.

This expedition, which promised such fine results, was disastrous for the mission, as well as for the honor and prestige of France in the East. It had been decided that the corvette the *Primauguet*, the sloop the *Déroulède* and the gunboat the *Tardif* would make a first reconnaissance on the coasts of Korea.

The Admiral took M. Ridel as interpreter and his three Koreans as pilots. Under the guidance of these three sailors, who thoroughly knew all the nooks and crannies of the coast, the exploration began on the 21st of September.

They anchored near the Boisée Island, opposite the village of Hap-Kotji. The officers were amazed at the aspect of the country: a large plain very well cultivated and covered with rice fields, numerous villages, and a league to the northwest, a great wall which connects the mountains where lies the city of Ganghwa⁷.

You could see a few forts fairly well situated, and on the shore rusty cannons, without carriages, but no soldiers; which did not give a brilliant idea of the means of defense of this poor people.

The frightened population had fled; a few more courageous individuals returned, others followed them, and soon they arrived in crowds to contemplate these strange ships which, without sails and without oars, went up the very rapid current and advanced with fire. They also examined, with genuine childlike curiosity, the officers who had come ashore, ecstatic over the blue eyes and red beards of some of them; touching their clothes, admiring their stripes and their golden buttons. They were especially very surprised to see that the Europeans were not ferocious beasts, but simply men like them.

By September 23, all sightings were complete; they were certain that the river was navigable for the fleet. It was a Sunday. At ten o'clock in the morning, M. Ridel dressed in sacerdotal vestments, went up to the altar which had just been improvised on the *Déroulède*, and celebrated holy Mass. Around the altar, with fixed bayonets, was ranged the guard of honor; then, at the head of their sailors, stood the admiral and the officers of the squadron. Soon the cannon thundered, the bugles sounded in the fields, and the white host, the spotless Lamb who takes away the sins of the world, rose above the bowed heads. It was the first time that the Holy Sacrifice was celebrated freely in the Kingdom of Korea.

Two days later, on approaching Seoul, near the village of Pong-a-Koti, it was noticed that junks had been placed to block the river; two or three cannonballs made a passage, without causing any further harm.

From there, on the mountains which surround the capital, one could see the inhabitants whom the noise of the cannon had attracted. Dressed in their fine clothes, they came to watch the arrival of the ships from the West. The variety of their blue, white, red costumes offered a charming sight to the eye; they looked like vast baskets of flowers thrown here and there on the green grass of the hillsides. From bottom to top of this vast amphitheater ranged many thatched-roof hamlets, mandarin villas, pagodas and graceful tomb sites.⁸

⁷ This city is one of the four great citadels which defend Seoul; the Koreans regard it as impregnable, and in time of war, the king makes it his refuge. That is why on the coast of the island, on the mainland side, a high wall has been erected, and on both sides of the river are multiple forts.)

⁸ The main part of the religion of Korean scholars, the only one faithfully practiced by the vast majority of the population, is ancestor worship.

The crew was in awe of this magnificent panorama, when from the shore, a cannon shot rang out. The admiral ordered the response, and a simple discharge silenced the miserable Korean batteries.

A little further on, almost under the walls of the capital, great was the astonishment of our sailors. Behind huge rocks, at one of the bends in the river, they saw a whole people waiting impatiently for the passage of European ships. These brave people had not heard the sound of the cannon; far from manifesting hostile intentions, they seemed joyful and multiplied their demonstrations of friendship.

Since the massacre of the missionaries, the Regent had exercised the most odious tyranny in Korea; by his orders Korean blood flowed freely. This is why the people, on the arrival of our ships, did not hide their joy, they hailed our sailors as liberators.

At this moment the capital was defenceless; a handful of men could have taken it almost without firing a shot. But the admiral had neither sufficient forces nor ammunition. He had soundings carried out, heights taken, plans drawn up, directions taken: that was the goal of this first trip.

On September 30, the ships were setting sail for China, when a Korean boat docked at the *Déroulède*. The sailors who had taken M. Ridel to Chefoo came to join him and tell him of the misfortunes of Christianity. The famine claimed many victims every day, and since the appearance of the fleet in the waters of Seoul, the persecution redoubled in violence.

The order was given to carry out the most minute searches to seize the missionaries who remained in the kingdom, and to put to death all the Christians and their relatives, without referring to the capital.

M. Ridel foresaw the misfortunes which the departure, even momentary, of the three gunboats would bring; he communicated his legitimate apprehensions to the admiral, and begged him to leave at least one of the ships pending the return of the fleet. The presence of a single gunboat would intimidate the Korean government; but his representations had no effect.

On October 3, they were again in the port of Chefoo.

While these events were taking place, MM. Féron and Calais, informed of the arrival of the French vessels and believing in a definitive expedition, tried to put themselves in communication with their colleague. Unfortunately, when they arrived on the coast, they learned of the departure of the fleet. Any return being impossible for them, they had with pain to take the road to China, where they landed on October 26, after having run many dangers. But by this time M. Ridel had left again for Korea, accompanying Admiral Roze who, it was thought, at the head of all his forces, would call the Regent to account for the blood he had shed.

If official dispatches are to be believed, this expedition was only a series of victories and did not cost France the life of any soldier.

Choosing a burial place is a major matter for any Korean; for people in high positions, you could say that this is their main concern. They are convinced that on this choice depends the fate of their family and the prosperity of their race, and they spare no effort to find a suitable place. Also, geoscopes and soothsayers, who specialize in this study, abound in the country.

When the place of burial is chosen and the body has been laid there, it is forbidden for anyone to bury it there, lest fortune pass to his side, and the prohibition extends to a more or less considerable distance, according to the degree of authority of the one who establishes it. For the Tomb of the Kings, the reserved land extends several leagues all around, and includes the surrounding mountains from which the tomb can be seen. For their part, the great and the noble take up as much space as possible; they plant trees there which it is forbidden to cut down, and which, in time, become veritable forests. If someone manages to bury stealthily on a mountain already occupied by others, this mountain becomes, in the eyes of the law, the property of the last burial. Hence quarrels, brawls, violent hatreds, which, like all Korean hatreds, are transmitted from generation to generation. (Introduction to the History of the Church of Korea by M. l'abbé Dallet, tome I, pag. cxliii.)

On December 27, 1866, the *Moniteur* published this magnificent bulletin: "Rear-Admiral Roze, at the head of all his forces, presented himself before Ganghwa, a town surrounded by a crenellated wall four meters high. Arrived within a hundred meters of the main gate, our troops were received by a rather lively fusillade, but the wall was scaled to the cry of: Long live the Emperor! and the enemy left us masters of the place."

"A large number of guns, more than ten thousand rifles, ammunition of all kinds were found in huge stores and demonstrate the importance of the place."

On January 7, 1867, the same newspaper said again:

"The Rear-Admiral having wanted to ascertain the state of the country, a detachment left the town and encountered, a few kilometers away, a large number of Koreans, entrenched in a fortified pagoda; the enemy, who had made a sortie, was repulsed and hastened to return to their intrenchments, abandoning their dead. After a very lively fusillade, in which we had no man killed, but which unfortunately cost us a few wounded, the column returned in the evening to Ganghwa."

The dispatch ends as follows:

"The ruin of Ganghwa, an important place of war, the destruction of the powder magazines and the public establishments that this city contained, must have proved to the Korean government that the murder of the French missionaries did not go unpunished."

Alas! the official account is far from conforming to that of the various eyewitnesses before us.

Here is the truth, they say:

On October 11, the admiral again left Chefoo, and on the 13th the whole squadron anchored near Boisée Island, opposite the village of Hap-Kotji. The landing took place as in a friendly country; in the village our sailors met only old men and children. All the forts built on the coast were absolutely empty. It was decided to seize Ganghwa, the capital of the island. As a result, Commandant d'Osery was ordered to reconnoitre the area as far as the capital. It was a walk. The little column advanced as far as the big city, traversed the country, and returned unmolested.

The next day, October 16, took place the brilliant feat of arms recounted by the *Moniteur*. The admiral set out at the head of all his forces. A kilometer from the town he sent scouts who advanced over the tops of the hills. The troops rested for some time and then resumed their march slowly and cautiously. We examined the walls, the hills and the ravines; and ready to attack, they were waiting with some anxiety, when suddenly Captain de Chabanne, sword at his side, both hands in his pockets, appeared on the walls and shouted: "You can come, there is nobody." We then knocked down the leaves of the door, we demolished a bit of masonry, no doubt to simulate an attack. But the scaling of the walls, and above all the lively fusillade, is only a piece of bravado set up by the admiral.

The town of Ganghwa taken, it was evident that the Koreans were unprepared; it was therefore necessary, without wasting time, to head for Seoul. In the French camp several officers thought it better to stop and wait for the proposals of the Korean government. Their advice prevailed and we went on the defensive.

Meanwhile, the Koreans were gathering an army and weapons. The admiral, hearing of these hostile dispositions, resolved to push for a new reconnaissance in the direction of Tongtsin, on the continent.

On October 25, a company of sixty men was sent for this purpose; it reached the mainland opposite the gate of Seoul. This is the name given to a stone arch, ogival in shape, surmounted by a Chinese pagoda roof, which commands the head of the road to the capital. Around this gate there is a village and fortifications. Armed Koreans guarded them. But at that time the French officers regarded the Koreans as unserious men, to such an extent that they had even neglected to communicate to the commander of the detachment the report which the

Christians had made the day before.

No sooner had the boats arrived in front of this fortified gate than the Koreans, who had been hiding until then, taking advantage of the slowness of the landing, fired with all their guns on the soldiers huddled together in a boat, wounded two and killed three. As soon as the detachment was on the ground, it captured the position and killed 25 men of the enemy. The rest of the Korean troops reached the steep mountains which dominate the village with surprising agility.

This first experience should have served; unfortunately, the chiefs took no notice of it. A few days later, and in a similar situation, they allowed themselves to be defeated, and, what no one ever understood, they didn't even try to repair it.

One day, some Christians informed M. Ridel that three hundred tiger hunters, skilful marksmen, had locked themselves in a fortified pagoda on the island of Ganghwa⁹ and that the next day, five hundred others would go to join them. The missionary hastened to warn the admiral. The powder kegs were immediately blown up, and considerable stores of arms were destroyed. In the two branches of the river which separate the island from the mainland, all the junks were burned. The same day one hundred and sixty men left to attack this position. It had been decided that we would take a few small pieces of artillery, but, surprisingly, at the moment of departure, the admiral changed his mind.

The pagoda in question is placed in a ravine, in the center of a circle of steep mountains whose heights vary from one hundred to three hundred meters.

The peaks of these mountains are connected by strong walls four meters high. The column arrived from the right of the road, and, which will give an idea of the complete illusion of the leaders, is that the small expeditionary troop took up position on the right flank, a hundred yards from the walls, without the simplest precaution being taken to send a few men on reconnaissance.

As soon as the soldiers were within walking distance, the Koreans fired a general volley which wounded thirty-three men. "The bullets," said M. Ridel, "went whistling in all directions, at our feet and over our heads. I turned away and saw almost everyone lying down: everyone was hiding where they could to take shelter and wait for the shooting to end; I did the same."

The surprise had thrown our soldiers into disorder, and the officers, five of whom were wounded, were barely able to rally a few fugitives and form a corps of skirmishers to protect the retreat.

The ensign attached to the artillery of the third corps had his right arm broken, his head plowed by a biscayan, and escaped only by a miracle from the Koreans, who attempted three sorties to seize him.

The small column was therefore forced to retreat and march for six hours, carrying off all its wounded. Fortunately, the Koreans did not dare leave their intrenchments, nor continue the pursuit in the middle of the ravines; without that, it is probable that not a Frenchman would have returned from this expedition. From the top of their ramparts, they witnessed the departure of the small troop, which looked like a convoy of wounded. At this sight, they uttered exclamations and savage cries, to congratulate themselves on their triumph over the barbarians of the West.

The day following this disastrous affair, the equipment was embarked, the city of Ganghwa burned, the evacuation decided! In the eyes of the Koreans, this departure looked very much like a flight. Indeed, it was not with a view to such a prompt retreat that ovens had been built which were used only once or twice, and that defense works had been undertaken,

⁹ This pagoda is actually a veritable small stronghold inhabited by monk soldiers. There are several kinds of bonzes in Korea: the scholarly bonzes, who take care of the composition of books and study the rites and ceremonies of the country, the mendicant bonzes, and the military bonzes, who make gunpowder, melt the cannons, make or supervise the construction of the walls (Note of M. Ridel.)

both in the city and on the neighboring hills.

On learning of this sudden resolution, the officers experienced a painful feeling. But their astonishment became real amazement when they read the agenda. They were told that they had covered themselves with glory and that the Korean expedition would count among the military memories. Assuredly the admiral was polite; but he would have done much better to lower the French flag and hide his face under a veil of mourning.

We remember the report of the *Moniteur*; it said in conclusion: "The Koreans will know that it is not with impunity that they put our missionaries to death." If the Korean *Monitor* had published an article on the same subject, it would no doubt have said: "The barbarians of Europe, the mandarins of the three-colored nation, will know that it is not with impunity that they approached our shores with their fiery junks. We Koreans forced them to get back on their ships faster than they got off." In that case, which of the two Monitors would have written the truth?

This flight of an entire squadron is still an obscure problem, difficult to clear up. However, it is certain that the Commander-in-Chief took upon himself all the responsibility for this expedition, for the advice of the Minister of Marine only reached him on the day when his troops had been so unhappy.

The ministerial dispatch said: "Since you are undertaking this business it is good, but do not engage the government." After reading this document the admiral added: "What I have done does not bind France; I am leaving."

He left and sounded the victory.

His agenda had just been proclaimed, when five or six unfortunate Koreans came to the Father, and told him that the persecution was raging even more violently. Already, all the Christians in their village, their wives and children had been massacred.

However, this was only the prelude to new misfortunes which were about to descend on this unhappy Christendom. The rage of the persecutors knew no bounds when they saw the ships of the West disappearing over the horizon. From then on, all legal formalities were dispensed with. All the Christians were dragged into the nearest prisons and immediately strangled. In some localities, the executioner's saber and ax did not work fast enough, so a new instrument of death was employed. It was a kind of guillotine formed of two superimposed beams; the upper beam falling on the other crushed twenty to twenty-five heads at a time. Elsewhere very large pits were dug; the Christians were heaped there alive, one on top of the other, and crushed with large stones; so that they were buried at the same time as they were killed. Let us say right away, without going back to it, that this state of affairs lasted until the end of 1868, and that we can estimate, without fear of a denial, at seven or eight thousand the number of victims of this bloody persecution.

No, never before had any military enterprise been more humiliating for the French flag and more disastrous for a Christian people¹⁰. One can imagine our apostle's grief on learning the Admiral's resolution. "What sadness," he exclaimed, "what cruel anguish seized my soul, when the admiral communicated his will to me! I had just learned that MM. Féron and Calais, after having wandered for a long time on these shores, had finally landed happily at Chefoo."

¹⁰ Here are the names of the warships and officers who took part in this expedition:

1° *La Guerriere*, frigate; commander, Admiral Roze; officers: Messrs. Olivier, d'Osery, Baron, Benezet, Marliave, Human, Despres; La Vieille, commissioner; de Thouars, commanding the Fusiliers of Yokohama; M. Ghabanne de la Palisse, captain.

2° *La Laplace*, corvette; commander, M. Amet; officer, M. de la Salle.

3° *Le Primauguet*, corvette; Commander M. Bochet; officers: Messrs. Laguerre, Lormier, de Courcel, de Cornulier, Pissève.

4° *Le Kien-Chan*, aviso; captain, M. Treve; Lieutenant, M. Fournier.

5° *Le Déroulède*, aviso; captain, M. Richy; Lieutenant, M. Collier.

6° *Le Breton*, gunboat; captain, M. de Cintré.

7° *Le Tardif*, gunboat; Captain, M. Chanoine..

So there was no longer any missionary on this land of Korea! I looked at the coast, I couldn't take my eyes off it. When will we return there? And then what ruins! What will become of our poor Christians? The Regent, exasperated by the attack of the French, puffed up with what seemed to him a dazzling triumph, set everything to fire and sword. I spent some very sad times during the few days we stayed at anchor. My heart was filled with bitterness. The hope of finding my colleagues encouraged me a little. I give up describing their desolation when they knew the state of things."

The events in Korea had a painful repercussion in Europe. The Sovereign Pontiff, Pius IX, on learning of the misfortunes of this desolate mission could not restrain the expression of his sadness. He wrote to the unfortunate neophytes to ease their pain, to encourage them in this cruel ordeal, and to remind them of the rewards promised to those on earth who fight the good fight. This letter from the Vicar of Jesus Christ is a fine title to glory for the Church of Korea. But do we not also find in the words of the Pontiff a shining testimony, rendered to the robust faith and the ardent zeal of him who was to receive the glorious heritage of NN.SS. Berneux and Daveluy?

"For Us," says the Holy Father, "although far away, We will accompany you in spirit in battle, and by Our prayers We will provide you with the greatest help Our weakness will allow. And lest you be deprived any longer of a pastor, like scattered sheep, exposed to greater peril, We will take care, as soon as possible, to replace him who has received the splendid reward due to his labors, by a man with the same zeal and energy."

When M. Ridel's letter, which gave the first details of the events in Korea, reached the Foreign Missions Seminary at the beginning of September, it was vacation time. The aspirants were in Meudon, in the seminary's country house. In the evening, the Superior announced to them that in Korea, nine of their confreres, two bishops and seven missionaries, had shed their blood for Jesus Christ. At this glorious news, a cry of joy burst from all hearts, and immediately the branches of the tall maple trees which protected the statue of the Blessed Virgin, shone with light. The *Te Deum* is sung with the invocation nine times repeated: Queen of martyrs, pray for us, and one of the future missionaries immediately improvises, in honor of the glorious dead, the hymn from which we take the stanza we will read:

.... The sword detached their bowed heads,
The soil has drunk their blood, it has been able to feed on it.
White flowers, flowers of love for heaven harvested,
To the eyes of fools they seemed to die.

O you, admirable firstfruits of Korea,
Under the edge of the iron fallen in the morning,
Guests at the banquet of celestial delights,
Harmonious voices of the endless canticle:

Imbert, Maubant, Chastan, Kim, priestly flowers,
All of you, ears gleaned by the hand of the Lord,
Holy procession, guide their triumphal march,
To the glorious abode of eternal happiness.

Oh ! how sweet it is to drink from your chalice,
O my Jesus!
Oh! how beautiful it is to walk to death,

For your chosen ones!
Happy soldier, I descend into the arena,
Revenge my faith,
I see the chain of my exile fall,
I fly to you.
Land of saints, generous Korea,
Dry your tears,
the era of joy is already prepared
By your misfortunes.
After the night of the dark catacombs
And sighs,
hope shines, and you have it in your graves
Of your martyrs.

Chapter XI

M. Ridel in Shanghai. - Memories and hope. - Works of the missionary in his exile. - Trip to Japan. - Nagasaki. - Return to Shanghai. - The Koreans are building steamships.

The grandeur of the missionary's sacrifice does not escape even the distracted gaze of the crowd. At the moment when he bids his country an eternal farewell, he is not unaware of any of the trials that await him. He knows that at the end of the journey he will find deprivation, suffering, perhaps death; that by carrying the Cross among the infidels, he will be able to redden it with his blood; all this he accepts freely, with joy, considering himself happy to be judged worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus Christ.

But what M. Ridel had not foreseen, what threw his soul into a sadness like that of the Savior during his agony, was to feel his best years wasting far away from all he loved. "Judge whether I must suffer," he wrote at the beginning of 1867; "I am not in Brittany and I am not in Korea. Brittany and Korea have all my affections, Leave Brittany for Korea, Korea for heaven!

"Now I am exiled from this land for which I gave up everything. That earth repels me and rejects me, nevertheless it is always towards it that my gaze and my heart turn. If we still have to wait a long time, despite the annoyances, the disgust, the difficulties of such a situation, I will wait with patience, because there is the post that heaven has entrusted to me; there are the children that God has given me, children that I always carry in my heart, and I can neither console them nor see them again. However, these unhappy children, oh! I love them! Willingly I would give all my blood to find myself in their midst, to alleviate their misery and show them the way to paradise."

The days, the months go by, the missionary's concern is always the same. His dear mission is the sole object of his thoughts and labors.

When they learned in Brittany of his exile and the deterioration of his health, they traced to him in the most cheerful colors the charms of the native country, they reminded him that there were always open arms and hearts there which were waiting. On this occasion the holy missionary let his heart speak and revealed himself completely.

"I haven't forgotten anything, I can still see the path we traveled together, those paths that the main roads have cut, that the railways have spoiled. These rocks, these shores, these old trees, I salute them from here; but this transformation of which you speak to me freezes me with terror. These meadows, these fields, witnesses of our childish games, the main road to the church that we followed so often in the company of our mother, this house where we spent such happy days, everything is changed or destroyed. The big stone, the little wall, the big walnut tree, the willows, even the fragrant air of the fields, everything has disappeared.

"Already I would seem like a foreigner, and then what to do there? Oh! to hold you close to my heart, and to weep over tombs! But you know, between two equally dear friends, I have never hesitated to give myself entirely to the most unfortunate.

"Do you understand now? Being away from a friend you know is happy is sad, but bearable. To be far from a friend who one knows is unhappy, without being able to share his pain, do you know a more poignant pain? Poor Korean Christians, unhappy orphans, no Father to console them, to provide for the needs of their souls! Do you understand the bitterness of my soul? You are Christians, generous, well! say now: where should my place be, my position as a soldier of Jesus Christ? These dear neophytes call me father; I feel a mother's heart for them, does a mother abandon her children in misfortune? The lioness whose young have been taken away to be locked up in an iron cage comes, at night, to prow around to free them, and when she has recognized her helplessness, she lies down beside them, and feeds on their seen. But she is a lioness, and I am a priest, a priest of Jesus Christ!

"So what is left for me to do? Wait; and when the time comes, return to this mission and

work there; like a good plowman, to clear the field which the thorns will have invaded; like a good doctor, to heal the wounds of these poor souls, like a good mother, to teach them, to love them.”

The missionary accepts this new trial without uttering the slightest complaint, the slightest murmur, and yet what a trial for him! Isn't it the torture of the brave soldier who is condemned to witness the disaster of the country? His instructions are to stay there, motionless, weapon in arm, while the enemy sows ruin, desolation and death before his eyes. Isn't it still the torture of a mother who sees her children perish, who hears their cries of distress and cannot help them? He is a missionary, he feels all the bitterness of it and he tastes none of those joys, none of those consolations which give charm to pain, attraction to danger, flavor to the bread of exile.

Shall we now go into the details of this new phase of his existence? Following the disastrous French expedition to Korea, M. Ridel had come to establish himself at the procurate of Shanghai. He hoped that France would not delay in repairing its failure, and that, on the other hand, America and England would soon avenge the death of their crews thrown by the storm on the Korean coast and cowardly massacred by the inhabitants. He already foresaw, in the near future, international treaties which would open Korea to European commerce, and in which religious freedom would be stipulated. From then on it would be easy for him to return to his mission and begin his life of dedication anew. But many more years were to pass before the object of his desires was realized.

However, nothing could be more natural than this thought of our missionary, and one is astonished that the European nations, France and England above all, have scarcely dreamed, even in our day, of obtaining for their nationals the right to trade freely in Korea, or at least in the ports of this country. (In Korea, there are still today only three ports open to European trade. The rest of the kingdom is absolutely closed to foreigners.) The Japanese have achieved good results. Why should European governments not try to obtain concessions, which we have no doubt would become considerable in a short time? The Korean people are not ill-disposed towards foreigners. They are even much better disposed towards them than the Chinese are; the Korean is less arrogant, less hostile to all kinds of improvement and progress, less fanatical about his pretended superiority over the barbarians who populate the rest of the world. The opposition comes from the government alone, which believes that this isolation and the state of ignorance in which it keeps the masses, is necessary for its maintenance.

In the month of January 1867, M. Ridel saw himself condemned by his state of health to almost complete imprisonment. But for him the hour of rest had not yet come; it would ring only in heaven. His time belonged to God, to his mission; it seemed to him that he had no right to distract a particle from it. He therefore used, for the benefit of the souls entrusted to him, the long hours of suffering, his moments of leisure, as he called them. He simply set about collecting all the documents, all the materials needed to compose a Korean grammar and a Korean-French dictionary. These literary monuments, which were to open the way to Korean philological studies, must have required years of labor, and what labor! The zealous missionary will tell us:

“Here, I am always locked in my room.

“Nothing interests me much in this world. I keep thinking about my dear Korea, and to better keep my thoughts there, I have undertaken the composition of a Korean grammar and that of a Korean-French dictionary. I have already gathered a lot of material; but it is a huge task. It would take months to put it in a slightly useful state, and years to finish it. Despite the difficulties and my few resources, I hope to bring it to a successful conclusion. But what blandness, what aridity! and yet I am so much at work that when I write to my friends, the thought of my work naturally comes to mind; my letters suffer from it and must appear very cold and very dry.”

No grammar had ever been written in Korea for the use of the natives. Under such conditions, M. Ridel had all the more merit in that he had to go into everything on his own.

The following April, he announced that his grammar was completed. Obviously, it was only a draft, but it was already a lot. Thanks to this first work, the three new missionaries MM. Blanc, Martineau and Richard, who came to replace the martyrs, set about studying the language of their mission when they arrived. Thus, their beginning in the apostolic life would become effective as soon as they set foot on Korean soil.

Two months later, a letter from Mgr. Petitjean, vicar apostolic of Japan, informed M. Ridel that several shipwrecked Koreans had been picked up at sea on Japanese junks. They had taken refuge in Nagasaki, and were only waiting for a favorable opportunity to return to their country. On the other hand, it would have been foolhardy to wait any longer for assistance from America or France: neither of them dreamed of raising the honor of its flag. To land in Korea, the missionaries had to rely only on Providence. They decided that MM. Ridel and Martineau would embark for Japan, and that at the same time M. Calais would leave for Chefoo, and go from there to Manchuria. It was necessary to find the means, either to penetrate directly into the mission, or to establish a communication with some Christians; the place and time of a meeting would then be fixed, and all the necessary arrangements would be made to ensure a prompt return.

Our missionary's health had improved a little. He took passage aboard the three-master *Arc-en-ciel*. The venerable bishop of Japan gave him the most fraternal welcome. The two apostles had known each other in Paris ten years previously, and since that time the ties of a closest friendship had never ceased to unite them. At that moment, they were far from dreaming that soon they would find themselves reunited again, but near the tomb of Saint Peter, in the capital of the world.

Scarcely had he arrived than M. Ridel recognized the uselessness of his journey. The Korean castaways were poor inhabitants of Quelpaert, a large island situated about thirty leagues from the mainland. The rumor of the grave events which had agitated their country had scarcely reached their ears, and prudence forbade the missionaries to enter their mission in the wake of these poor pagans. Any attempt to penetrate from the south was therefore abandoned.

Before leaving Japan, will we accept the kind invitation of our missionary? Shall we take a quick look at this vaunted country with him?

"Take an armchair, he tells us, and sit down in front of this balcony. What a charming country! on the right, fifty paces from you, is the church dedicated to Saint Peter the Baptist¹¹ and to his companions in martyrdom; it is the cathedral of Japan. On the left again is the holy hill where the blessed were crucified. Look now, at the top of the hills, these houses which look like real palaces: they are the different consulates and the dwellings of European traders; how they dominate the bonzeries, the pagodas and the humble Japanese houses! You are surprised to see the sidewalks in the middle of the streets here! Can't you guess the reason? It's because no one in Japan, not even the emperor, rides in a carriage.

"Traveling through this country, one would think oneself in the south of Korea: mountains crowned with bamboo groves, fertile valleys covered with rice fields; it's absolutely the same aspect, perhaps here a little more fertility. As for the Japanese, they are far from being what you think in Europe! They are still little children, and especially little minds. I like Koreans better. No one will agree with me, however, who could be a judge? The Korean is stronger than the Japanese, he is cleaner, perhaps poorer, but no less happy, as skilful and more serious, as

¹¹ Saint Peter the Baptist, Franciscan priest and religious, was born in Saint-Estevan, Spain. The Governor of Manila sent him as an embassy to Japan, with four other monks of the same order, in 1593. In the first days of December 1596 he was condemned to death by Taico-Sama, in hatred of the Christian name. At the same time, five other Franciscan monks, seventeen tertiaries of St. Francis and three members of the Society of Jesus had the same honor. Their solemn martyrdom took place on February 5, 1597.

cunning, and no less proud.”

At the beginning of autumn, M. Ridel found himself in Shanghai, entirely devoted to his philological research.

He could not foresee the end of his exile. Also, to break the monotony of his work, and especially to protect his young confreres against the trials of the apostolic life, he recalled his memories and brought them together in a collection entitled: “Information for regulating the conduct of a missionary in Korea.” This little book forms a large part of the “Customary of the Korean Mission” that Bishop Blanc has just had published. This information indicates how to behave during the administration of Christian communities there; they reveal to the missionaries the extent of their task, and acquaint them with the customs and manners of the country which they are evangelizing. A precious advantage, in a country where the variety of uses and forms of etiquette is exceeded only by the susceptibility of the inhabitants.

The reader will perhaps not learn without pleasure what has been going on in Korea since 1866.

Two of the Koreans whom M. Ridel had brought with him to China had left for their country the previous year. After twelve months of absence, they returned to the Celestial Empire and related to the Fathers the following details which are not lacking in interest. We borrow them from a letter from M. Calais.

The Koreans had seen the steamboats of the French squadron. Not doubting their genius, they resolved to build similar ones and even to perfect the European system. Immediately, the workers set to work. The thing seems to them very simple; for evidently what distinguishes a steamboat from an ordinary ship are the wheels and the funnel.

After a whole year of incessant work, in which had taken part a crowd of workmen recruited from among the most skillful in the country, the three famous Korean steamers were launched on the river which bathes the walls of Seoul.

According to the country’s custom, His Korean Majesty only leaves his capital once a year. As it was on the eve of the annual walk, the naturally designated purpose of this walk was a visit to the three recently built boats. The king seemed very anxious to admire them and to give his people the spectacle of a naval battle. Only, to get to the place chosen by the prince, the three ships had to make a league of navigation.

Three junks had been fitted with chimneys and enormous wheels; a whole system of handles and cranks had then been practiced inside. But it was necessary to set the whole thing in motion; that was the difficult part.

At the first signal, a swarm of sailors invaded the sides of the ships, seized the handles of the famous wheels and made every conceivable effort to move them. The steamers stand still. The breathless sailors go back to work, their limbs dripping with sweat. Unnecessary pain. We shout, we examine, we employ all the means that skillful people suggest. The ships persist in an immobility that provokes cries of indignation from some, laughter and mockery from others, the astonishment of all. It was necessary to recognize that the chimney, that the wheels were not very useful in a steamer, and to decide to use cables to drag the famous ships like simple boats. Again, despite all the goodwill that was deployed, it took three long days to get these ships to sail a league, magnificent works of Korean genius!

The boats arrived, the representation of a naval victory was given. An old junk, half-ruined and abandoned on the banks of the river for several years, represents the European fleet; it is agreed. The Korean ships take their measurements: a crate of gunpowder is attached under the hold of the junk to which is fitted a wick sheltered by a long bamboo tube.

The king gives his orders, the fire starts, the fuse is lit. A moment later, the wreckage of the poor junk sank into the waters of the river, to the applause of a delirious crowd.

“Here,” exclaims the king, “is how all the barbarian ships that come to land in my kingdom be treated from now on!” Having said this, the king returns to his palace.

The three ships, decorated with the title of frigates, were still resting on the very scene of their triumph, when in the spring of 1868 an American ship appeared on the shores. Order of the court is dispatched to the three frigates to march against him. Unfortunately, the journey was not short; it was ten leagues at least. So the order was received with repugnance. They set to work. Thanks to numerous aids, thanks to cables of all sizes, the distance was covered in three months. The American steamer had long since left. "Without a doubt," said the Koreans, "they will have been afraid of our frigates."

Today the three ships are under the walls of Ganghwa, and woe to those who approach them too closely!

At the same time that the ministers were thus reforming the navy, they redoubled their violence against the Christians.

It was no longer isolated arrests, but mass proscriptions. It was a question of annihilating any vestige of Christianity. In the provinces, the Christians underwent interrogations and tortures; in the capital, those who were recognized to have been formerly Christians were dispersed, and a large number of the faithful perished of misery. The pagans took advantage of the persecution to take away what little goods they had. A new law ordered all immigrants to present themselves to the Mandarin of the territory where they arrived, so that it would be known whether they were Christians or not.

These difficulties were not to appear insurmountable to the missionaries; far from slowing down their ardor, they inflamed their desire to see their dear neophytes again. They resolved to make a new effort to penetrate into Korea.

Chapter XII

Attempt to return to Korea. - M. Ridel, superior of the mission. - The post of N.-D. des Neiges. - Journey from N.D. des Neiges to Chefoo. - M. Ridel embarks for Korea. - Failure of the Expedition. - M. Ridel is appointed Vicar Apostolic of Korea.

When a king of the earth leads an expedition, he has numerous battalions, formidable squadrons. His murderous engines cast ruin and death afar. What a contrast, my God! The army that comes in the name of Jesus Christ to take over the vast Korean empire has six soldiers. And to plant the standard of their master above the palace of kings and the temples of the gods, these six men have only a cross in their hands and an immense love in their hearts. For many years, the frontiers of Korea will be impassable for them, but they will constantly renew their attempts, because they know that a missionary must return there and raise up the overturned cross, they know that there as in the rest of the universe, Christ must conquer, command and reign.

Such is the touching spectacle given us at this moment by Peter's envoys. Are they not truly imitators of his faith and disciples of his doctrine? They have prayed, their resolution is made and they leave. Will they succeed? it is the secret of God. On June 29, 1868, M. Féron took the road to Passiette (?), in the north of Korea, in order to enter the mission there. At the same time, Messrs. Calais, Martineau and Richard meet in Liaodong to put themselves in communication with the Korean Catholics by the border village of Pien-men.

For his part, M. Ridel arrives at Chefoo with M. Blanc. There, after mature reflection, after having recognized the impossibility of any immediate return by sea, he decided to embark with the three Koreans who accompanied him, in order to determine exactly the place where the Christians should come to meet some fathers. But this project cannot be realized.

At the last moment the Chinese refused to receive in their junks a European whose presence would put their lives in danger on the coasts of Korea.

All these unfortunate setbacks saddened our holy missionary, but did not dampen his courage. A letter he wrote then to one of his friends expresses to us the sentiments of his soul:

"I left everything for Our Lord. It was a great sacrifice at the time of departure; but the abundant consolations which God poured into my heart by the numerous conversions which took place in our mission, the fervor of our Christians, their attachment and their love for the missionary, were, I can say, a great compensation. God seemed to give us a hundredfold what we had left for his glory.

"Suddenly his hand fell upon us: nine of our confreres won the palm and are now crowned in heaven. Why did I not obtain such a grace! It came close, but I was still unworthy of it.

"From then on, driven out, pursued, I became useless, and now that the post of our mission seems to us to be closed in such a cruel way, I am ready, waiting with the weapon in my arm, with the same pleasure as the sentry who only awaits the hour when someone will come to relieve him.

"Anyway, I have never given up hope. It takes time. Suddenly, the time will come when we will be able to repair the ruins of such a desolate mission, bring relief to our Christians, collect the bones of our martyrs, and, if God pleases, walk in their footsteps." (Letter to Father Rolland, Honorary Canon of Nevers.)

The attempts of the other missionaries were no more successful. M. Féron soon had to abandon his post and return to France. God had other battles in store for him on another battlefield. On his departure, the worthy apostle placed in the hands of M. Ridel the office of superior which he had so valiantly fulfilled.

Our holy missionary had always had a very humble idea of his person, and this mark of confidence frightened him. He forgot, no doubt, that the person most capable of commanding

is he who best knows how to obey. On receiving this appointment, he wrote to the directors of the seminary of the Foreign Missions: "I know the pains and the difficulties which will arise, I feel the weight of this new charge, but also I am ready to make all my efforts to fulfill it, following the spirit of Our Lord, until the appointment and arrival of our new Apostolic Vicar, whose presence is becoming more and more necessary."

His first care was to summon all his confreres to a general meeting, in order to seek with them what measures should be taken for the future of the mission. Without delay, he heads for Tcha-keou, a small village in Manchuria that the missionaries have baptized with the name of Notre-Dame des Neiges. It is there, on the frontiers of the mission, that they will henceforth await the favorable hour and opportunity to replace the martyrs and resume their interrupted labors. It is in this humble village, wedged between two high mountains, whose summits rise sheer to the sky, in the middle of the snow, on the edge of the Sa-Heu (?), frozen by a temperature of 22 degrees below zero, that the assizes of the second synod of the Church of Korea were held.

The sittings of the little assembly lacked in luster perhaps, but not in importance. The rules of administration which M. Ridel had already drawn up were examined in detail and approved. They then sought the various means of arriving as quickly as possible at the assistance of the Christians, and it was decided that, in the spring, two missionaries would present themselves on the coasts of Korea, under the leadership of the Christian Francis Kim. He would first disembark alone and go to gather news. If the news is good, if it offers all the guarantees required by the Council, the Fathers will be able to descend in their turn.

MM. Calais and Martineau are happily chosen for this perilous attempt.

In the meantime, as soon as they are established at Notre-Dame des Neiges, the apostles of Korea must learn about everything that can open up the forbidden country to them, get used to its customs, learn its language, its laws, and above all, through prayer and the practice of piety, form their courage for the trials of which they know the severity. It would take the soul and the brush of an artist to present the picture of this civilizing station, at the gates of Manchuria. It is impossible not to be struck with admiration for the courageous French, who are there the extreme vanguard of Christian civilization, servants of truth and science, personifying those great ideas which, in all countries, under all skies, deserve honor and respect. Is it not one of our country's purest glories to furnish the most dangerous posts with champions of civilization?

M. Ridel only saw in the charge of superior entrusted to him an opportunity to dedicate himself still more entirely, if that were possible, to the work of God.

The little assembly had scarcely finished its work when the new superior set out again for Chefoo. Such a trip, at this time of year, was not attractive.

Imagine a bad cart, drawn by a donkey driven by a Chinese, and rolling along such paths that the driver, in certain places, prefers to make the animal trot through the furrows of the fields. Each step is a jolt. Very often the suffering forces the traveler to get out of the vehicle, to the great scandal of the Chinese coachman. This journey by cart and boat lasted fifteen days; but the complete destitution of the missionaries made it necessary.

On April 14, 1869, M. Ridel was in Shanghai to settle several business matters for the mission. He learned there that M. Calais had not been able to buy or rent a boat to return to his post. A conflict had just arisen between Koreans and Chinese, on the subject of herring fishing on the coasts of Korea. The Chinese junks had already returned, and at no price would they agree to put to sea again. The apostle's desolation is understandable. "This news saddens me," he wrote to his friends, "but I do not lose heart. *Contra spem in spem!* As soon as I get back to Liaodong, I'll make sure to find a meeting place; if only a rock in the middle of the sea, where we will await the arrival of a Korean boat which we will try to buy first. It is still a project, an embryo of a project that I will examine. We hope to see our new Vicar Apostolic soon, or at

least learn of his appointment.

On his return to N.-D. des Neiges a new pain awaited him. M. Calais, obliged to leave Manchuria, had just embarked for France. Excessive fatigue, continual privations of all kinds had reduced this intrepid missionary to impotence.

A few days later, M. Ridel, entrusting himself to the grace of God and to the custody of holy angels, left with M. Blanc for Korea. Let's listen to his story:

"Friday morning, May 28. - M. Blanc and I are leaving Notre-Dame des Neiges for Korea. After having received the farewells of the two confreres and of our Chinese Christians, we mount our horses and head towards the sea. The Koreans had left before us with our luggage. Two of them had to stay, they accompany us for an hour and then leave us crying. I turn around several times to look at them again; seated on either side of the road, their heads in their hands, they are completely engrossed in the pain of a separation which reminds them of their unhappy country, and excites in them the desire to see it again.

"Soon we join the cart. There, the Koreans are, on the contrary, cheerful and happy; they have come to look for the Fathers, and this time the Fathers respond to their request and leave with them. The next day we go to the boat; we leave the port despite the headwind and we arrive tacking in Tariaoko(?).

"At sea, ten leagues southeast of Haeyang-do, Sunday, June 6th. We were detained on this island for seven days. Yesterday morning a good wind blew, we were able to leave the port and go to the islands of the Bom-Chien (?) group, where the contrary wind and the currents forced us to drop anchor.

"Towards evening we were under sail, and we were passing through the middle of these islands, which are almost all inhabited. We see the huts of farmers and fishermen scattered in the middle of clumps of trees and greenery. The coasts are generally very high, and formed of sheer rocks where seabirds have built their nests. On one of them we noticed a veritable army of gulls. At night we continue our journey, and the first lands we see belong to Korea.

"Our boat must be some twenty-five feet long, eight or nine wide. She is flat underneath, like almost all Chinese junks. M. Blanc and I lodged ourselves forward of the mainmast in a compartment four feet long by three wide. Mats spread over a layer of sand at the bottom of the boat form the floor of our room. Other mats, placed above the opening, protect us against the rain or the sun. To get in and out, or simply to see clearly, we have to lift our roof. On the other side of the partition, a little further forward, are two of our Koreans, installed more or less in the same way. All the Chinese junks thus have the hold cut off by transverse bulkheads which are often caulked, so that if the water enters one compartment it cannot pass into the next.

"Monday, June 7th. - This morning, at sunrise, we thought we saw land. The Koreans rejoiced when they saw the mountains of their country appear; but at ten o'clock nothing more was seen. The night was quiet, the wind is light, the sea calm; however, almost all the Koreans are ill, and M. Blanc is unwell. We take our meals in small bowls that the owner of the boat has bought especially for us; we each have two, one for rice, the other for tea and fresh water. Everything is brought to us on a small board decorated with the name of table. We have it placed on a stand, and seated, cross-legged Korean style, we try to swallow the small pieces of salted onions and boiled fish.

"Since the morning, we have had one more Korean on board; he no doubt wants to welcome us to his country. It is a charming little bird. It flutters, it hops around us, it waves its wings as a sign of joy. We look to him as a pilot...and a guide. Long before him, I think, the protective angels of the Church of Korea came before us, to lead us, to protect us and to assist us. Our crossing was successful; it is already a great protection from the sky.

"Wednesday, June 9, 9 a.m., between Cho-do Island and the mainland. - Monday evening, at nightfall, we pass near Cho-do Island; but the wind died down, it was not until about three o'clock that two Koreans could be dropped off on dry land. Yesterday was a quiet day; in

the evening, two more Koreans went down. Today, like yesterday, the weather is calm, the sky clear and cloudless; the sun shines in all its splendor, the sea looks like a lake. We discover green plains; further on, high mountains, cut into a thousand singular shapes and covered with fir trees; the country looks charming: it is our dear Korea. From our cabin, we enjoy this spectacle by lifting the mat which protects us from the sun and prying eyes. No native has yet come near us.

“Sunday, June 13. - We have already changed anchorage many times; today, with the help of a spyglass, we saw some Koreans in their boats, and on the coast, little children driving their oxen, or walking on the shores of the sea, across the rocks. In the evening, we were not far from a village; and we could make out the smoke coming from huts where rice was being cooked. During the night, a few Koreans came on board; our sailors bought rice and large mussels. In the morning, we discover the village very distinctly; it is made up of about ten earthen houses covered with grass and rather similar to flattened beehives. The Koreans, in fine white clothes, quietly smoke their pipes at the door of their huts, while the women, also dressed in white, carry water and take care of the housework.

“Tuesday, June 15. - Sunday evening, we anchored at some distance from this village; we were sheltered offshore by an island surrounded by rocks and reefs. A Korean boat docks with us, and the Koreans, despite the defense of our men, climb aboard: “You have goods, we want to see them.” They try to lift the mats covering us; the crew resist them, and end up forcing them to leave.

“We move and hide in the small compartment occupied by two of our Korean sailors, then we are covered with a mat. Two other boats come in the evening and leave. We are having a pretty bad night.

“The next day, around 3 o’clock, we tighten the ropes that hold our mat: it’s a new visit. We roll our beds into a corner, spread a mat over them so that nothing in the cabin reveals our presence.

“We slip under the planks of the bridge, as far as possible. Soon the Koreans come on board. From the sound of footsteps and voices, we judge that there are many of them. They speak a little Chinese, but between them Korean: ‘We want to visit the boat,’ they say; ‘there are goods there.’ The boatmen try in vain to stop them. They are seized by the hair; their money and their wine are taken away. The Koreans seek to lift the mat and undo the ropes. And we, all the while, huddled in our corner, play dead, trying to understand what is being said, and above all praying fervently. We think about the consequences of our arrest. As missionaries, we will be taken to the capital, the persecution will begin again; Christians, especially those who want to let us in, will be sought out. And then, when will the missionaries be able to return to Korea? All these thoughts and many more present themselves to us; we pray with new fervor and new confidence.

“There must be money here,” said a Korean, “I want to come in.” “Bah! what can there be?” responds another, “let’s go.”

“There is nothing,” repeat our boatmen.

“But they are lifting the mats again. One more effort, and we will be discovered. They seem to leave, then they come back. Finally, they walk away.

“Our moved, exhausted boatmen go by dint of oars to drop anchor at some distance.

“Are you all here?” we ask anxiously.

“Yes, all!

“Well, let’s go!” it would be unwise to stay longer.

“There was no wind, and the current was contrary, we couldn’t even run away.

“We then learned that the Koreans were twelve in number, that on their boat there were two cannons and rifles. This whole scene had lasted an hour and a half.

“The place where we were was the meeting place. Staying there was impossible; to

distance ourselves was to render useless all the researches of the Christians.

We moved off. This morning, seeing the mountains of Korea disappear, we looked at each other silent and with very sad hearts.

M. Ridel was there, at the most advanced post, when Pius IX declared to the cardinals of the consistorial congregation that the see of Imbert, Berneux, and Daveluy ceased to be vacant. A worthy successor was given to them, and this successor was the humble missionary who, for several days, had been living huddled between the lofts of a wretched Chinese junk.

In the consistory of June 15, the Sovereign Pontiff proclaimed him Apostolic Vicar of Korea, with the title of Bishop of Philippopolis: the angels and martyrs of Korea flocked to him, descended from heaven carrying in their hands the diadem of the Pontiffs, and placed it on his forehead. M. Ridel thus received, unwittingly, the heavy but glorious succession of martyrs.

It was not until the following July 18 that the holy prelate learned that he was being considered for the office of apostolic vicar.

Ten years of work and perils, a perfect knowledge of the language of the country, an unflinching zeal, all the virtues, in short, of an intrepid missionary had determined this happy choice. His humility was frightened, and without suspecting that he was already chosen, he wrote to the directors of the Foreign Missions:

“Alas! how is it that they thought of me for the office of Apostolic Vicar? It is an honor of which I am unworthy, a function which I am incapable of fulfilling. I understand your embarrassment, it seemed reasonable that the new bishop should be one of the former missionaries; it is true, assuming that he was worthy, but the choice fell on the most unworthy. I am convinced that if you had known me, you would not have designated me. Also, I who know myself perfectly, I will not have the temerity to accept.

“After having thought long and seriously, after having prayed a lot at the foot of the crucifix, I throw myself at your feet begging you to have another vicar apostolic named, and to think no more of me, even to be coadjutor. My acceptance, I am convinced, would be a misfortune and a ruin for the Church of Korea. I accepted the charge of superior, I could not do otherwise, I remained alone. But I feel very well that I acquit myself very badly of this function, and I hope to be freed from it soon.”

Towards the end of the following month, two brief dispatches from Rome announced to him that his appointment was a *fait accompli*.

It is easy to judge what was the surprise of the holy missionary, seeing himself charged with this burden which would be dreadful even to the angels. In his eyes he was so small that he could only see an infinite disproportion between him and the episcopate. It was wrong, he thought, to assume that he had all the qualities that a bishop should have; he knew none of it and had to make it his duty to flee this dignity. Also, it was by mingling his tears with his supplications that he again asked his superiors and the Holy Father to cast their eyes on someone else who was more worthy of this eminent office.

“When I think of my elevation to the episcopate,” he wrote to the superior of the seminary of the Missions, “I can only beat my chest crying, and repeat to myself: I am unworthy, very unworthy. On the other hand, if I still think about all the business that I will have to deal with, to decide, I always say to myself: I am incapable of it.... Oh! I have only one desire, it is to do the holy will of God, and to sacrifice myself entirely to his good pleasure; therefore, convinced that they were mistaken in designating me for the episcopate, I beg you to join me in obtaining another nomination from the Holy See. There must be a subject capable of holding this position and worthy of being elevated to this rank.”

“I have just received the two briefs appointing me bishop and apostolic vicar of Korea,” he wrote to Cardinal Barnabo, prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Rites. “Ah! how could anyone think of me? I was a missionary in Korea, but a very mediocre missionary in all respects. I accepted the post of superior because, currently, I am the most senior, and reasonably I could

not do otherwise. But I thought it was only for a few months, and that the appointment of a vicar apostolic would soon take away the responsibility of this charge. The Society of Foreign Missions does not lack holy priests, missionaries capable of fulfilling this function. I do not have sufficient science to lead a Christianity, and my many sins are capable of counterbalancing the mercy of God and the graces that the virtues of my confreres, their sufferings, their martyrdom, the sufferings and the martyrdom of our numerous Christians should attract to this beautiful and so desolate mission Also I throw myself at the feet of His Eminence, I conjure him to receive favorably my supplications, and to present them to the sovereign Pontiff, and to obtain that no one thinks of me any more for the Apostolic Vicariate of Korea, but choose another one.”

These letters had a result quite different from that proposed by the humble missionary. They proved to the superiors that they had not made a mistake in their choice.

M. Ridel was asked to answer the wishes of all, to bow his head, and to receive the burden which holy obedience placed on his shoulders. Any resistance became impossible. He submitted to the order of the sovereign Pontiff.

M. Ridel inherited the estate of the Daveluys, the Berneux, the Ferréols, the Imberts, the Brugnières. What names, and what glory around these names! Everything is great, heroic in the history of these bishops; it is the summary of all kinds of martyrdom.

When Gregory XVI created the Apostolic Vicariate of Korea, Bishop Brugnières, already coadjutor of Siam, offered himself to the perils of this unknown mission. Three years later, in the prime of life, but exhausted with fatigue and sorrow, he died on the border, which he was unable to cross. He cleared the way and remained lying on the threshold. Maubant, Chastan, Imbert crossed this mortal threshold, and soon freely delivered their heads to the executioner to save the Christians, their children, from death. Bishop Ferréol, after ten years of work and suffering, called himself with truth “a corpse rather than a living being”. From his den, stretched out on his mat, he directed his mission “awaiting death and the orders of God.” Dying, he commanded his missionaries to forget their bishop and think only of his dear Christians. He breathed his last without a friend receiving his supreme recommendations and closing his eyes. His successor, Mgr Berneux, first confessed the faith of Jesus in the TongKing: there, captive and condemned to death, he underwent the cangue, the chains, the cage and the interrogations, that is to say the rattan which reduces the flesh to shreds. But his greatest pain was to learn of his deliverance and to have missed the palm of martyrdom. Having become apostolic vicar, he reconquered it in Korea. When Mgr. Daveluy entered for the first time as apostolic vicar in his episcopal city, the apparatus and the procession of his triumph were the apparatus and the procession of the victims who were going to be executed. He did not allow his face to be veiled, in order to encourage the Christians by a smile, and show them his joy in dying for God.

This formidable succession, so worthy of the courage of the newly elected, frightened his modesty; but the order was formal; he was commanded, though not yet consecrated, to come and take his place among the Fathers of the Vatican Council; he obeys.

Leaving for Europe at the beginning of the year 1870, he came straight to Rome, without even obtaining beforehand the consolation of embracing his family.

Book 2

Chapter 1

Welcome of Pius IX. - Consecration of Bishop Ridel. - Stay in Rome. - Definition of the dogma of infallibility. - Return to Brittany. - Stay at Vannes.

Monseigneur Ridel saw an abyss between his weakness and the perilous honor imposed on him. So, while going to Rome, he kept deep in his heart the hope of being relieved of such a burden. He had no doubt that the Sovereign Pontiff would accept his reasons and listen to his prayer. This illusion only vanished when the holy missionary knelt under the blessing of Pius IX. The Pope listened to him with a smile, even found his reasons excellent, his motives very serious. The latter believed his cause won, when the Holy Father, with an expression of paternal tenderness, added: "However, dear son, have yourself consecrated without delay, and the day after your consecration, take your place in the council."

God's will was manifest, all hesitation ceased.

"The Holy Father," he wrote to his followers, "did not take my refusal into account, he wants me to be a bishop. Here, then, is the moment for me to make an act of loving obedience to the representative of our Lord on earth. I said to myself: the Pope wants it, so I want it too; my superiors advise me, I cannot be wiser than all. Under these conditions, I will always have, in the midst of the pains and difficulties of the future, the consolation of telling myself that everything was arranged by the will of God... Poor Korea, they gave him a pastor; will he be the good Shepherd? I desire it, I want it with all the strength of my soul, but the thought of my weakness makes me shudder. You who love the pastor and the flock very much, pray for them."

The ceremony was fixed for June 5, the feast of Pentecost. Bishop Ridel expressed the desire to be consecrated by a French bishop and addressed himself to Cardinal de Bonnechose:

'I will,' replied the eminent cardinal, 'but perhaps the ceremony will leave something to be desired; I haven't consecrated anyone yet.'

- May your Eminence be reassured, answered the missionary, because it is also the first time that I will be consecrated."

On the appointed day, more than forty bishops, a large number of priests, the French ambassador, the highest personages of the Roman nobility and of the pontifical army crowded into the church of Gêsu.

In this imposing ceremony, the consecrating prelate was assisted by NN. SS. Vérolles, Vicar Apostolic of Manchuria, and Mgr Petitjean, Vicar Apostolic of Japan. By a delicate thought of Bishop Ridel, the Church of Korea found itself between its two elder sisters to receive from France a supreme blessing. At this very moment, Manchuria offered an asylum to the missionaries of Korea; there they waited for the time when it would please God to open to them, at the very cost of their lives, the country from which they were proscribed. As for the Church of Japan, we know, with its past, the personal relations between its bishop and Bishop Ridel. "This rapprochement took on a striking and sublime character, the emotion was at its height and all eyes filled with tears, when, towards the end of the ceremony, the Bishop of Korea gave the kiss of peace to his brother of Japan. We wondered if it was not the kiss of Peter and Paul separating on the way to Ostia, to go to die and ensure by their martyrdom the perpetuity of the apostolate (*Catholic Missions*, June 1870)."

Let a witness (Louis Veuillot, *Rome during the Council*) speak of this feast: "Yesterday, in the church of Gesu, Cardinal de Bonnechose consecrated the new bishop of Korea, Mgr Ridel, of the Foreign Missions. We know the ceremony, its profound rites, its eloquent prayers. There the bishop is made, nothing in the world is greater, Rome added to it. The name of Rome adds resplendence to majesty, as the sun to color. There was also that solemn moment of the Council,

and that very holy day of Pentecost, feast of the triumphant Spirit of God. *Spiritus Domini rejplevit orbem terrarum*. A large number of vicars apostolic from all parts of the world surrounded their younger brother, and appeared *in dispersitæ linguæ tanquam ignis*.

But what heightened the emotion, even making it poignant at times, was the destination of the chosen one, that bloody Korea. Here is the man who offers himself to die, here is the great and sublime combat. *Ecce agon sublimis et magnus*. O Rome, who give us such a spectacle! Here permanent things and transient things swell the veins of life and maintain them in their glorious plenitude, and the heart of man knows what it can bear of admiration, of pain, of love.

“This young bishop, in spite of his tears, accepted the terrible dignity to return more quickly, and because the hand of the bishop is equipped with graces and forces which his mission needs. He will return to join this handful of young priests who are waiting for him.

He will go and sit on his seat above which the sword that kills twice still hovers. He will reconcile repentant apostates, he will baptize the infidels, he will ordain priests. He will be the guide and the example of all in the way of martyrdom. He will call from Europe the generous souls who aspire to those palms which Europe no longer gives.

“So I saw this coronation, these witnesses, this whole scene so great beyond the ordinary spectacles of life. What seriousness in the act, in the place, in the men! It was at the high altar, consecrated in the name of Jesus, between the chapel of Saint-Ignace and the chapel of Saint-François-Xavier; it was in Rome; it was close to the Vatican and St. Peter; it was the day of Pentecost. Every word that was said and every rite that was performed raised eternal visions, visions of the greatness of God and of the greatness of man in the hand of God. The new bishop was on his knees, the weight of the Gospel on his shoulders. He was prostrated as dead while the great litanies were sung, so that, by the help of the triumphant Church, the man would in fact die and leave nothing in him but the pastor sent from God. He gets up, his head bandaged, his hands tied, heading for the altar, pale and calm, like a victim already beaten who is about to receive the final blow. What a memory right now! Mgr Daveluy, his predecessor, entered the capital of Korea wearing the cangue, and greeting with a calm smile the multitude who looked at him.

“After the consecration, the new bishop sits on the throne, miter on his head, crosier in hand, and then gives the clergy and people his first blessing. The bishop of poor Korea performs this royal rite: clothed in gold, carrying the paternal scepter, he walks through this magnificent church, and blesses the kneeling crowd; but that his gaze sunk far from these splendid walls and from this people whom he blessed, and as You saw clearly, by his greater and more august pallor, that his first blessing went to the crucified bride who awaits him! And we, eyes clouded with tears, beyond this rapid pomp we saw the serene head of Bishop Daveluy raised on three stakes fixed in the ground at the foot of which lay a body exposed to the teeth of beasts. However, the bishop returned to the choir, and the *Te Deum* was sung: *Te Deum laudamus, Te martyrum candidateus laudat exercitus!*”

“Before proceeding to the consecration, the bull of election dated from the tomb of Saint Peter was read. By virtue of this bull, the chosen one is prince in the universal Church, legitimate pastor of the flock to which the Sovereign Pontiff has given him, and any contrary human power can only take away his life. But what will be the use of killing him? What can the power that gives death do against the power that begets life, and what can time do against him to whom God gives time? There is a man in Korea who is called king, who wears a crown, who has ministers, great men, scholars, soldiers, executioners and who does not want Christians in his home. He can kill them, he kills them, but he cannot always have some to kill. He has just killed some, in a few years ten thousand, perhaps more. He doesn't know any more, but he knows that there are still some, and God knows it too and sends him a bishop and if this bishop is still killed, God will send him another, and another still after, and always, and the emperor

and the empire will be Christians and God will give him bishops.”

The next day Bishop Ridel expressed the feelings of his soul thus:

“How good is God! how merciful he is! I cannot humble myself enough before this august Majesty who delights in showering me with blessings. Every moment of my life is marked by favors, and I cannot help trembling when I think of the account that I will have to render if the sanctity of my life does not correspond to the abundant graces that I have received.

“Now I can only shed tears, repeating to myself every moment: I am a bishop; I, a useless servant, despite my extreme misery, have been raised to the most august dignity that exists in this world. I would like to tell you the impressions I felt during this imposing ceremony; but how to translate them? When, stretched out on the steps of the sanctuary, I offered myself as a victim to the divine Majesty, I thought of you and of my poor Korea. In receiving the holy anointing, when I gave my first blessing you were also in my heart; you were not alone there, my dear and unfortunate Koreans were there too.”

At the first meeting which followed the feasts of Pentecost, Bishop Ridel entered the council.

The moment was solemn: the assembly resumed this memorable discussion which was to put an end to disastrous differences and bring a remedy to the evils of the Church. The principle of divine authority, undermined for a century, was at stake. It had to be restored to its former glory and shown to men, always proud of their rights and their enlightenment, to the earth a doctrinal and infallible authority, deriving from God as its source, and to which all intelligences. as all hearts owe submission and respect. One remembers the difficulties then raised by the Chapter relating to the nature and character of the primacy of the Roman Pontiff and especially to his infallibility. The new Father set himself to the study of these lofty and important questions in order to worthily occupy the place which the Holy Spirit had assigned to him. During the rare leisure time left to him by this work, he liked to visit the sanctuaries of the Eternal City: Near the relics of the saints, on the tombs of the martyrs, in the recollection of meditation and prayer, his spirit found clarity. celestial and his heart of ineffable emotions.

It was July; an oppressive heat made the stay in Rome almost intolerable. The discussions dragged on. But if the wait for the council had been long, the outcome was sudden and unexpected. The noise of the war which was kindling between France and Prussia suddenly resounded in the world. It was necessary to hurry: the public session was fixed for Monday, July 18.

Forever memorable session. Hardly had the solemn act of promulgation of the dogma been completed than a general acclamation, accompanied by applause, resounded in the great assembly. The crowd that fills the church responds with the same enthusiasm. At this moment a terrible storm surrounds Saint Peter, plunged almost into darkness. The proclamation of the dogma of infallibility amid lightning and thunder was reminiscent of the promulgation of the law at Sinai.

Alas! that day was not as sweet as it should have been for Bishop Ridel. A great sadness darkens this great joy. God did not want his apostle to taste unmixed happiness on earth. With the joys of triumph, with the joys of return, he mingled the sadness of his country, sadness which found a painful echo in his eminently French soul.

When he saw his Brittany again, the famous Saarbrücken victory bulletin was plastered everywhere. What a memory! A few days later he learned of our disasters at Wissembourg and Forbach, and at the same time of the withdrawal of our troops from Italy. A coincidence worthy of our meditations: the day our flag ceased to shelter the Rome of the Popes, the same day victory ceased to follow it.

In Nantes, in Vannes, in Sainte-Anne d’Auray, everywhere it was a celebration to receive the child of the country; we were proud, because he was a bishop, and whispered to ourselves: he will be a martyr.

During his brief stay in Brittany, neither the affection of his family, nor the respectful sympathy of all those who knew and loved him, not even the mourning of the Church and of France, which he carried in his heart until at his last moment, made him forget his unhappy Korea. Persecution, he had no doubt, had destroyed the work of his predecessors. Catechism, translation of books of piety, everything would have to be started over again: what zeal, what trouble to repair so many ruins! Bishop Ridel gave himself entirely to this work and continued it tirelessly. Also, during the few months he spent with his family, he was always found withdrawn in his room, absorbed in his cherished occupations, happy to tire himself out for the glory of God and the good of his mission.

Chapter II

New farewells. - In sight of Ismailia. - Ceylon. - Cape of Diamonds. - Saigon. - The Paracels. - Shipwrecked Koreans at Shanghai. - American vessels on the coasts of Korea.

On May 9, 1871, Bishop Ridel again tore himself from the affection of his family to return to Asia.

Five days later he embarked at Marseilles on the *Tigre*. Before setting foot there, he addressed the following lines to his family: "If I leave you, it is because God commands it; His holy will be done. It is a great sacrifice for my heart, but without stifling the feelings of nature, I bend them under the order of Our Lord. It is a grace that God gave me generously, abundantly. No, no, I don't stop loving you. I know your courage and your piety; may God reward you. We will meet often, always in the heart of Jesus. I give you this appointment for all the days of our lives. To God then and goodbye. I bless you all affectionately. Be true disciples of Our Lord Jesus Christ."

We will not recount this long journey; let's just tear off a few pages from the missionary's journal.

May 18. - Our captain is M. Boilève, the passengers are few, a few children take care of the movement and the music alone.

"May 21st. - The heat is beginning to be felt, the wind barely ripples the surface of the water. The blue of the sky and the blue of the sea merge in a distant horizon. My gaze dives far beyond. I see my missionaries eagerly awaiting my return, the poor Church of Korea, my beloved spouse, reaching out to me and calling me to her aid. Alas! what can I do right now? Turn to God, pray and cry out: help, help! What am I not a saint to obtain everything from infinite mercy!... If my gaze plunges towards the far east, very often it turns towards the west, to see and contemplate you, you my well-beings. loved ones, whose memory will always be alive in my heart."

"In sight of Ismailia. - I have not forgotten Madame de la Maisonfort's recommendation. I also thought of Madame de Lesseps, and in passing gave my blessing to a tomb which I could not see¹² At the same time I bless the living. I would have said a prayer, but what a prayer to recite on the tomb of an angel, I could only sing the song that the angels sing in Paradise! Glory to God!"

"May 24. "The heat is excessive, impossible to write to you, and yet my affection for you is even hotter than the sun of the Red Sea."

"June 1st. - On all sides the sea, always the sea. Waves which pursue each other and leap like herds in the plain. Above our heads, large gray clouds, edged in white, slip into the sky. Near the ship, the waves race like those children from the villages of Brittany after the cars: it looks like a speed fight. We go faster, the one who is leaving us makes a supreme effort, breaks into silver pearls and breathes a last sigh, then a second, then a third. I see them, I contemplate them, I speak to them, I thank them for the distraction they provide me during this long crossing."

"In Ceylon. - The father who embarked with me at Marseilles is leaving me to go to Pondicherry. Another separation. When will we reach the end of our journey? When will we have the happiness of no longer knowing the sadness of separation! In Heaven! In Heaven!"

The aspect of the coasts and the interior of the island presents to the eyes the most picturesque sites. First, on arriving, magnificent forests of coconut palms: further on, going to

¹² Madame de la Maisonfort, mother of Madame de Lesseps, was living in Vannes at the time; she had asked the missionary, at the moment of his departure, this memory and this blessing for the tomb of the child of Mme de Lesseps, her daughter.

lose themselves on the horizon, mountains crowned with ancient forests where the trees, as in virgin forests, are intertwined with lianas; at their feet, immense valleys all smiling and animated by the voice of the ever-flowing waters of an infinity of streams and rivers. Here winter and summer go hand in hand. For the high mountains which divide the island into two parts produce the same it as in all equinoctial countries, that of stopping the monsoons; so that the seasons differ, at the same time of the year, on each side of the mountains. Thus at this moment the monsoons are inundating with torrential rains and upsetting with their impetuous breath the whole southern part, but the other side of the island is dry and completely flooded with light.

“June 4th. - A delightful walk: cottages scattered here and there under a forest of coconut palms; inhabitants, men and women who come out to see us pass, children who follow us; flowers on both sides of the road; birds chirping and whistling in the woods; a heat tempered by our parasols. It is indeed the enchanted island; we drink coconut milk, we eat bananas, pineapples. A few Christians come running up, take my hand, kiss my ring, and offer me their little children to be blessed. When will I be able to see and bless my little Korean children?...”

“June 10. - Our crossing is accomplished fortunately, we are only 5° from the line. Leaning over the edge of the ship, last night I admired the phenomenon of phosphorescence. On each side of our ship, the sea, broken by our rapid passage, boiled in foam and threw its complaints at us. Around the ship was like a long flowing robe of the most dazzling whiteness all covered with sparkles of gold. Aft, a long wake of fire undulated like a belt of silver studded with stars. If you could have enjoyed this beautiful spectacle! I considered it for you, thinking of you.”

“June 11. - We are rounding Cape Diamant. A magnificent sunset is brewing; gold, silver, fire; the most varied shapes and shades; it is a splendid sight. Soon the night covers everything with its dark veil: thus end the things of this world.

“Many times today, I have traveled to France, to Vannes, to contemplate and follow the procession; to offer my homage to the Blessed Sacrament which comes out of the cathedral, crosses the place des Lices, the rue Saint-Vincent, the old moats of the port¹³ of the Garenne. I see him blessing the faithful people.”

“June 19. In the river of Saigon. - Both banks are very low, covered with shrubs and green grass. At first sight it is an interesting spectacle, which uniformity soon renders monotonous. Finally Saigon is discovered in the distance; we seem to be struggling to get there.

Here takes place a little adventure which covered the poor gunner with shame. To salute the city, we had to fire a cannon shot. The shell is loaded; passing in front of the post: Fire, shouts the commander, and “tick” a noise of a capsule! Quickly we put in a second, then a third; always same result. So we remove the breech, unload it, and find at the bottom... a sock.

“21st of June. ‘Yesterday we saw the Paracels. These are large coral banks, very dangerous for navigation. The sea completely covers them, so you have to be very close to notice them. The one we saw can be seen three miles away, because of the clarity and tranquility of the water. Its surface is of a beautiful transparent green; the sea breaks there whitening. It’s like a beautiful table covered with a green carpet edged with silver braid.”

¹³ This was the name of the ditches in the western part of the city Nothing more picturesque than these moats transformed into gardens: tall trees shaded the street that bordered them and, on the other side, the old ramparts recalled the glories of the past.

About these walls, M. Amédée de Francheville wrote: “The city of Vannes can provide proof of its antiquity and claim the glorious title of having been the capital of the Venetian people.

“Examination alone of the ancient walls with which this city is still surrounded suffices to give the idea of a high antiquity; they seem, in some parts, to go back beyond the conquest.”

Alas! these moats of the port, more modern, it is true, but so picturesque, are only a memory! May the ancient city of the Veneti console itself, however; men, fortunately of very rare taste in aesthetics, have replaced by rue Thiers these old witnesses of past centuries.

On July 6, Bishop Ridel landed in Shanghai. The next day, nine Koreans presented themselves to him. They offered a spectacle of the most heartbreaking misery: their tattered clothes, their emaciated and almost livid features told enough of their destitution and the sufferings they had endured. However, as soon as they saw their Father, they threw themselves at his knees, showing by their tears and by the expression of the liveliest joy all the jubilation of their soul.

They brought news of persecution and death. The mission was still in the hands of the executioners and the blood had not stopped flowing. Also, it was not without a feeling of sadness and pity that the bishop said to them:

“Where do you come from, my poor friends, how did you come here?”

- All answered at the same time, impossible to understand them.

Finally, the first emotion over, they asked if they had a bishop.

“Yes,” said the missionary to them, “you have a bishop.”

- Where is he? Perhaps at Liaodong?

“No, he’s here.

“Was it you who became bishop?”

Yes, said one of them, can’t you see that he wears a ring on his finger; he is the Bishop.

“Yes, dear friends, the Sovereign Pontiff has appointed me your bishop; I am now more especially your father, you are all my children. You are in pain, we will suffer together; you are fugitives, enter the house of your bishop, of your father. Rest, eat the rice. When you’ve recovered a little, we’ll talk longer. At these words, they prostrate themselves in greeting. The joy of having met their bishop brightened their faces. Bishop Ridel had seen his faithful; it was his triumphal arrival among them.

“I was happy, he continues, to receive them in my home, or rather in this house in the Procure, because my home does not exist for exiles. Soon all these brave Christians surround me, they cannot leave me. The other Fathers, how are they? where are they? They had to be satisfied.

“And our Pope Pio Nono, is his health good?”

“Did you see Pio Nono?”

“I told them with what benevolence the Sovereign Pontiff had welcomed me, and all the affection, all the compassion of the Pope for the unfortunate Church of Korea.

“There are some here who haven’t seen Pio Nono, we want to see him.” This request made me smile; I made them pass into a room where there was the portrait of the Holy Father: “Here is Pio Nono!”

“Immediately they join their hands, make a great sign of the cross. After having considered for a long time, they turn away and say to me with a smile: “How beautiful!” I sat down at my table, and I let my Koreans move around a bit. Poor people! they know nothing. They go and feel the window panes, turn the keys in the locks like children. They come back to see me write, touch my pen, my penknife. I opened a small red album which especially aroused their curiosity: “Here is the portrait of my brother, my sister, etc.” They uttered a cry of admiration and one of them said to me, rubbing the left side of his chest: “How sweet to be able to contemplate the image of one’s parents and friends in this way!” But this bishop, who is he?

“He is the bishop of the country where my parents live.

“What’s his name?”

“His name is Jean-Marie.

“Hey, like me, said Choe, my name is also ‘John’.”

“When their curiosity was somewhat satisfied, I in turn asked them for news of the mission. Alas! What ruins! Entire villages have disappeared; of my poor Jinpat only a few scattered remains remain. I no longer dare ask them about the Christians I have known; almost always they answer me: dead, martyr. They wrote a few pages of their annals. I put them to

work so that they still write down everything they know for sure about the persecution, about the arrest, the interrogation, the torments and the death of the martyrs. What relics to collect!”

The reader may wonder how these poor Koreans were able to cross the seas and land at the port of Shanghai. The story of these unfortunates is not long, here it is:

At first, their life was passing very peacefully around the capital, when persecution forced them to flee to the mountains in the south, at the extremity of the kingdom. There, finding themselves sheltered from the ill-treatment and the searches of the satellites, they resolved to go to meet the missionaries and bring them back to their country. So they prepared a boat and engaged in trade on the coasts. While they were thus heading north, they learned that the regent had just discovered the retreat of the Christians in the southern provinces, and that satellites sent from all parts were arresting and killing those whom they found. The return was therefore impossible; reaching the shores of China was their only chance of salvation.

They were already in the middle of the Naepo islands when they were told that European ships were anchored in the Seoul River. This news revived their courage, and soon they discovered the fleet stationed opposite Ganghwa. They approached, and making the sign of the cross were immediately recognized as Christians. They were welcomed on board, where they became the object of the most benevolent care. But, it was in vain that they claimed their Father and their Bishop.

These ships, which the poor Koreans had taken for European ships, were none other than the ships of the American fleet. The commandant who had shown himself to be particularly kind to them asked them for information about their country: they refused to give any, because no Father was there; to their Fathers alone they would tell what they knew. They were then asked what they wanted to do. “If we return to our country,” they answered, “we will certainly be put to death; we would like to see our missionaries.”

A few days later, an American ship left for Shanghai; they embarked there, and thus they arrived in this city a few hours after their bishop.

But how, why were these American vessels on the shores of Korea? Chance alone had led them there at first. They were sailing towards Japan, when on their way, they met several Koreans whom they saved from shipwreck. The admiral was even kind enough to take them home. But hardly had the rowboats which had detached from the warships arrived at the mouth of the Seoul River than the batteries, masked, served by thousands of Koreans, opened a violent fire. The Americans to respond to this cowardly provocation went down to earth, stormed several forts, killed two hundred and forty-three Koreans. The number of wounded and prisoners was still greater. However, the admiral considering that he did not yet have enough forces to make an expedition in order, and it was true, thought it prudent to ask for help.

It was therefore thought in July 1871 that this expedition, which had begun so well, would end in honor of those who had undertaken it, but on the following August 3, the American squadron left the Korean coast for good.

This expedition only increased the anger of the government and made the persecution more bloody.

Chapter III

Bishop Ridel at Chefoo; return to Shanghai. - Missionary's Diary.

When these last events came to the knowledge of Bishop Ridel, it was easy for him to foresee that he would not be able, for a long time, to console his mission so cruelly decimated. Deeming his presence in Shanghai useless for the moment, he embarked for Chefoo. With legitimate impatience MM. Blanc and Martineau were waiting for him there. It would be difficult to express the happiness and joy of these two missionaries in seeing their former friend, now their guide and their father. From the bottom of their soul, they thanked God for having given them a pastor worthy by his courage and his virtues to succeed the martyrs whom the angels had already crowned. Under his skillful and paternal direction they would devote themselves to their ministry with a new ardor.

Alas! the joys of the return were not of long duration. Indeed, a few days later, they received news from the mission; they were heartbreaking. The regent's pride and rage, far from being appeased, knew no bounds. How could it have been otherwise after all these failed expeditions? Hadn't he, in his eyes at least, twice driven out the French? Where the subjects of the Son of Heaven had failed, he triumphed easily. The barbarians of the West were defeated, he had forced them to flee on their ships of fire. In truth, what hope for the future did these four abandoned and destitute missionaries have? Their confidence was not shaken, however, for it was in God that their hopes rested. He alone changes the hearts of tyrants, He alone restores calm after the storm.

The following November 10, Bishop Ridel was again in Shanghai. M. Blanc's health, then compromised, demanded care and a less rigorous climate. Moreover, the presence of nine Koreans at the Procure of the Missions was a help that the pious bishop could not disdain to carry out the literary work he had undertaken. While waiting for the moment of Providence, he gave himself up entirely to this work which apparently did not suit his tastes.

An apostle with an ardent heart, he had come on a mission to devote himself to the salvation of souls: once again he was condemned to live for long months with no other horizon than the four walls of a poor cell. His days pass in the most arid study, his life becomes that of the most industrious Benedictine. However, his serenity is not altered, for he does what God wills, and that is his sole ambition.

Eight months passed thus, without incident worthy of being announced. To better enter into the intimacy of this beautiful soul, let's glean again here and there among the notes and letters that we have before our eyes.

November 15. - Hello. Here, as usual, alone the weather varies. Big gray clouds, black, formed a great veil that enveloped us in mourning and sadness. Last night the north wind lifted the vast curtain; the sun shines in all its glory. I take this opportunity to pay a little visit and prove to you that my affection always remains the same, large and splendid as the sun today. There, no clouds, no fog, always the sweet wind of friendship, of gratitude. From you to me, it's a limpid and gentle current like charity. I let myself go; it is my rest, my relaxation; I believe it is according to the heart of God.

November 17. "I am thinking of your grandchildren. Take good care of these little souls; they belong to the good God who created them, to the Lord Jesus who redeemed them. May they always be children of the good God and never become slaves of the devil through sin. Teach them to love the Blessed Virgin well, to place all their trust in her. What sweeter and safer asylum for a child than the loving heart of this good Mother! If I yielded to the feelings of my heart, I would often repeat the benefits, the touching cares which I have been the object of since my childhood, especially since the moment when, having no longer a mother on earth, I threw myself, orphan, in the arms of the one who remained to me in paradise.

1st December. "Now everything is quiet here. My window is open; the full moon casts a pale light, intercepted by a light mist. I hear only a few barks in the distance, and at intervals, the little noise made by the Chinese night watchmen. To ward off thieves, they roam around houses and enclosures knocking on a hollow bamboo; which means: "thieves, go somewhere else, we watch here." For us, our good angels keep watch.

The weather is getting cold. M. Blanc is a little ill. For me, I am doing well; I take iron pills; what if I was going to become steel? may I become fire, for the glory of God!...

Without a living faith, this immense distance which separates me from you would be unbearable to me, but what is time, what is distance, when they are compared to eternity, to God! I came here to do great business, to amass a store of eternal happiness. Let us work, each on our side; let us strive to acquire those riches which thieves cannot rob us of and which we shall enjoy together. A little time, a little trouble, what if we put eternity, heaven on the other side of the scale!

December 10. - In China, trade, trade, always trade; an extraordinary movement, an all-consuming activity; on the quays, ships to load, ships to unload-, arrival and departure of steamers, just that.

However, the Chinese are said to be preparing for war. They certainly have deep in their hearts a hatred of Europeans; the goal of their thoughts, the most ardent of their desires is to get rid of them as soon as possible. They now have steam gunboats; their soldiers are armed with European rifles, in their arsenals they melt cannons and manufacture all the material of war.

To trade, to manufacture weapons, to melt cannons; this is called pushing the Chinese along the path of progress, and because they do not want railways and telegraph poles, people complain of their slowness. Illusion! with steam and electricity, the Chinese will retain their shameful habits and their superstitions; he will always prostrate himself before his idols in which he does not believe, he will light the usual sticks, he will honor his serpents and his dragons, and in times of eclipse will strike the tom-tom to prevent the big black dogs from eating the sun or the moon. To civilize a people, it must be made Christian. Only the dogmas of Christianity will elevate his spirit and show him the absurdity of his superstitions, only Christian morality will put charity in his heart instead of selfishness which kills all noble sentiment...

Two cannon shots ring out. They seem to say: rejoice, you who wait for news. Here are the good epistles of your parents, of your friends; here are their wishes, their wishes, their feelings, their hearts. Yes, there is all that in these two cannon shots; what it is to know how to read; and everyone knows how to read that writing.

Christmas night. - The sky is dotted with stars, it is only natural that it shares in the celebration. I'm thinking of you, but I don't have time to write to you. My first Mass will be for Korea, the memory of which follows me everywhere and always; my second will be for you, for our parents and our friends, the third will be solemn; I reserve it for the Holy Church and for France. Our dear Brittany will have its share. Could I indeed forget Brittany, the country of my heart. What a beautiful night! Our Lord will soon come. When I think that I will hold him in my hands, that he will descend into my heart. Ah! I'll stop here, it's too beautiful, you can't write, you have to meditate. I therefore take the little hand of the Child Jesus, and through him, with him, I bless you, you, your children, our parents and our friends, France and Brittany, I also bless my poor Korea. I stay with you near the crib: let us meditate in silence, let us pray, let us love, oh! yes, love!

December 30. - This morning, M. Blanc, who always sends you his compliments, thought of cutting a little piece of cardboard into a spiral and hanging it by a pin above the stove. The heat that escapes makes it rotate continuously, to the great amazement of the Koreans and the Chinese, who never tire of admiring what they call a snake. Notice to nannies for the consolation and amusement of their little ones.

January 4, 1872.-Your letters came to me by the *Pei-Ho*, a large steamer belonging to

the Messageries Maritimes. This magnificent ship is there, in the port, anchored not far from our residence. It is the most beautiful ship of the station. Every time we pass on the quay, we stop in front of her, and it is with a feeling of national pride that we regard her. She is there, motionless like an immense sleeping giant. When the current makes her turn, the river doesn't seem big enough for her. The other ships must have anchored in the distance, out of respect, one would say, and so as not to disturb her sleep. She sleeps, and while she rests, her vast sides are filled with goods of all kinds: thousands of boxes, bales of silk, bags of tea, etc.

In a few days she will wake up, shake off her heavy chains and take flight towards the vast ocean; she will take this letter away with all my feelings of affection. Without burdening this giant of the seas very much, they alone, however, will fill her beyond measure, for through it I am sending you a hundred thousand boxes of affectionate souvenirs, which you will distribute to all our relatives and all our friends.

February 7. - The north wind is blowing furiously; the Chinese join in. Every night, it's a hell of a racket. At all hours of the night, for ten minutes, it sounds like people shooting in every house. It's that we are approaching the first day of the Chinese New Year, and now they are dismissing their tutelary geniuses. These must go and pass these days of rejoicing in Olympus; they are celebrated before they leave, so that they do not speak ill of the family. Moreover, to oblige them to be discreet about all the little household affairs, care is taken to fill the idol's mouth with mastic. What Chineseness!

March 7. - Here comes spring at a gallop; the birds find their songs again, the sun its warmth, the fields see their flowers again: and me, when will I see my Korea again?...

I feel strong, I can suffer; but I am weak when I see others suffer, and I would like to take all the trouble for myself. It is cowardice, because it seems to me that I would suffer less.

May 9. - It's been a year since I left France. Since then, many events have taken place; alone, my situation remains the same. A year has passed! What have we been doing during this time? Have we advanced in the way of heaven? Have we become holier? Oh! very dear friends, let us work, each one on our side, to love God more and more; deserve to be together forever in blissful eternity. What a misfortune if someone missed the rendezvous! I have the sweet confidence, and I expect the mercy of God, that all of us, young and old, parents and friends, will meet again in heaven. Oh! yes, in heaven!

May 30. - During the past few days, a ship has passed laden with Krupp cannons, battery and siege guns, and mountain guns. The Chinese have also bought machine guns and torpedoes: they have a very particular admiration for torpedoes: "These engines of war, they say, are traps where the game comes to catch itself without danger for the hunter." As it is in the Chinese spirit, this invention goes to their hearts. "But," one of them asked me, "how is it that there are Europeans vile enough to betray their country in this way by selling us these munitions of war?" These people are traitors. We accept their service, because we need it, it is advantageous for us; but we despise their acts and their persons. If a Chinese committed such a crime, he would immediately be put to death by the people."

June. - This is not the time for big news. The wind begins to blow from the north, it is cool: it is the beginning of a magnificent autumn. Everywhere we collect, everywhere we reap: the harvests are beautiful and abundant. We do not harvest; not sowing, what could we gather? The field where we should spread our sweat, and that our martyrs have watered with their blood, this land so fertile, so fertile, we cannot see it again. O my God, what weeds, what briars and thorns!... If I let my heart go, a long and sad elegy would come out of it. It is better to be silent and put all this at the feet of the crucifix.

Chapter IV

Return of the Koreans to their homeland. - Their farewells. - Work of Bishop Ridel in Shanghai. - Departure for Notre-Dame des Neiges. - Mgr. Verroles' cabriolet, triumphal arrival. - A look at the Vallée-Fourchue.

One year had passed since Bishop Ridel's return to China. Nothing yet allowed him to foresee the end of his exile. The Koreans he had taken in often looked, too, toward the fatherland; then sometimes the vast horizon of sky and sea seemed to open up, and a kind of sweet vision appeared to the gaze of their hearts. There were their wives and children; there they had suffered much, their parents had been immolated to the rage of the tyrant, many sorrows and tribulations doubtless awaited them; but it was their country. The well-being of exile seemed to them more bitter than the sorrows of the fatherland.

They therefore begged the bishop to provide them with the means to return home. The bishop was their father, their country was his; their desire to see Korea again was also the most ardent desire of the revered prelate; he therefore hastened to satisfy it. M. Blanc set out immediately for Chefoo to hasten and ensure the return of these unfortunates. A few days later, the preparations were complete; a Chinese boat was waiting for them.

Nothing is more touching than the farewells of these poor Koreans. The pain of leaving their bishop, the joy of seeing their unhappy Korea divided their hearts and they burst into tears. Among them was an old man of admirable devotion and piety, John Choe. This generous Christian had seen his wife and six of his children undergo the most cruel torments to confess their faith, and in spite of his burning regrets, he found in his soul only words of blessing and gratitude to the good God.

At the time of departure, Bishop Ridel recommended to him, when he would be back home, to travel the country, to get in touch with the Christians of the different provinces and to return to China to report to him what he had seen. and heard. This detailed report, which would later be so useful to the missionaries, was to cost this old man eighteen months of privation and peril.

As for the Bishop of Korea, work of a new kind obliged him to prolong his stay in Shanghai. The catechism, the translation of several books of piety had been completed; but that had not sufficed for his activity. He had undertaken to have Korean characters engraved on wood in order to print immediately the essential works.

This typesetting work required meticulous care and skillful direction. Indeed, if in modern typographies the number of matrices is more or less limited to that of the letters of the alphabet, it is far from being the same for the printing of a Korean text.

The letters, it is true, are not more numerous than in our alphabets, but they aggregate in a hundred ways to form syllabic groups and the number of the matrices approaches twelve hundred.

This work finished, the missionary approached his mission. From the first days of October he had joined M. Blanc at Chefoo. He was preparing to leave this little town to go to Liaodong, when a Christian, who was going to Intze¹⁴, came to beg the missionaries to take passage on his boat. The route was much longer, but the happiness of traveling in a Christian boat was a compensation for the pains they expected to endure.

Any crossing on a Chinese boat is necessarily rich in incidents, but these are rarely

¹⁴ (original note) Intze is a port open to European trade. It is located at 120 east longitude of Paris and by 42 30' of north latitude. It is there that the north of China gets its supplies and sells its products. This country formed of alluvial lands is flat, it is only in the distance and during on fine days you can see the mountains. Europeans wrongly give this name to the town of Niou-tchouang; this last small town is still further north, 4 or 5 leagues from the sea. (The identity of Inze is unclear)

varied. Let's just say that after running into serious danger, the two missionaries landed at the small port of Intze at the beginning of November. For the rest of the journey, Bishop Ridel undertakes to tell us about it with his usual enthusiasm.

"The roads are bad, M. Blanc rides on horseback, and I take my place in the carriage of Mgr Verrolles. 'Carriage' is perhaps exaggerated, the cart has only two wheels; moreover, it lacks cushions and also springs; but it must be a cabriolet, for at any moment one is threatened with doing a cabriolet in it. You have to hang on with your feet and hands, always be on the alert to avoid a bruise on the right or on the left. One would be ten times better on foot; but it is more worthy to travel by wagon; you have to give in to etiquette.

"The vast plain we are crossing is monotonous and almost devoid of cultivation. There is a road to get to Saint-Hubert, but it is in such a state that we avoid it as much as possible. In the evening, for dinner, we stop at an inn located on the side of the road. Here, people admire the length and beauty of my beard, and they pay me endless compliments. The little scullion especially, whose filth is repulsive, remains in ecstasy while gazing at me. The first emotion over, we prepare for dinner. We start by wiping our plates and our dishes in order to remove the thick signature that the cook applies to them with his five fingers.... The next day we get into the saddle, because the road is long and can only be continued on horseback. Biscaro is the name of my courier: he is a child of Tartary.

"After several days of travel, towards evening we saw the spire of the church of N.-D. des Neiges. Two riders, notables of the village, come to meet me and offer me a cart; I would have preferred Biscaro to reach the end of the journey. All the men had gone to the entrance of the hamlet, music at their head; the bells were ringing, the music was playing, the cannon was roaring, and Biscaro, who no doubt shared in it all, raised his head."

In this sad country of Manchuria, in the Vallée-Fourchue, in the village of Tcha-keou, in other words N.-D. des Neiges, long days, long months were still to pass without bringing any change to the hard position of the Korean missionaries. An abundant snowfall covers the whole valley and all the surrounding mountains with its white mantle, and isolates, sometimes for several weeks, the inhabitants of this poor hamlet.

Despite this, the Bishop of Philippopolis finds this region charming.

"It is," he says, "a true country of silver, it is the country of N.-D. des Neiges: the snow does not melt, even under the most radiant sun. The scene is especially delightful at night: the stars shine with all their brilliance; the moon sheds a soft light which is reflected on these millions of crystallized snow needles. There are here and there effects of light of great beauty, glaciers to tempt artists, and we would enjoy this spectacle for a long time, but a light north wind will soon chirp in your ear. It's his way of telling you to come back inside and we are always ready to follow his advice."

From time to time the spectacle changes, but it is no less interesting; listen instead:

"Last night, thieves broke into our garden, they broke into a little hut where our provisions are, they took away a dozen cabbages; these good thieves, they will at least be able to eat cabbage soup! And our two dogs who didn't say anything: it's rather in their habit to let it happen; but apart from that, what good guards we have!

"Today, if you could hear the wind howling in our valley! Since noon, the hurricane has been unleashed with unprecedented violence; the mountain ranges have disappeared, the sky seems to have lowered. The frightened little birds do not have the strength to flee, and hide behind the embankments; in vain, the magpies fly in long lines to overcome the storm, the wind whirls them around and carries them away; the trees creak; the snow, the sand heave, the wind whistles and throws out its highest notes.

"Tonight, from here, I am still witnessing this torment of nature. The storm is still brewing, fortunately our house is solid. Besides, everything is calm around me; my lamp from time to time lets out a little noise as if to tell me that it has sufficiently fulfilled its function; the

fire crackles as it goes out little by little, my alarm clock sounds its monotonous ticking; my pen squeaks as I hurriedly trace the thoughts, the descriptions that I send to friends over there. Yes, over there! How happy we will be when we are up there!”

Chapter V

Bishop Ridel's journey to Peking. - M. de Geofroy and the Chinese ministers. - Return to Manchuria. - Brigands invade Notre-Dame des Neiges, Bishop Ridel puts them to flight. - News from the Korean Mission.

On his return to Manchuria, Mgr. Ridel tried to collect the former pupils of MM. Petitnicolas and Pourthié. To all the Christians of Korea who dared to cross their formidable frontier, he recommended that they seek out former seminarians or other children who were willing to consecrate themselves to God. These recommendations had a first result towards the end of the year 1873.

At this time, a young Korean learned of the bishop's desire and resolved to respond to it; he asked his mother's consent, obtained it, and under the guidance of an old man, left for China. Disguised as lumberjacks, they deceived the surveillance of the satellites, and despite the rigor of the winter, despite the perils of a long journey, they both arrived safe and sound at N.-D. des Neiges.

Great was the joy of the venerable Vicar Apostolic at the arrival of this adolescent; it seemed to him that he saw rising from its ruins this Saint-Joseph college which he had visited and on which Bishop Berneux had founded such sweet hopes.

In the month of February 1874, couriers arrived from Korea at N.-D. des Neiges. They announced that the Regent, who had persecuted the Christians with such relentlessness, had rendered himself execrable at court, and that the King, after having driven him from his capital and having chosen wise and moderate ministers, had taken over the reins of government.

This news was serious. Bishop Ridel wanted to take advantage of the good dispositions of this new government and address a petition to it in favor of the Catholic religion. But how to send this request to His Korean Majesty? that was the difficulty. If the Chinese government consented to render this service to the missionaries, the thing became easy; it was, moreover, the only means of attaining the goal.

The wise prelate knew China too well to have many illusions about the success of this request, but he was urged to do so by the Korean Christians who had for so long been subjected to an intolerable yoke.

These good people imagined that their bishop, through the intermediary of the French ambassador in Peking, would easily obtain religious freedom. The missionaries did not share this confidence, but by dint of hearing it expressed they inclined to it, and ended by acting as if they believed it to be well founded. Moreover, it is always consoling to say to oneself that for the accomplishment of one's duty one has done all that it was possible to do.

Apart from the projected plan, it was also advantageous for the bishop of Korea to see the French ambassador at Peking, and to ascertain his dispositions for the future. He therefore set out, accompanied by M. Blanc and two Koreans.

It took courage to undertake such a journey at this time of the year. All of northern China is buried in snow; here and there wide streams stop the traveler and present him with perils of a particular kind. Rivers and streams are covered with a thick layer of ice; but the local Chinese take care to dig deep cavities every morning into which the traveler very often sinks. So the perpetrators of the accident hasten to come to the aid of their victim, and are largely compensated for their trouble. Chinese industry goes that far.

After a month of continual fatigue, the missionaries arrived in Peking. The ambassador, M. de Geofroy, received them with the most cordial benevolence, and promised to place all possible good will at their service. Unfortunately, good will is not always enough; in China especially, strength and consideration are still needed. The representative of France therefore took up the bishop's petition and carried it himself to the Yamen (衙門 This is the name given

to the ministry which treats with European ambassadors.) The ambassador was told that the dispatch he was carrying should be presented to the Libu (禮部 The Ministry of Rites, which deals with the Korean ambassadors, and these were at that time in Peking.). M. de Geofroy, not being able to deal directly with the Libu, begged the members of the Yamen to be good enough to undertake this dispatch themselves, and to hand it over to the competent ministry. “We will try,” replied the ministers, “but we do not promise that our colleagues will accept it.”

Five days later, the petition was returned to the French Embassy. The Libu had not even been made aware of it: that is what is called diplomacy in China.

While making this journey, Bishop Ridel had also intended to see Bishop Delaplace, Apostolic Vicar of Peking and his personal friend. He wanted to explain his plans to him, and ask for advice and support. Here his fatigues were not in vain. He took advantage of the hospitality which his venerable colleague offered him with wholly apostolic charity, to visit the establishments of the mission in the capital of the Celestial Empire, promising himself to profit by the experience of others; for at the bottom of his heart he still preserved the liveliest hope.

Back in Manchuria, Bishop Ridel resumed his work on the Korean language and began his life of prayer and isolation anew. A letter addressed to M. Bonnissant, missionary in Canada, allows us to enter into the details of his existence and to admire the elevation of his sentiments.

“Here I am,” he wrote on October 24, 1874, “here I am in a valley beyond Manchuria, forced to remain with arms crossed with three missionaries, my eyes turned towards our poor and desolate mission while awaiting the moment of Providence. This is to tell you that our situation is in no way changed, and that, as in the past, we are doing nothing - at least I hope and have the firm confidence that we are doing the will of God; this thought encourages us, sustains us; for me, I desire nothing else: what God wills, as he wills. You can imagine that in such a situation I don’t have a lot of interesting things to write to you; perhaps, however, you would not be sorry to know our way of life in this exile.

“Our geographical position is thirty leagues southwest of the Korean gate. We live in the former residence of Bishop Verroles, who was kind enough to grant us this post until we can return to our mission. All my clergy consists of three young missionaries; we all live here together, in community. One of these gentlemen is procurator, the other is priest of the parish, which is made up of about three hundred Christians; the third is in charge of the seminary in Korea, the entire staff of which consists of the professor and a student, a young man of fifteen, whom I was able to get out of his country and who is beginning his studies.

“As for the poor bishop of Philippopolis, he does a bit of everything; which, you understand, means not much. You will be quite astonished when you know that I was able to make a dictionary and a grammar of the Korean language; certainly, I was not born for that; and that proves that God can use all sorts of tools.

“So our days here pass in expectation, our life is that of a seminary; our regulations fix the rising, the meals, the recreations, the times of study and the various exercises of the day. My missionaries are animated by an excellent spirit, and, by the grace of God, are priests of an exemplary life, of great edification; but also what a perspective! In a few days, I can tell them to try to return to the mission. So, they know, it’s life in prison, in a dungeon, with all the deprivations one can hardly imagine for the body, for the heart, and even for the soul, except that God seems to be more present; it is above all the prospect, which can so easily become a certainty, of being arrested, then subjected to horrible tortures, to finally lay one’s head under the executioner’s axe. And all this is not imagination, it is reality. The Korean government has never treated the envoys of Our Lord in any other way. Well! you understand easily, this perspective helps a little to have a solid faith, a practical faith; above all, it helps to love the good God and the salvation of men; it also and above all helps to have great humility, the foundation of all virtues: without humility, no one can suffer these tortures; without humility no one can be a martyr.

“Do not forget us in your prayers: ask for me the strength, the patience and above all the love of the good God.”

The village of Tcha-keou assumed, towards the end of the following winter, the aspect of a veritable stronghold; its inhabitants, usually so calm, spoke only of brigands, of battles; and almost every night terrible detonations awoke the echoes of the mountain.

This is what had happened: bands of robbers had advanced from the depths of the forests which form a vast neutral ground between China and Korea; they had sacked the neighboring regions and threatened the valley of Notre-Dame des Neiges with a similar misfortune. To ward off this peril, the Christians of the hamlet came to ask the missionaries to help them. The house of the Fathers became a refuge for children and old people, and was transformed into an arsenal, where, after having repaired arms long out of use, they began to manufacture new ones. One day, the sentry who was mounting guard on the little terrace of the missionaries' garden, came in quite pale, completely beside himself, to announce that a large troop of brigands was preparing to cross the village. In the blink of an eye everyone was at their post. The danger was serious. We saw, in fact, advancing slowly and in good order an armed mass whose intentions left no doubt.

Mgr. Ridel, fearing that some misfortune might happen, went straight to the leader of the troop, and, having reached a short distance from him, he said to him: “Stop, you cannot pass.” The band stopped, but soon the most elated shouted, “Let's go ahead!” The bishop then swelled his voice and uttered a few resounding words in French which had a magical effect; at the same time, with a terrible gesture and look, he pointed to the steeple of Notre-Dame des Neiges. Now, that day, the steeple of the charming church had a formidable appearance. From its arches, from which only the ringing of the silver-tone bell had ever issued, enormous cannons could be seen advancing, their mouths gaping. This view was not made to give much assurance to this band of Chinese, and moreover, this devil of a European had blazing eyes, a thundering voice, and a beard!

But their fright was at its height when they suddenly heard an indefinable and strident noise which rose from the side of the village. Imagining that it was the noise of wheels or the whistle of some war machine invented by the Europeans, they decided to take another direction. These discordant noises which had frightened the brigands were produced by bamboo pipes, with which a missionary amused himself by building organs. As for the guns, one imagines that they were not bad; they were only simple stovepipes, which, with a little tow and painted canvas, had been transformed into formidable engines of war.

The alerts of this kind were quite numerous, but thanks to God, thanks to the energy of the bishop, the small population of Notre-Dame des Neiges had no misfortune to deplore.

The reader will undoubtedly remember that Bishop Ridel, in 1872, had sent a good old man, John Choe, to Korea with the express recommendation to travel the country, to get in touch with the Christians of the different provinces, and to return then to China to report to him what he had seen and heard. After a long and vain wait, the missionaries had come to believe that this valiant Christian had died of fatigue, or that, victim of persecution, he had, like the rest of his family, won the palm of martyrdom.

So, towards the middle of January 1875, what was their joy, when one of the Korean Christians who lived with them rushed into their room and exclaimed: “John Choe is not dead, here he is, coming with the couriers. In fact, a few moments later, the good old man found himself in the house of the Fathers. In what condition! He was pale, emaciated, his face frozen, he had just walked more than two hundred leagues. “I have no idea,” he said, after a long silence, “I don't know if I'm alive or if I'm dead, I don't know what to say.” However, the rest and the attentive care of which he was the object recovered him, and soon he related what he had learned during his long and perilous journey.

From the capital to the middle of Jeolla-do, in the center, in the south-west, the rage of

the persecutors was unleashed with unprecedented violence. Impossible to know the number of martyrs; but it was greater than in any of the previous persecutions. To put an end to Christianity, the mandarins stirred up the pagans. These came running, sword and fire in hand, and the unfortunate Christians, after having been the sad witnesses of the pillage and the burning of their houses, had to flee in haste... Thousands of poor people thus found themselves deprived of everything, without asylum, without resources of any kind. Many died of hunger, cold and misery. To make matters worse, most of the orphans were taken in by pagans and are being brought up today in hatred of the Catholic religion; women, in large numbers, were separated from their husbands, and then remarried by force or sold as slaves to pagans.

For some time now, the persecution has slowed down a bit. According to the orders of the king, the mandarins cannot put a Christian to death without having referred it to His Majesty. Despite this great alleviation of their fate, the position of the Christians still remains very painful. They are always outside the law, and consequently exposed to the continual vexations of the pagans.

Many Christians have had the misfortune to apostatize, but the greater number have remained faithful and sigh for the return of the missionaries.

Certain cases of marriage present inextricable difficulties, and the poor people have no one near them who can clear up their doubts. Finally, the books of religion are almost all lost, and these unfortunates forget their catechism and their prayers; this ignorance can only increase with time.

However, not all the news the good old man brought was so sad. He announced at the same time that, in the north and in the center, several pagans desired to embrace the religion of Jesus Christ and to receive baptism. It therefore became urgent to bring some missionaries into Korea, for a longer absence could cause the complete ruin of this once flourishing mission. On the other hand, such an enterprise was full of perils. The Korean coasts were being actively watched, and staying in the country seemed much more difficult than before the persecution.

Formerly, the missionaries, putting on the habit of mourning, could almost without danger traverse their districts; but at this moment this very dress was becoming dangerous, for it was no longer a secret to anyone that the Europeans hid themselves under this disguise. The missionaries had, moreover, to mistrust the traitors and a few cowardly and indifferent Christians who, far from desiring their return, feared it.

Finally, if the government tolerated the existence of Christians in the kingdom, or at least if it did not show the same relentlessness against them, it was because it believed them to be reduced to impotence, persuaded that any relationship with the Europeans was definitely broken. But the weakest Christian demonstration, the least indiscretion could rekindle the persecution and become for the Church of Korea a cause of irreparable misfortunes.

Chapter VI

Serious decision. - Prudent hesitation of the Bishop of Korea. - His project is approved in Paris and Rome. - Death of M. Martineau. - Letter to a friend. - Bishop Ridel announces his return to his mission to his family. - First attempt. - Second expedition. - MM. Blanc and Deguette enter Korea.

It is easy to understand the perplexities in which the courageous bishop found himself. At this moment he required all his zeal and all his prudence. He therefore assembled his missionaries to know their opinion and to help himself with their enlightenment. After a long deliberation, these generous apostles decided by common accord that two of them, in the month of September, should try to penetrate into the northern province.

This decision was serious; it placed on the shoulders of the apostolic vicar a heavy responsibility. So he thought it wise to make it known to MM. the directors of the Missions-Etrangères, in Paris, and to ask them if they believed such a step was according to God's will.

In this letter, the venerable bishop explains all the possible combinations to carry out this project and also all the difficulties which present themselves to him, and finally he asks himself in ending this question: "Why not try to return simply and secretly as before? It's probably the only resource we have left." The answer was not long in coming, it was in all respects in accordance with his wishes.

"In the present circumstances," he was told, "we can hardly hope for any help from men, and our conviction is similar to yours. We only believe that it would be useful if Your Excellency did not leave China, in order to follow events and keep us informed. We are the first to understand and recognize that, from the beginning of your episcopate, you found yourself in the presence of the most difficult situation that it is possible to imagine, and we can only praise the prudence which you demonstrated so far. Today, you think, and we think like you, that the time has come to act, and that, before God, before the Church and before our Society, we are obliged to make a supreme effort to put an end to our poor and dear Korea's widowhood which has lasted for eight years. Such an enterprise can only be approved by the Sovereign Shepherd of souls, and we hope that, through the intercession of the Queen of the Apostles and our intrepid martyrs, it will be crowned with success."

Before this letter had reached China, Bishop Ridel had sent a second letter in which he explained in even more detail the difficulties and his fears. He demanded a clear and categorical answer. If it had only been a question of his life, he would have given it little value; but it was a question of the life of his missionaries, of the workers of God: he hesitated.

This hesitation was certainly quite legitimate, because to give the order to enter Korea was surely to give the order to go to a probable death, perhaps very soon? Above all, was this not going to cause Christians new and terrible trials?

Here, moreover, in what terms he was answered from Paris. Apostles alone can speak or hear such language.

"Our last letter has already given Your Grace a presentiment of our point of view. Today, directly and explicitly consulted by You, Monseigneur, we have made it our duty to think about it even more seriously.

"We have weighed one by one the serious, very serious difficulties that Your Lordship exposes therein, and it seemed to us that from the point of view of the faith and the duties of the apostolic vocation, these difficulties, taken separately or all united, could not prevail against the necessity of assisting twenty thousand Christians, for eight years deprived of priests and devoid of all the help of religion.

"Undoubtedly, the return to Korea, under the present circumstances, constitutes a truly heroic act and not only an ordinary duty; but in certain vocations and especially in apostolic

vocations, heroic acts can and often do become a duty. Be that as it may, there is absolutely no doubt that those who will have the generosity to dedicate themselves to run to the aid of these abandoned poor, those will have, in the eyes of God and in the eyes of the Church, accomplished the act of the most excellent charity. And if they were to fall under the sword of persecution, not only would they be martyrs, but their merit would be all the greater because the eventuality of this death, without being sought, would have been more clearly foreseen and more generously accepted. for our Lord Jesus Christ.

“If in the near future we could have foreseen a greater ease of returning to Korea, we would have advised a delay; but we do not see this hope shining anywhere.

“Although our response to Your Excellence is based on complete conviction, we nevertheless did not want to confine ourselves to our own lights, and, less to cover our own responsibility than to give Your Greatness an assurance and a consolation of Moreover, we explained to the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda, the difficult project that you intended to carry out, recommending it to his prayers, and requesting for its success a special blessing from the Holy Father. Through the care of the cardinal, this blessing was obtained on Sunday, in the octave of the Epiphany.

“After that, it seems that nothing is lacking for you to be able to put your hand to the task, trusting, for the result, in the goodness of Him for whose love several colleagues will expose themselves to the hardest labors. and possibly death.”

“As of today, we promise you, Monseigneur, to you and to all our beloved confreres in Korea, a very special remembrance in our prayers and as soon as we learn of the certain realization of this great design, we will all redouble here our entreaties to the God of mercy and we will have several fervent communities pray with us. However, with the prayer and by the prayer, we will obtain from God that it blesses your company and that it crowns your efforts.

“We would like to be able to share ourselves your efforts, your labors and your perils in this circumstance.

“Since this favor has not been granted to us, be at least persuaded that we will neglect nothing to ensure the happiest result.”

These letters relieved Bishop Ridel of all anxiety. The blessing of the Holy Father gave his project the highest and most effective approval that it is possible to obtain in this world. In an enterprise of this kind, was not the blessing of the Sovereign Pontiff, in effect, the ratification of God himself?¹⁵ This approval became an order for our apostle, and despite the opinion of men, despite the numberless perils he was about to run, he immediately took his measures.

It was therefore decided that in the month of September 1875, two missionaries would try to enter the kingdom of Korea and that Bishop Ridel would remain in China to follow events. But divine Providence had decided otherwise.

Death came to surprise M. Martineau almost at the moment of departure. On July 24, he went to Intze to meet Bishop Verrolles who was arriving from France. As soon as he arrived in this small Chinese port, he fell ill, and a few days later he fell asleep in the Lord. The piety of this missionary, his devotion, his courage which was equaled only by his gentleness and his humility, all these apostolic virtues, together with a great knowledge of the Korean language, enabled his bishop to place on him the most legitimate expectations. But God, whose designs

¹⁵ Here are the terms in which Cardinal Franchi expressed the feelings of the Sovereign Pontiff: In audiencia porro diei 10^{ae} vertentis mensis (januarii) referru curavi SSm^o D^{no} nostro ea quæ R. T. scribebat de consilio a R. S. D. Ridel, vicario apostolico Coreano ejusque missionariis suscepto, iterum missionem ingrediendi. Sanctitas vero Sua valde horum evangelicorum ministrorum zelum animumque admirata, Domino eos se commendaturam edixit, ac specialem ex corde iisdem benedictionem impertivit/ In the audience of January 10, I took care to make known to the Sovereign Pontiff the intention that Bishop Ridel, Apostolic Vicar of Korea, and his missionaries, had to return to Korea. His Holiness greatly admired the zeal and courage of these ministers of the Holy Gospel. He entrusts them to God and from the bottom of his heart sends them a very special blessing.

are always adorable, was content with his good will and found him ripe for heaven.

In announcing this painful event to the directors of the Foreign Missions, Mgr. Ridel announced to them that he was taking the place of the one who had just died and embarking with M. Blanc for Korea, leaving it to M. Richard to stay at Notre-Dame-des-Neiges.

“If I die,” he said in conclusion, “M. Blanc will take over the government of the mission as superior. If we both die, M. Richard will direct the mission, until another superior has been appointed.”

Finally, towards the beginning of September, the holy bishop wrote to one of his friends (Letter to M. l’abbé Rolland, chaplain to the Ursuline Ladies at Nevers.)

“All my arrangements are made; I will try to enter my mission. A thousand dangers, a thousand difficulties stand before me; I place myself simply and with confidence in the hands of the good God... Will I succeed? I do not know; but God only asks for good will.

“For nine years, our Christians have been deprived of the sacraments, can I leave them thus abandoned any longer?

“Of course, I am prepared for anything and willing to suffer anything. To better put myself in this disposition, I am going to make my annual retreat. I will do it under good conditions, almost convinced that it will be the last, because I have no illusions; the hidden life that we will have to lead will quickly wear down our health; faster still, I hope, the satellites of the King of Korea will have recognized and found us. May the good Lord grant me the grace to die as an apostle, to shed my blood for his love, for his glory, for the salvation of souls! Fiat! Fiat! I have no other desire.

“I take with me half of my clergy, which means one priest; we will be two, pray for us.”

It would be difficult to read without deep emotion the letter that Bishop Ridel wrote a few days later to his family. In this holy intimacy, the missionary lets his heart speak and reveals his whole soul. Let’s listen instead:

“I know you love Korea very much; I was very touched by the sentiments you expressed in favor of these unfortunate Christians. How unhappy they have indeed been for nearly ten years! They live and die without the assistance of any priest.

“Prudence advised me to wait for better days and I spent years in exile. Finally, I received news from my dear mission and I announced to these unfortunate Christians that in the fall I will send them two missionaries. This determination was serious, I consulted: I was told that doing so was good, that it was even an obligation for me. Propaganda approves of me, the Holy Father blesses me. What more could you want? Isn’t that really God’s will? God wills it, it’s my duty, and I don’t hesitate. All my preparations are made, in a few days I will leave, and I come today to announce it to you.

“At this news your hearts may be a little sad, but a thought of faith will soon bring you, together with courage, a feeling of joy. Our Christians are going to see their fathers again, and I, my mission; she is my wife, a very afflicted wife, but whom I must console, support and encourage. The task is heavy and difficult; it is not from today that I know my weakness, my incapacity, my impotence to re-establish this beautiful Church of Korea. But on the other hand, the vocation is beautiful and great. There are many dangers, you may say to me: I know them, and no one in the world knows them, sees them better than me; but that is not what should stop a missionary. Didn’t our Lord say to his apostles: ‘I am sending you like sheep in the midst of wolves,’ and the apostles did not back down. Didn’t our Lord know all the sufferings that awaited him in Jerusalem? Every Christian must walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, a fortiori a priest, a missionary. What beautiful examples of abnegation, of renunciation in the lives of my predecessors! Oh! how happy they are now: for a moment of labor, an eternity of happiness! I will follow in their footsteps, courageously, despite all the dangers. It is for the glory of God. I hope that God will protect me and, if it is his will, I will gladly die for him. I’m ready. To die for God, what could be more beautiful, more enviable here below? The world does not

understand this, but you who are Christians will easily understand it, and if one day, by a signal favor of divine mercy, I am judged worthy of this glory, you will rejoice in it in God.

“But we’re not there yet. My goal in entering Korea is to raise this poor Church from its ruins, to help these unfortunate Christians and to expend myself for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

“I threw myself at the foot of the Cross a long time ago, kissed it. I have taken this bare cross for my share, with all its sufferings and humiliations: it is the surest path that a Christian can follow. This is the most excellent way to arrive at the intimate union of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

“However, as always also we carry our poor nature which is not inclined to adopt this doctrine, to rejoice in this state; I rely very much on the help of your prayers, the prayers of fervent souls, to obtain the courage, the patience and all the virtues of the apostles. Ask God that I never offend him: that is the only danger, offending God. Everything else is trifling and not worth worrying about. O my God, I really hope to remain united to you continually, and to pray to you with such fervor that I will never make the slightest mistake deliberately; as for all other evils, I do not fear them, because you will always be with me. Oh! to always be with God!

“Adieu, my dear friends, I am still going to distance myself a little from you, but these are distances which bring us closer in God. Let each on his side do his duty, the holy will of God, and we will meet again in heaven, in heaven forever!

“Do not be afraid for me, I am in the hands of the good God: To strengthen you, I send you my most tender and my most affectionate blessing.”

The meeting place on the coast of Korea is clearly determined. The Korean boat and the Chinese junk must wait until October 3, if the weather is favorable; until the 10th, if the wind is contrary.

On September 20, the little caravan set off, Bishop Ridel at the head; M. Blanc accompanies him. With their missionaries, three Koreans return to their homeland; the minor seminarian Joseph, his mentor, old Thaddeus, the third, recently arrived, responds to the name of Dominique. Finally, on the junk, which was already too narrow, a Manchurian servant took his place with the travellers, not to serve them, but to bring back to China the baggage that could not be transferred to the Korean boat.

On Sunday evening, the 26th, the last Chinese land disappeared on the horizon, and on Tuesday morning, on awakening, the missionaries saluted the shores of Korea. “I will not express to you,” writes M. Blanc, “the sweet emotion which shakes our hearts at the sight of this land for which we have sighed for so long, land where, for nearly ten years, the blood of the great victim of Calvary, and where many Christians no longer find the living and fruitful sources of the sacraments. And it is we, messengers of the good news, who will restore Jesus Christ to them, break their chains and heal their wounds.

What lively thanksgiving escapes from our hearts!...

Our joy is short-lived. Our boatmen have taken the wrong direction, and we are near the island of Tchyoto, more than thirty leagues to the north of our rendezvous.”

Soon the wind becomes contrary; the sea swells, impossible to move forward. We drop anchor in the open sea, and all night the frail boat is the plaything of the waves: the mainmast wobbles, the rudder threatens to escape, the sail of the mainmast in front is half torn, the junk itself, too old to withstand the storm, seems every minute on the point of breaking in half. The appalled boatmen declare that they can go no further and want to return to China.

However, the wind dies down, and the wretched junk finally lands at the island of Tchyoto. Suddenly, a Korean boat is reported; it is a boat of mandarins. We must flee – and quickly.

The fugitives return to the high seas, escaping pursuit, but their junk runs aground on rocks. The waves crashing hard on the fragile skiff threaten to engulf it. For five hours death seems inevitable.

The boatmen, beside themselves, look for paper to offer a sacrifice to the demons. Bishop Ridel stops them and tells them not to fear anything, that he undertakes to pray with his companion and to obtain their deliverance from this peril. Immediately he falls on his knees on the bridge, recites the rosary, invokes Our Lady of Lourdes, and promises her in return for her maternal protection, to celebrate or have Holy Mass celebrated in her beautiful sanctuary in France.

Soon, to the great surprise of the poor idolaters, the wind blows from the north and the cleared junk resumes its course through the waves. On October 5, the two missionaries are at the meeting place. They are already thanking God and abandoning themselves to joy, when towards evening, the Christian who had prepared an asylum for them comes to warn them of the danger which threatens them: the chief of the island, near which they have been stationed since morning, suspects their presence and is preparing to board them.

They must think of a return; but the provisions are exhausted. For three days, the crew and passengers contented themselves with a few cups of boiled millet, seasoned with a little salt.

This perilous attempt had weakened the strength and health of the two missionaries without reducing their courage. They withdrew again into their solitude at Tcha-keou to await the hour of divine Providence.

This hour, so impatiently awaited, was not far off.

On April 27, 1876, a new missionary, M. Deguette, had come to join the apostles in Korea. Two days later, he was chosen to embark in the company of Bishop Ridel and M. Blanc. The ever pressing appeal of the Korean Christians, the relative calm which the kingdom had enjoyed since the expulsion from the court of the cruel regent, seemed so many favorable circumstances which could not be overlooked.

At the time of departure, the Christians of Notre-Dame des Neiges had gathered around the bishop of Korea, to beg him not to leave China. The Fathers joined their prayers to those of the pious faithful: "for," they said, "His Grace, by remaining in China, could soon obtain freedom of worship for the mission; or at least the imminent opening of Korean ports would enable him to rule Christendom with much more ease and fruition." These reasons, quite similar, moreover, to the advice addressed to him by the directors of the Foreign Missions, shook the courageous apostle, but could not determine him. The voices of the hungry had moved his heart. These unfortunates who asked for bread were his children, he knew their distress, he knew the disasters accumulated around them by the persecution. And to raise so many ruins, to provide for so much physical, especially moral misery, three missionaries was still very little! "*Quid haec inter tantos!*"

The crossing from China to the island of Tchyto, the meeting place, lasted eight days, thwarted by the winds, it was however carried out without unfortunate incident.

Let Bishop Ridel speak:

"On May 8, around eleven o'clock in the evening, we heard a noise, at first quite confused, of voices and oars. Soon we distinguish a black point which moves towards us while skirting the coast. Our Chinese take to the boarding post, determined to defend themselves if they are attacked.

"The boat is approaching. We return to our hiding place so as not to be recognized. A few moments later, the noise of the oars ceases, a friendly voice is heard: it is that of Thaddeus who, the previous year, had made the same trip with us and who had returned to Korea. We are very happy, and soon our Koreans are on board. It is the sailors of the boat that has come to pick us up.

"The first outburst of joy subsided, the poor people come to me and say: 'Why didn't the bishop stay with the other Fathers to do his best to obtain our freedom? He would have

returned on a Japanese ship and would have established himself in one of the open ports¹⁶. What desolation for our people if they learn that they cannot hope for freedom! On the contrary, hope would be reborn in their hearts if they learned that the bishop is still in China, occupied with their interests!”

“I consulted my two companions; they were of opinion that I would be more useful to them in China, and that if we could obtain a little freedom for the Christians, it would be the greatest service to be rendered to religion in Korea.

“I had trouble making up my mind; however, time was pressing. I then remembered that I too had had the same thought, and that at Notre-Dame des Neiges, I had received the same advice from Paris. I saw clearly that such was the will of God, and I resolved to leave MM. Blanc and Deguetto to enter Korea alone.

“How much it cost us to separate! I was heartbroken, especially when my two traveling companions asked me for one last blessing. I knew all the privations, all the pains, all the sufferings that awaited them, and that’s when I left them!

“The hearts of Koreans were overflowing with joy. They had two missionaries and, thanks to my return, they foresaw the freedom to practice their religion in the near future. As for me, I dared not conceive of such a hope.

“Soon the little boat moves away and disappears into the night. I follow her with my eyes and my heart for as long as possible. I then enter the cabin, which now seems huge and sad. Various thoughts run through my heart, but I am resolved to do all I can to help my missionaries and my Christians, Will I succeed? I do not know. At least I will have done my best. It was to fulfill God’s will that I came to Korea. It is again to accomplish this holy will that I return to China.”

No sooner had Bishop Ridel left his missionaries than the wind blew violently, shaking the poor junk violently. But this wind, which thwarted his return, was favorable to those who were going to Korea, and the holy bishop blessed God in his heart. Thanks to this squall, M. Blanc and his companion were able to reach the mouth of the capital’s river without difficulty and ascend it to the place indicated.

Two days later, they landed on this land of Korea that no Catholic missionary had trodden for ten years.

“My heart beat very strongly,” writes M. Blanc, “when, for the first time, I walked on Korean soil. But confidence and joy abounded. Were we not blessed children of God? Was not the eye of divine Providence fixed on us? Did not the good Virgin, the angels and the saints intercede for us?...

¹⁶ At the moment, the Japanese ambassadors were in Seoul to obtain from the Korean government the opening of several ports, and their approach had no result.

Chapter VII

Relations between Bishop Ridel and M. Brenier de Montmorand, French Minister in Peking. - Reply from Pius IX. - The tactics of the missionaries. - State of the Korean Mission. - Bishop Ridel enters his mission happily. - Letter to a friend.

The junk which was bringing back Bishop Ridel, long the toy of the waves, nevertheless landed on the shores of Manchuria. Far from dreaming of rest, the courageous bishop resumed his wandering life. Continual journeys from Chefoo to Shanghai, as in the past to Hong Kong, Nagasaki, Peking, had only one goal: to see the representatives of France and beg them to take the cause of her missionaries in hand. and their Christians. Admiral Veron, MM. de Geofroy and Brenier de Montmorand, Ministers Plenipotentiary in China, must still remember what charm the Bishop of Korea spread around him, with what touching conviction he begged them to take an interest in his poor Christians.

All his efforts were useless. If he formed a project, almost immediately he saw it crumble; if they gave him a hope, it was soon disappointed. It therefore became more and more evident to him that he should not count on the help of men; but if men failed him, the Lord remained to him. And that was quite enough... He resolved to go as quickly as possible to Korea to share the sufferings and perils of his missionaries; nevertheless he thought it prudent to communicate this step to Viscount Brenier de Montmorand, who had for some time been representing France at Peking.

The missionary congratulated the minister plenipotentiary on his devotion to Catholic interests "which, especially in China, cannot be separated from the interests of France." This devotion seemed to him to bode well for the future, and he had no doubt that the wisdom and skill which our representative had already demonstrated in Nanjing and Shanghai, and his long business experience would return his stay in Peking salutary and fruitful in happy results.

His letter ended as follows:

"The interests of our dear mission in Korea are not foreign to you either. You have already known our trials for a long time. So I have no doubt that, when the time comes, you will use the resources of your credit and your position to help us in our ministry to our poor Christians and to improve the present situation of this poor mission. Your letter and the interview we had in Shanghai confirm my hopes. May God assist your efforts and be your reward!"

The French minister in Peking was personally devoted to the missionaries, full of admiration for them; but his government dreaded the slightest complication in the East. He therefore believed himself officially obliged to ask Bishop Ridel not to leave China and even to bring back from Korea the two missionaries who were already working there.

This attitude of the minister did not discourage the bishop. Before sending his priests to Korea, he had thought and prayed for a long time. The Pope, blessing him, and the superiors of the missions had told him to have confidence and to go forward. Now, the blessing of the Pope and the voice of superiors were for him the very word of the God who conquered the world and whose arm still works miracles. Under these conditions, no obstacle, no man would have stopped him. Besides, it was not at the moment of danger, and especially when he felt so well supported, that he veteran, he bishop, would have deserted the field of battle, abandoned his children and his flag.

"It is my duty," he replied, "to revive this mission, beaten for so long by all the winds of persecution. Neither I nor my missionaries have any illusions about the difficulties and the perils. But a man risks his life to save that of his fellow man; a magistrate exposes himself for the business of his government, and I know that you would not hesitate, at a given moment, to sacrifice yourselves for the honor of the nation.

“The missionary, too, is a man of dedication. For us it is a question, not precisely of saving the life of the body, but of saving souls; it is about the glory of God! Our devotion must therefore be all the greater as the goal is higher. No doubt we would have preferred another situation that was easier for us and for our Christians; it is even what made me delay my entry into my mission. Now nothing is holding me back and my duty is to accept the current situation and go join my missionaries. Things have always been like this in Korea, and in this I am only following in the footsteps of my predecessors.

“The French government, devoted to the missions and to the missionaries, may have some concern, but its intention is not to advise the missionaries not to fulfill their ministry, because there is danger. The Government understands duty and devotion; it employs men who are resolved to push duty to the point of sacrifice. And you yourself, M. Minister, last year, when the residents left Tianjin, what reason led you to this city, despite the real dangers that could be encountered there? Is the French government sure of your safety in Peking? No, but there are positions where duty obliges us to remain despite all the perils.”

This eloquent letter somewhat disconcerted the ambassador; he tried, however, to overcome the bishop’s resistance. But his answer was unfortunate. After paying homage to the courage and virtue of the missionaries, he added:

“You know what difficulties your mission has already created for my government, and what misfortunes, in still more favorable circumstances, have resulted. All military expeditions are forbidden to us at the moment, and it seems to me impossible to protect you in a country with which we have no treaty. You are marching towards martyrdom, Monseigneur, you and your missionaries. I know that your faith desires it, and that such a perspective is only an encouragement for you; but allow me to point out to you all the embarrassments you can create for the government of our country, and how much you risk compromising it in circumstances that are already so difficult for it. It is your political spirit and your patriotism that I come to appeal to, asking you to at least postpone your entry into Korea.”

The minister then speaks of the misfortunes that the presence of the missionaries in Korea could cause to the inhabitants of this country, he ends by saying that, if His Grace does not take these observations into account, he should not expect any intervention on the part of the French government, which declines all responsibility.

When one remembers Admiral Roze’s disastrous expedition to Ganghwa, one cannot help feeling surprised at hearing the representative of France cast onto the missionaries what was only the inevitable consequence of the most shameful debacle. Three or four hundred sailors, armed with a few pieces of artillery, could have driven the regent to flight and easily taken Seoul.

France could then dictate its conditions, and the missionaries openly preach the Christian religion. If the French squadron had not landed in Korea, if above all it had not withdrawn, after a very unfavorable combat, it is almost certain that after the Massacre of the missionaries, the number of victims would have been very few. . . But what above all armed the hands of the satellites and the executioners, what filled their hearts with an always unquenched rage against the Christians, was that they saw in them the allies of defeated France!

Moreover, the letter from the French ambassador to Peking did not go without protest. Here it is:

“Tcha-keou, June 19, 1877.

“Minister,

“On May 1, I had the honor of letting you know what I had undertaken in the interest of the mission in Korea, and the motives which prompted me to act in this way.

“I have just received your letter of March 15, in which you advise me not to pursue my project.

“I am pleased to recognize that you have been inspired by noble feelings, and I thank

you in particular, Minister, for this benevolence towards us. But let me tell you, your letter surprised me. Until now the members of the legation had advised me to be cautious. Now, I believe I have been as prudent as one can be, while fulfilling one's duty.

"That's what I will always strive to do. Duty fulfilled with prudence, such is the principle which made me wait patiently for many years and reject the desire I had to be among my Christians.

"When I thought the moment was favorable, I brought in two missionaries and tried to reconstruct this beautiful and interesting mission. Everything went well. The momentum is given, it must be supported and developed. This is what demands of me, of my missionaries, all possible energy; now, it was at this moment that I received advice from the Peking legation to abstain from any enterprise! What a misfortune for our Christians, for the mission if we were to abandon it in such circumstances. But no, the idea cannot come to me, and I don't hesitate to continue what has fortunately been started. You yourself, Minister, will be of this opinion. Our intention is in no way to create embarrassment for France. If in 1866, the government was compromised, if it had difficulties (which I do not have to examine) the fault is not with the missionaries. You know this story since you were part of this expedition, and you know how to appreciate this unfortunate enterprise, which, for us, for our Christians, was the cause of so many misfortunes. When we succumb, when no one tries to avenge us: the blood of the missionary does not cry out for revenge, it cries out for mercy.

"All we would ask of an expedition, you know, is freedom for us to preach religion; for the inhabitants, the freedom to embrace it and practice it. Undoubtedly, our presence can be a cause of the irritation of the Korean government and push it to new excesses. But, on the other hand, our absence deprives Christians of the religious help to which they are entitled, and therefore they claim with all the more ardor that they still feel themselves under the blows of a persecution. To be taken and put to death is terrible; but to be put to death and deprived for a long time of all spiritual help, is still more terrible. They understand that. Hence the entreaties they make to have missionaries. Doesn't not responding to their wishes mean abandoning them and depriving them of the assistance to which they are entitled as Christians? Wouldn't that be failing in my duty and assuming a great responsibility? A mother exposes herself for the life of her children, and I, as priest, bishop, I must expose myself to save the souls of my children when they call me, when they claim my presence and the help of the sacraments! It is therefore impossible for us to remain deaf to this appeal; also my missionaries did not hesitate to expose themselves to fulfill a duty which God has imposed on us.

"This devotion gives us the right to rely in a very special way on Providence, and we know that not a single hair from our head will fall without its permission.

"That the French government cannot do anything for us now, I understand. But that does not prevent us from hoping that at some point, it will always be glad to be useful to the work of the missions and missionaries, who, while spreading religion in these countries, preserve the love of their country, and strive to make France known and loved."

M. Brenier de Montmorrand thought himself obliged to communicate his impressions to Propaganda through the intermediary of the French Embassy to the Holy See. The Cardinal Prefect explained the situation to the Sovereign Pontiff and asked his opinion. "If the vicar apostolic of Korea," answered Pius IX, "does not want to go on his mission, I do not oblige him to do so; but if he goes, I bless him." This response was self-explanatory. The Prefect of Propaganda therefore wrote to the French Embassy that he could not oppose the undertakings of zeal and devotion of the missionaries; he was good enough, however, to warn the procurator of the missions that his colleagues in Korea would not be able to count on the support of France, their attempts being made at their own risk and peril.

Since the apostles shared the world to preach Jesus crucified, everywhere, always it is the same love that we find in their hearts; everywhere, always, the same cry escapes from their

breasts: “What is the use for a man to gain the whole world, if he loses his soul?” *Quid prodest homini si mundum universum lucretur animate vero suæ detrimentum patiatur* (Matt. xvi. 26.). To ensure their victory, they also have their tactics, very old, it is true, but very different from the tactics of men. It can be summed up in two words: “*Hi in curribus et hi in equis, nos autem in nomine Domini* (Psalm xix. 8.). Men rely on the number of their chariots and their war horses; but all the confidence of the messengers of God rests on the name and the word of their master. As we see, Bishop Ridel was the worthy descendant of the apostles.

The activity of the courageous Vicar Apostolic knew no bounds. Despite the distance, he led the small community of Notre-Dame des Neiges. He consoled and encouraged the two missionaries who had entered Korea. At the same time, he made known to Paris and Rome the situation which was made for him and the state of his mission. It enjoyed a relative calm, not that the Christians were tolerated, but it was imagined that the greater number had disappeared in the persecution, and that the survivors, terrified by the death of their relatives and friends, would soon return to ancestor worship.

While the Korean ministers regarded as a *fait accompli* the annihilation of Christianity in their homeland, two missionaries, resolved to suffer, to die for the salvation of souls and the glory of God, worked in the greatest secrecy in the midst of this kingdom. closed to the rest of the universe. There, as in a prison, never being able to appear in public, nor circulate in broad daylight, they had at least the happiness of causing the blood of the spotless Lamb to flow over this pagan land, and of attracting to it the merciful gaze of the Master of the world.

Already M. Blanc had traversed the provinces of the north, the north-east, and the east. In his nocturnal journeys he had administered the sacraments to many of these unfortunate Christians, whose number still amounted to about fifteen thousand. The presence of the missionaries had awakened their faith; all devoted themselves to the study of religion and applied themselves to the reform of their morals. But ruin and death still hovered over their heads and compelled them to the greatest reserve and excessive prudence.

This painful situation was, for the soul of Bishop Ridel, a subject of perpetual anguish. “With a little freedom,” he wrote to Cardinal Franchi, “the mission would soon be relieved. But always under the blow of persecution, one is obliged to keep the greatest reserve so as not to excite the suspicions of the pagans. The slightest imprudence would be of a compromising nature. Hence the difficulty of establishing between pastors and faithful the relations necessary for the sacred ministry. It was impossible for the former to travel during the day, and for the latter, to go to the house which served as a refuge for the missionary. Add to this the fear of apostates and traitors.

“Divine Providence has so far led the two missionaries as if by the hand. I hope she will continue to watch over them. What they undertook for the glory of God and the salvation of souls will not turn to the detriment of this Christianity that we are trying to raise from its ruins.”

Besides these material obstacles, difficulties of another kind presented themselves to the missionaries in the accomplishment of their task. “Our Christians,” wrote M. Blanc, “are not afraid to travel forty, fifty, and even sixty leagues to participate in the sacraments and recover spiritual life.” Some, it is true, return to morality from even further away; but does the parable of the prodigal son allow us to assign limits to divine mercy? The situation of Christians living in the midst of pagans addicted to all the superstitions of paganism is full of perils still greater for the soul than for the body.”

Before leaving China, Bishop Ridel believed that the vacancy of his See was also an event to be foreseen. The still precarious state of his mission, the unheard-of difficulties that had to be overcome to enter it, the fear that death would soon deprive this persecuted people of its pastor, made it a duty for him to take such a step. This is why the letter which he addressed to Cardinal Franchi and which we have quoted in part, ended with a petition; he asked the Sovereign Pontiff for the powers necessary to resolve the difficulties inherent in the state of his

mission.

This legitimate desire, which met the needs of this unfortunate Christendom, was favorably received. The Holy Father granted the humble bishop of Korea the most extensive powers. He sent him, with blank bulls, the authorization to choose a coadjutor who would succeed him, and to confer on this successor all the same privileges.

If Bishop Ridel's solicitude extended to all the faithful entrusted to his care, those whose sorrows he had shared, those who had shed their blood for Jesus Christ, could not be absent from his memory. He believed the moment favorable to work for their glorification on earth and to pay them the just tribute of veneration which they had deserved. Moreover, the witnesses of the last battles and of the death of these martyrs were becoming increasingly rare. This consideration increased his desire to realize the purpose he had conceived.

To facilitate the execution of this project, the directors of the Seminary of the Missions-Etrangères sent a new missionary, M. Mutel, to Korea. The aptitudes and special knowledge of this young priest were to be of great help to the pious bishop, who proposed to introduce the cause of the glorious martyrs into the court of Rome. No means was overlooked to ensure the success of this enterprise. The missionary, before going to Korea, passed through the Eternal City to learn about the requirements of his mission, and then through Western Tong-King in order to acquire the practice, under the guidance of M. Bon, who was then working for the cause of the confessors of the faith in this country.

About the same time, M. Coste, procurator of the missions in Shanghai, received the order to join the missionaries of Korea and to place himself at the disposal of Mgr. Ridel. This missionary, endowed with a rare intelligence, had a rather extensive knowledge of the Chinese language; he became a valuable auxiliary to the Vicar Apostolic of Korea. Charged with supervising and directing the printing of the Korean grammar and dictionary, he brought to this important but arid work an admirable zeal and abnegation.

All these measures wisely taken, our dear apostle hastened the preparations for a new expedition to Korea. Finally, God was going to grant the most ardent of his wishes.

From the spring of this year 1877, two new missionaries, MM. Doucet and Robert, had arrived at N.-D. des Neiges. In the month of September, he embarked with them on a Chinese junk, abandoning himself in everything to the holy will of God. After eighteen days of fatigue and danger, he landed happily on Korean soil.

"Finally I have found my Korea," he wrote to a friend, "and under the protection of the good angels, I had soon, in the middle of the night, crossed the three leagues which separated me from the house which was prepared for me under the capital's walls."

"That's where I live; it is from this house that I have the pleasure of writing to you. M. Blanc, one of my missionaries, was waiting for me there. I renounce to describe to you the joy of all. Finally, the pastor was returned to his flock.

"I had left the two missionaries who accompanied me at the entrance to the river, receiving their farewells near the house which would serve as their residence to learn the language and train in the customs of the country. Now they are all in the field, working courageously for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. As for me, I remain in the capital, the center of the mission, directing and regulating everything.

"In what a sad state I found this poor mission!

"Thousands of the faithful have disappeared, victims of this cruel persecution which our Christians say is the most terrible of all those which have raged so far. Some died of hunger, cold, misery, others, especially the young girls, were sold as slaves and taken away no one knows where. Those we see are in the most miserable state, both in body and in soul.

"Forced to flee and hide, they lost everything they owned, their fields, their houses; they have nothing left to live on.

"Here I keep myself hidden; surrounded by pagans on all sides, I can only speak in a

low voice, and when I go out to minister to Christians, it is only in the middle of the darkness of the night. So far no accident has happened to us – divine Providence protects us in a sensible way. How happy we are to put all our trust in God! Besides, the best way not to be surprised is to be ready for anything; so I've gotten into the habit of living every day as before dying every day. May the holy will of God be done! and if I am judged worthy to suffer for his holy name, at that time I will remember my friends, and relying on the support of their prayers, I will also pray for all. (Letter to Father Rolland, December 3, 1877).

Chapter VIII

Bishop Ridel establishes his residence in Seoul. - Arrest of couriers at the frontier. - The bishop is discovered and thrown into prison. - First interrogation. - The prisoner placed in stocks.

As soon as he arrived, Bishop Ridel set to work. The task was heavy: it was necessary to reunite the remnants of these once flourishing Christianity, now dispersed by persecution, but still alive.

While his missionaries traveled the country in secret, he established himself at the very seat of government. From there he could follow the work of his companions and remain in touch with the post of N.-D. des Neiges which still remained the headquarters of the mission. He had already founded a college where some young neophytes were to begin their studies. He proposed to create a printing press. Everything smiled on his efforts. For their part, the scattered Christians, learning of the arrival of their bishop, took courage.

From their eagerness, from the fervor of their zeal, one would have said that a dawn of peace was finally rising over this unhappy country. Day and night were not enough to satisfy the neophytes' desire to see and hear the messengers of God.

However, the situation had not changed much; the dangers remained the same. Proscription edicts were not abolished, hatred against Christianity was not extinguished, and the executioners always seemed ready to shed the blood of martyrs. So much so that on his arrival, Bishop Ridel wrote: "We are truly in the hands of God. In the midst of a thousand dangers, without strength, without protection, at any moment we can be arrested and see a new persecution arise. And later: "What can I say to you about my position? Oh! It is very beautiful! beautiful because I am here by the will of the good God, but humanly speaking, it is very difficult, it is unbearable. I speak to you about it, not to frighten you, but so that you admire the mercy of the good God. So here I am, me, a poor missionary, surrounded by enemies who have sworn our death.

"I entered their midst, passed through their ranks unrecognized, and am established in their capital, the last capital of the pagan world; but one could also say the capital of all demons. I am there in the name and by the order of Our Lord. I was not able to plant the cross there in full view of everyone, but I hold my crucifix pressed to my chest.

"Every day I shed the blood of the divine Lamb, every day it descends from the altar into my heart. For a long time I have been alone; my missionaries travel through the provinces and devote themselves for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. This loneliness is not frightening for me. In the midst of this new Babylon, I live the life of heaven, I feel God watching over me and protecting me, I feel the presence of good angels, the presence of saints. It is in their company that I offer the holy sacrifice, that I recite my office, my rosary. I hear, so to speak, the words of Our Lord.

"Oh! how good it is to leave everything for God! Every day I can say to myself: it is today that they are going to take me. Since Jesus died for me, would I refuse to die for him? Ah! the beautiful day! heaven opens: God, God, always God, the Blessed Virgin, the angels and the saints always, happiness always!

"Such is my position on this land of Korea so rich in memories, so fertile in heroic virtues. Until now, by a miracle of divine mercy, all remains in peace, all is well; we had no accidents."

Alas! this tranquility was of very short duration. In the last days of January 1878, a courier was to arrive from the frontier: one can guess with what impatience he was expected.

On the 28th, around ten o'clock in the morning, Bishop Ridel saw his master of the house, old Choe, enter his house. The poor man's face was decomposed. The bishop was too accustomed to alarms to frighten himself without cause. "I found in him," he says again, "an

air which announced something more serious than usual.

“What more bad news is there?” I said to him.

“After a long sigh he said to me: The couriers were stopped at the border, they were subjected to horrible torture, they were forced to declare everything. The news came yesterday; immediately the king summoned satellites and himself gave the order to arrest the bishop and all the fathers. The traitors of 1866 were required to search for the Christians. The satellites are to come here today.”

“Well, now is the time to be truly Christians; all this happens by the will of God, it is not our fault. We will be caught; let us count on the help of God, which will not fail us, and prepare ourselves to die for his greater glory; it is the most direct way to go to heaven.”

“Oh! I am not afraid of dying, I who am so old; but the bishop who has only just arrived; but Christians who have not yet received the sacraments! what a blow! it’s the end of the mission in Korea!”

A letter from M. Blanc tells us how this misfortune happened. Bishop Ridel’s couriers had already crossed the border and thought they would arrive in Seoul without incident, when, crossing a small town, they were suspected of theft. The Korean government, like all weak governments, is very distrustful. The secrecy of correspondence, individual freedom are things absolutely unknown. A man is arrested on the most futile pretext. The couriers were therefore stopped and searched. The nature of the packets, the European characters of the letters they carried left no doubt. The order was immediately given to put them to the torture. The poor, cruelly tortured Koreans revealed their secret and said where the European was to whom they were to deliver these letters. This is how Korean satellites tracked down the Vicar Apostolic and discovered his residence.

Bishop Ridel, certain of being arrested, hastened to take all the measures required by such a situation. He had his missionaries informed of what was happening, burned all the compromising papers, entrusted to a reliable Christian the little money he had left for the needs of the mission; then he waited for darkness to flee. Necessity urged him to leave, but to face broad daylight would have been to run into danger. However, he had no illusions about his fate. “It was a great favor for me, he told us, I was going to be relieved of the burden that had been imposed on me; I was going to have the happiness of confessing Our Lord and of dying for his glory; it was my passport to heaven and blissful eternity. I was ready and ready, calm and undisturbed, I surrendered myself entirely to the good pleasure of God and I prayed for my dear missionaries and our poor Christians.”

Around four o’clock in the afternoon, people came to warn him that satellites were guarding the street; it was impossible to escape.

Soon a great noise is heard, the doors open, the windows are broken, and a multitude invades the house. Hardly had the satellites recognized him than five of them rushed on him, seized him by the hair, beard and arms, “shouting, howling, to give themselves courage” then, without giving him the time to take his shoes, they lead him to another room, where the people of his house were also captives.

One of the leaders introduces himself and speaks to him:

“I know there are four other Europeans, and I hope you will write to them and order them to present themselves.

“How do you know if there are other Fathers?” responds the missionary.

“Oh! we know it well. Besides, the bishop will come with us. I know you use a book to recite prayers; entrust it to me, I will take care of it, and will give it to you later.”

“But how do you know all this?”

“Oh! it was I who arrested Bishop Berneux and Bishop Daveluy; I knew them well and the other Fathers too. Do you have watches?

“Yes, I have three.

“Do you have grape wine too? Oh! it’s very good, grape wine; it will be for us.”

The prisoner showed his cases.

“It’s okay, we’ll take care of all that.”

“During this time,” continues Bishop Ridel, “I tried to collect myself while thinking of the capture of Our Lord in the Garden of Olives. I felt happy to walk in the footsteps of our divine Master; I was happy to be a prisoner because of Jesus. But I felt great pain thinking of my dear missionaries and our Christians.

“The previous days, to prepare myself for the feast of Saint Francis, I had done my meditations on the gentleness and firmness of this great saint; I resolved to imitate him as much as I could. The noise continued in my house; the satellites, and the employees especially, shouted, laughed, joked, upset everything. Some insulted me in spite of the remonstrances of their chief. Finally, he warned me that it was time to leave. Two employees seized me, and I went out accompanied by a whole troop of satellites; my poor old Korean, in the same position as me, came behind, as well as a young man who happened to be at the house at the time of the arrest.

“The neighbors, attracted by the din, were at the gates to see us pass, but once out of the neighborhood, no one paid any more attention to us; it was night, moreover.”

For the first time the missionary was able to examine the streets of the capital at ease and cross them without fear of being recognized. He related the observations he made at that time. They are full of interest and reveal an admirable calm and composure.

“I saw the inhabitants who were swarming as always at this hour, the peddlers who shouted, the children who ran, sang, had fun, the women who, covered with long veils of bright colors, circulated in silence. I saw retinues of great nobles; they were preceded by servants who ran, uttering piercing cries to warn the people to make way. I also saw poor little abandoned children, sitting in the middle of the street, stiff with cold, they tried to arouse the pity of passers-by with their tears. The capital really presents at this hour a strange physiognomy; all these clothes of a thousand colors, more or less clean, all the lanterns, each carrying his own, which go, which come and pass each other, give the streets a singular aspect. I could notice all this, despite the pressure of my two jailers who held me tightly and shook me in a fine way. My mind was nevertheless occupied with the misfortune of this poor people who did not know God. I had come to spread the light of faith, to teach him the way to heaven, and I saw myself stopped from the start. At least I offered myself generously to Our Lord in order to die for the salvation of these unfortunate people.”

We come to court.

In Seoul, the court consists of two separate courts – they are located, one to the right and the other to the left of the king’s palace. For this reason the first is called the tribunal of the right, the second the tribunal of the left. In the first, the judges hear the witnesses, examine the case and, by torture, extract a confession from the accused. The second Court is composed of the judges who pass the sentence¹⁷.

¹⁷ In the villages of Korea, the elders are the natural judges for all cases which come before the civil court. If the parties do not accept their decisions, they appear before the mandarin who, in ordinary cases, judges without appeal. Depending on the seriousness of the cause, recourse may be had to the governor of the province, to the minister and finally to the king.

In the provinces, the trials always begin near the court commonly called the court of thieves, and from there, according to the gravity of the case, are referred to the governor of the province, or, in the capital, to the court of crimes. The court of crimes has jurisdiction over the people and over the nobles who are not dignitaries, for crimes of all kinds, except those of rebellion and *lèse-majesté*. A special tribunal, called *keumpou*, whose members are appointed directly by the king, has the sole right to try public functionaries, and alone can hear acts of rebellion and *lèse-majesté*, whoever the culprits may be. In the latter case, the family of the condemned man is entirely enveloped in his punishment, and his relatives are all deposed, or exiled, or put to death.

The assistants look at him dumbfounded, and the judge asks him:
 What's your name?
 My name is Yi.
 Your first name ?
 Pok-Myengy (which means Felix-Clair).
 When did you come?
 I came at the 7th moon.
 By which road?
 By Changsan (the westernmost cape of the Korean coast).
 Why did you come?
 To preach the Catholic religion and teach men to behave well.
 Did you educate many?
 Arrived for such a short time, I have not had the leisure to instruct many people.
 Who brought you?
 As the answer to this question would cause damage to several people, it is for me a duty not to answer it.
 Where are those whom you have instructed?
 I don't know much about the country, I don't know where those I saw live, moreover, for the same reason that I explained earlier, you understand that I cannot give the name of any of those who have had relations with me.
 Are you a father?
 Yes, and moreover I am a bishop.
 Ah! it is undoubtedly the Father Yi of formerly who having escaped became the bishop Ni?

You say true, it is so.
 Well! he adds, let him be taken away and treated well.
 "I was taken to the guardhouse," says Bishop Ridel. "There, instead of letting me rest, they overwhelm me with a host of questions; I answer it as well as possible. Finally, little by little, they all retire; only two satellites remain. Around midnight, they pass me a small piece of

No mandarin can, on his own authority, execute a sentence of exile or death. The provincial governors themselves have this right only with certain restrictions, and almost always, when it comes to capital punishment, they have their sentence approved by the minister of justice. But in exchange, the judges do not answer for a culprit who dies under the blows during the interrogations, which is quite frequent, Bishop Ridel appears first before the court on the right. Hearing his answers to the judges who question him, one would think oneself transported to the first years of Christianity. He recounted his various interrogations, his suffering during long months in prison, his deliverance, his return to Manchuria. This story is simple, without preparation, and yet sometimes sublime; it looks like a page detached from the Acts of the Martyrs.

The judge is seated on a mat; the soldiers line up on both sides, and the prisoner advances in the middle of them; the light from two lanterns casts a pale and sinister glow over the whole scene.

The interrogation begins. and often they take this means to get it over with as quickly as possible, in order to avoid formal trials.

Knowing the susceptibility of Koreans to everything that concerns etiquette, Bishop Ridel had resolved to use the polite form of language between equals and, from the start, he told his judge: "My intention is to speak to you according to the rules courtesy; but as I am not very expert in the Korean language, if some inaccurate expression escapes me, please do not pay attention to it.

The civil mandarins being at the same time prefects, justices of the peace, magistrates, tax collectors, customs inspectors, police inspectors, etc., it seems that it is impossible for them to suffice for such a task. And yet there is hardly a more idle and idle life than that which they lead. They spend their time drinking, eating, smoking, having fun parties. Their tribunal is only open three or four times a week, for a few hours, and business is settled with the help of a few sentences or a few strokes of the stick, often without hearing either the interested parties or the witnesses. (See the introduction to the history of the Church of Korea, by Father Dallet, pages lviii and lix.)

square wood which is to serve me as a pillow; I say my prayers and I fall asleep easily.

“The next day, I made my prayers in pieces; every moment someone spoke to me; I also recited my office; I had been given my breviary, which I kept and recited until March 16. In the beginning, it was difficult; but soon everyone knew that, when I read this book, it was useless to speak to me.”

Two days after his arrest, the missionary was taken to the Geumbu 禁府 prison of Geumbu, reserved for noble defendants and state criminals. There, he was put in the “vine stocks”.

The vines are shackles made up of two superimposed pieces of wood, about four meters long and fifteen centimeters wide. In the lower part are indentations in which the foot is placed at ankle height; when the feet of the patients are thus placed, the upper part is lowered, which moves by means of a hinge placed at one end, while at the other it is closed by means of a padlock; this instrument in Korean is called “Tchak-ko”. Thus held, the prisoners cannot escape. Sometimes the captive’s two feet are restrained in this way.

“When I was presented with the instrument, they had to give me a lesson. The two satellites were almost ashamed to put me in this position; to sweeten things up a little, they said to me: it’s a custom here, when for the first time you receive a guest, you put your feet in this instrument.

“Despite the vines, I was able to lie on my back, and with a little skill, also put myself on my side. Tired as I was of this new life, I was able to sleep for a few hours.”

The company in which Monseigneur finds himself imposes on him a crueler torture than the instrument of embarrassment. Two scoundrels covered in rags, devoured by vermin, are lying near him, constantly fidgeting and giving him no rest.

The missionary thought that he was thus placed next to the executioners who would be responsible for executing him, so repulsive were their faces. He learned later that these wretches were beggars attached to the secret police.

The words he heard in his prison left him with little illusion about his fate.

During the day of the 31st of January, there was talk only of the execution for the following day. The following night was spent entirely in expectation of death. It is easy to guess what thoughts, what visions came back to the mind of the missionary during that night, in that dungeon, so far from his earthly homeland, so near to heaven. Doubtless the anticipated sight of eternal rewards fortified his soul; but could he forget, he, whose affectionate tenderness we know, could he forget his family, France and his dear Korea?

The next morning, he wrote this note on his Ordo: “Recited the Office until None, in a few moments I will probably die. I am all for God. Long live Jesus! in a few moments I will be in heaven.” In fact, while the missionary was writing these lines, threats of death, ferocious cries, uttered by the soldiers in the vicinity of the prison, reached him and seemed to announce that his last hour was near. At this moment when nature has the right to weaken, his face was radiant, and his voice made the echoes of the prison vibrate. Believing himself about to reach the port, he intoned the *Laudate Dominum* and the *Ave Maris Stella*.

Chapter IX

Satellites. - Torture. - Soap bubbles. - Chinese New Year celebrations in Seoul. - Manner of Correcting Korean Soldiers. - The jailers. - The executioners. - Prison system.

Bishop Ridel ardently desired to suffer and die for the faith, but God did not reserve for his apostle the palm and crown of martyrs. In their council, the ministers had attended to him however. Some wanted to send him back to China, others to put him to death immediately. For the first time the Korean government hesitated to shed the blood of a Catholic missionary.

In the first days of the month of February, a praetorian came to the bishop and said to him: "A courier has been sent to China to consult the Son of Heaven about you; we will do what he orders."

This news, quite probable, gave the captive a glimmer of hope; but, at the same time, it gave him a glimpse of a long and painful torture.

In our countries, all steeped in Christian civilization, prison is a punishment because it deprives of freedom; but in Korea, as in other idolatrous countries, prison is the meeting place of all suffering. The most formidable torture is precisely that which is not among the tortures authorized by law: it is the stay in prison. The Christians who have gone through the trials of the great persecutions are unanimous in saying that the torments of the interrogations are less formidable than this dreadful stay.

To get an idea of it, imagine a vast space enclosed by high walls, against which rest small wooden huts opening onto an interior courtyard. There are no windows in these dungeons, only a low, narrow door through which a few rays of light slip. Thirst and hunger are daily tortures, and the prisoner is often reduced to devouring the rotten straw on which he is lying.

In Seoul, there are two prisons: the Geumbu, reserved for nobles, as we have already said, and the Guryugan 拘留間, where low-ranking criminals are imprisoned pell-mell.

At each of these two prisons, fifty satellites are employed. Then, under the dependence of the satellites, there are the soldiers of the praetorium, the jailers and finally the executioners, men with the face of monsters.

The satellites are dressed in all manners, they vary their costume so as not to be recognized in their expeditions. They have chiefs whose ranks correspond to those of sergeant and lieutenant; the former wear jade rings on the headband, the latter have gold rings. All are under the orders of a prefect of police whose power is absolute in ordinary cases.

To be recognized, the satellites always carry suspended from the seam of their trousers, by a deerskin strap, a wooden plate on which are inscribed characters and a stamp.

Their authority is very great; no one would dare to resist them, except the nobles who despise them and sometimes mistreat them. But then woe to the plebeian who falls into their hands; for their revenge is cruel. They are especially terrible when they have a personal offense to avenge, or when they covet the property of some rich man. Lacking reason, they have the torture they employ without rule or measure.

The most common tortures are hanging and twisting the arms and legs; sometimes the unfortunate victim looks more like a flayed corpse than a living man; the ribs are bare, the beard, the eyelashes, the eyebrows are burned, the eyelids swollen, the feet sprained, the knees crushed, the thighs and the lower abdomen burned.

When Christians are in the hands of these barbarians, one can imagine what tortures await them, to force them to revelations and to apostasy.

"Sometimes I heard," said Bishop Ridel, "the sighs and cries of these poor tortured people who were suffering for Our Lord Jesus Christ. Alas! I shared their sufferings, but what hurt me the most was to hear the sneers, the peals of laughter of the satellites and the executioners. There is no pity to expect from such men!"

And yet the power of virtue is so great that the courageous confessor of the faith impressed his jailers.

“Is it possible to put him in shackles,” they said; “he’s an honest, fair man, the likes of which you don’t find in Korea. He is a real Fô (Buddha) who has returned to earth.” They liked to converse with him; their questions about Europe, France, never ceased. It was often also necessary to explain to them the four seasons, the phases of the moon, the eclipses of the sun, the steamships, the railway, etc. The missionary took advantage of these occasions to talk to them about the Catholic religion, about God, about creation, about the ten commandments. These continual conversations were not without sweetness and fatigue for him either.

“I was always with the satellites,” he said again, “and these, eight or ten in number, sometimes twenty, came and went, followed one another. This was not the least of my troubles; unable to get enough rest. I was constantly spoken to; I barely found time for a little meditation; when I could, I made up for it during the night; what difficulty in reciting in the midst of this uproar my breviary which I always carried with me!

“Various crates seized from my house had been brought to the satellite guardhouse. They took what suited them and sometimes even came to ask me what this or that object was used for.

“One day, a satellite brought me a small cross asking me if it was gold: I recognized that it was the crosspiece of my pastoral cross which contained relics. He had broken it: the whole thing will have been burned, melted, because I never saw that cross again. Another time they brought me a piece of soap, asking me what it was. I resolved to amuse them, and I believe I succeeded quite well; for having shown them how to blow bubbles, everyone set to work as best they could, even the mandarins, who were blowing hard into a paper pipe to inflate the bubbles they admired. They brought their friends from outside to see this marvel, and I believe that all would have liked to have soap at their disposal; a large number asked me for it quite uselessly since I had nothing.

“One of the satellites said to me one day:

“Is soap good to eat?”

“No,” I answered him, “that cannot be eaten and would make you sick.”

“Ah,” he said, “my little boy who is ten years old, and to whom I had given a piece of it, smelling the odor which was exhaled from it, thought it was a cake, and he ate some; in fact he was very ill.

“I took advantage of this circumstance to warn them that in my boxes there were some European remedies which were good when you knew how to use them, but which otherwise were dangerous and capable of causing death.

“Yes, but grape wine, they said, oh! Oh that’s good! we know it well.”

“How strong it is,” added another, “I drank a few glasses of it, and I got so drunk that I didn’t wake up until the next day.”

“They had drunk all the mission wine in just a few hours.

“One day someone came to me and said: ‘The chief judge has learned that you can draw, he asks you to paint him a portrait of a Korean, a Chinese and a European. I hesitated at first, because I don’t know how to draw, but above all I feared a trap. They insisted, I set to work. The Korean passed easily, the Chinese too, for the European, I dressed him a little to my fancy, and I sent my work to the chief judge, who thanked me, telling me that I was very clever. Everyone then wanted to have drawings but I always refused to keep my reputation.

“Towards the middle of February, I heard for the first time about the games which follow the celebrations of the first of the Chinese year and which last a month. It is a barbaric amusement, but the satellites which told the thing were amazed by it. These games are real combats: two armies, composed of two or three hundred men, armed with big sticks two feet long, are in the presence of each other. At a given signal, the fighters rush on their opponents

with fury. The blows rained down right and left, until one of the parties was forced to give in and flee, leaving the victory to their adversary. It is easy to imagine the resulting bruises and dislocated shoulders, broken heads, jaws, legs, arms; often even death ensues. These are real gladiator fights; the people of Seoul know of no sight more interesting; they are very proud of it. As I pointed out to them the danger and the immorality of these struggles, they answered me:

“Oh! Only Koreans have this courage, to withstand such blows and thus brave death! If Europeans attended these games, what a lofty idea they would have of Koreans: there is no people like us.”

“I also had the opportunity several times to see how soldiers are corrected. The culprit is first put in shackles and then condemned to receive three, five or ten blows from the plank. I was invited several times to see this execution, but I refused, pitying the poor victim, which made the satellites laugh. Although I saw nothing, yet I heard everything. After laying the patient on a mat, in the presence of his comrades, the chief admonished him, then a man armed with a stick, or rather an 8-foot long plank, approached. At the command of the chief, he raised his instrument and struck the culprit, who at each blow did not fail to cry out; but, to stifle his cries, two other soldiers sang in a different tone: *Tien, oh, i*. The blows followed one another at rather close intervals. Very often this beating was only a comedy; but several of these unfortunates, after ten strokes of this plank, returned with their skin removed and their thighs deeply plowed – they lost consciousness, and it took them a month to recover.

“The religion of all these employees of the prefecture, like that of the nobles, the civil servants, is the cult of Confucius. They honor Confucius, respect him, praise him, admire him, make sacrifices to him. Entering directly into a discussion about their philosophy is useless and irritates them. Several times however, I showed them that the doctrine of Confucius was not complete, that the sacrifices which they make to the ancestors are often only a joke; but all this with great care, because the Koreans are very touchy there. To convert them, it is first necessary to explain to them the Christian doctrine, to bring out its beauty, and to expose to them the proofs of it, but to attack their doctrines head-on would only succeed in humiliating them without converting them.”

Below the satellites and soldiers are the jailers and executioners.

The jailers! what false, deceitful, irascible characters! If pity sometimes seems to enter these hearts, it is because a feeling of interest follows. They discharge their function of executioners while laughing: to strangle a man is for them a distraction, an amusement. If by chance the chief hears the noise of the blows, and comes to moderate their fury, then, to take revenge and not to excite the attention, they fix a point of iron in the shape of a goad to a stick of wood, and they use it to sting the poor victims who stifle their sighs and cries.

A poor Christian, overwhelmed with a violent fever, asked them one day for a little water: ‘Ah! we’ll give you some water, Christian dog!’ And they bruised his chest with their pointed sticks, so that two hours later this poor wretch died. It was declared that he had died of illness; the corpse was carried away and thrown outside the city walls.

In Korean prisons, the death of prisoners is never observed, so that murderous jailers are sure of impunity.

It seems to be hard to find viler, meaner people; well! in this place, there are some: they are the executioners properly speaking. They have the faces of monsters, a repulsive aspect, their sight hurts. They hit, scratch, break legs, arms, laughing at the pain of the patients, whom they overwhelm with vile jokes. They seem to smell of blood; their appearance inside the prison announces a torture, an execution, and strikes terror among the prisoners. How can the human species fall to this point of degradation, debasement and cruelty?

After introducing us to the prison staff in Korea, Bishop Ridel talks about the life they lead there.

The prisoners are divided into three main categories, namely: thieves, prisoners for debt,

and finally the Christians, who are in the majority. Each of these categories usually occupies a special room. Thieves are most to be pitied. They are there, with their feet in the vines, day and night, all suffering from disease. Scabies devours them, their wounds rot, they suffer from hunger; they are real walking corpses, some are just skin and bones. They can hardly take a few steps when, in the middle of the day, they are allowed to go out. One could not imagine a more horrible spectacle; one must have seen this misery to form an idea of it. They are forbidden to sleep: during the night, the guards, armed with big sticks, watch them; and if, carried away by sleep or fatigue, someone falls asleep, the guard immediately, using his weapon, wakes him up with blows of a stick on the back, the legs and the head. How many times, during the night, have we heard the blows that these madmen, often drunk, administered to these unfortunates who had only a breath of life left, and who often died under the baton of the barbarian guards, more like tigers than to men!”

The thieves’ dungeon is the image of hell. Those who inhabit it are all almost naked, in winter as in summer. They cannot get a drop of water to wash their hands or face, only happy when sometimes they are allowed to go out and dip their hands in a hole of corrupt and stinking water, which is in the middle of the yard, to refresh his face, chest and legs a little. So they are all covered with a thick layer of scabies, and horrible ulcers.

“The food consists of a small cup of rice without seasoning, in the morning and in the evening; insufficient food. The prisoners who arrive strong, healthy, are, after twenty days, like skeletons.

“Prisoners for debt or for reasons other than theft are less mistreated. They are referred to as Tcha-Kal (jagal?). They can communicate with their relatives and friends, and receive their food from outside; they lead a merry life under the eyes of hungry thieves.”

Christians are fed like thieves and cannot communicate with anyone outside. Nothing equals the contempt they have for them. The only alleviation which, from time to time, the jailers bring to their pain, is to deliver them from the shackles. Their huts are in every way similar to those of thieves.

For an opening, a door that closes at night: above, through bars, in the shape of a skylight, a little air and light enter. The walls are covered with loose linden planks. The poor condition of the roof only partially shelters the prisoners from the rain and melting snow. The heat of summer is as intolerable there as the rigors of winter.

It was in such retreats that the Bishop of Korea and his poor Christians, more despised than thieves, had to pass those long days which they regarded as the last of their lives.

The contrast of their virtues excites the hatred and barbarity of jailers and executioners. Calm and resigned in their misfortune, seizing the opportunity to render service to everyone, Christians bear suffering and ridicule without complaining and without murmuring.

In this filthy dungeon, never a relative, never a friend comes to them to sympathize with their distress, to bandage their wounds, to cool their feverish lips with a drop of water. Because they are Christians, they are no longer men, they are something less than an animal that we must get rid of. At least if their parents fail them, God remains with them, God consoles them and sustains them. The prayer begins in the morning, it continues during the day, and often for long hours at night. “We pray a lot in prison,” says Bishop Ridel, “God seems more present, and we know our own nothingness better.

“To use my free time, I had made a rule: I said Mass in spirit or I attended in the same way. When I had no more breviary, I made up for it with the rosary, taking great care to hide my rosary, which would have been taken from me. I liked to go to some church to make my visit to the Blessed Sacrament. In the course of the day, I easily did several meditations: my time was regulated as for an eight-day retreat; it went on well beyond that.

“Another exercise that is done well in prison and which brings many consolations is the Way of the Cross. What graces the Lord lavished on me in these days of recollection! I had no

worries, and I had placed myself entirely in the hands of God to do His holy will in everything, convinced that only what God would like to allow would happen to me.”

Chapter X

Second interrogation of Bishop Ridel. - Bishop Ridel in the thieves' prison. - The Solemnity of Easter. - A young Christian prisoner volunteer for Jesus Christ. - "Prison is a long martyrdom. - Anniversary of the consecration of Bishop Ridel.

On March 16, a sedan chair was prepared in front of the missionary's cabin; it was the one used to carry the corpses:

"Bishop," commanded the head of the satellites, "get in there."

- To go where?

- You will know soon, go up quickly.

They took him to court.

It is a large courtyard at the back of which is a chamber where the judges sit.

They were seated on flowered mats, leaning on silk cushions, and dressed in all the insignia of their dignity; horsehair caps or miters with frills hanging down each side, large blue silk coats, held up by a belt richly adorned with tortoiseshell or precious stones.

On arriving, the prisoner was handed over to an executioner who, after tying him with a long red rope, the one used to bind the greatest criminals, led him before the judges.

"Kneel down," the satellites told him.

He remained standing.

Then on all sides, the satellites, the executioners shouted:

"On your knees!..." the same immobility. The judge then said: "Sit down at your ease."

And satellites and executioners repeat with a smiling face as if the order came from them: "Sit down, sit down."

He sat down on the straw, crossing his legs according to the Korean custom, and the interrogation began.

After several questions about his name, age and stay in Korea, the judge asked him:

- What is your country?

- Pul-lan-seo.

- Write it down.

"I am passed," said the missionary, "paper with a brush, and I write: Pul-lan-seo, in Korean."

The judge looked and said:

- Write it also in your own language.

"I wrote: France. At this moment I felt a cloud pass over my heart: Poor country! my France! and all at the same time I felt a sense of pride."

"Do you have any dignity in your country?"

- I have no dignity: I exercise no function.

"When you return, will your government give you great jobs, honors?"

"When I came to Korea, it was to live and die there. Even if I were to return to my country, I would have no charge there.

"I was shown your passport, where did you get it from?"

"I got it from the court of Peking; she gives them to all the missionaries so that they can go about without being stopped."

"What's the stamp on it?"

"I think it's the stamp of the Chinese government."

- Is it you who asked for it?

- No; it was the French Minister residing in Peking who asked for it for me.

"What is this minister's name?"

- His name is Louis de Geoffroy.

- What did you say?

- Louis de Geoffrey.

“So all the assistants, listening, tried to repeat, and I heard the most skilful who said, pursing their lips with strong grimaces: “Nuise So-Poa”, I repeated this word again, emphasizing each syllable. The judge tried quite uselessly once to articulate this word; he would have lost his dignity if he insisted.”

After this interruption the judge resumed:

“Why, having gone out the first time, did you come back?”

- The boatman sailing on the sea, and surprised by the storm, went to take shelter in some port; then, the storm over, he went back to sea; so did I.

The judge begins to smile, saying in a low voice: “Oh! It’s not the same thing. What have you come to do?”

- Preach a beautiful doctrine.

“What doctrine?”

- The Catholic religion, which teaches to honor the Master of heaven, God.

“What is God?”

- He is the creator of heaven and earth, it is He who created the first man from whom we are all descended. Every man should honor his parents; with all the more reason he must honor God, the Father of all men; it is He who governs the whole universe.

“Who has ever seen God?”

- God spoke to men: it was God himself who gave the ten commandments which all men must observe. Besides, the proofs of the existence of God are everywhere, and our Christian books, which you have been able to see, give a lot of them.

“What is good about this doctrine?”

- It teaches to love God above all things, and all men as oneself; it teaches to do good, to avoid evil, to regulate morals, to bear patiently the evils of this life, with the hope of eternal happiness after death.

“When you die where will you go?”

- Each man, after his death, appears before God and undergoes a judgment on the good or the evil he has done during his life: the good go to heaven; the wicked to hell.

“But you, where are you going?”

“No one can answer for himself.

- But finally, what do you think, or do you hope to go?

- I hope, with the mercy of God, to obtain heaven.

“Aren’t you afraid of dying?”

“Everyone fears death.

“But now, if you were put to death, wouldn’t you be afraid?”

“I’m only afraid of one thing: sin. If, at this moment, they put me to death for the cause of God, I have no fear.

“So where would you go?”

“To heaven, in the presence of God.

- For how long?

“All eternity.

“But the bodies are in the ground?”

- Yes, the bodies go to the ground where they rot, but the soul does not die. Moreover, one day the bodies will all be resurrected and will reunite with the soul in the place where it was before the resurrection, and this forever.

“That’s enough,” said the judge, “take him away.” The executioners immediately untied the prisoner, and led him to the guardroom of the satellites.

The two judges remained in deliberation until well into the night, the missionary

stretched out on the bare earth, his head leaning against the wall, sleeping soundly.

Three days later, on March 19, a satellite came to him, and with an embarrassed air, said to him:

“The judge has ordered you to be put in another apartment, where there will be less noise. The bishop was led into a narrow hut usually reserved for thieves. On entering it, the first person he met was John Choe, the old man, whom he thought had been dead for a long time. On the floor they had spread a little fresh straw, but without removing that below, which was rotten and gave off a foul odor.

“On entering this little room,” adds Bishop Ridel, “I understood that it was urgent not to break the rules, and in my simplicity I asked what the rule was. An old pagan who was playing the role of spy among the prisoners heard me, and in a hoarse and curt voice answered me: “The rule? Rule? It is to sit on the straw and be still.” After this clear information, I sat down at the place indicated, I was even able to kneel down, say my prayers and fall asleep. The next day I woke up before daybreak, and I saw my good old man who had begun his prayer, taking advantage of the darkness to be more recollected.”

Three Christian women from the capital, arrested almost at the same time as the bishop, lived in the same dungeon.

“When I arrived,” said the venerable prelate, “one of them was ill, suffering from the plague, or typhoid fever, which is permanently in this prison. She was twenty-six years old, and was the mother of two nice children, the last of whom was only six months old. Married to a Gentile during the persecution, she had taught and converted her husband who was awaiting baptism, as well as her father-in-law and mother-in-law. Unfortunately, I am told, she had the misfortune to apostatize. I took pity on her when I saw her, seizing the moment when no one saw her, making the sign of the cross several times while looking at me. At night, she said to the Christian woman who was caring for her: “My greatest pain is having had the misfortune to apostatize. Oh! how guilty I am!” And she was shedding profuse tears. As it was impossible for me to confess her, I sent her word that I would give her absolution. She prepared for it and in the morning, at an agreed signal, without leaving my place, I pronounced the formula. What happiness for her! It was the best remedy for her illness, which from that moment took a good turn; the danger disappeared, and the patient soon entered into convalescence. I have never been able to speak to him, but many times I have had occasion to admire her good character, her piety, her confidence in God and the correctness of her spirit. Her husband, who passed for a pagan, could not see her, but spoke to her through the opening which serves to dispose of the filth; the jailer granted them this favour! In this way, we received some news from outside, but never from the Christians. The other two women were quite old. All three had been tortured; what made them suffer the most were the obscene remarks of the executioners and the indecency with which they had been treated.”

Two days before the arrival of Bishop Ridel in this dungeon, another Christian had died there of the plague. They did not come until five days later to pick up the corpse; but there was nothing left but the bones, the rats and the weasels had devoured him. For a long week the Christians had this horrible spectacle before their eyes; in the midst of this mortal atmosphere they prayed for the one who had given up her soul to God. Each of the survivors expected to follow the same path soon. This hope calmed the anguish and softened the sufferings of the most dreadful captivity; for, to die for the faith, of hunger, of misery, to die in shackles, was that not martyrdom? And martyrdom is the direct path from earth to paradise.

On Easter Day, a touching ceremony was celebrated in the prison of Seoul. Let the pious bishop speak:

“On that day, I told the Christians that I was going to give a solemn and special blessing for all the people of Korea. This was good news; but we had to choose the moment, for we had in our company an old pagan and a monk: the latter troubled us little, he always slept. At the

favorable moment, the Christians knelt down, and religiously gathered, received the blessing.

“What happiness! it was our Easter ceremony: everyone was happy, and the rest of the day passed in great fervor, proof that religious ceremonies help piety.”

The blessing of a captive bishop in a prison in Korea, to Christian prisoners like him, and who tomorrow with him may die, isn't that a solemn ceremony?

In their dungeons, the Christians stood ready for any event, abandoning themselves into the hands of divine Providence as far as concerned them, submitting their will to his holy will, striving by their prayers and their examples to win over Jesus -Christ the souls of the captive Gentiles with them.

Towards the end of April, an arrogant and haughty old lady was brought among them; she was indignant at being confused with thieves, but especially with Christians. Now, a few weeks after her incarceration, she was stricken with typhoid fever, and soon reduced to the last extremity. Lying unconscious, deprived of all help, she would inevitably have died, if her Christian companions, forgetting her bad character and the contempt she had for them, had not devoted themselves day and night to save her.

When she recovered, she recognized her wrongs and bitterly regretted them. This wholly Christian revenge wrought a surprising change in the soul as well as in the body of the patient.

The examples of Christian charity form, with the tortures of the executioners, the chronicle of the prisons of Korea.

The entry of a new prisoner always causes a sensation and causes painful emotion, but it would be difficult to describe the feelings produced by the arrival of the young Pak, twenty years old. He came freely to give himself up prisoner to have the honor of confessing Jesus Christ.

“I learned,” he told the judges, “that you have arrested the bishop my master, that you arrest the Christians, well, I too have been a Christian since childhood. My father and my mother were killed by you in 1868; I was only ten years old, but I remembered their instructions. I adore God, creator of heaven and earth; it is He who gives us and keeps us alive; he suffered for us; I too want to suffer for Him; I desire nothing so much as to endure your tortures; make me suffer from hunger, from thirst; break my legs, my hands, my life belongs to God.”

At first they chased him away like a madman; but he returned, still begging the favor of suffering for Jesus Christ. He insisted so much that the judge ordered him thrown in jail. He was mixed up with the thieves, and had to suffer so much that after a fortnight he was unrecognizable. His courage never wavered. When Bishop Ridel left, young Pak was still in the dungeon.

In these dungeons, almost every day the prisoners see passing before their eyes the victims who have succumbed under the blows or those who have died of hunger and misery. Sometimes the victim who is brought back from the courtroom is still breathing, so he comes back carried on the back of a valet, unconscious, his head hanging down and sprinkling the ground with his blood.

On the 1st of May, the executions and tortures recommenced with new violence. During the day, the rope which was to be used for the execution was brought into the prisoner's shed; and until evening each of these unfortunates could wonder if he was not on the threshold of his eternity.

What solemn moments in life! At nightfall, a satellite came in and said to the designated victim: “Come on, we're going to strangle you”, or else: “Don't be afraid, we're going to do this to you the right way.” And, without further ado, without delay, the unfortunate was introduced into the chamber of the corpses, which adjoined the missionary's dungeon. A few moments later, one heard mingling with the death rattles and lugubrious convulsions of the dying man the railleries and the still more hideous and more lugubrious sneers of the jailers and the executioners.

Towards the end of May the heat became unbearable; the air no longer circulated in this filthy dungeon, and the missionary felt faint. Old John Choe was also wasting away, and his condition was becoming more and more alarming.

Both were still dressed in their winter clothes, clothes they had been wearing for five months. “We had,” says Bishop Ridel, “to remove the cotton that lined them, which made them lighter, but no less dirty. What a situation for a bishop! How many times have I thought of Pope Saint Marcel, condemned by Maxentius to live in a stable and take care of the animals! This memory encouraged me, strengthened me. Then, more recently, didn’t I have the example of my predecessors? Three bishops of mine had passed through this prison, which had been built less than fifty years ago. Perhaps they had lived in the same dungeon? If these walls had spoken, how many things I would have learned! Could I not think of so many other bishops locked up in Russia, in Germany? Mgr de Macédo, my friend, my classmate at Saint-Sulpice, had he been treated better than I by his jailers? And now that I am driven out, exiled, don’t I still have the example of the bishops of Switzerland and Poland? Always and everywhere persecution. It is not those who suffer in this way that we must pity, we must especially pity their executioners, and those who allow themselves to be conquered by persecution.

“Prison is like a long, everyday martyrdom. The head gets tired, the body weakens, the very character becomes difficult. A living faith, one constant piety, and above all sincere humility, can alone, with the grace of God, support weakness and prevent succumbing to boredom and discouragement. If the ordeal is painful, the help of grace makes itself felt. The Christians who were with me persevered in prayer, trusting in God. However, they were sometimes heard to say: “Until when shall we remain thus; if they want to put us to death, let it be as soon as possible.”

At other times hope was reborn, then the memory of their family, of their children, of their parents presented itself like a dream, at the end of which was prison, always prison, an endless prison.

“On June 5, I celebrated the anniversary of my consecration. I had warned the Christians of this. We were still celebrating, celebrating in a dungeon. Suddenly the praetorian chief of the post, in full dress, appears before our door: “Take your things,” he said to me, “and follow me.”“

“What could be new? I shook hands with the old man, I blessed all the Christians and left after my guide, who led me to the room of the satellites, outside the prison. I was taken into another prison cell which was empty; I was given water to wash myself. I really needed it. Must I say that I felt a real pleasure in washing my hands, my face and even my feet?

“The sun was coming out, I stroked some blades of grass that were growing there; it had been so long since I had seen one! I gazed at the sky, I could even see mountains in the distance; everything seemed new to me, everything seemed beautiful to me. I could walk, which did me a lot of good; but how weak I felt!

“Soon the news spread through town that I had been released from prison and was being kept in the court chambers where I could be seen. From then on, the court was invaded by a crowd of curious people who came as if in procession; they were government employees, bourgeois, nobles, etc., etc. Three or four guards were needed to keep the crowd together, and soon they had to confine me to a courtyard, the walls of which were quickly scaled. Satellites brought me their parents, their friends; I had to receive everyone, answer everyone and answer every question. These people of the capital are really good; all spoke to me politely and affably; even the nobles, who sometimes presented themselves to the number of about thirty. The mandarin governor of the prison, who had his apartments in the tribunal, also called me, and, shut up in his room with some of his friends, we chatted quite comfortably. They took great pleasure in it; I was able to tell them about the doctrine I had come to preach. I remember staying twice long enough into the night to answer their questions. He admired the explanation of the creation of the world and said that the doctrine of the ten commandments was very

beautiful. Through him, I also had the opportunity to see several employees of the court who addressed themselves to him to be introduced, these gentlemen not wishing to present themselves as mere mortals; so we exchanged politeness, Korean style. I must often have been mistaken about etiquette, but it was well known that I never left the king's palace.

"However, the thought of my poor Christian prisoners did not abandon me. One day, I spoke to the chief judge about it and said to him:

"Oh! if only I could see old John Choe!

"Would you like to see him? It's very easy, you're going to see them, I'm going to have them all come."

"He immediately gave the order to call all the Christians, who came one after another; the sight of them consoled me; I tried to encourage them to patience, to trust in God. Alas! I was set free, and they remained prisoners; who will fully understand the greatness of this ordeal? My presence must have been a relief for them, and here I am leaving them. Old John stayed longer. In his presence, I asked this chief what would become of these Christian prisoners. He replied immediately: "But we are going to send them all away; what's the use of keeping them, since we're dismissing their leader?" It was unbelievable, and I could see that old John didn't believe it.

The old man left us, he was very sad.

"Oh!" he said, "I shall never see the face of the bishop again!"

"Courage," I said to him, "we will certainly meet again in heaven." Thereupon he left, returned to prison, and I have not seen him since.

Chapter XI

Deliverance of Bishop Ridel. - Leaving for China. - The procession of the missionary. - The European does not want the people to be hit. - Songdo. - Dangerous Passage. - The Bishop's Mitre. - A Good Old Man. - Arrival at N.-D. des Neiges.

The hour of deliverance had sounded; but, for the missionary, deliverance was exile; his heart was broken. The satellites came to congratulate him on the happy success of his business and the happiness he must have felt at returning to his country. But, as he did not seem to take part in the joy that was manifesting around him, one of the chiefs said to him:

'You don't look happy to be going back to your kingdom; tell me, have you committed any crime against your government?

'No,' he answered simply, 'I haven't committed any crime.

Alas! poor people, they could not understand the anguish of his soul, the anguish of an exiled bishop! Forced out of Korea, he did not abandon his mission for that; but when would he see his children again?

A painful sacrifice still awaited Bishop Ridel on the threshold of his prison. The prefect of police ordered all the cases of the bishop to be opened and to be put aside the books in Chinese and Korean characters, even those of Europe where there were some Chinese and Korean characters.

The sorting done, a fire was brought, and all these books were thrown into it.

All the manuscripts went there; and yet there were several works newly translated and of which there were no other copies. Fortunately for the main works, precautions had been taken; care had been taken to leave a copy of the most important books in China. Thanks to this wise measure, the Korean grammar and the Korean-French dictionary, which we will discuss later, were saved from this disaster.

The next day, June 11, the Vicar Apostolic of Korea put on the new linen clothes that had been brought to him and set out for China.

The procession first crossed the main street of Seoul; it's a veritable boulevard extending as far as the eye can see – on each side are mud houses covered with straw, so small, so low, that one wonders if they are not beaver dwellings. It was through the trellis which serves as a door to the sedan chair in which he was confined that the missionary was able to enjoy this spectacle.

The surroundings of the capital are of a charming aspect: gently undulating hills, then, in the background, high mountains among which the Sam-Hah-San; everywhere fields, everywhere greenery, then woods, forests, tall trees which are carefully preserved. A little further on, one enters a defile carved into the rocks, which, covered with trees, rise steeply on each side. It is the main road, which nature alone is responsible for maintaining.

The procession which was to accompany Bishop Ridel to the Chinese border consisted of four porters and two satellites. From behind came the mules loaded with baggage and led by two young Koreans. Finally, a military mandarin, mounted on a small horse, brought up the rear and watched the caravan.

During the first days, the functionary of the capital, draping himself in his dignity, showed himself cold, taciturn; but little by little he cheered up. From then on, each time he heard the exclamations or bursts of laughter from the satellites and carriers, he invariably asked: "What did the European say?" A porter stood up, and told him word for word the subject of the conversation and the common hilarity.

The Mandarin doubtless had his qualities, but he was not a horseman; moreover, by his lack of courage, he belied the saying of the country: "Brave as a Korean, skillful as a Japanese." The missionary quickly realized this, and to free his guide from this critical situation, he

suggested that he change mounts. After a short hesitation, the offer was accepted with visible satisfaction. The bishop therefore mounted the little Korean horse, and continued on his way with all the airs of a mandarin of the country on a mission for his government, and appearing to watch over those who were charged with leading him.

The mistake was complete for everyone, and the porters said: "When the European is on horseback, no one recognizes him."

This journey from village to village was long and strewn with incidents.

In all the localities through which the bishop passed, scarcely was anyone aware of his arrival than the crowds came running compactly. It was a curious spectacle to see a whole people spread out in the streets, in the courtyards of the mandarins, eager to contemplate and hear "the great man of the West." Sometimes the satellites armed themselves with their sticks to ward off the crowd. But the ascendancy of the venerable missionary over his guardians was immense; he commanded the satellites not to strike, and the mandarin never failed to cry out: "Don't strike, don't strike, the European does not want us to strike the people."

This people indeed, by the order of Jesus, were his people, he was happy to see them and to speak to them. He then showed them the greatness of God and the beauty of the Christian religion. All, after having heard it, returned astonished, delighted, repeating among themselves: "Yes, he is a very great nobleman, a truly great man." These poor Koreans did not believe to say so well, because the pious bishop had a nobility and a greatness which they could not suspect.

We are obliged to leave aside many details which Bishop Ridel recounted with a simplicity full of charm.

Let us cast a glance, however, at the long road he traveled, and select in passing two or three of the most curious scenes.

Ten leagues from Seoul is located Seongdo, the ancient capital of Korea under the Kaoli dynasty. As you approach this city, everything announces a famous place: vast tombs remarkable for their shapes and their antiquity, stone bridges, works of giants, and whose ruins recall the splendor of the city of Kaoli. Seongdo is Korea's most commercial city. There are exhibited all the products of Korean industry and agriculture, there are still all the objects brought from Europe via China.

Leaving Seongdo, the path winds between mountains sometimes bare, sometimes crowned with trees; at the bottom of the valleys, fertile rice fields; here and there villages, hamlets whose houses all look alike.

Near Pong-San, the road becomes dangerous; two or three travelers would not dare to venture there alone, they meet in a caravan to defend themselves from the tiger who is the king of the mountains. In the middle of this defile on the top of a mountain, there is a pagoda dedicated to the devil of the tiger: "On arriving there," says Bishop Ridel, "I see a man who approaches the pagoda; he recites a prayer while frequently bowing and rubbing his hands; he prays for everyone, each traveler has his special prayer, I also have mine, and I am not a little surprised to hear him say: "Make Bok-Myeong (Korean translation of the first names of Bishop Ridel : Félix-Clair) cross happily over the pass, preserve him from the tiger, grant him a good trip, without accident, oh you, protector of travelers!" Little by little the forest becomes bushy, the thickets thicker; what a variety of trees, shrubs, plants of all kinds! But, in fact, it must be a real den of tigers; we travel a long time in this enchanted country."

We have said that Bishop Ridel, on leaving prison, received a new suit to replace his rotten clothes, but he had not been given a hat.

"I walked like this for several days with my head exposed to the sun. Crossing a stream, the mule carrying my luggage stumbled, and my boxes rolled in the water. Arriving on the shore, I wanted to open them. My companions came to examine what I was carrying. Among other things, I opened a cardboard box that contained the precious miter given to me by Bishop Bécél,

Bishop of Vannes. They admired its beauty, but did not know what its use was.

“What is this thing for?”

“It is an ornament with which the bishop covers his head in worship ceremonies.”

“Here,” said the mandarin who accompanied me, “you don’t have a hat, and everyone remarks on it, so put this one on your head, you’ll be sheltered from the sun, and no one will have anything more to say.”

“This advice made the assistants laugh, who all repeated:

“Oh! yes, it is very handsome, and it would be very curious if the European put it on his head.”

“I couldn’t help laughing myself, they even wanted to impose it on me immediately.”

“Heaps of monsters,” I said to them in good French, “would you please shut up!”

“What are you saying?”

“I say that I had a Korean hat of my own, and that it was stolen from me in the capital along with many other things. It was a similar one that should be given to me.”

“As for this one, as it cannot appear with my coarse clothes, there is only one thing to do, and that is to put it back in the box.”

“I did so solemnly without opposition from them.”

We were nearing the end of the journey and the caravan was resting on the top of a mountain. “I was examining one of those little pagodas so common on the main roads of Korea,” said Bishop Ridel, “while the porters were cooling off in a neighboring house.”

“Suddenly, I see coming out of this cabin an old man with white hair who cried: “What? He is here; but he is a saint; I who for so long have desired to see these men!” Then, seeing me, he runs towards me as quickly as his legs will allow him, takes me, squeezes my hands, and exclaims: “Oh! how I have heard of you! How long have I longed to see your face! A great happiness was reserved for me in my old days; I can die now, I have seen the face of one of those venerable men who impose so much trouble and fatigue on themselves to come and teach us a beautiful doctrine. They are saints; I have seen the figure of a saint.”

“I was amazed at this preamble; I shook the hand of this good old man who kept talking. Turning to the porters who were witnessing the scene, he said to them: “He is a man unlike any we have; he only came here to instruct us; it is not at all, as some claim, to take over our country; their purpose is only to teach us a beautiful doctrine. And we Koreans mistreat them; in the capital they were taken, they were put to death; what a misfortune for our country, where men are thus killed who only want our good! What fury! what injustice! they never hurt anyone. Oh! How cruel and blind is our government!” The bearers looked at him in amazement, and smiling seemed to say: “it’s true.”

“He told me that he was from Gyn-To Island (Jindo? southwest of Korea) where he had seen European ships in the past.”

“He was seventy-two years old and wanted to know religion. I encouraged him and said to him: “The doctrine that we teach is the only true one, it teaches us to know God, our Father, and to honor him, to do good, to avoid evil, and that gives us eternal life. I cannot instruct you, but you will find men who know it; they will teach you, for God wants to save you. I am not free, the government has arrested me and expelled me from the country; I am forced to go away without doing the good that I would like.”

“Oh! what a misfortune for our country!” added the good old man, with tears in his eyes; “what fury has the government to reject in this way what would make us happy?” Then again taking my hands; “Come,” he said, “enter my house for a moment. It will be for me, for my family, a blessing; I have some wine, you must need to cool down.”

“I cannot; First of all, I don’t drink wine, and besides, here comes our mandarin, I’d be sorry to cause you any misfortune. Be calm and quiet; I have seen you, your words have done me good in the midst of the evils that overwhelm me; I will not forget you and I will pray to

God for you. Make sure you find Christians to teach you.”

“The mandarin was coming, I stepped aside so as not to compromise this man, who however, while walking away, never ceased to praise me.”

At the moment of setting foot on Chinese soil, the exile’s heart is deeply moved.

“I turn around,” he said, “to contemplate once more this beautiful country, my dear mission; what a sight! what a splendid panorama! It’s like a smile from Korea that I’m forced to leave. From the bottom of my heart, embracing the whole country, I send it my tenderest blessing, saying: “Goodbye, see you soon.”

On July 12, Bishop Ridel was back at Notre-Dame des Neiges, where the Christians reserved for the generous confessor of Jesus Christ a welcome worthy of their faith and their piety.

Two kilometers from the village, a procession had formed. At the head came the horsemen, rifles slung over their shoulders. Five carts adorned with foliage and garlands came next, bearing children who held banners and flags in their hands. A sixth vehicle, prepared with even more care, awaited the bishop. No sooner has he climbed in than the procession unfolds and marches to the sound of music. As soon as the cannon thunders, the firecrackers burst; cheers and cheers mingle with the sound of cymbals and the singing of litanies. The pagans flocking to contemplate this spectacle could not contain their admiration.

At the entrance to the village, the prelate dons the rochet, the mosette and the stole, and, under a canopy carried by four Christians, he goes towards the church.

On his arrival, the missionaries sing the beautiful antiphon: *Sacerdos et pontifex*. “O priest, o pontiff, adorned with all the virtues, pastor who devotes you to your people, come and pray to God for us.” Then, as if to respond to this pious invitation, the pontiff climbed the steps of the sanctuary, and soon with his hands once laden with chains, he took the holy Host, all radiant in its glory, and blessed the piously prostrate people.

Thus ended this long journey. A bishop had just been violently separated from his missionaries, but he found three others, ready to help their brothers who remained in Korea, when the moment of Providence came.

Chapter XII

Steps taken by the Chinese and Japanese governments for the deliverance of Mgr Ridel.
- New difficulties. - Caution of Bishop Ridel. - Trip to Japan. - Benevolent welcome from the Japanese government.

On learning of Bishop Ridel's captivity, M. Brenier de Montmorand and Mgr. Delaplace, Apostolic Vicar of Peking, hastened to demand, through the intermediary of the Chinese government, the freedom of the Bishop of Korea.

We were no longer then in the days when the famous regent, after the Massacre of Mgr Berneux, replied arrogantly to China: "We have killed Europeans several times, their compatriots have never complained. No one has anything to do with the affairs of our country." The French minister went himself to the Zongli Yamen (總理衙門) and begged Prince Kong, president of that ministry, to obtain from the King of Korea the release of the French prisoner. A decree from the emperor was necessary; it was written without delay; and, on May 15th, a quick courier was dispatched with an official letter for the Korean Government. A few days later, Bishop Ridel was free, if exile can be called freedom.

While the French representative was actively dealing with this matter at Peking, Mgr. Osouf, Apostolic Vicar of Northern Japan, and M. de Geofroy, French Minister at Tokyo, were making every effort to obtain the same result from the Japanese government. The *Hugon* and the *Cosmao*, French warships, which were at present anchored in the waters of Japan, were sent to the coasts of Korea to intimidate the government of Seoul and to succor the missionaries in distress. Finally, the emperor decided to welcome the request of the French resident. He ordered his Minister of Foreign Affairs to send a dispatch to the King of Korea. On the 11th of June a special ambassador was charged with carrying it to Seoul; here is how it was written:

"It has come to the knowledge of the Japanese government that the Korean government has imprisoned French Catholic priests.

"The good relations that exist between Korea and Japan and also between the Japanese and French governments, authorize the Japanese government to make the following representations to the Korean government:

"The Massacre of French priests executed previously (in 1866), by order of the Korean government, remained unpunished because France was at war with a European country.

"But if Korea defied it with new acts of rigor, it would probably have to suffer the arms of France.

"Japan wants to intervene to keep the peace between the two countries. The way to have peace is to return the prisoners into the hands and under the protection of the Japanese authorities established at Fusan."

When the bearer of this dispatch arrived in Seoul, Bishop Ridel was no longer in Korea. Nevertheless, this move by the Emperor of Japan is an event that cannot be allowed to pass unnoticed in the annals of the Churches of the Far East. Indeed, it enhanced the prestige of the missionaries and forced the Korean government to think before renewing the violence of the past. It showed above all, in a manifest way, that if the Christian nations refuse to lend themselves to the work of God, God makes use of the pagan nations when necessary for the interest of his cause and takes his instruments where he pleases. Thus, two governments yesterday still persecuting, bitter enemies of the Christian name, today become the protectors of the missionaries.

The Church of Jesus Christ on earth must be militant, this is one of its distinctive characteristics; also the difficulties that Bishop Ridel had never ceased to encounter on his way were far from being ironed out.

France had pushed China and Japan to help the missionaries; but it was no longer, alas!

ready to respond to the noble impulses of her faith and to show herself worthy of her sublime mission as Eldest Daughter of the Church and Champion of Christ. She saw in Korea's stubborn refusal to forge relations with the States of Europe and in the Massacres which had gone unpunished for so long, only a political scandal and a bad example for the great nations among which this small kingdom is located.

Besides, could the men who persecuted religion on the soil of the mother country sincerely make themselves its protectors abroad? Could they appreciate the benefits that Christianity brings to barbarian peoples?

Back in China, the bishop of Korea was going to be forced to start the fight again with our diplomats. But this prospect was not calculated to discourage him. Indeed, from the first days of the month of September, Bishop Ridel received communication of a despatch from Prince Kong to the Minister of France.

The King of Korea, in his reply to the President of the Tsong-ly-Yamen, begged the Chinese prince to tell the French government to take good care of the missionaries, to prevent them from renewing their attempts. Thus they would have the advantage of avoiding any embarrassment and tranquility would be maintained.

Under this inspiration, the Chinese minister wrote to our representative a letter which ended with these words:

“Monseigneur Ridel, after what has just happened to him, must have regretted not having followed your advice and must no longer want to return to Korea. If, however, other missionaries were tempted to do so, we firmly hope that Your Excellency, inspired by the fact that the customs of this kingdom differ from others, will be good enough, as in the past, to dissuade them and oppose it, in order to prevent regrettable complications.”

To this communication, M. Brenier added only the following note: “I abstain from any conclusions, His Grace will guess them by referring to my letters and my previous conversations.”

“According to these documents, the courageous bishop concluded in his turn, “you see that around here I still have to fight, but God is for us and with us; courage and confidence. *Certa viriliter*, keep waiting. That's my motto, I'll stick to it.”

It is not surprising that a Chinese prince imagined that the sufferings of a long captivity would stop a missionary bishop in the accomplishment of his task. As for Bishop Ridel, like the soldier carried from the battlefield who impatiently awaits the healing of his wounds to return to the ranks and give to the cause he supports what remains of his strength and life, the dangers of day before did not make him fear those of the morrow. Moreover, a single letter from him to the French minister at Peking would have quickly dispelled Prince Kong's illusions.

After paying homage to the zeal and devotion that M. Brenier de Montmorand had displayed in this affair, he added: “What Catholic heart would not sympathize with the situation of these poor Christians! What bishop, thinking of the misfortune of his children, would not feel his heart breaking?... It is in such circumstances that the Chinese government persuades itself that we are going to abandon everything? Oh! only a selfish and pagan heart can have such ideas. For you, Minister, you know what faith commands me, what duty commands me. But you seem to be worried about an excess of zeal, an imprudent zeal on my part. Please be reassured; I will always make my efforts to act with a truly Christian prudence and an altogether apostolic zeal.”

Indeed, if the zeal of the venerable bishop recoiled before no obstacle when duty commanded, on the other hand, his wisdom and his prudence left nothing to caprice or chance. He could give this last assurance to the representative of France, the one who, almost the same day, wrote to his brother the touching lines which we are about to read:

“There is a question in your letter which I summarize as follows: ‘Can we currently return to Korea? Is it safe to go there?’ In fact, it is a question that requires a lot of thought to

answer. I thought about it; I'm thinking about it; I haven't solved it. I do hope that good Providence will bring about a circumstance, an event which will provide the solution. For me, I ardently desire to return to my mission, because it is my station. Outside of that, I'm like a dislocated bone, a very unpleasant situation, but well made for patience. However, I will be quiet; I will always act with caution. My desires are not ordinarily the rule of my conduct; they have no voice in my council, nor influence on my decisions. We desire so many things in this world! God leads us much more surely than our imagination, than our desires and even than our wisdom! How sweet it is to abandon oneself thus to this conduct of God! As for me, I am always ready, ready for anything, as soon as circumstances make me aware of Master's will. Then nothing will divert me from this path where one cannot wander. What God wants, I want it, it is the only freedom that I recognize myself; holy freedom, which gives strength and courage to reach the goal; freedom of the children of God, which is not quite what the world proclaims, but it is easy to understand that it is better..."

The members of the legation mistakenly believed that the courageous missionary would immediately return to his mission. M. Brenier seemed displeased and threatened to bring back to China all the missionaries who had remained in Korea.

This cruel prospect tore the heart of the pious bishop, the future seemed to him for a moment very gloomy. What would become of his desolate mission if France, through the Chinese government, imprisoned the preachers of the Gospel? Who then would instruct the faithful and govern them? who would administer the sacraments to them, a source of strength and perseverance? Undoubtedly, there would still remain zealous and faithful catechists; but despite everything, they were only simple Christians; to vivify and fertilize their labors, the action of the priest was needed; his hand was needed to bless, his word to absolve and consecrate.

Bishop Ridel, in order to avert the storm, tried to calm the minister's concerns. He showed him that his thought had been misinterpreted. For, after what had happened, the impossibility of an immediate return to Korea was only too obvious.

But between the immediate return and a complete abandonment of his Christianity there was an abyss. His sole desire was to preserve complete freedom of action for the future and to remain the judge of opportunity.

He then explained what disasters his mission would have to suffer if the King of Korea listened to the request of the representative of France. The satellites would again pursue the missionaries, seize the Christians and torture them to force them to denounce the fathers. These would only find refuge in the mountains and would soon be exposed to death from cold, hunger, or the teeth of ferocious beasts. In a word, Christians would be exposed to all the horrors of cruel persecution.

"I beg you," said the venerable bishop in conclusion, "in the name of the devotion you have for the missionaries, do not push the matter to this point. Just demand that missionaries be saved if caught. Do not demand that they be sought out, pursued, and snatched from their holy ministry and brought back to China.

"You confide in me that you are making efforts to obtain a treaty with Korea; we have wanted it for a long time. May you succeed! For my part, I would be happy if France were the first to make a treaty. We would have every reason to count on your benevolence to obtain complete freedom through this treaty. Our native Christians have loved France for so long! Today they turn their eyes towards her, in her rest their hopes."

They seemed to listen to the prayers of the vicar apostolic. France did not prevent the missionaries from carrying out their work of regeneration and salvation in this inhospitable country. This was not, however, the end of the struggle.

Bishop Ridel, barely recovered from the sufferings he had endured during his long captivity, was forced to take the road to Japan. For two years one of its missionaries, M. Coste,

had resided in Yokohama and directed the printing of Korean books. This tireless worker gave without counting his time, his pains and his talent. However, despite the prodigious resources of his mind, he was sometimes stopped by the difficulties of a language whose secrets he had not yet been able to penetrate. For the execution of such work, even the most active correspondence was insufficient; the difficulty of communications constantly delayed the completion of a work impatiently awaited.

Moreover, if the events in Korea had aroused the vigilance of the satellites on the borders of Manchuria in the north, the obstacles were smoothed out in the south. Newly established relations between Japan and Korea offered Bishop Ridel valuable advantages; he hastened to put them to good use.

During this long journey, the sympathies, the respectful veneration of all surrounded the confessor of faith.

In Tokyo, the government gave him the warmest welcome. He was promised that no pains would be spared to improve the lot of his missionaries and his Christians. Thanks to the high intervention of M. Terashima, Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Japanese consul residing at Busan would himself undertake to forward to the missionaries the letters and objects that were given to him for them. By this way, it became easy to send to Korea the wine for Mass, the holy oils, the objects of piety, with the money necessary for the expenses of the worship and the mission.

This magnificent result encouraged Bishop Ridel to implore the Japanese government on behalf of his children. He asked it to be his intermediary with the king of Korea and to claim for the Christians the freedom granted to them in Japan. The self-esteem of the Japanese was flattered by this prayer; the minister made the finest promises for the future. No doubt these promises were still only words, but they allowed the missionary to renew the same request later.

The freedom to preach the Gospel, and to display the cross on Korean soil, was the dream of our apostle. Alas! he will not see this dream come true here below; God reserves this happiness for another. For his part, he received the struggle and the contradiction, he will have to taste in this world only the bitterness of the cross.

Happy to have achieved his goal in Japan, Bishop Ridel was preparing to return to China when a letter from M. Blanc announced to him that one of his missionaries, M. Deguette¹⁸, had

¹⁸ We learn of the death of M. Deguette.

At the beginning of April 1889, Mgr Blanc called M. Deguette to the capital. The missionary immediately responded to the invitation of his bishop; but the day after his arrival in Seoul, he fell ill and died a few days later.

M. Victor-Mary Deguette was born in Pont-sous-Avranches on August 7, 1848. He left France on February 27, 1876 and arrived in Manchuria when Mgr Ridel was preparing to return to Korea. He embarked the day after his arrival at Notre-Dame-des-Neiges; he didn't even bother to unbuckle his trunks.

M. Poisnel, missionary from Korea and compatriot of M. Deguette, has described, in a very interesting note, the works and the virtues of this valiant missionary. We reproduce here the last lines of this work, by making known the missionary they also give an idea of the progress made by the Catholic religion in Korea:

“As soon as the news of the death of Fr. Deguette had spread, all the Christians of the capital came to pray near his remains, with the eagerness of the most filial pain, but also of the most Christian resignation. The room, where his body was exposed for two days, dressed in sacerdotal vestments, was always full day and night. The funeral ceremony which took place on May 2, at ten o'clock in the morning, at the Catholic Mission, Tjyong-hyen hill, gave rise to an imposing demonstration, not only on the part of the native Christians, but also of the foreign residents who held to give Bishop Blanc, in this circumstance, a testimony of their sympathy. The funeral Mass was attended by representatives of six foreign powers: England, Germany, the United States, Russia, China and Japan, not to mention France. M. Collin de Plancy, commissioner of the French government in Korea, made a point of coming in official costume, and following the funeral procession, which crossed, cross at the head, all the capital, in the middle of a pagan population astonished but respectful. The course was precisely that which had been followed at various times by all the martyrs. Fr. Deguette left this city of Seoul, where he had remained for four months a prisoner of Christ, by this same western door, which he had passed through to go into exile, and he went to sleep his last sleep a league and a half from the capital, opposite the plain of Saenamteo,

been arrested. Extraordinary thing! the satellites had taken only three or four Christians from a village that numbered more than a hundred. They had even forced the others to flee, allowing them to take whatever they wanted.

M. Blanc's missive, before arriving in Japan, had passed through N.-D. des Neiges. On learning of M. Deguette's captivity, the procurator of the Korean mission hastened to inform M. Patenôtre, successor, for some days past, of M. Brenier de Montmorand at the Peking legation. He earnestly demanded his benevolent intervention with the Chinese government. The ministers of the Son of Heaven, jealous of all foreign influence, were difficult at first, but eventually yielded. Their approach was crowned with a success all the greater since the King of Korea seemed to be waiting only for their intervention in this affair to send the missionary back to China.

This event should have enlightened our diplomats in Peking, shown them that France's influence was still growing, and that in Seoul, despite the contempt they had for foreigners, they were now reckoning with her. Unfortunately, they closed their eyes to the evidence: far from listening to the patriotic advice of bishops and priests who were children of France, they preferred to follow the advice of a prince and a few Chinese ministers. By doing so, they facilitated their task, but they retarded for Korea the progress of the Gospel and of civilization; they deprived their country of the honor of coming before Germany, before England and Russia, to plant its flag on this land which had already drunk so much French blood.

and the arena on which had fallen, with more glory, but perhaps with less pain, the victims of the persecution of 1866. It is there, in a place called Sam-ho-tjyang, that the late Father Deguette rests, awaiting the glorious resurrection.

"The Korean mission has lost in him one of its holiest and best workers, and it lost him at the moment when, by his experience and of people and things, by his knowledge of the language, he seemed most necessary. He leaves a void that cannot be filled anytime soon. A man of faith, of prayer, of work, the friend we mourn was a support and a model for everyone. Dead to all earthly interests, and living only for souls, enemy of praise and noise, of a tender piety without affectation, of an extreme delicacy of conscience, without scruple, generous even to sacrifice, ardent heart, devoted friend, holy priest, missionary in all the force of the term, we can say, without fear of exceeding in praise, that he was always the apostolic man, such as the Church desires for the salvation of peoples."

(Excerpt from the report of the work of the Society of Foreign Missions.)

Chapter XIII

A look at the latest happenings in Korea. - Captivity of M. Deguette. - Feelings of the King and Queen of Korea. - Diplomats always do diplomacy. - Painful difficulties for Bishop Ridel. - "There's some devil down there."- M. Blanc and his colleagues do not want to abandon their Christians. - Letter from Bishop Ridel to Cardinal Simeoni.

As Bishop Ridel returns to China, let's take a look at the events that have just taken place in Korea.

The persecution which had begun with the arrest of the bishop was not of long duration. Several Christians nevertheless succumbed in the prisons of the capital or perished at the hand of the executioner. Many neophytes, to escape the worst treatment, had to seek refuge in the depths of the forests or on the tops of the mountains, and live, during a harsh winter, without resources and without shelter. The missionaries themselves were pursued, hunted down like wild beasts; the angels alone witnessed what they had to endure.

But God, who watched over his work, calmed the storm and allowed his apostles to resume the administration of the districts, which had been interrupted for a moment. Seven to eight thousand faithful had the happiness of receiving the sacraments; several hundred catechumens were baptized.

After a campaign as painful as it was fruitful, the missionaries were resting from their fatigue and confidence was beginning to be reborn when, in the month of May 1879, a traitor handed over M. Deguette to the satellites. This betrayal threw the country into confusion and desolation among the Christians.

The prisoner was taken to Seoul and handed over to the prefects of police. On learning of the arrival of the missionary in his capital, the king seemed very irritated. Without warning, a thorny affair was placed on his hands, which the probable intervention of China and Japan would further complicate. It is even said that he exclaimed: "Since you are arresting the Europeans, why didn't you bring them all here!" Everyone knows that among them, there is one named Paik, and the other Tieng. Then he immediately dismissed the two prefects of police.

M. Deguette's captivity lasted four months. Far from ill-treating him, the mandarins tried to soften his fate. Every day, by their order, they brought him decent food; often they even added to it sweets unknown in the dungeons of Korea.

However, the captive fell ill. Remedies were administered to him, and the satellites provided him with all the care of which they were capable. They had the missionary moved from his cell to a more spacious apartment, and placed at his disposal three rooms and a yard where he could walk comfortably.

This conduct of the Korean government towards a European, the displeasure of the king at the news of this arrest, the dismissal of the prefects of police, the relative calm which the missionaries and Christians were enjoying at this time, surely all this indicated a complete transformation in the ideas of the court?

These provisions were known to no one. For several months, in the towns and in the villages, nothing was spoken of except the Christian religion. This kind of conversation excited the verve of scholars and wits; to their objections the poor people answered: "Since the king wants us to embrace the Catholic religion, why do you oppose it? Formerly you killed those which practiced it, however the Christians continued to observe it, it is thus necessary that it is not very bad." Almost everywhere, the mandarins avoided molesting the Christians; they knew that several villages were inhabited only by them, and yet their satellites, well informed, passed through these localities without disorder or hassle. Obviously, this lack of zeal on the part of Korean officials could only be explained by orders from the capital.

"Despite the arrest of M. Deguette," wrote M. Blanc, newly appointed pro-vicar

apostolic, “our situation is relatively good, I am led to believe that we will be left alone and that no more satellites will be sent in pursuit of us. If, on the way, we met MM. Praetorians, we would be arrested and probably taken back to China; but there would be no general persecution for that.”

After having examined at length the difficulties of a new sending of missionaries and the pressing needs of Christendom, M. Blanc ended thus:

“I have thought about it carefully; I believe that there is no more danger this year than last year. Our neophytes, in the midst of the evils which have overwhelmed them, need help from on high; the grace of the sacraments will strengthen their faith, increase their courage, soften their pains, and new generations of saints and martyrs will emerge from the ruins of this desolate Church. And then, if the divine Master allows us to fall into the hands of our enemies, by the grace of God! But I hope things don’t come to that.”

The future therefore presented itself with the most cheerful hopes. Never, since the establishment of Christianity in Korea, had the situation of the missionaries, although still very painful, been better. The slightest step on the part of the French government could, at this hour, give complete freedom to Christians and preachers of the Gospel. Unfortunately, our plenipotentiary ministers took no account of Bishop Ridel’s letters, and let this favorable moment pass without profit. At the same time, they lost a unique opportunity to establish commercial and diplomatic relations between France and Korea.

Indeed, major reforms were announced in all Korean administrations. The government, which until now had made every effort to preserve old customs and remain isolated, seemed eager to introduce a different policy. The young king, although of a very weak character, seemed to favor this progress; and yet he had no one in his entourage capable of informing him of the situation in Europe or America. The queen seemed to devote herself entirely to luxury and pleasures, but beneath her frivolous exterior she concealed great skill. She admired her husband’s intentions and encouraged them with all her might. At the same time, the king’s father, who showed the deepest disdain for all the improvements which it was desired to introduce into the affairs of the state, found in her a resolute adversary.

We insist on this fact, because it marks an important step on the road to civilization for the Korean people: and it will be the honor of these two young sovereigns to have put an end to this hateful policy of their predecessors, who inevitably would have caused the ruin of their country. Let’s hope that by opening it soon to international trade and to Christian civilization, they will save its independence threatened by its formidable neighbors to the north. Because, it is enough to cast the eyes on a map of Asia to note that this small kingdom occupies a strategic place of the first order, and that it is not possible that the powers of Europe, America, let it fall under the domination of China or Russia.

On the other hand, the Japanese, whose commercial relations with Korea dated back only a few years, displayed the greatest activity in extending their influence in that country. One can say that, in spite of several failures, they succeeded to a certain extent. Indeed, towards the end of 1879, they obtained important concessions: a second open port, a third about to open, offered their trade an excellent outlet for many products whose flow was not easy at home.

It was therefore the hour when the nations of Europe, France and England especially, should seriously think of obtaining for their nationals free trade with Korea, at least through a few ports. It then became possible, even in a commercial treaty, to introduce a special clause in favor of religious freedom.

If the representatives of France in Peking had wanted it, an era of peace and prosperity was opening at this moment for this country, France was regaining its influence, the triumph of the Gospel was near.

But when Bishop Ridel returned to China, new difficulties awaited him there, greater difficulties, and above all more painful because they came from France.

“I arrived at Tianjin,” he wrote to M. Blanc, “in the month of October 1879. Immediately I received the order from the French legation not to present myself at Peking. They forbid me to return to Manchuria, and even to think of Korea. I ignore it and I am in N.-D. des Neiges. - I wonder what we want to do, and what we will do. I wait. With that, count on the support of men? Fortunately, we still have the good Lord! Ah! always put our trust in him alone! That’s my thought. But in such circumstances, what can we do for the good of our mission?”

Arriving in N.-D. des Neiges, Bishop Ridel wrote to his family:

“I received news of my mission. All my missionaries go around, work and administer the sacraments to the different Christian communities They don’t lack courage, nor work. Everything is going better than we would have hoped. As for your servant, he is back in the little village of Tcha-keou, and in a forced rest.

“Any other perhaps would get away with it; for me, I am very embarrassed; determined, however, to do everything possible. I expect nothing from my weakness, but everything from help from above. Once again I abandon myself entirely, without reserve, into the arms of divine Providence. It is the missionary’s refuge. I have made it my asylum and my home.”

The pious bishop was right to rely only on God. What, in fact, to expect from a persecuting government which, after having forced convents, driven out the monks, banished God himself from the barracks, schools and hospitals?

It is true, however, and we make it our duty to say so, the instructions which arrived from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Paris to the legation in Peking were favorable to the missionaries. But diplomats always do diplomacy: they watch where the wind is blowing, and try to guess the true intentions of their masters. These intentions were made known to us by one of the most influential members of parliament at the time when, two or three years later, when he was appointed governor general of Tonkin, he said on leaving: “I will always make use of the missionaries and I will never use them.”

This is no doubt why the French legation in Peking, far from engaging in a clerical enterprise, condemned by the most odious ostracism Mgr Desflèches, bishop of eastern Sichuan, to exile himself from his mission¹⁹; it even claimed to forbid the bishops of China from ordaining native priests and Bishop Ridel from returning to Korea.

Fortunately, those who gave such orders forgot that the priests and bishops in the mandarinates of China and Japan were much freer than the religious in France, under a so-called government of liberty.

It would have been a shrewd policy, conformable to the interests of France, to close one’s ear to the complaints as well as to the always perfidious advice of China, to support, on the contrary, the missionaries and to encourage their zeal.

¹⁹ On September 5, 1873, two missionaries from Sichuan had been knocked to death in the courtroom of Kien-Kiang and their bodies dragged by the populace through the streets of the city. Bishop Desflèches thought of making the most of this painful event. for the propagation of the faith. Thanks to his efforts, thanks to his skill, M. de Rochechouart, charge d’affaires of France in Peking, MM. de Roquette, first secretary, de Bezauce, chancellor, negotiated with the viceroy of Sichuan an arrangement which gave part of the satisfactions claimed.

In 1876, despite treaties and promises, a new persecution broke out in another district of Sichuan. Bishop Desflèches stood up to the storm. But the mandarins, jealous of the preponderance which the bishop had acquired, formed the design of destroying him in public opinion and of discouraging him. They used all the resources of their minds: tricks, trickery, insults, lies, threats, nothing was missing. The prelate held firm all the same. Then the mandarins left for Peking, there they represented that the bishop of Sichuan was an obstacle for them in the direction of affairs.

Bishop Desflèches did not find this time among the representatives of France the support on which he had the right to count. He was obliged to give in and leave for Rome, where he arrived about the middle of August 1878. His justification was easy. The Sovereign Pontiff and the cardinals showed him the greatest sympathy.

A year later, M. Bourrée, Minister of France in Peking, published that His Grace was “the very innocent victim of the mandarins.

It was known, in the special circumstance which concerns us, that they alone, in spite of the most terrible laws, had crossed the frontiers of the Korean kingdom, that they alone knew the aspirations of the Christians and the tendencies of the court. It was therefore natural, as we have already said, that their opinion should weigh in a French council, as much, at least, as the desires of a prince Kong or the reasons of a minister of the court of Rites:

Unfortunately, Bishop Ridel had not had the good fortune to please the members of the Peking legation. Hadn't he asked for the protection of the Japanese government for his mission? Secondly, he was accused of not having himself requested the intervention of M. Patenôtre to obtain the release of M. Deguette, but of having left this task to the prosecutor of his mission. Serious, very serious complaints! Also our dear missionary was represented to Paris as a restless character, of an untimely zeal, and causing insurmountable obstacles to the policy of the diplomats of the Far East.

The French government instructed its ambassador to renew its entreaties to the Holy See. It wished to obtain that Bishop Ridel should not return to Korea and that the missionaries who were then in that kingdom should be obliged to leave it. To facilitate their return, it promised to provide them with safe conduct to China.

All these steps are obviously an indication of great concern. What fears inspired the stay of a bishop and a few missionaries in Korea? No treaty, no international relations existed between France and the Korean government, so it was difficult for a diplomatic complication to arise between the two nations. It could happen, it is true, that the bishop and his missionaries were taken and thrown into the dungeons of Seoul, but then the French Minister in Peking remained free to renew his steps in favor of the prisoners or to refuse his intervention. The difficulty ended there. The embarrassment was no greater if the missionaries succumbed. In this case, the French government would have recourse to an old tactic: it would demand an account from Korea of the blood shed, if it saw its interest in it; otherwise, he would close his eyes. Never have the martyrs been avenged otherwise. Where did this systematic opposition to the work of Bishop Ridel come from? M. Bourrée, successor to M. Patenôtre in Peking, gives us an excellent answer. A few months later, in a situation more or less similar to the one we are reporting, this skillful diplomat noticed the cunning of the Chinese ministers and said: "There is something of the devil in there; he stirs, so much the better, he's afraid."

Yes, this is the real author and the real cause of all the obstacles sown in the way of the venerable bishop of Korea. The devil is attacked in his last entrenchments; he is afraid, and one can imagine his fear. He knows that the Church, his immortal enemy, has not yet completed its conquests, and that the plenitude of nations must enter his fold. Now, of all the peoples of Asia, Korea alone has not yet erected the cross above its capital. But the victory of Jesus Christ is near. Satan divines it; that is why he moves about in Seoul, Peking, Paris and Rome.

In Rome, great was the surprise of Cardinal Simeoni on hearing the French ambassador express the desires of his government: he was asked, prince of the Church, prefect of Propaganda, to put an obstacle to the preaching of the Gospel in the Kingdom of Korea.

"I refused," the cardinal said later, "I absolutely refused. But to please the French government, I promised that Bishop Ridel would not return until he had received our instructions and that if the missionaries wanted to leave Korea, Propaganda would ask for the intervention of France. As far as the bishop is concerned, the day when he believes that he must enter into his mission, he will certainly not be prevented from doing so by the Holy See."

The three missionaries then in Korea were informed that they would be granted refuge in China, if they thought fit to spontaneously abandon their Christians.

M. Blanc replied on behalf of his colleagues and used the language expected of them:

"Coming to Korea for God and with the support he promises to those who love and serve him, we cannot, too much, stop at what the government can say and do. The only grace I ask for every day is that of dying on the battlefield,

“I would add that my two colleagues are animated by the same feelings, and are not about to leave Korea by diplomatic means.”

On the other hand, Bishop Ridel, on learning of the Propaganda’s decision, hastened to write to the cardinal prefect and to ask him for an authorization which, at any moment, might become necessary. We quote this magnificent letter in its entirety:

N-D. des Neiges, March 18, 1880.

“Eminence,

“The mission of Korea has stood out so far for the faith of its faithful, their courage and their attachment to the Catholic religion, even in the midst of the cruel persecutions which have bloodied this poor Christendom.

“The greatest misfortune that the Christians of this country can fear is to see themselves deprived of their pastors.

“A lot of people understand that. Without speaking of the efforts made in the past to obtain missionaries, have we not seen them, in recent years, undertake long journeys, endure the hardest fatigues and expose themselves to all dangers in order to reintroduce the fathers into their country.

“These, once returned, hastened to bring the Christians together, to instruct them, to reawaken faith in these souls deprived for so long of religious help.

“The great difficulty was to moderate the ardor of these dear neophytes, whose eagerness could compromise the safety of the missionary. All, in fact, wanted to see the father, to hear him and to receive the sacraments immediately, in order to draw from them faith, strength and courage.

“This momentum continues. The missionary has no rest day or night, and despite the persecution, despite the threats and the dangers, a certain number of pagans recognize the truth of religion, abandon their superstitious practices, educate themselves and receive baptism. All Christians regard the missionary as an angel sent from God to console them, support them, heal their miseries, and lead them to heaven, where they have the desire and the firm hope of reaching.

“Is it under such conditions that fathers would abandon their children, that pastors would leave their sheep, that missionaries would leave their neophytes?

“My collaborators who are in Korea succumb under the weight of their ministry, but far from complaining they carry their cross with resignation, even with joy, and congratulate themselves on the share of inheritance that Our Lord has bestowed on them.

“I am convinced that they are far from thinking of leaving the country, as long as their forces allow them to lead this harsh existence.

“Those who prepare to leave know the suffering, the abandonment and the dangers that await them. However, they have only one desire, to go to the aid of their brothers to live and die according to the good pleasure of God, in the midst of these dear Christians. It is under these circumstances that I received from the directors of our seminary in Paris a letter which communicated to me Your Eminence’s order.

Always disposed to obey the Sacred Congregation, I bow my head humbly and submit with resignation and happiness, for deep in my heart I find only one feeling, to do in everything and always the holy will of God. Now, here I have no doubt, it is indeed the will of God, since it is an order from Rome.

“So far I have deferred cautiously, now I wait patiently. I cannot foresee the moment of my return, but the favorable hour may present itself soon.

“Failing to take advantage of this opportunity would be a calamity for the Korean mission. Also to avoid as much as possible any delay prejudicial to the interests of my vicariate, I hasten to warn Your Eminence, that; I intend to return to Korea as soon as a way opens up. Nevertheless, before putting my project into execution, I will await the instructions that the

Sacred Congregation will be good enough to give me. I have every reason to think that they will assist my designs.

“It seems to me useless to express here all the serious reasons that call me to the position that they have been kind enough to entrust to me. Suffice it to say that the poor Church of Korea is just beginning to rise from the ruins heaped up by persecution and the deprivation of all spiritual help; that to abandon it again would be to annihilate it. These unfortunate Christians are entitled like the others, and even more than the others because they are more unfortunate, to our devotion and to the affection of Your Eminence, whose solicitude extends to all the missionaries.

“See then, I pray you, these poor Korean Christians prostrate at your feet; their bishop, their missionaries join them and conjure you to listen favorably to their prayers.”

In the reply of the Prefect of Propaganda, one reads with happiness the testimonies of esteem and confidence which the cardinal took pleasure in giving to the venerable confessor of the faith, and the praises which he awarded to his zeal and his devotion. “I see in you,” he said to him, “the good Shepherd ready to give his life for his sheep. I don’t know what praise to give to your generosity; for it is this same generosity which led the apostles to convert the world and rendered the martyrs invincible.

“The Sacred Congregation of Propaganda, which is not near to judging what is most useful in the Lord, neither orders nor refuses you to return to Korea. It depends entirely on your judgment and prudence²⁰.

It was all the Sacred Congregation could afford in such a delicate matter. The copy of this official document was doubtless given to the French ambassador. Also, rather to please the latter than to draw a line of conduct for the apostolic vicar, the cardinal added: “I recommend that you, however, while you are considering the means of effecting your return, to see too ardent does not cause you to face certain perils. You are not unaware of what damages and what persecutions could result from it for the Christians of this country²¹.”

The bishop of Korea understood better than anyone the difficulties of his situation and the inconveniences of too hasty a step; but if a favorable circumstance presented itself in an unforeseen manner, his duty would be clearly marked out.

²⁰ “Video pastorem bonum qui animant suant ponit pro ovibus suis. Nescio quibus laudibus tantam tui animi generosita tem efferre, ea enim eadem est quæ apostolos ad mundi conversionem adduxit, atque martyres invictos effecit.”

Nihilominus hæc S. Congregatio de Propaganda fide, cum in tantâ locorum distantia impar sit ad judicandum quid magis in Domino expedat, neque jubet te Coream redire, neque hanc veniam tibi concedit, sed omnia prorsus tuæ prudentiæ et arbitrio relinquit.

²¹ Oro tamen quatenus de reditu cogites, ne nimio \e\o correptus imprudenter te periculis objicias certissimis; nam optime noscis ex hoc quot damna et persecutiones coadunari possint super illâ catholicorum communitate.

Chapter XIV

Bishop Ridel encourages and directs the missionaries who remained in Korea. - The work of relief to captives. - Creation of the College of Elders. - M. Blanc asks for reinforcements. - Death of Father Richard. - Departure of MM. Mutel and Liouville for Korea. - Ecclesiastical Tribunal in Korea. - Bishop Ridel, eighth-grade teacher.

While they were occupied in Paris and Rome with the Korean mission, Bishop Ridel followed with a gaze full of solicitude the labors of his missionaries. He maintained frequent correspondence with them, and feeling their anguish, taking part in their joys and their successes, he encouraged them with the kindness and authority of a father.

“We are in the hands of God,” he told them, “instruments that his providence can use or break according to his good pleasure, and for his greater glory. Now, we only want here below this glory of our Master and the accomplishment of his holy will; let us therefore always be submissive, let us abandon ourselves with confidence and love to his holy providence. Not a hair falls from our heads without his permission.

“God wants us to save Korea. For this holy work, if one must suffer, if one must die, it is to continue the work of Our Lord Jesus Christ, it is to acquire an immense weight of merit for eternity. It is upon us that God has cast his eyes for such an august and great ministry. What a beautiful calling! and how can we sufficiently humble ourselves and tell the Lord our gratitude?

“You know how I live with your life? I sympathize with your sorrows and your sufferings. I was obliged to leave you and to abandon you in anguish and alarm, but each day I place you lovingly in the heart of Jesus. Your letters let me know your position—I bless God it is comparatively good; so far you have had to suffer, but you have been courageous and valiant. I thank Our Lord for it; I seem to hear him say to each of you: *Euge, serve bone*. Courage, good servant. I too repeat with Him: *Euge, euge*, courage! courage! Soon you will hear his merciful call: *intra in gaudium*, enter into joy and happiness: for the sufferings and the cross of Jesus are the path that leads to resurrection and glory. *Per passionem ejus et crucem ad resurrectionis gloriam*.”

Already, by his generous initiative, a new work, the work of aid to captives, had been founded; it flourished throughout Christendom. The faithful, despite their destitution, clubbed together for their brother prisoners, while the most intrepid met with satellites or influential pagans, and sometimes by flattery, sometimes by largesse, managed to relieve those who generously confessed. Jesus Christ in the horror of the dungeons. This generosity of some and this devotion of others recall the most touching scenes of nascent Christianity.

Another thought still preoccupied Bishop Ridel. At this moment the slightest attempt in Korea, made with a little firmness by the nations of Europe, would have been crowned with success. Let's say more, this step would have responded to the secret desires of the Korean government, which of itself could not break, either too quickly or too openly, with the secular traditions of the country. But would France or the other Western powers take advantage of these favorable provisions? The past did not guarantee this hope. From then on, the relative peace which Christendom enjoyed depended on a palace revolution; and it was to be feared that, in a more or less distant future, the era of persecutions would recommence and again plunge this unfortunate mission into the greatest misfortunes. The missionaries currently in the country could therefore disappear one day, and how to replace them? Or else, and this was already a reality of the moment, their small number would not allow them to suffice for the work. Under these conditions, the idea of creating a native clergy as soon as possible naturally came to the mind of the pious bishop.

The native priests, in fact, escape more easily from the searches of the satellites; in their language, in their countenance, nothing betrays them. Children of the country, they travel all

the paths without help and without guide; from one Christendom to another, they bring to the faithful the consolations of their holy ministry without danger to anyone. As soon as things calm down, they are there, ready to repair the ruins, or to sustain a fervor excited by the fighting.

Already in 1876, at Notre-Dame des Neiges and later in Korea, Bishop Ridel had taken in children in the hope of founding a college. Unfortunately, the persecution had dispersed the masters and the pupils. But a first failure was not of a nature to discourage our apostle.

Also, far from abandoning his project, he resumed it in 1880 on a larger scale. He ordered his missionaries to seek among their most virtuous catechists those who, willing to consecrate themselves to the service of God, seemed the most worthy of this honor. In China they would be taught the indispensable theological knowledge and the elements of Latin necessary for the celebration of the holy mysteries and the administration of the sacraments.

For the moment, there was no need to think of making learned priests: what mattered above all was to train them in the practice of the priestly virtues, to inspire them with the zeal, devotion and courage which befits all priests, but especially to those who exercise their august ministry in such a barbarous country.

The execution of this plan was certainly difficult, but the memory of the venerable Kim and the pious John Choe, Korean priests, made it possible to expect excellent results.

“Seek then, wrote the valiant bishop to his missionaries, seek among your Christians those who seem to you worthy of reaching the priesthood. When you have tested them, begin to instruct them and form them in the practice of the spiritual exercises and in the priestly virtues, the foundation of everything. Let them be from twenty to forty years old, and even if they have great dispositions, accept them until they are fifty years old.

“That they are free from any commitment, of good morals, and that they enjoy the best reputation in the country.

“Let them be intelligent, educated in religion, let them be above all virtuous, humble, serious and pious.”

After having traced this line of conduct full of wisdom, the great bishop, not daring to trust his own lights, wrote the same day, April 20, to his provicar.

“On the college of old I ask your opinion as on any other subject. But I leave you the greatest freedom of action so as not to hamper yourselves or hinder the good that you have in view. Also, I have much less the intention to give you orders than to indicate a direction to you. I do what I can and do my best, but I know I could be wrong, so I’d love to hear your opinion.

“Besides, in a few years, probably soon (because I feel I’m getting old), you’ll be running Korea, and I wouldn’t want to embarrass my successors. I do so with a view to the future and for the good of the mission. I would like to consult you more often, but the correspondence is neither prompt nor easy. Once again, I don’t want to hinder your action: you are in the country, in fact you direct the mission, and, I am not afraid to say it, your direction has always been wise, prudent, for the greater glory of God. I cannot express my gratitude to you enough. Today I fulfill this duty, you know, with all the sincerity of my heart.”

M. Blanc replied on the following August 28: “My colleagues and I will do our best to respond to your wishes, but the thing is not easy, at least this year. It will only be during the administration that we will be able to seek and discover subjects capable of being part of the projected work. When we have found them, what will we do next?

“As you know, Monseigneur, for more than six months each of us has been busy visiting Christians. Under these conditions, it is very difficult for the missionary to undertake to lead with him, from village to village, the aspirants to the priesthood whom he may have encountered. Anyway, it is our duty to try; may it please the divine Master to bless this new foundation.”

A few weeks later, the first students of the seniors’ college set off for China to begin their studies. But in Korea, the missionaries succumbed to the pain, and M. Blanc saw the necessity of asking for help.

“I reflected again before the good Lord, he said, I held a council of war, and now I believe that it is our duty to undertake a new expedition this year. Our health is not robust; for me, I’m half crippled, but I’ll go as long as I can; if we have to stop, we will stop. M. Doucet is hardly more solid. M. Robert alone enjoys decent health.”

When this letter arrived in Manchuria, the small community of N.-D. des Neiges was in mourning. The good father Richard had just given up his soul to God. This missionary with an ardent soul, whose gentle piety and amenity of character were the joy and admiration of all, died in exile, far from France, which he loved with the most tender love, threshold of Korea, his adopted country, towards which he daily directed his eyes and the aspirations of his heart.

On the very evening of his death, September 28, 1880, Bishop Ridel wrote the following letter. These hastily drawn lines praise both the father who wrote them with a trembling hand, and the missionary, or rather the beloved child who was the object of them:

“My dear friends,

“Although the hour is very late, and despite the fatigue of the days that have just passed: I want to write to you myself at the last moment. United as we will always be by the bonds of charity, it is impossible that my joys and my afflictions should not be yours, and that yours should not be mine.

“Today I announce to you great pain. I feel my heart overflowing and my eyes filling with tears: I have just lost one of my missionaries.

“This dear Father Richard whom you knew, who had written to you, whom you loved, my friend, my companion, my adviser, and more than all that, my child, is no more.

“This very morning he left us. After a short illness, endured with patience and resignation, his soul soared to heaven! For he was a good, holy priest, whose edifying life was crowned by a holy death.

“We are all here in pain and desolation; yet everyone says to himself: may I die like this. Yes, it was a great consolation for us to have witnessed the calm, the faith, the confidence, the resignation of our dear colleague. We weep because we have lost a friend, but our faith consoles us and tells us to hope that his ever-uplifting life has earned him the crown of the elect.

“We pray nevertheless, and we will pray a lot for him, you will not forget to join us in asking God to receive him in his mercy, in his holy paradise.

“How happy are those who die in this way, but also how good it is, how prudent it is to always be ready to respond to God’s call! When you think that a few days of illness are enough to transport us to our eternity!”

Despite this painful event, the following month, MM. Mutel and Liouville went to sea to respond to M. Blanc’s call. After a long voyage which nearly cost them their lives, the two missionaries happily landed in Korea. These two apostles, during their stay in N.-D. des Neiges, had taken up the study of the Korean language with such ardor that when they arrived in the land of the martyrs, they were ready to set out on the campaign trail.

M. Mutel, we have not forgotten, had a special mission. Also, soon we saw in the very center of the capital of Korea, appearing before a regularly formed ecclesiastical tribunal, the Christians who had witnessed the death of Mgr Berneux, Mgr Daveluy and their companions. They came to tell, with their hand on the Holy Gospel, the heroic deeds and deaths of those martyrs they had known, their last words they had heard.

They then thought of placing the precious remains of the confessors of the faith in a safe place, because despite the vigilance of Christians, chance or betrayal could cause them to disappear.

The Christians who had collected the relics of the martyrs were still living. Led by M. Blanc, they went to the place of burial, exhumed each body separately, and provided each part of the body with a special inscription and the seal of the provicar.

A few months later, these venerated remains were placed in the hands of Bishop

Petitjean. And now it is still in Japan that they rest until it pleases the holy Church to exalt them and to clothe them with the glory which will crown their labors and their martyrdom here below.

After the departure of the two missionaries, all were worried for a long time in N.-D. des Neiges. In fact, hardly had the two travelers left the shore when the wind began to blow furiously. This terrible storm lasted four weeks.

“The trip is usually made in twelve or fifteen days,” says Bishop Ridel; however, the Chinese boat had left a month before, and since then there has been no news! M. Deguette and I dared not speak to each other for fear of communicating our fears. The north wind was blowing with a violence that is hard to imagine, even when one knows the equinox winds on the coasts of Brittany. It was snowing. We cannot say that the snow was falling; carried horizontally by the storm, it was going to accumulate on the side of the mountains. On the plain, none appeared; I will always remember those long days and endless nights.

“One evening, around ten o’clock, I was still thinking sadly of my two missionaries, when a noise was heard at our door; a cart had just stopped there. I got up hastily, and soon saw three Korean students that M. Blanc was sending us. They had been in port for three days, but the heavy seas made any landing impossible. After a day in the open air on the cart, they arrived stiff with cold, barely able to speak a word. The Chinese boat which fortunately deposited MM. Mutel and Liouville in Korea brings them to us.

“May our Lord be blessed a thousand times!”

Since the death of the good Father Richard, M. Deguette had fulfilled the function of procurator of the Korean mission, so who then was to take charge of the education of the Korean pupils?

Bishop Ridel will answer us.

“Finally the classes started this morning: I have become a teacher. I have three students who already know how to read and write, but that’s it. We started today with the first declension, mensa. My duties as a teacher take up a lot of my time, because I have everything to do, grammar and dictionary too; to write to you, I am obliged to draw on the night.” (Letter of October 10, 1880).

The new pupils supported, guided by the affection and the talent of such a master, naturally found their task easy and devoted themselves courageously to the most arid studies. The illustrious bishop had taken his new teaching duties to heart, and a few months later he wrote: “My pupils are in eighth grade, they are doing well and are beginning to translate small sentences into Latin.” Finally, he added with touching humility: “The two youngest will succeed, they would have already made greater progress if they had a better master.”

While the Apostolic Vicar of Korea was making himself a modest eighth-grade teacher, fame gave his name a new luster. The Korean-French dictionary, the Korean grammar, were finally completed; the first of these works had appeared. The care with which this dictionary had been prepared, the abundance of information which it contained, had attracted the attention of scholars, merchants, diplomats, of all those, in a word, who are interested in Korea. The newspapers of Japan, China, America, and England gave it the highest praise.

Moreover, this important work came at its time; for these various powers had already spoken of entering into negotiations with the Korean government. Rumors were confirmed that the Chinese government would show itself favorable to the opening of Korea, that it had even advised the king of that country to welcome proposals to this end, if foreign nations took the initiative.

Despite the aridity of such a study, it is impossible to pass over in silence a work which required of our missionary so much trouble and so many vigils, for more than fifteen years.

Chapter XV

The Korean-French dictionary. - Korean grammar. - Bishop Ridel forbids the English and the Germans to translate his works. - News from the mission.

So far orientalist knew very little about Korean literature. The Korean-French dictionary is the first serious work that has appeared on a language as unknown as the people who speak it.

As soon as he arrived on his mission, Bishop Ridel made the Korean language an object of special and in-depth study. He even acquired a universal reputation in the kingdom. And it often happens today, when conversing with a Korean, that one of the first questions is this: "Did you know Bishop Yi (The Korean name of Bishop Ridel.)? He spoke Korean like us."

In addition to the lexicographical point of view, the work of the learned prelate takes on an interesting character which arouses curiosity. It describes the fauna, ichthyology, flora, sciences and arts of Korea with a local color which gives it a particular and picturesque cachet.

It suffices to leaf through a few pages to discover curious details about the mores and institutions of a country where almost at every step the foreigner finds himself face to face with the unknown.

"Furthermore, at a time when Europe's eyes are turning more than ever to Korea, the publication of a geographical dictionary of this country was most welcome. This thought could not escape Bishop Ridel. Drawn from the most fashionable treatise on geography and from the official documents of the Korean government, this work contains the names and positions of provinces, cities, mountains, rivers; indication of civil and military administrative divisions.

"The composition of such a work lasted no less than fifteen years, during which the results of the day before were patiently added to those of the next day. It is the fruit not of isolated work, but of an active and meticulous collaboration, where the particular discoveries were recorded only after having undergone the test of common control and passed through the sieve of severe criticism. (*Echo du Japon*, December 18, 1880.).

A few months after the publication of the Korean-French dictionary appeared the Korean grammar.

In the introduction, which is by no means the least important part of the book, the author discusses the similarities between Korean and Chinese. According to him, it was towards the end of the twelfth century BC, when Korea was occupied by Chinese troops, that the influence of the language of the conquerors began to be felt, and since that time, a large number of Chinese words have been introduced into the language.

It is worth noting that the Korean alphabet is composed of only twenty-five letters, and one wonders how a nation which has such advantages as regards the characters of writing, imposes on itself of its own free will the study of the hieroglyphics of China, and regards with deep disdain its national language. Thus, epistolary correspondence is always in Chinese, if the two correspondents are a little educated. Shop signs, account books, etc., are also usually in Chinese. The country's scholars dislike and affect not being able to read books in Korean characters. They say they find no taste in them and leave them to the children; the books they read are Chinese books; the language of study is not Korean, but Chinese; the philosophical systems which find followers are the Chinese systems, and, by a natural consequence, the copy being always below the model, the Korean scholars are very far from having equaled the Chinese scholars.

In the Korean language the greatest difficulties come from the honorific forms. The Korean attaches the greatest importance to this and would not want to fail to observe the distinction between superiors, equals and inferiors in conversation. One can imagine what an enormous complication must exist when each tense of a verb varies according to the rank of the

person we are talking about. The author has taken the trouble to explain these rules in very clear language, and to offer the student a number of very well chosen examples.

The other parts of speech have been treated with the same care and are of the greatest interest to those who would like to study Korean.

An appendix gives us some information on the Korean method of measuring time, on weights and measures. Finally, the grammar ends with a series of progressive exercises on the parts of speech, which go from simple to compound, from easy to difficult, so as to follow and direct the progress of the student. In the choice of subjects, passing, according to the advice of the poet, from the serious to the gentle, from the pleasant to the severe, nothing has been neglected to join the pleasant to the useful.

These stories, interspersed with details which provide curious information on the domestic, social or political life, on the customs and institutions of a people still little known, contribute to making the study both attractive and instructive.

In a word, the French-Korean dictionary and the Korean grammar are indeed the work that one could and should have expected from a man of the caliber of Bishop Ridel, who never ceased to study the Korean language of which he yet possessed such exact knowledge.

In our time, when the smallest discoveries of the human mind everywhere receive encouragement, one cannot too much applaud the success which crowned the long and persevering labors of the venerable prelate and his devoted collaborators.

“Such a publication demonstrates, once again, that missionaries are in no way uninterested in what concerns progress properly understood, and that they know how, even on the least hospitable soil and in the midst of difficulties of all kinds, to consecrate part of their time endowing science with unknown treasures (*Echo du Japon.*)”

The praises which hailed from all quarters the appearance of the books of which we have just spoken, reached their humble author and consoled him in his exile. He congratulated himself on this success, but with what modesty!

“The Korean-French dictionary has appeared,” he wrote to his missionaries, “it is awarded the highest praise; I’m quite happy about it. It always helps to have a good reputation. But we, we know that our work is incomplete, we see all the imperfections. Also, that each one of us put words there, and later, these collated words will serve to perfect the work.”

These two books, written in Korean and in French, provided the venerable bishop with another opportunity to manifest his patriotism. The Protestant ministers of China offered to translate them into English, to pay all the expenses, and to give him a large remuneration for his mission. The Germans made him even more attractive offers.

“No, never,” he said, “will I agree to sell to others the work of fifteen years of my life. I am French, and I want Koreans to learn the language of France and not that of foreign nations.”

At the same time, the good news he received from his mission heightened his joy. The horizon brightened more and more, and the protection with which the divine Master surrounded the workers of the holy Gospel became more and more manifest.

One of the last letters that Bishop Ridel wrote from the Far East gives us some interesting details about his mission and shows us the progress of the faith in this country.

“To rejoice your catholic heart, I am going to say a few words to you about my mission.

“A missionary (M. Liouville.) escaped in a providential manner from an accident which might have resulted in still greater misfortunes. Recognized by the satellites, he was thrown in prison, then, after two days, released on the special order of the governor of the province. This is real progress.

“Two Christians, arrested as such, were imprisoned; on their refusal to apostatize, they endured torture, but they remained firm in the confession of their faith. After a while, the Mandarin simply dismissed them. This is the first time that Christians have been acquitted in this way.

“Last May (1881), the Regent gave the order to the bonzes (Buddhist monks) to offer sacrifices to the ghosts of neophytes put to death since 1866, and to collect their bones to burn them. The monks collected scattered bones from the places of execution, saying: “We only want the bones of Christians and not those of thieves.” At the time of the sacrifices, they cried out: “Come, come, souls of Christians; but you, souls of thieves, withdraw, this is not for you.” The bonzes had received three thousand ligatures of cash for this task; in order to finish it more quickly, they collected all the bones they found, without distinguishing between human bones and the remains of animals, and instead of burning them, they buried them in the ground. The operation lasted six days, which means that there were six solemn sacrifices. The Regent, irritated at the way things happened, had fourteen monks arrested, beaten up and sent to prison; little by little they were released, retaining only the two main ones.

“Naturally, everyone in the country comments in their own way on this act of the Regent and his wife. Is it a pang of conscience for having shed so much innocent blood? Is it the superstitious fear of the misfortunes that vengeful souls might cause him? It is not easy to know his feeling. Be that as it may, we have nothing to gain from it, for it is now publicly declared that the Christians who fell in the previous persecutions are innocent victims; in fact, no one has ever had the idea of offering a sacrifice of expiation to a thief, to an assassin, to any other public malefactor.

“These are the newcomers from Korea. In this country we talk a lot about the Catholic religion, we have fierce adversaries and ardent defenders; it’s almost a decisive moment. What will come of it? We are in the hands of God, may Our Lord take us under his very special protection.”

The kingdom of Korea, which had hitherto held itself out of the civilizing movement through excessive distrust, broke with its age-old traditions. The United States had just begun negotiations which were to end with a treaty of commerce and friendship.

Doubt was no longer possible. The dawn of this beautiful day that the missionaries had been waiting for so long finally appeared. The Church of Korea was in its turn to emerge glorious from its catacombs, and the cross, freely planted, dominating the ramparts and the palaces of the capital, would soon announce the victory of Jesus Christ.

But the work of Bishop Ridel was accomplished on this earth. God wanted his faithful servant to taste all the bitterness of the cross without ever taking part in the joys of his triumph. However, the time to receive the eternal reward had not yet arrived. Previously, divine Providence reserved for him a long and painful ordeal, no doubt, so that he might be for us, during his illness, a perfect model of patience and resignation.

Book 3

Chapter I

The first attacks of the disease. - First stay at the Hong Kong Sanatorium. - Trip to Japan. - Apoplexy. - Extreme Unction. - Return to Hong Kong. - Bishop Blanc appointed coadjutor. - Departure for France. - The crew of the Natal.

It was around the month of March 1881 that Bishop Ridel felt the first attacks of the disease which was to finally snatch him from the affectionate veneration of his parents and his friends. Intolerable headaches accompanied by violent pains caused by acute rheumatism, and severe oppression forced him to go to the Hong Kong Sanatorium.

A few days after his arrival, the patient thus gave an account of his condition to M. Coste. "When I started out, my chest was tired; For some time I had been experiencing frequent oppressions, and felt a malaise which at first I took for a cold. The journey from Shanghai to Hong-Kong only increased this discomfort, so much so that on arriving at the procure I felt a kind of suffocation; I couldn't utter five words in a row, nor climb a few steps. The doctor probed me. The lungs were good, but he declared me asthmatic. I immediately followed a diet which, together with rest, gave me some relief. However, I was unable to attend the consecration of Bishop Chausse as I had first hoped. A few more days here, and I'll be almost completely recovered."

Alas! the courageous missionary deluded himself; this improvement was only apparent. The privations and sufferings of twenty years of apostolate had exhausted his strength; he no longer sustained himself except by the energy of his character. Listening only to his courage, he went to Japan, where he had resolved to transfer the post of Notre-Dame des Neiges.

It would be difficult to express here the joy and also the painful emotion of Bishop Petitjean in seeing again the friend who reminded him of the beautiful years of the seminary in Paris, the solemnities of the Vatican Council, and who had suffered so much for Jesus Christ. It was the same penetrating gaze, the same smile on his lips, the same look of kindness on his face, but his hair whitened before his age, his emaciated features spoke eloquently of the long tortures of prison.

However, there was no sign of an imminent end. In the hospitable residence of the Bishop of Japan, the venerable patient saw himself the object of the most attentive care. Under these favorable conditions, his health seemed for a moment to recover; when, on the 5th of October, towards two o'clock in the afternoon, he was found in his armchair, his head bowed, his gaze dull and breathing with difficulty. Fortunately, there was a Russian warship that day in the port of Nagasaki. The doctor was called in haste, and he hastened to come. This one immediately declared that it was an attack of apoplexy. Thanks to his good care the danger soon disappeared, but the arm and leg on the right side remained paralyzed. However, the Russian doctor gave hope that this paralysis would soon disappear. This new ordeal did not alter Bishop Ridel's serenity. "Our venerable confessor of the faith," wrote Mgr Petitjean, "is magnificent in his resignation, he is for all of us a great subject of edification."

"I did not suffer much," said the holy missionary himself, "but people around me were frightened, they feared that my condition would worsen unexpectedly, Mgr Petitjean therefore decided to speak to me about the sacraments. I confessed. His Grace then proposed that I receive Extreme Unction. I didn't think I was very ill, however I answered him: "I don't mind, I'm going to prepare for it." I had often seen death so close, and in circumstances where it was so terrible, that I didn't feel the slightest emotion."

It was a very touching scene. The priests of the mission dressed in their white surplices accompanied Bishop Petitjean; the students of the seminary holding lighted candles in their

hands and several Christians came next. The sick man could hardly articulate his words, however, by the movement of his lips, one could see that he united in heart and mouth with the prayers. His radiant face expressed joy and thanksgiving. The mere thought of eternal years absorbed him entirely; one would have said that his beautiful soul, impatient to break its earthly envelope and take flight, already glimpsed, in glory, God who was to be its reward. The priests, the seminarians, the faithful kneeling and answering the prayers of the holy liturgy could not contain themselves; everyone was crying. "For me," said Bishop Ridel even later, "I was happy, I really wanted to die; because I felt well prepared. However, a cloud of sadness passed over my heart when I thought of my own. 'What will become of them,' I said to myself, 'when they learn it?' Then I offered the sacrifice of my life and my affections for the salvation of Korea, for my Christians, and I no longer thought of anything but God and eternity."

On the third day a slight improvement set in and continued for a few weeks; but the heat was unbearable. Day and night, two students from the seminary came in turn to take the office of nurse near him, and busied themselves in chasing mosquitoes. His good smile, caressing and patient, his gentleness, his paternal delicacies soon won the hearts of these young people who vied with each other in care and attention.

In this complete stillness, the days were endless, but the pain and insomnia made the nights even longer. In the morning they carried him to an armchair, in the evening they stretched him out on his bed; it was for the poor paralytic a very monotonous variety; but his courageous patience made him preserve all his gaiety. Unfortunately, the hopes of an early recovery faded little by little.

Towards the end of October, the Russian warship set sail from Nagasaki. Before its departure, the doctor advised transporting the patient to the Hong Kong Sanatorium. The care he would find there, the change of air, the crossing itself, could only have a salutary effect on such dilapidated health. This good advice was an order.

On November 23, Bishop Ridel, stretched out on a sort of stretcher, left the episcopal residence of Bishop Petitjean. The Christians of Nagasaki wanted to accompany him to the port and thus show the Bishop of Korea their love and veneration. Before going towards the ship, they took the road to the church, a graceful building situated on the slope of a hill which dominates the roadstead and the whole town, and from which the widest panorama unfolds. They ascended the steps of the holy place; on the threshold they stopped and intoned the hymn Ave Maris Stella. Immediately the Christians, uniting their voices to those of the missionaries, raised to Mary, star of the sea and salvation of the infirm, the accents of the most ardent supplication. The invalid begged those who carried him to turn him towards the crowd who implored Heaven for him with such fervor, and, his left hand painfully lifting his right hand, he blessed it. At the same moment several vessels entered the port, and the cannon, saluting their arrival, resounded on all sides. The crowd was sobbing; the chant of the Magnificat came out interrupted by all the breaths. In the presence of this unexpected spectacle, the missionary felt overwhelmed by emotion, big tears rolled down his face and his lips murmured: "How this solemn farewell resembles a final farewell!"

A few moments later, Bishop Ridel, assisted by M. Poisnel, a missionary destined for Korea, set off to return to China. After a rather long stay in Shanghai, he arrived in Hong-Kong at the beginning of the following year.

The Sanatorium, which the missionaries still call Maison de Béthanie, is a spacious residence, perfectly suited to the state of its guests. It is located on a mound that dominates the city and from where the sea unrolls to the horizon. There the patient breathes the least unhealthy air in China; the sight of the ocean, continually crisscrossed by warships and merchant ships rests and recreates him. He finds in this asylum all the help of art and the attentions that fraternal charity alone is capable of inspiring.

On arriving in Hong Kong, Bishop Ridel was the object of the liveliest sympathy. "Here,"

he said, "I am given all possible care with the greatest charity. I had come to be treated, but I see that they want to spoil me. From my room, I see the sea and islands in the distance; in the evening, I often witness magnificent sunsets. But the most precious thing is that I am very close to the chapel, God's neighbor! and every day I have the happiness of making Holy Communion. Leaning on the arms of another patient, I take a few steps around the house. The doctor says I can get well, I think the best is what God wants."

These short walks sometimes occasioned cruel suffering, but the courageous bishop often repeated them, to give his paralyzed limbs more vigor and suppleness. Back in his room, he trained his left hand to render him the services which his right hand refused him.

Scattered in front of us are the lines he so laboriously traced. All breathe the same serenity, the same contentment of a holy soul whose supreme desire is to conform in everything to the good pleasure of God. At the sight of these characters traced by a trembling hand, at the cost of so much painful effort, the heart sinks, and the eyes involuntarily water with tears. These letters are only simple notes, which become longer as the strength increases: in each the missionary puts all his soul. We quote randomly.

Bishop Ridel to his family:

Hong Kong, January 26, 1882.

Dear Friends,

I would like to write to you more often, but you see the difficulty I have. Right now, I'm a little better; but the right arm still gives me pain. It is the will of the good God. May he be blessed! I will make sure to write to you now. Courage and patience, and above all not sadness. Here we are always cheerful. Rejoice in the Lord.

February 25. - I think of you all the time, I would like to write to you more often, but what can I do? My left hand isn't making any progress, and my right hand is just as lazy as ever. They tell me, however, that I am better, they always tell me that I will be cured. I don't know, and no one I believe can know. What God wills will always be the best and the most advantageous. If I cannot answer all your letters, I can at least read them. Don't be discouraged, then, and continue to write to me as often as you can; don't worry, I have everything I could possibly want here, but pray for me so that I know how to take advantage of my condition to work effectively for my sanctification.

3 May. - Time, patience, above all trust! I have no intention of returning to Europe as you have urged me to do, because such a journey in my position would be very difficult; next, I don't know if I would recover more easily in France than here, and above all I would fear that, if I did not recover, they would try to hold me back. I always have deep in my heart the love of my Korea. This is where I would like to live and die. But above all, may God be loved and his holy will be done! You will understand my reasons, you will accept them, and you will not doubt my deep affection for you. How we will love each other in paradise, where we will meet again never to leave each other!

Farewell, dear friends, let us remain united in the heart of Our Lord; I pray to him to protect you and to bless you.

July 10. - Thank you for your good letters and your affectionate wishes. I am in much the same state; you see that it is very long, but patience. He is good, ah! very good to suffer here below. It is the surest means of salvation. Heaven is so beautiful that nothing should be spared to secure possession of it. And then, Our Lord, out of love for us, suffered so much! Is it not right, in return, that we too, out of submission to his holy will and above all out of love for such a good Master, willingly suffer the miseries that his merciful providence sows, for our greater good, on the path of life. Courage then, it is so good to rest in heaven!...

These lines are almost the last that the missionary bishop wrote to his family. We have already noticed that the supernatural thought is always present in this correspondence. A true

apostle, Bishop Ridel wants everything in him to be a preaching, and we do not know of one of his letters, even among the most familiar, that does not contain a word to elevate the soul.

Already nearly ten months had passed since the day when illness had stopped him in his apostolic pursuits. The resources of the medical art, the most assiduous care had not been able to overcome the obstinacy of the disease. From all sides then, fervent prayers rose to heaven; but other friends were also praying up there to remind them of the confessor of Jesus Christ. The friends of heaven were stronger than the friends of earth.

God, who wanted to reward his servant, measured the trial by his courage. Before the supreme sacrifice, he demanded another. When the courageous missionary was spoken to about returning to France, his first impulse was to reject this idea with energy. All his thoughts, all his aspirations carried him towards Korea. In spite of his pitiless sickness, he always thought about it, he occupied himself with it incessantly.

His life had had some very rough stations; no suffering, no contradiction had been spared him; nevertheless, of all the sacrifices that God could impose on him, the greatest and the most painful was to be further removed from his mission, perhaps forever. But the opinion of his colleagues was unanimous; the opinion of doctors, formal. Only the country of his birth was capable of giving him, if not a complete cure, at least enough strength to still work for the conversion of Korea. This last consideration touched him; it seemed to him that God was asking him for this new trial. For a few days the struggle could be felt, the sacrifice divined; but the desire to conform to the divine will prevailed over his dearest affection. From then on, without a complaint touching his lips, without a wrinkle betraying his pain, the sacrifice was accomplished. This immolation of what he loved most in the world was the culmination of his virtue.

We remember that Bishop Ridel had received from the Holy See the necessary powers to choose a successor. The moment seemed opportune to assert this privilege.

After having implored for a long time the light of the Holy Spirit, the venerable apostle wrote to M. Blanc to ask him to have his hands laid on him and to be consecrated as soon as possible coadjutor bishop of Korea, under the title of bishop of Antigone. Here is that document:

Dear Father Blanc,

“My great desire would be to see you, to live near you, to take part in your fatigues and your sorrows. Persecution has suddenly separated me from you and now illness forces me to move away again. I am sent to France to seek health. What does the future hold for me? I do not know. This departure is the sacrifice that costs me the most; God’s will be done!

“After having reflected for a long time in the presence of God, on the feast day of Saint Anne, I appointed you coadjutor. Please accept with simplicity and trust in the goodness of God and be consecrated as soon as possible.

“I transmit all my powers to you, I entrust you with the internal and external administration of the mission and place all my insignia at your disposal.”

The lines that we have just read were dictated by Bishop Ridel, those that follow are written by his hand.

“You know, Monseigneur, I can be the first to give you this title, you know my feelings of affection for you. I would like to testify to you in person the devotion of which you have given me so many proofs in the most difficult circumstances. Alas! I’m leaving, and my left hand is too unskilled to trace what my heart wants to say.

“I commend all the confreres to you, all the Christians, and particularly M. Poisnel, who took care of me with so much charity, in the name of all the missionaries of Korea.

“Continue the work begun: the administration of Christians, the trial of martyrs, the translation, correction and printing of new books, useful to Christians. Watch above all for the sanctification of all the confreres, of all the Christians.

“May God preserve you, give you peace and many conversions. May I come back soon!

“Farewell, or rather goodbye; as our Lord wills. Everything for the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls. Pray for me, your friend, your brother in Our Lord and his holy Mother.”

This duty accomplished, Bishop Ridel embarked for France. In his grief, the missionary also had the good fortune to meet on board the *Natal*, at the head of a Christian crew, a man in whom kindness of heart, amenity of character were combined with a lively intelligence and deep convictions. It was with truth that Commander Nodier said to the missionaries who entrusted their dear patient to him: “Don’t be afraid, gentlemen, Monseigneur will be with us as a family member.”

From the first days of the crossing, the pious bishop had won the affection of all his traveling companions; kindness seemed to him so natural, gaiety so easy!

Soon his praise was on everyone’s lips. When one approached this soul so pious and so strong, one experienced the feeling and the perfume of his virtue. Admiration was growing, and veneration resulted:

“I will never forget in my life, wrote one of the passengers two years later, the month we spent together on board the *Natal*.

“Despite his sufferings and the great embarrassment caused by his paralysis, he was the one who had the most even character and who cheered us up; for, if we had no bad weather, we had to do two quarantines, which did little to excite our good humor.

“Dear Monseigneur hoped to recover and return to his mission where his long stay and the special knowledge he had acquired there made him so useful. God has decided otherwise, he is one more saint.”

Chapter II

Korea enters into a relationship with the peoples of the West. - Troubles inside. - Attack on the Japanese Embassy. - Requirements of the Japanese government. - Proclamation of the King of Korea, - Bishop Ridel arrives in Marseilles. - Stay at Balaruc. - Pilgrimage to Lourdes. - Arrival at Vannes.

While Bishop Ridel was on his way to France, serious events were occurring in Korea. It will perhaps not be without interest to recount them here briefly. At the beginning of the previous year, the king and queen of Korea had sent many couriers to Japan, with the mission of learning about the customs of the barbarians of the West, and then of making known if there would be any advantage for the Korean government to continue its policy of exclusion, or to enter a new path, by signing treaties with foreign nations. The envoys, chosen from among the noble families, were, it must be believed, intelligent people, for their more or less truthful reports favored the intentions of the young sovereigns. These favorable reports encouraged the king, and explain the firmness he showed in overcoming the obstinacy of the scholars. These supporters of the old regime, accustomed to seeing only Korea, regarded everything that was not Korean as barbaric.

On April 2, 1882, the Korean embassy, which brings tribute to Peking every year, returned to Seoul by sea and embarked at Tianjin on the Chinese gunboat *Ching-Hai*. The ambassador was accompanied by Commodore Schufeldt, who was to lay down the preliminaries of the Korean-American treaty, and by M. Hughes, whose mission was to organize the customs service in several Korean ports.

Six weeks later, the trade treaty between America and Korea was signed.

The treaties concluded between Korea and the nations of Europe do not differ appreciably from this Korean-American treaty. For this reason, we publish here, according to the *Mainichi Shimbun* of Yokohama, the main articles:

Article 1. - Korea is a dependency of the Middle Kingdom; but in the exercise of her foreign policy, she enjoys absolute freedom... The President of the United States will not intervene in the future in questions concerning this vassalage.

Article 3. - The two countries will each appoint a diplomatic agent, who will fix his residence in the capital, and consuls-general or vice-consuls who will reside in some of the ports.

Article 5. - American citizens residing in Korea shall be protected body and property by the Korean government. Any Korean subject who commits a crime against an American will be arrested by Korean authorities and punished according to the laws of the country. American citizens guilty of a crime against a Korean subject shall be tried and punished by the American consul or other official authorized for that purpose, in accordance with the laws of the United States of America.

Article 7. - American citizens may reside and trade in the ports open to commerce and in the localities enumerated in the treaty; they can buy, build, lease and occupy houses and shops; they can trade in all kinds of products, manufactured objects, with the exception, however, of prohibited goods. The Americans established on the territories granted, will pay a royalty calculated according to a tax fixed by the Korean authorities, they will be able to obtain territorial concessions in perpetuity. If, with the approval of the Korean government, they lease land outside the treaty boundaries, they will be subject to local jurisdiction; there they will be forbidden to import goods, trade, and buy land.

Article 12. - Every facility shall be granted to the nationals of the two countries for studying the language, sciences and industry of the allied country.

Article 13. - As this is the first time that Korea has entered into relations with a foreign nation, in five years, when both the people and the officials will have become well acquainted with the language and customs of each contracting nation, the two States will hold a new deliberation to remedy the inconveniences which the putting into execution of the treaty will have pointed out.

Article 14. - In official letters, the Korean authorities shall use Chinese; US authorities will use English and Chinese.

The American treaty once concluded, in 1883 it was the turn of England; Germany, Austria, Russia, and Italy then came successively to claim the same advantage. The delegates of these powers were received with the greatest honors by the Korean government, which hastened to welcome their request.

France had been negotiating since 1882, but the treaty which was to unite it with Korea was not concluded until 1886, and ratified only in 1887.

(Note: Here are a few rather pungent details about France's late steps in Korea. Since China was sovereign over Korea, the delegates of the foreign powers, before treating with the government of Seoul, went to Peking and asked the Zongli Yamen for a letter for the Ma-Taotay (Chinese Commissioner residing in Seoul). They then presented to the Koreans, of behalf of China, the envoys of the European legations and had them granted participation in the American treaty.

M. Bourrée, successor of M. Patenôtre, delegated M. Dillon, French consul, to Tianjin, and begged him to ask the Zongli Yamen for the ordinary letter for the Ma-Taotay; but the Chinese minister would not give anything, unless they agreed beforehand not to speak of missionaries to the Koreans.

Let us note in passing that the Chinese minister had just received the visit of M. Wade, ambassador of London in Peking. Jalouse Albion always.

Furious, M. Bourrée went himself to the Zongli Yamen and said to the Minister: "It is not a question of making a treaty with Korea. When we are there, I will see what there will be to do. At the moment it is only a piece that you gave to the other two legations. Either you are going to give it to me this evening, or this evening I shall telegraph to my government. The piece was tuned immediately."

The details of this affair were so strange that M. Bourrée said to himself on returning home: "There's something devil in there, if he stirs, so much the better, he's scared."

When M. Dillon made the first overtures to Incheon to obtain a treaty of commerce, the Koreans protested, saying that France was not on the same terms as the other governments, since she had made war on the Korea, that she had previously to give satisfaction for the capture of Ganghwa. Secondly, the Korean plenipotentiaries justified their refusal on the intention which they attributed to France of wanting to favor the missionaries above all. But Ma-taotay, who was a Christian, replied to the Koreans: "You are wrong to make an exception for France, it is a power as respectable as the others. The Americans with whom you have dealt have rejected any clause contrary to religion, no power will accept it and even less France. Why would you want to impose it on us?" The apropos of these remarks immediately stifled a discussion which could have hampered the negotiations. M. Dillon returned to China with an official dispatch, by which the Korean government promised to make a treaty with the French government.)

These honors lavished by the king of Korea on foreigners were an unheard-of fact in the annals of the kingdom and caused serious discontent.

The partisans of the old regime had at their head the father of the king himself. This

man, it has no doubt not been forgotten, had exercised the regency during the tutelage of the young prince; by his bloodthirsty edicts against the Christians, by his excesses, he had rendered himself so odious, that the first act of the king on his majority was to banish him from the court.

The latest events provided him with the opportunity to satisfy his hatred against the king and to take his revenge: it was brilliant and terrible as one would expect, but more cruel and more savage than one would have supposed.

“The results are frightening,” wrote Msgr. Blanc. The royal majesty uncrowned, without strength, without power, having no longer anyone on whom to lean; the disorganized army, recognizing no leader; the Japanese driven out, their houses burned and looted, a dozen corpses dragged through the mud, all the influential members of the Min family banished or massacred; a large number of innocent people put to death as suspects, that is part of the toll of this terrible revolution.”

While the soldiers ransacked the palace, insulted the king and threatened him with death, the riotous crowd let out atrocious shouts. “Add to that,” says M. Mutel, “the gunshots, the drum, the trumpet, the thunder, the pouring rain, it was sinister beyond words. It was given to me to hear this din, it made my blood freeze in my veins.”

The missionaries and the Christians, who on this occasion showed themselves to be the king’s faithful subjects, did not have to suffer too much. The rage of the sectarians was directed above all against the royal family and the Japanese.

The latter showed remarkable bravery, and if they had been more numerous, they would have easily got the better of this crowd of fanatics.

When they saw themselves outnumbered, they assembled, placed their leader, M. Hanaboussa, in their midst, and effected their retreat in good order. They thus arrived at Incheon, and embarked on the first two junks they found. After running the greatest perils, this handful of brave men was met by an English sloop who picked them up on board and brought them back to Japan.

At the news of these monstrous attacks, all Japan was moved and demanded prompt revenge for the insult done to its ambassador and the murder of its children. M. Hanaboussa returned to Korea, and this time, at the head of an imposing force, went to the capital where the king and the regent awaited him.

The Japanese government’s demands were harsh, but fair.

He asked:

1. The punishment of the guilty;
2. Payment of an indemnity of 50,000 (The yen is equivalent to approximately 4 fr. 50 of our currency.) to the families of the victims, and of 500,000 yen to the Japanese government for the cost of preparations for war;
3. The maintenance of the Japanese troops for the defense of the legation;
4. The opening of a new port and the freedom to circulate around these ports within a radius of ten leagues;
5. Finally, the sending of a Korean ambassador, bearing an autograph letter from the king apologizing to H. M. the Mikado.

On his arrival in the capital, the Japanese minister was the object of the regent’s hypocritical attentions, but in the midst of the celebrations he did not forget the object of his mission, and in the face of his firmness the Korean government, yielded.

M. Hanaboussa had barely left Korea when the Chinese diplomat who had led the negotiations with Korea, a vassal of China, and foreign powers, in turn entered the capital. He too was received magnificently by the king and the regent. A few days later, in the midst of a feast which these two personages were attending, he informed the regent that he had orders to arrest him and take him to Peking to be tried there. This order was immediately carried out, and Korea was thus delivered from this monster of cruelty (See *Les Missions Catholiques*, volume

XIV, page 336.).

Order having been re-established in the kingdom, the king regained all his authority. After having severely punished the accomplices of the regent, he issued a proclamation to his people in which one read the following:

“Our country ratified, in the spring of 1876, the friendly agreement between us and Japan and promised to open three ports to trade. Now we have other treaties with America, England and Germany.

“It was certainly an innovation, and there is no reason to be surprised at the discontent expressed on this occasion by our people. But international relations are now quite commonplace, and there is no difficulty in establishing relations based on true principles and good faith.

“Our treaties of friendship and commerce will be regulated according to international jurisprudence. As for religion, we cannot let it preach inside, special laws oppose it.

“Now that we are maintaining friendly relations with the nations of the West, I order the removal, outside the capital, as incompatible with the new order of things, of all road signs notifying foreigners that they are forbidden to go farther. You, students and people, understand this well.

“This order promulgated by the authority of the government, must be posted up in the principal localities, throughout the length and breadth of the country.”

One can imagine the pain and anxiety that Bishop Ridel would have felt if he had learned before his departure from Hong Kong of the dangers to which his mission was exposed; but, thank God, the letters which contained the account of these events reached him only at Marseilles, at the same time as those which announced the restoration of order and the punishment of the culprits.

After resting for a few days in Marseilles, the Bishop of Korea went to Balaruc, where the doctors advised him to take the waters. There, the crisp, pure air, the walks along the edge of the Thau pond, the vigilant attentions of those who assisted him, gave him a relief which made him conceive serious hopes for the future. Unfortunately, the limbs remained paralyzed, and from time to time still sharp pains were felt. But no one around him noticed it, with the valiant apostle gentleness and cheerfulness were constantly the order of the day.

“It is a real pleasure to care for such a cheerful and amiable patient,” wrote the missionary who accompanied him. “Here is moreover how His Grace reasons about his condition: ‘Whether I recover or whether I do not recover, I have everything to gain on both sides and nothing to lose. If I recover I will do the will of God by returning to my mission; if I don’t recover, I will live as an pensioner, again by the will of God. So I can only be happy, since I did not look for my sickness and in one way or another I will always do the will of God.’”

Assuredly, Saint Louis de Gonzague and Saint Francis de Sales would not have reasoned in any other way.

Before seeing his family again, the pious missionary wanted to fulfill the vow he had made in 1876, when he almost died with M. Blanc on the coast of Korea. His first visit to the land of France was therefore to Mary at her sanctuary in Lourdes.

At the beginning of November, Bishop Ridel was back in Vannes. Ah! if affection, devotion, the most tender solicitude had been able to restore him to health! “He was surrounded day and night, at all times by a family happy and proud to have him. The presence of this apostle at its hearth was its happiness, was it not also its glory? (Funeral oration pronounced by Father Mainguy.)”

Chapter III

Stay in Vannes. - Bishop Ridel's affection for the poor. - The Vannes clergy. - Visits to the Major Seminary of Vannes. - At the minor seminary of Sainte-Anne.- Reception of Archbishop Le Coq in Nantes. - Last letters. - Pilgrimage to Lourdes. - Pious Sentences. - Bishop Ridel's last moments. - His death. - His funeral. - Funeral eulogy.

In a man's life, frivolous spirits admire what shines outwardly; they allow themselves to be captivated by what dazzles and fascinates. But that is not true greatness; it consists in never showing oneself inferior in the humblest situations. The man who has reached this high degree of perfection resembles the pilot who has his goal fixed and who tends towards it firm and upright, despite the roughness of the waves. The will of God is his will, and he does it with the same energy, with the same nobility in the midst of the most varied events, through what is called good or bad fortune, health and sickness, honor and darkness, joy and pain.

In the solemn circumstances in which the Bishop of Korea had to appear, he always showed himself to be a man of fine character and noble sentiments. We have seen him, a humble missionary, cross the seas on a wretched boat, coming to implore the support of his country for his mission in peril; we have seen him leading the French arms and raising the flag of France on the coasts of Korea; we have been present at his consecration in the midst of the solemnities of the Council; we followed him in his discussions with the diplomats in Peking. But did he seem less great to us, either when he was working in the mountains of Korea converting the flock entrusted to his care, or in the icy valleys of Manchuria, when he was composing the most arduous and the driest texts, or when he devoted himself entirely to the education of his eighth-grade students? Did he seem even less great to us when, stretched out on the straw of the dungeons, in the midst of poor Christians dying of hunger and misery like himself, he absolved them in secret, solemnly blessing them on an Easter day? Everywhere, always, it is simple virtue, without ostentation, it is continuous sacrifice, it is fidelity to duty without discouragement or weakness. Well, we will say with the panegyrist of our apostle, when we encounter these beautiful things of the soul, we must admire them, for they alone are worthy of praise, and thank God who gives us such examples.

Now, during the last months of his life, infirmities condemn him to inaction, but small things are done by him with as much nobility as great ones, and in his least actions the character of holiness shines.

"I remember," says one of his nieces, "that during the first winter that my uncle spent among us, he picked up a small flowering bulb from the paths of the garden, put it in a pot and carried it to his room. . For more than three months this plant was the object of his care; he watered it, put it out the window, and brought it in every evening. He was so solicitous for it that one day, when I brought the little protégé to him, I said to him:

"Really, this little bulb is so well cared for that I'm almost jealous."

A good smile spreads on his face and he says to me:

"Don't you know why I treat it so well?"

"No really, because it's so ugly, so dry that it won't flower. It seems to me that I would have chosen another more beautiful, and consequently more worthy of my care."

"It is precisely because it is badly made and sickly that I chose it," replied my uncle; "don't you know that I love those who suffer and that the deprived of nature have always been my favourites?"

Indeed, Bishop Ridel took particular care of two children from the neighborhood, two poor little girls who ran to greet him as soon as they could see him. One day, one of these children fell ill; as soon as Bishop Ridel learned of it, he directed his walk towards the wretched hut, he entered it. The poor child was stricken with typhoid fever, and in her delirium she asked

to go to heaven to join her little brother. Soon the delirium ceased and the little patient recognized Monseigneur. She gave a slight nod of her head to greet him, and a smile that spoke of her joy touched her lips. The pious bishop touched her forehead, made the sign of the cross there, and blessed her.

Soon the fever disappeared, but the poor child remained paralyzed on the right side; this new misfortune redoubled the affection of the missionary for her, and from then on, the little paralytic was the protégée of Bishop Ridel.

Every day the missionary tested his strength by taking a walk by the sea. Great was his joy when, walking with less difficulty and squeezing more easily with his paralyzed hand the cane which supported his steps, he began to hope again; then he quickened his pace, took on the rough paths of Kerino to acquire more strength. If fatigue forced him to stop, he preferred to rest, a rock near the shore or a high place from where the gaze could extend over the Gulf of Morbihan. And as once the sight of Korea reminded him of his Brittany, now the sight of Brittany reminded him of Korea. "Oh! How beautiful is this country!" he often told us, "these mounds, these clumps of trees, these villages scattered here and there remind me of Naepo; but Korea seems even more beautiful to me. It's a country that men haven't touched, it's a virgin country." And he began again with stories in which the sweetest gaiety mingled with curious details and serious lessons.

In his walks he found means of exercising that amiable charity which formed the basis of his character. He had met some small children who kept their herds near the path he walked every day. He spoke to them of the good God, of the Blessed Virgin, and after having instructed them in the truths of religion or told some charming story, he left them a pious memory. These little children loved the illustrious bishop and they must have cried a lot when they learned of his death.

At other times again, the little girls from a neighboring orphanage saw him on the other side of the port, they then left the alleys of the *rabine* and came to kneel on the opposite bank, to receive the missionary's blessing. It was a very simple spectacle, and yet this blessing seemed solemn. The missionary uncovered his beautiful white head, leaned on his stick, with a trembling hand blessed these children. At this sight, walkers stopped, uncovered and most crossed themselves.

One of Bishop Ridel's sweetest joys, and which did much to soften the bitterness of his last exile, was to find at the head of the Vannes clergy a heart which was fraternally devoted to him. The venerable Bishop of Vannes had not ceased to follow the apostle of Korea in his distant peregrinations; he had taken part in all the joys as well as all the difficulties of his apostolate. Touching letters had come to tell the missionary what pain the news of his captivity had thrown into the soul of him who loved him like a brother, and what a cry of joy had escaped on learning of his deliverance.

For their part, the priests of Vannes venerated the illustrious bishop who had so valiantly confessed his God. Among them, a friend of the finest years reminded Bishop Ridel of the holy projects, the pious conversations of yesteryear and also the charming excursions by boat on the Morbihan, the races to the steeple through flowery fields and moors, where one practiced the fatigues of the future. This friend worthy of such intimacy has been pastor-archpriest of the cathedral for many years. The wicked esteem him, the good love him, the poor bless him.

We will be careful not to forget here the fleeting hours that the missionary came to pass among the pupils of the sanctuary.

The sight of saints gives virtue an inexpressible charm and an irresistible attraction. In contact with them, everyone blushes at their misery and feels born in the bottom of their hearts the desire to become better. It is, in the supernatural order, like a law of attraction which draws to God. Now, the venerable bishop of Korea was a model of all Christian and apostolic virtues; grace took on the most lovable forms with him, and his words, his acts, his whole person

emanated a certain sweetness, like an aroma from heaven. Each of his visits to the major seminary was a good fortune, and the worthy superior was too expert in matters of the soul to let them pass without profit. What Christian, in fact, what aspirant to the priesthood above all, would not have felt growing in him the zeal of souls, the love of sacrifice at the sight of this weakened body, of this once robust but so little spared temperament which had succumbed under the weight of the work with which he had been overloaded! Already all that was missing from this beautiful figure of a saint was the diadem of justice that the Lord would soon place on his forehead.

It was a party at the seminary every time Bishop Ridel appeared there. At recreation time, the bell called the community, which immediately gathered around him; if it was class time, the thing became even easier; the learned professor, reserving his science for the next day, folded up his notebooks and descended from the pulpit where the bishop replaced him; as for the students, shall we say? they had no regrets.

“Happy surprise,” wrote on his customary, on the date of May 4, 1883, the regulator of the house, “we had this morning for professor of canon law, a bishop whose very sight causes the masters and students of the seminary of Vannes ever-new happiness. Bishop Ridel, the Apostle of Korea, came today to fulfill the promises he had already made to us on two occasions. He spoke to us about his mission, but in a language of which he has the secret; his grace and serenity naturally brought to mind the name of Saint Francis de Sales.”

It has been said that the missionary’s visits to the minor seminary of Sainte-Anne were almost triumphs. Father Nicol, our poet from Vannes, is going to show us that the truth has been told.

“The village of Sainte-Anne celebrated the feast of the Holy Childhood, the sweet feast of children and mothers... That day, there was something even more touching. When the crowd had filled the nave of the basilica, the valiant bishop of Korea, whose long sufferings everyone knows, came and sat down in the middle of the crowded ranks and in a familiar, pious, emotional conversation, he spoke of the Holy Childhood. He had seen the magnificent results of its benefits; its necessity, he noted with pain, and to plead the cause of the abandoned, it is enough for him to tell what he saw... Certainly, such a man is competent to speak about this great work.”

A Chinese approached him one day and said: “Why are you coming to our house? You have nothing to do here. No need to discuss further.”

“I would have one thing to do,” replied the bishop, “if I could. As I passed through your streets, I saw many abandoned children who are about to die. I would like to buy a big house where I would collect them to feed and raise them.”

“That’s fine, but are you very rich then?”

“No, I’m poor.

“Where will you find the necessary money?”

“The children of France will give me some.”

“Are these children rich?”

“No, most of them at least, but they have a good heart.

Touching words! having a good heart is necessary to contribute to the good work and that is enough. So we deprive ourselves sometimes, we give sometimes, we always pray.

In the evening, another meeting in the chapel of the minor seminary. In front of these young people who will soon be men, and for the most part, if God please, priests, Bishop Ridel gave the most interesting details about the poor country he knows so well. There, the demon works hard, but grace works wonders. Its action on certain souls is often, so to speak, visible: witness this man, this scholar of whom the venerable bishop spoke to us, who, not being satisfied with his doctrine, asked himself with anxiety: where is the truth? And he went to find sorcerers, he studied the books of the bonzes, he reflected, he traveled without finding what he

was looking for. A missionary gave it to him: he is happy because he is a Christian.

What a book we could make with the details that the pious missionary lavished on us with an always smiling kindness, a charm of expression and a piety that we will not forget!

The following evening, a very intimate party brought together around Bishop Ridel the teachers and students of the minor seminary.

It was a surprise.”

During the day, the verses we are about to read had been quickly written. These verses were composed, the author tells us, less to be read than to be sung. They were sung with great soul to the tunes of two Breton melodies, and we believe, despite the fears of our dear poet, that they will also be read with great pleasure.

THE APOSTLE

Still young he left for the distant beaches,
Where souls, sleeping far from the unknown sky,
Waited for the sent back who would break their chains.
He left, saluting the glimpsed martyrdom.
To win the Korean land for the Lord,
Other martyrs had already fallen joyfully,
Sowing the Christian word on their tombs,
He worked like them, wanting to die like them.
One day he put on, in the splendor of Rome,
The armor that God gives to the pontiffs of heaven,
And angry hell could see how a man
Struggles, prays and commands in the name of the Eternal.
Pursued, denounced, like the divine Master,
He suffered without complaining and always remained strong,
And the proud mandarin, who perhaps admired him,
Insulted the hero who despised death...

- Where do you come from?

- From the country which gives the apostles.

- What's its name ?

- France.

- And its God?"

- Jesus Christ. He's powerful enough to overthrow yours.

- Beware!

- The future belongs to the proscribed cult.

- Reckless stranger, I hate you!

- I love you.

- I have strength in my hands.

- Weakness will win.

- Go away !

- I will stay.

- So what do you want?"

- I sow;

Despite you, in hearts the good seed will sprout.

- My kingdom is mine. What is your field?

- The souls.

“Who will make it fruitful?"

- The executioner's sword.

From the bodies of his martyrs God causes flames to spring up.

The man digs a grave, he makes a cradle of it.

- Christian, you will suffer.

- It's Heaven beginning.

Throw my broken body into the bloody furrow:

You will be the sower, I will be the seed,

The heavenly harvest will bloom in my blood.

- What ! you could ?

- I can, by dint of prayers,

To the hungry of heaven give the truth,

- The walls of a prison...

- We will take the stones,

To build a church to the persecuted God.

And the captive prayed with the heart of a father,

For the lost people who killed him,

And the gloomy dungeon that perfumed his prayer,

Listened astonished to the accents of the martyr.

Thy will be done,

O God who sent me,

You will complete the conquest

Of the land where I labored.

I would have liked, for your glory,

to save souls by the thousands.

Others will gain victory

On these inhospitable shores.

Bless my double homeland,

Korea where I die for you,

And on my dear Brittany

Spread your sweetest gifts.

May your light shine here,

And may there, always pious,

The Bretons, to save the earth,

Keep the faith of their ancestors.

O you, swift swallows,

Who travel under the blue sky,

Have you seen in their chapels

Apostles growing up for God?

In the depths of my sweet Brittany

There are still valiant hearts.

May Saint Anne accompany them,

I bless them, I await them.

Glory to heaven! the captive has seen our France again,

To the children of Saint Anne he teaches on this day

How a Christian heart can tame suffering

And preserve hope when it is full of love.

O Pontiff, obtain for our young courage,
Since God calls us to defend his rights,
The strength to fight despite the storms,
The glory to suffer and to plant the Cross.

Later . . . Soon the wind will come to fill our sails,
And, praying for the apostle, in the shade of the holy place,
Our hearts will follow the cross shining in the stars,
And the boat sailing by the grace of God

(These last verses allude to the arms of Bishop Ridel, which are: Gules, a ship Argent, sailing on a sea Vert; a chief Azure, bearing a cross Or, accompanied by twelve stars of the same, 6 to dexter, 6 to sinister.).

In June, Bishop Ridel had to take the road to Bourbon-l'Archambault to obey the orders of the Faculty. The venerable bishop wanted to take advantage of this journey and see again the many friends whom he had never ceased to love with the most lasting love, despite time, despite the distance.

In Paris, Roanne, Nevers, everywhere he was acclaimed and celebrated: it was the expression of joy and veneration. At Nantes, Archbishop Le Coq went himself to the station to meet the missionary, lent him the support of his arm to support his tottering steps, and did not allow him to know, during his too brief stay, any other hospitality than his own. This fraternal welcome, the honors he received at the major seminary, at the College of Saint-Stanislas, he liked to recall as a delicious memory.

Assuredly these testimonies of sympathy consoled the apostle's heart, but could not divert his thoughts from his dear Korea. Korea was his adopted home, the promised land where he wanted to live and die.

"Hardly a day goes by that my thoughts are not with you," he wrote from Vannes to his missionaries. "I see you, I accompany you on your errands, I take part in your sorrows and your sufferings. May Our Lord always be your strength and support. I never stop praying to this divine Master to bless you... How I would like to be in your midst! May the holy will of God be done! For two years I have been grappling with this terrible disease which keeps me away from you. There is indeed an improvement in my condition, but so slow that it is hard to notice. It is, however, sufficient to maintain the hope of a sick person, who always desires and awaits healing.

"Currently, I walk with a stick; the muscles that move the foot have not yet resumed their function and seem dead, so the leg is crooked and the foot is dragging. The arm moves with difficulty, in jerks. May I take advantage of all this to sanctify myself." (Letter of December 3, 1883.)

"How long the separation seems to me," he wrote a few days later to Bishop Blanc. I came to seek health, and health does not return quickly; it's long, very long. I still hope that we can see each other again and that it will be given to me to die in Korea. Thank you, dear friend, for your affectionate sentiments, thank you for your fervent prayers for me. I would like to be able to thank all our dear confreres, all our Christians; be my interpreter with them. All of you work with courage, you depend on yourselves with generosity for the good and the prosperity of the Mission: may God be your reward!

"From here, I follow with concern the progress of your works: the college in Seoul, our children in Pinang, the various printing works in Korea and Japan, the trial of the martyrs, the

work of the Holy Childhood, the conversion of pagans, the administration of Christians. I see each confrere at work, I share your anxieties, as well as your joys, your consolations. I am in France, but I can say that I am much more in Korea with you, in mind and heart, with you, Monseigneur, with our dear colleagues, MM. Coste, Deguette, Doucet, Robert, Mutel, Liouville, Poisnel and Josse.

“May I be with you soon otherwise than in thought! For this, I scrupulously observe the prescriptions of the doctor. I haven’t said Holy Mass yet, my arm isn’t strong enough. I walk, but with difficulty, and I still feel tightness in my chest. All this makes you see that I am nothing more than an old wreck. If, at least, we could repair it for good or bad, and put it in a condition to serve as a pontoon in some corner of dear Korea!”

Here is this soul of an apostle, it forms only one wish: to die on the land of Korea. This goodness which pours out on all, it has its privileged object: its priests, not only because they belong to it most closely, and because, formed by it for the harsh life of the apostolate, they are, as missionaries, her work and twice her children, but because she sees in them her cooperators in the sublime mission of procuring the glory of God and saving souls.

Here is the last letter from Bishop Ridel to his adopted family; it is addressed to the Venerable Coadjutor of Korea, and dated April 4, 1884:

“Dear lord and friend, (While this book is being printed, painful news reaches us from Korea: Mgr Blanc died in Seoul on February 21, 1890. We were unable to receive the news in time to publish here the details we requested of the last moments of the venerable bishop.)

“I thank you for the pleasure you gave me with your last letter. The news you bring me is as good as it gets. All our confreres, in good health, work with courage, each in his district; tranquility, peace everywhere, with the prospect of freedom. Oh! fiat! fiat! and Deo gratias!

“For me, the days go by with the same monotony. However, I hope to see Korea again, our dear mission. This hope sustains me. I have still only been able to celebrate Mass seven or eight times, and with great difficulty.

“I have just received from Rome a dispensation which allows me to use my left hand for certain ceremonies.

“Here, in this long forced rest, how often the eyes of my heart turn towards you, dear friend, towards our poor Korea, where I see all our colleagues!

“I have just reread all the letters I had sent to my family, from Shanghai, Chefoo, and especially from Tcha-keou, all our travels on land and sea. more present, at least more sensitive, you, my companion, my support. When we parted in 1878, or rather in 1877, on October 22, who would have told us that it was for such a long time!

“I now hope to see you again. My desire is to return soon to Korea to live there among my dear missionaries, our poor Christians; yes, to live there and to die there. When we have freedom, this desire will be realizable. In the meantime, I must use all the means that Europe gives me to improve my health. Thank you for the generous devotion with which you strive to replace me in the conduct of our dear mission. Thank you also to all these good colleagues who assist you in this difficult work, but very pleasing to the good God.

“I write little and rarely; but in mind and heart I am always with you all; I pray for all, and bless you very affectionately from afar as I would like to be able to do it up close. Say it well to these dear colleagues; tell them that I love them all as a father loves his children. I do not need to recommend myself to your prayers, I know that you do not forget me, and I express my gratitude to you.

“Farewell, my dear Lord, or rather goodbye. Oh! Yes goodbye! In the meantime, everything to the will of God!

“I leave you in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, where I am always your devoted and affectionate friend and colleague.

“+ F.C, Ev., Vic. ap. from Korea.”

The following month, the courageous bishop still wanted to make a last attempt to restore his health, having decided to leave all the same, because he could no longer live far from his dear mission. On May 17, he wrote to his family from Paris:

“I’m still more or less in the same state, and, according to the doctors, the illness is fixed: there’s nothing more to be done. Electricity as a test? but, already employed in China, it gave no result. Thermal waters as a consolation?... rather to prevent a relapse than to obtain a cure in which the doctor does not believe.

“What’s the use of going to the waters? They send me there, I go there.”

While the missionary was writing these lines, someone came to tell him that they were going to start a novena for him in Lourdes. He was advised to go there. This thought smiled upon him, and he ended his letter thus:

“The doctor sends me to Bourbon. I’m going to Lourdes, confident in the power of the Blessed Virgin. Faith and trust! Courage and patience.”

On May 23, 1884, he wrote: “Here, you know, we pray, we hope, we love, we are happy: this is what I am, this is what I do. I live with the missionary fathers of Lourdes; in the morning, I can attend two or three Masses, go down to the grotto two or three times. Every day I go to the swimming pool. Yesterday I gave, at vespers, a solemn blessing after an instruction of the month of Mary, where the preacher “

Here is what Monseigneur meant: the Jesuit father who preached the month of Mary, had told the story of a missionary formed by the most holy Virgin. He was from Nantes. - Oh! He is a compatriot, said Monseigneur to himself, and he listened. - After his seminary years, he exercised the parochial ministry for a few months. – Just like me,” he whispered. - Zeal soon made him a missionary. - Like me again. - His superiors sent him to Korea.

At these words he guessed. “I was very ill at ease,” he said later, “but the crowd only understood at the end, when they learned that this missionary, who had become a bishop and almost a martyr, was going to give his blessing.”

When he went out, people crowded around him: everyone insisted on kissing his ring, his cassock: it was necessary to keep an active watch: there was talk of cutting off pieces of his cassock and his belt. But he entered the pool, and everyone on their knees recited the Rosary with more fervor than ever.

God, who had refused him the palm of martyrdom, had decided to soon grant him the crown of the elect, and the miracle requested by all was not obtained. The holy bishop was not frightened by it, despite his strong desire to be cured in order to return to Korea.

Fifteen days later, he was back in Paris, from where he shared his pilgrimage: “From all sides, people prayed fervently for my recovery; the Blessed Virgin did not want to grant it to me. It is for the greater glory of God and my greater good.

“Courage and confidence! I spent some wonderful moments in the country visited by the Blessed Virgin, at the basilica and at the grotto. What subjects of edification, the faith, the piety of the pilgrims, the graces and the favors obtained! You don’t always get what you ask for; but we always go home comforted and full of confidence.”

Towards the middle of June, Bishop Ridet was back in Vannes.

At this time, his health seemed to recover. Alas! death, under these deceptive exteriors, was advancing silently like an enemy hiding. But could she surprise the bishop who wrote the following reflections:

“To be a saint or a damned for eternity, there is no middle ground.

“Jesus Christ is my model.

“Fix one’s mind in meditation and make every effort to walk in the footsteps of the saints.

“I can die any instant. I will die soon; is it too much to devote what remains of my life to the service of God?”

“My salvation, eternity!

“The good of souls that I can save by a holy life, the good that would result for my mission, for my missionaries...

“Penance, atonement for my sins, the glory of God, the peace of my conscience.

“To delay would be a crime, would be dangerous. May I therefore work immediately, tirelessly, to become a saint.

“Every day prepare to die, by detachment from what is earthly. Retreat of the month with preparation for death.

“Take advantage of all the graces, do not abuse them; collect good aspirations by putting them into practice.

“In everything I undertake, purify intentions and have as goal only the glory and love of God, union with God, of mind and heart.

“Trust in God. Abandon yourself with full and complete confidence in the arms of Providence. To want only what God wants, as he wants; reject unfounded anxieties, do not rely on the help of men, nor on one’s own strength.

“Love of God, of Our Lord... To strive to imitate Our Lord in everything.

“Do not fear humiliations, sufferings, poverty, bear them with resignation, receive them with love like a treasure, like graces of choice and rejoice in them in God.

“Devotion to the Most Blessed Sacrament, to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, to the mysteries of the Passion of the Cross; devotion to the Blessed Virgin, to the Good Angel, to the Holy Angels, to Saint Joseph, to all the Saints.

“Thought of eternity, of final ends.”

Here we have arrived at the last moments of an innocent and holy life, a precious life before God and always occupied with his service or that of his neighbor.

Bishop Ridel’s death was similar to his life; gentle, tranquil, full of submission to the will of God and trust in his infinite mercy. Accustomed to despise the world, and to regard the present life as an exile, he saw without pain the dissolution of his body, he regretted nothing, because he had never loved creatures except to make a sacrifice of them to God. .

Towards the middle of the day, June 19, the sufferings suddenly became more acute, without altering the serenity of the missionary. The recitation of the rosary was a relief from his ills, and often this word of resignation rose from his heart to his lips: “May the will of God be done.”

The following night, the sickness increased and suddenly took on alarming proportions. Soon we lost all hope of saving him. Sometimes the pains became intolerable; then the dying man raised his eyes to Heaven: “My God, how I suffer!” he said; “my God, your will be done! Immaculate Mary, pray for me.” These were the last words that escaped his dying lips.

On June 20, the day of the feast of the Sacred Heart, around 6 o’clock in the morning, his soul slowly took flight to be united with the source of all good, with the same God whom he had loved with so much ardor, and served with such fidelity.

As soon as this painful news spread through the city, the respect, the veneration of the crowd manifested itself in the most touching manner. From all sides the faithful flocked to venerate his remains. Each wanted to kiss his ring one last time, medals and rosaries were made to touch his body. One could not tire of admiring the serenity of that beautiful face that even death had respected.

The flowers that were constantly thrown from all sides on this funereal couch disappeared almost immediately, carried away like a pious memory; only one word was said: he is a saint, he is a martyr!

The next day, friends, priests, piously placed in the coffin his venerated remains, a precious temple of the Holy Spirit. At this moment of the supreme farewell, they fell on their knees and their tears were the last that watered those icy hands which had so often been raised [to absolve and to bless.

The funeral was a triumph. Mgr Bécél himself presided the funeral and celebrated the Mass, Mgr Nouvel, bishop of Quimper, presided over the absolution, and the two bishops accompanied the body to the cemetery.

The little girls from the religious schools, the children of the Brothers, the pupils of the Saint-François Xavier college, the pupils of the major Seminary, the priests of the city, of Sainte-Anne, those of the neighboring parishes, the Chapter of the cathedral formed the most magnificent procession. On the coffin, carried by seminarians, were placed the insignia of episcopal dignity, an immense crown of white roses and two green palms, symbol of the martyrdom of the illustrious deceased. The palms and the crown were tied with a magnificent red sash on which were read these words: Seminary of the Missions-Etrangères, Korean Mission, Nazareth (Nazareth is the name given to the work of the Departing: to name this work is to say its purpose and its importance.).

Behind the coffin, seminarians still carried bouquets and wreaths. Along the whole route, the crowd of faithful stood full of recollection and sadness, and many knelt as if to ask the servant of God for a last blessing.

Fifteen days later, Father Mainguy pronounced the funeral eulogy of the missionary bishop in the presence of the bishops of Nantes, of Vannes, of Cap Haitien. The speaker was as eloquent as the best friend can be, when he speaks of a friend, and the last words of his speech will also be the last of this story:

“At the Foreign Missions Seminary, when we learn that a missionary has been beheaded for the Faith, we meet in the chapel, we light up the holy altars and we sing the hymn of thanksgiving: *Te Deum laudamus!* Ah! I understand that, it is a new glory for the Church. The whole of Christianity rests on the dogma of redemption through pain. The Savior suffered greatly, his great work was to die.

“The instruments chosen by him will do the same: they will be martyrs, it will be their glory and their reward. Well, the apostle whose memory we venerate was one of those marvelous instruments that God makes to pass through the world to raise it up, purify it, make it better.

“So we will dry our tears and we will pray to him, now mingled with the glorious phalanx of the martyrs of Korea, to protect and bless us. We will ask him to imitate the examples he left us, following in the footsteps of a life that will always be an honor for his country, for France and for the Church.”

February 10, 1889, the feast of Saint Scholastica.

Epitaph of Bishop Ridel

Illms-Ac-Rms-D-D-Felix-Clarvs Ridel
Episcopus. Philippopolitanus
Vicarius. Apostol. Regni Koreani
Deiparae. Virginis. Mariae Cultor Eximius
Impavidus. Fidei Confessor
Martyrii. Cupiditate. Flagrens
Famen. Sitim. Verbera. Vincula. Carceres. Exilium
Pro Christi Nomine

Gaudens. Pertulit
Nanettes. In. Ortu. Societatem. Missionum. In. Vita
Venetias. In. Morte
Illustravit
Pretiosa. Morte. Justorum
Obiit. Xii. Kal. Jun, A.D. Mdcclxxxix. Anno Nat. Liv
Certa viriliter, sustine patienter.

TRANSLATION

Most illustrious and reverend lord Felix-Clair Ridel,
Bishop of Philippopolis,
apostolic vicar of Korea,
fervent servant of the Virgin Mary Mother of God,
fearless confessor of the faith,
passionately desirous of martyrdom.
Hunger, thirst, ill-treatment, irons, prison, exile
endured for Christ
were a joy to his heart.
Nantes where he was born, the Society of Missions where he lived,
Vannes where he died,
have collected his glory.
The precious end of the just crowned his life
June 20, 1884, in the 54th year of his age

This epitaph was composed by M. Schliebus, rector of Kérentrech (near Lorient).

Fight with courage, endure with patience (Motto of Bishop Ridel).