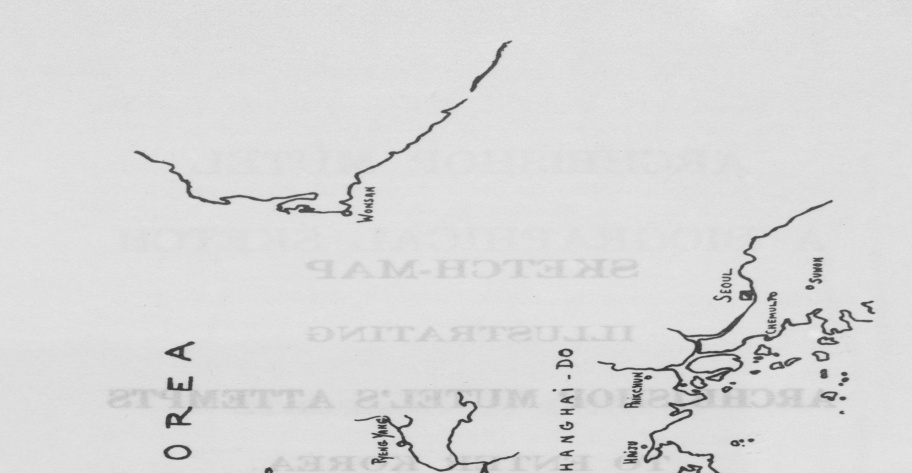
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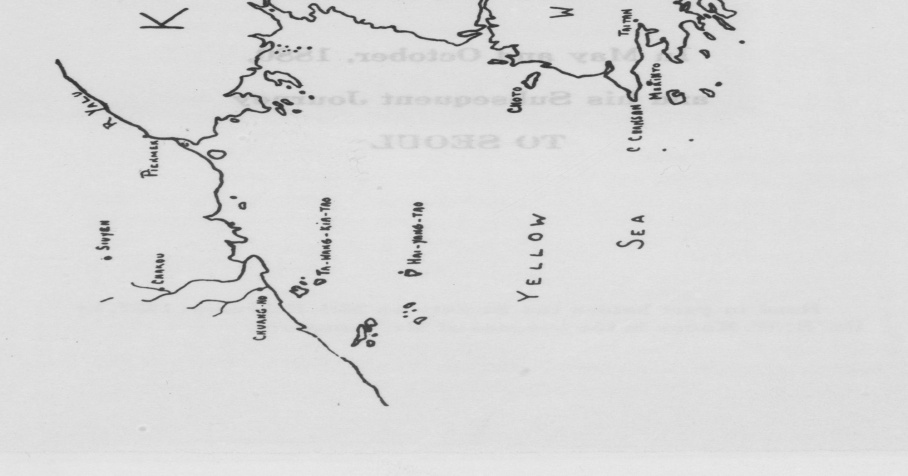
**ARCHBISHOP MUTEL A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

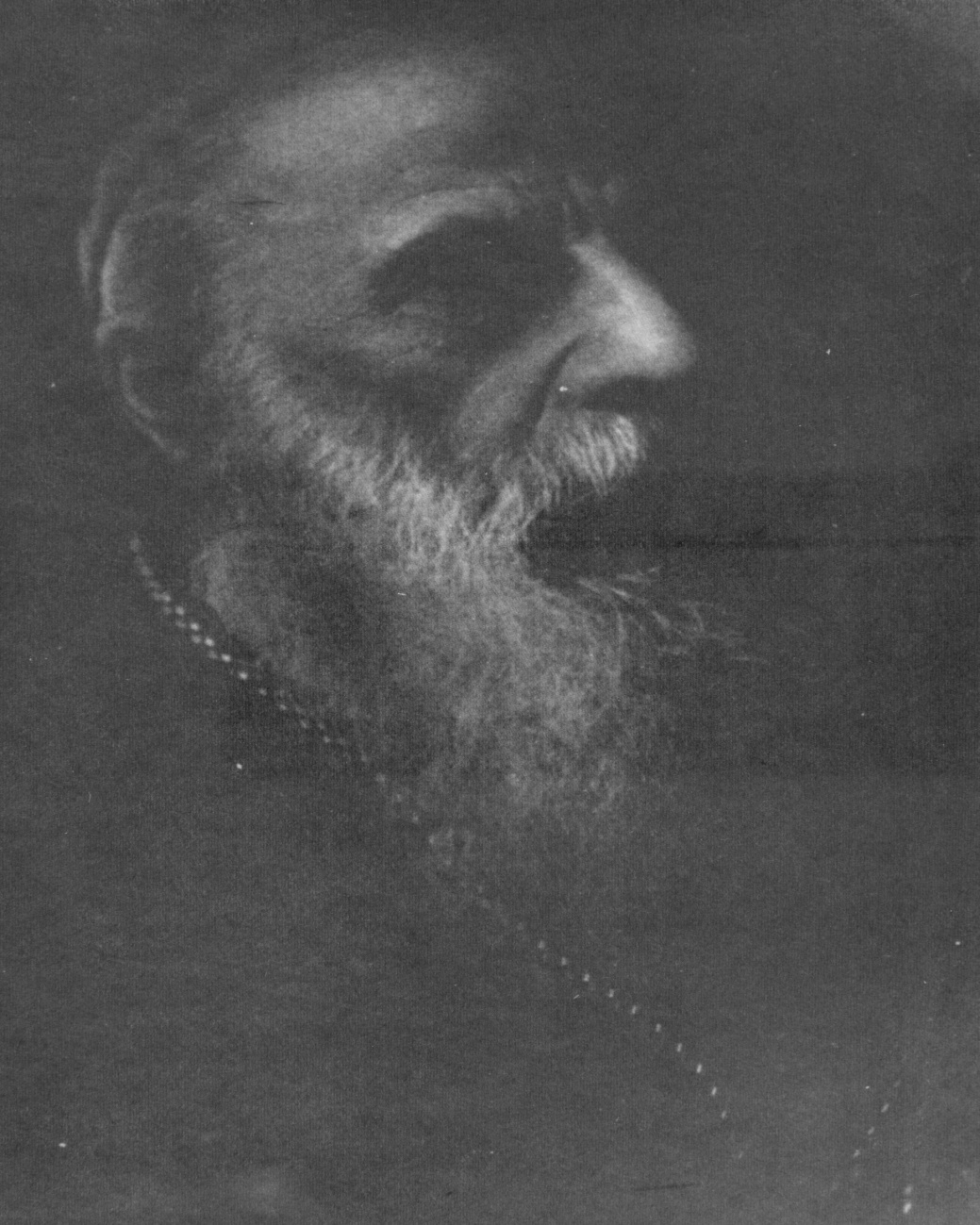
BY G. ST. G. M. GOMPERTZ

Read in part before the Society on 26th February, 1937, by Dr. E. W. Koons in the absence of Mr. Gompertz.

SKETCH-MAP ILLUSTRATING ARCHBISHOP MUTEL’S ATTEMPTS TO ENTER KOREA

In May and October, 1880, and his Subsequent Journey TO SEOUL





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INTRODUCTION

It is hoped that the following brief memoir on the life and work of Archbishop Mutel in Korea will interest not only those who knew the grand old man—to use an over- worked phrase in its fullest significance—but all who would see something of Korea through his eyes in the earliest days of foreign intercourse. Archbishop Mutel’s life in Korea covered the epochal period 1880-1933. He came secretly and in disguise before the country was opened and, at his death, was among its greatest figures. He belonged to that small but renowned company of pioneers and organisers who brought order out of chaos and transformed the life of the whole people : Avison by his great medical institution, Underwood by his Christian educational centre, Mutel by a strong and united Church.

The Roman Catholic is the oldest and still the largest of the Christian Churches in Korea. Many who oppose its tenets or dislike its practices would agree that it continues to exercise a certain primacy in missionary work; and none would deny the self-abnegation and heroism of its first missionaries and martyrs.

It would be an understatement to say that martyrdom was still in the air when Archbishop Mutel entered Korea. The torturings and butchery had only ended by reason of their own success. The country was terrorised; Christianity was proscribed and driven underground if not quite extirpated. For ten years all missionary work had been at a standstill, and could only be resumed under conditions of secrecy resembling the meetings in the catacombs during the Roman persecutions.

The qualities of fortitude and resolution which such times demanded characterised Archbishop Mutel all his life. He was first and foremost a survivor of that stern period of persecution which Christianity has everywhere known; his [page 62] spirit, tempered by hardships and adversities, remained indomitable.

The Faith that he held was absolute, untrammelled by the least questioning. The right action was clear: it remained only to do it, and with his whole force. Yet his discretion never failed; among all the shifting currents of an eastern despotism in full decay, he held firm to his purpose, shunned every slightest deflection therefrom. The foundations of the Church in Korea must be rock-steady— that was his chief concern; and it precluded expediency. His relations with the Court, high officials, and foreign representatives in Seoul were the pleasantest imaginable— for he possessed the true courtesy and personal charm of a “Grand Seigneur” and bore himself with equal majesty and graciousness―but he eschewed obliquity and dubious alignments, asked neither fear nor favour.

One other outstanding characteristic must be mentioned, his unsparing devotion to duty. For the greater part of his life—at least until the appointment of a Coadjutor in 1921 — Archbishop Mutel conducted lengthy visitations of his Vicariate, accepting the lot of a plain missionary and spending many hours daily in administering the Sacraments. His tours were marked by a simplicity that suited the country and his mission; there were no speeches, receptions or celebrations : a father came to his children—that was all. Besides these more strictly pastoral labours, there were all the obligations of his office and the great work of directing the Mission. The scrupulous way in which the Archbishop carried out the least of his religious duties impressed all who knew him, and the greater the task, so much the greater was his care and devotion.

And so to sum up : we have to review the life of a great prelate and more, a dominating spiritual force in Korea during nearly fifty years. Apart from the Archbisop’s own diaries, which require much fuller treatment than circumstances of time and place permit, materials are scanty : a biographical memoir by Bishop Larribeau, a few extracts [page 63] from the diaries, and some letters and reminiscences—that is all; yet it may suffice for the rough sketch, the few vivid glimpses, here attempted. If this essay is tendencious, or a mere panegyric, it fails of achievement; the aim has been to combine quotation with bare facts and let both speak for themselves.

Thanks are due to His Excellency, Mgr. Adrien Larribeau, Vicar Apostolic of Seoul, who has graciously permitted the writer to utilise his own work, much of which is incorporated verbatim, together with other materials published by the Society des Missions Etrangeres de Paris. The use of footnotes has, so far as possible, been avoided, but a list of the chief authorities consulted will be found at the end of the memoir.

Their traces that remain still bear witness that they were truly holy and perfect men who did battle so stoutly, and trampled the world under their feet.

Thomas a Kempis

“Of the Imitation of Christ” Chap. XVIII.

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**ARCHBISHOP MUTEL, A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

Gustave Charles Marie Mutel was born at Blumerey in the province of Haute-Marne, about halfway between Paris and Switzerland, on 8th March, 1854. Besides Gustave, there were three other children in the family, an elder sister and brother, and a younger brother born eight years after him. Though comparatively well-to-do farming folk, his parents lived laborious days, cultivating their own land, a mode of life which precluded the children from idling away their time. Instead, they joined in the work, and Archbishop Mutel to the end of his days recalled with pleasure the times when he used to help his father in the fields—both before going to college and later during the vacations.

The three boys received a good education, partly at the college at Joinville, of which their uncle was Principal, and partly at the “Little Seminary” at Langres, the chief town in the province. In particular Gustave showed himself a serious and intelligent scholar and quickly won a high place in the estimation both of the masters and his fellows. During the three years, 1870, 1871 and 1872, which he spent at the Little Seminary, his comrades grew to like and respect him; indeed it is impossible not to feel that he already stood out head and shoulders from the others, and there is evidence that his masters placed unusual reliance on his character and ability. On leaving, he was appreciatively described as a most distinguished scholar (“clerc fort distingue”). It was this quality of pre-eminence that was to characterise his whole life.

During his years at the Little Seminary, there were no fewer than a dozen missionary vocations, and it was as one of these—the e1ite of the school—that Gustave proceeded to the Seminary of the Foreign Missions Society at Paris. His example was not lost on the younger brother who followed [page 65] him through the same college and Little Seminary, but a future of quite exceptional promise was cut short when the latter suddenly died at the age of eighteen, while studying for the priesthood at Innsbruck University.

Gustave entered the Paris Seminary in 1873 and was ordained priest on 24th February, 1877. That he made his mark during those four years of intensive study and prayer is evidenced first by his being designated “Socius” to accompany Fr. Rousseille to Rome and second by his recall to Paris in later years to be nominated a Director of the Seminary.

On being ordained, Fr. Mutel learned that he was destined for Korea. Two other missionaries, Frs. Doucet and Robert, had sailed a month earlier for the same Mission, and were still on their way to join Frs. Blanc and Deguette, the only missionaries then in the country.

It is here necessary to turn aside and briefly sketch the history of Catholic missionary work in Korea from its official inception in 1831 up to the time of Fr. Mutel’s departure in 1877.

In 1831 Mgr. Bruguiere was appointed first Vicar Apostolic of Korea, but while still on the way to his Mission, he was suddenly taken ill and died in October, 1835. The following January, however, Fr. Maubant succeeded in entering Korea, crossing the frozen river Yalu at night and disguised in Korean mourning costume. A year later, in January, 1837, Fr. Chastan followed; and, after another year, the two were joined by Bishop Imbert, second Vicar Apostolic. All three missionaries entered by the same route and in similar disguise; since Korea was yet a closed country, hostile to foreigners and bitterly opposed to Christianity. After nearly two years of work, during which time they made some three thousand conversions to the Faith, a fierce persecution broke out In August 1839 Bishop Imbert was betrayed, and sent word to his two colleagues to give themselves up, hoping thereby to save the Korean Christians. [page 66]

The three missionaries were imprisoned, tortured and finally martyred on 21st September, 1839.

Nothing daunted, further missionaries entered the country six years later, in October, 1845, this time by boat from Shanghai. Bishop Ferreol, Fr. Daveluy and Fr. Kim (a Korean) were the first to arrive; numerous others followed. The succeeding twenty years were marked by steady growth of the Mission. Fr. Kim alone met martyrdom, soon after his arrival; but several of the priests, including Bishop Ferreol, died on the field, due largely to the severe hardships they had to undergo. Yet there were always others to fill their places. Local persecutions broke out from time to time, but the work continued without intermission until February, 1866, when Bishop Berneux, fourth Vicar Apostolic, was suddenly arrested in Seoul, and soon afterwards, in and around the same city, Frs. Beaulieu, Dorie, de Bretenieres, Pourthie and Petitnicolas. All six missionaries were imprisoned and tortured, and met their martyrdom on 8th and 11th March. Bishop Daveluy (Coadjutor) was the next to be taken, while Frs. Aumaitre and Huin surrendered themselves at his instigation, in order to save the Korean Christians. The three were cruelly martyred on 30th March.

The persecution continued throughout the country for several years, thousands of Korean Christians meeting mar-tyrdom as resolutely as their pastors. Of the latter only three out of the original twelve made good their escape to China - Frs. Ridel, Feron and Calais.

Ten years later the situation was little changed. The actual persection might have died down, but the proscriptive edict remained in force; the chief persecutors lived yet and same state of hostility to the foreigner obtained. No western power had yet made a treaty with the “Hermit Kingdom”.

Fr. Mutel was thus called to a glorious heritage. The missionaries of his Society had twice set out to spread the Faith in this strange and almost unknown land; twice their efforts had ended in failure, though crowned with martyr- [page 67] dom. But there were known to be many thousands of Korean Christians yet living, preserving their Faith in the greatest secrecy and deprived of the Sacraments and all spiritual direction. These awaited a fresh dawn, and the Society, together with the whole Church, longed to renew the work.

The following is Archbishop Muter’s own brief account of the reopening of the Mission in the years immediately preceding his entry into Korea :

“After the persecution of 1866 Korea was without mis-sionaries for ten years. Several expeditions attempted to re-establish the Mission, but failed. At last, in May 1867, Bishop Ridel succeeded in sending two missionaries into the country- While one of these, Fr. Blanc, was engaged in visiting the scattered Christians at Komeui-ko (I-Chun, Kang- won Province) in the greatest secrecy, the younger, Fr. Deguette, fell mortally ill His companion wanted to return and help him, but the dying man sent him word as follows : ‘We are here for God, Who will not leave you to labour alone. I await a miracle. Stay where you are!’ God worked the expected miracle; the dying man returned to health and was able to take the field in his turn. The arrival of the mission- aries revived the courage of the Christians, but only a few thousand were to be found at first Many others had been lost sight of during the persecution, and were for years unaware of the return of the missionaries. When computation became possible, it was ascertained that one half of them—that is to say, more than 10,000 had disappeared, victims of violent persecution or utter destitution.

“In September 1877, Bishop Ridel rejoined his two mis-sionaries, together with a new reinforcement — Frs. Doucet and Robert; but at the beginning of 1878 some letters sent to him from Europe were seized at the frontier; the messenger was put to torture and everything was discovered. The Bishop was arrested and thrown into prison among thieves. Expecting death daily, he was conducted to the frontier, China having demanded his release at the request [page 68] of the French Minister at Peking. This was the first act of clemency on the part of the Korean government towards the missionaries; the following year Fr. Deguette’s arrest, which was likewise protested by China, provided an occasion for its repetition. But the ancient barriers protecting Korea from the outside world were not to fall till much later; the state of persecution lasted until 1886; and it was necessary to smuggle entry into the country and, once there, to remain in hiding.”

Before leaving France, Fr. Mutel received an important commission. The Foreign Missions Society was anxious to further the cause of the beatification of the French and Korean martyrs, and to this end required him to become conversant with the necessary procedure. The examination of a similar cause was just then taking place in Tonkin— another classic field for martyrs—and it was considered advisable for Fr. Mutel to stay there for some months on his way to Korea and see for himself how matters were conducted. This delay was to cost him dear, for his eventual arrival at “Our Lady of the Snows” at Chakou, the Manchurian mission-post from which the new expeditions to Korea were to start, took place a short while after the departure of Bishop Ridel with Frs. Doucet and Robert, all bound for Korea; and he was obliged to remain there for three long years, awaiting the opportunity for a fresh expedition, which at that time required long and careful preparation. Early in 1878 news came through that Bishop Ridel had been arrested in Seoul and cast into prison. Fr. Mutel longed to be at his side but feared there was now no hope of early entry to the cherished mission-field.

It was a situation of agonizing uncertainty and a severe trial for the eager young missionary, forced to remain an onlooker at Our Lady of the Snows. Were they on the eve of another savage persecution like those of 1839 and 1866? Would the Superior be subjected to torture and martyrdom ? And would the four other missionaries be able to elude a thorough-going search? [page 69]

Most of these doubts and fears were set at rest when Bishop Ridel was liberated at the Manchurian frontier. “Rejoice, dear Father Coste,’’ wrote Fr. Mutel on 8th July, “Bishop Ridel has been restored to us! It is a great step forward, the greatest no doubt to date, but the future is not free from anxiety. What is to become of our colleagues ?”

Fr. Mutel was far from inactive at his temporary post He set himself to study the Korean language as well as the written Chinese character, and was able to give some help to Fr. Coste, who was then engaged on the production of the earliest Korean French Dictionary at Yokohama.\* A further task was to copy out the letters received from the missionaries in Korea, for who knew but they might soon be numbered among the martyrs ? His writing was done in an unheated room, where, as he told in later days, it was often necessary to thaw his pen at the candle-flame. As soon as he had sufficient knowledge of Chinese, he devoted much of his time to the Christians in the congregation of Our Lady of the Snows, and for exercise would go out shooting. He told how the report of his gun used to waken the rabbits, and how on one occasion a bold young rabbit “paused to look back mockingly at the hunter, then scampered off shaking its ears.” His memory of these days remained vivid, and it was delightful to hear him tell of them with his habitual charm and simplicity.

But at the time he could find little satisfaction in his various occupations. He longed to press on to his appointed Mission and take his share of the trials and hardships he knew awaited him there. The letters he wrote at the time continually harp on this theme. To Fr. Coste he wrote on 19th June 1879 : “........The couriers for Pienmen left this morning in spite of the rain. The rendezvous is fixed for the 24th. May they bring back good news―I am burning with impatience to enter Korea........”

\* There is extant in Seoul a manuscript of this Dictionary entirely written in Fr. Mutel’s hand.

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Meanwhile Fr. Deguette was seized and conducted to the Manchurian frontier―just as Bishop Ridel had been the previous year; and the time was judged inopportune for a fresh expedition. Further delays ensued, but at length Bishop Ridel decided that the attempt should be made by Frs. Mutel and Liouville in the spring of 1880. The story of this expedition is best given in Fr. Mutel’s own words :

“Tuesday, 11th May. Monseigneur (Ridel) accompanied us to the port as well as Fr. Guillon. Fr. Liouville set out with them on horseback; as for me, I had to make the trip in a small cart, and in order to be as little behind the others as possible, I left somewhat in advance. At 7 o’clock I said goodbye to Frs. Richard and Deguette, then got into the cart. A good number of Christians were there to bid us farewell, and little by little the dear steeple of Our Lady of the Snows receded. I had lived in its shadow for close on three years. About a mile from the village, the cart overturned, out luckily there was no serious damage; in less than five minutes everything was in order again and we resumed our journey. At 10 o’clock we were overtaken and then soon left behind by Monseigneur and our colleagues on horseback. The weather was threatening and towards mid-day rain began to fall. Happily the others must have arrived by this time, but we still had about eight miles to go before reaching our destination. Eventually, at 3 o’clock, we arrived at Chuang-ho, and stopped at a pawnbroking establishment run by the local Christians. It had been arranged that we should go on board our junk that very evening, but the rain had made the roads so bad that it was almost impossible to carry our baggage there, so we were glad to accept the hospitality offered by the Christians and spend the night with them.

Wednesday, 12th May. This morning the weather was fine with a northerly wind. After breakfast, we asked for the Monseigneur’s blessing and were soon on our way to the boat We covered the short distance on horseback. Monseigneur and Fr. Guillon accompanied us as far as the junk, as well as two of the local Christians. Our baggage had already [page 71] been taken on board and it seemed they were only waiting for us to weigh anchor. But the tide gradually fell and we did not budge, for the boatmen were not yet ready. However, we installed ourselves in the cabin, then went back on shore. From all sides we were assailed by a fetid odour of salt fish, which somewhat discomforted us. At mid-day we were served with millet instead of rice and a single plate of dried fish - which boded ill for the future; luckily we have with us some provisions supplied by the Christians of Tang-pou. The afternoon passed waiting for the next tide. We were assured that we should leave during the night. In the evening the sailors were all on board and finally the captain arrived; he paid us a visit and promised that all would be done for the best He bore with him a small case containing lamp, pipe and other accessories for smoking opium; on being told that the smell of this drug disagreed with us, he replied that he would smoke far enough away not to incon-venience us.

“Thursday, 13th May. We left during the night as we had been told. This morning our boat is fast on the mud outside the channel At 10 o’clock the tide began to rise and at 11 all got ready for our departure. The wind still blew from the north, and once the anchor was raised we were soon at sea, being tossed about by the waves. The better to stand the motion, we went down to our cabin and stayed there like gallant fellows. On poking our heads out at 2 o’clock, we found that we had cast anchor at a small port, Ta-wang-kia-tao, a Chinese islet one hundred li from Chuang-ho. Three of our sailors landed and Fr. Liouville and I accompanied them at their invitation. We sought to regain on the hills the appetite which had already left us, and later returned to the beach. There an old man ap-proached timidly and spoke to us; all the neighbouring villagers who had been watching; from afar, gradually became emboldened and surrounded us; finally they invited us to their village for awhile, and as they were so insistent, we went along to smoke a pipe there. The conversation was [page 72 ] trivial: What is your name? your age? your country? Whence do you come? Whither are you going? They asked us whether we were going to trade in Korea. These people appeared very unsophisticated and kindly. It one lived among them for a little while, it seemed to me, they could be successfully evangelized. There are about eighty families on the island, scattered among five or six villages. Some of the inhabitants are cultivators, but the majority are fishermen. At present they are drying cod-fish on the beach. We returned to the seashore reading our breviaries; everyone followed and seemed much astonished at seeing us praying in this manner. At length our sailors came back, and while they were engaged in refloating our boat, we ate oysters, of which numbers were to be found on the rocks.

“Friday, 14th, May. The wind continuing contrary, we remained at anchor

“Saturday, 15th May. We left at last this morning, although there was only a slight breeze and that not very favourable; by evening we were in sight of Hai-yang-tao, the last Chinese island we shall see.

“Sunday, 16th May. Feast of Pentecost We were not so happy as to be able to celebrate Holy Mass, nor could we even console ourselves by assisting at it; so we united our intention with that of the whole Catholic Church, recalling especially the Feasts we had witnessed at Our Lady of the Snows. The mountains of Korea could already be seen in the distance—we were heading for the Promised Land. At about 10 o’clock a little bird came and perched on the boat, and spent a good part of the day there. The wind is scarcely perceptible and we are barely moving We had a small extra for dinner—the cook killed our first fowl, and served up a fairly good soup; for once the cup of millet and the dried fish were left on one side.

“Monday, 17th May. We are close to the coast of Korea but a southerly wind persists and it is impossible to make way against it; so we make for Choto to cast anchor there, arriving at 2 o’clock. [page 73]

“Tuesday, 18th May. The day fixed for the rendezvous, and we are still more than a hundred li from Merinto! The south wind continues to embarrass us. Our sailors went ashore to look for wood and vegetables, and soon returned, for they found some ready-made faggots on the slope of the mountain, and thought it a simple matter to carry them off, poor pagans that they are. Towards evening the anchor cable broke owing to friction with the side of the boat, and left the anchor at the bottom of the sea. Our captain thus sustained a loss of 100 strings of cash.

“Wednesday, 19th May. Still the south wind blows. We redouble our entreaties to the Blessed Virgin to obtain a favourable wind. During the day many Korean boats put out to sea without troubling about us. At about 2 o’clock a Chinese junk came up from the south and anchored close by Two men came on board our boat and we remained hidden in the cabin during their visit, It appears that this junk is fishing along the coast for sea-slugs and is being pursued by the Koreans. I don’t know whether our boatmen are themselves afraid of trouble, but we always seem to weigh anchor and leave in spite of a head-wind. We had to tack about all the evening. At nightfall we found ourselves pretty close to the land; we could distinguish a yamen on the shore with a tower rising close by. We spent the night at anchor.

“Thursday, 20th May. We continued tacking south. At 10 o’clock the wind suddenly dropped, and at 2 o’clock it rose again, this time from the west We travelled at good speed. A heavy sea was running when we came opposite Cape Chansan, but once we had rounded the cape, the waves grew less and fine weather returned. At nignt-fall we went up on deck to have a look at the land. The mountains were wooded right up to their summits and were a magnificient sight at this time of year, when everything is green. Soon we located the island of Merinto, our rendezvous, which we reached at about 8 o’clock. We were counting on meeting the Korean boat there, for the wind had blown consistently from the south, but tbere was no sign of [page 74] it Indeed, there was not a single Korean vessel to be seen, only two Chinese junks which were spending the season there, fishing for sea-worms. We cast anchor not far from them.

“Friday, 21st May. This morning we had a visit from a Korean who, it appeared, was trying to sell fish. He was inquisitive to the point of prying, but did not discover us. While chatting with the captain on deck, he suddenly and without warning lifted the matting covering the entrance to our cabin. I was still in bed and could make him out quite plainly through the cracks; but he was not in such a good position for seeing me, and perceived nothing. I quickly turned my back, while at the same time the captain prevented him from repeating his action and asked him to go and sell his fish somewhere else. About thirty fishing-boats were rocking on the waves all round the two Chinese junks. In the course of the morning our men went ashore and informed us on their return that there were many more inhabitants than we had thought at first sight A number of families were settled there, and some of the people had asked our sailors all sorts of questions : ‘What have you come here for ? You have no merchandise on board. You are not trading. You must surely be on some secret business.’ Our men got through it all as best they could. Other people said : ‘You’ve got some Koreans on board’, and when the sailors denied this, ‘then from what country do the men on your boat come?’ they asked. This was certainly a random question, for no one there had yet seen us. It had been arranged that we should hang a white shirt to the stern of our boat as a signal to make ourselves known to our Korean friends. The people on the island had noticed this and asked what it meant; they were told that it was merely left out to dry. We are obliged to remain hidden owing to the island and other junks being so close. Fr. Liouville, who would be given away by his long beard, is condemned to stay in the cabin the whole time; as for me, I put on Chinese dress ana can thus appear on deck sometimes without danger. [page 75]

“Saturday, 22nd May. Fifth and last day of the rendez- vous. We have not yet found the Korean boat which was to come to meet us. Last night seemed quite favourable but nothing came. During the day some Korean boats were to be seen here and there, but all .sheered off, not a single one approaching us or making any sign. We hope that the coming night the last for the rendezvous, will be more fortunate. Perhaps our Koreans came the first day, and, not finding us here, went off to take shelter in some coastal port, intending to come back later. However that may be, we have judged it prudent to remove our signal, the shirt, since it is quite dry by now! It has been replaced by a white towel From a distance this looks the same, while allaying the suspicions of the people near at hand. This evening, as night was falling, a small boat manned by five or six people, looked to be making for us. Certainly these were not our Christians and the captain had his suspicions that it was a magistrate’s boat and told us to conceal ourselves. For want of a better method, we each crouched down in a corner of the cabin and awaited events. We were in God’s keeping. The captain had the entrance to the cabin closed, and everyone sat down on the cover while he received the visitors. We heard the opening words of the conversation that ensued: ‘How many men have you on board?’ ― ‘Nine,’ replied the captain. As this was the number of men on deck, the inquirers were inclined to believe that he was telling the truth. After this, there was so much noise on deck that we were prevented from hearing any more. After a quarter of an hour’s palaver, the Koreans climbed on board and we heard them passing to and fro overhead for a long while. Eventually they went away and the door of our prison was opened. The captain came down to see us and seemed quite dismayed. ‘There was nothing to say to them; it was most embarrassing—we had no reply to make!’ That was all, but he repeated it for five minutes. At last the Christian who is accompanying us came to render an account of the visit. The Koreans had announced that they were delegates from [page 76] the Magistrate of Pieceu-long-kang, and pointed to the blue flag flown from their boat as proof of their mission. This is as nearly as possible the conversation which followed :

‘What have you come here for?’

‘In order to trade.’

‘What are you trading?’

‘European textiles.’

‘Where is your merchandise?’

‘We haven’t any this time.’

‘Then why have you come here? Obviously not to sell textiles.’

‘We have come to find out what articles are most in demand among Koreans and we shall return at the eighth moon with a cargo.’

They seemed to believe only half what the captain told them and climbed on board our boat, all talking together. After looking all over it, they turned their attention to the signal-towel, on which they expected to find some clue. They examined it minutely, but found no characters written thereon, and could not think it a rallying sign. Of course they quite forgot to visit the one place that should have been suspect―the cabin where we were hidden. This ingenuousness seemed to us the more astonishing by reason of their calling, and we could not see it otherwise than as a special intervention of the Divine Providence. Whom God protects is indeed well guarded!

The Koreans, while they were departing, enquired of our men whether they expected to sail on the next day, given a favourable wind, and added that they would keep a watch on us until we were a long way off. The crew are all in great fear and I think they would leave immediately if there were the least bit of wind. An old seaman came down into our cabin and held forth for a long time, proving to us that it was impracticable to stay here any longer. ‘What a misfortune,’ said he, ‘if they had discovered you!’‘Possibly they would have seized us, but what had you to fear?’ we replied. [page 77]

‘How we should have lost face,’ said he, ‘why, we should never have dared to go back to Chuangho!’

We tried to reassure them, but fear is not a rational process. In the meantime the Korean boat did not go away as yet She was at this moment near the other Chinese junks, which in their turn received a visit from the Koreans. Our men were afraid that they might be inclined to return the same evening, and wondered how we could best be hidden. The captain made us roll up our beds and stow away our books and other suspicious objects; then he re-moved two or three planks in the cabin, slid a mat to the bottom of the hold and showed us his hiding place with an air of satisfaction. ‘Once you’re in there,’ he said, ‘I shall have no fear of their finding you.’ We were about to go down into the hold when the Korean boat made off and returned to shore. For the time we were safe. I enjoined the men not to be afraid if they saw a boat coming towards us during the night; our Christians might well be arriving at last That night we went to sleep fully dressed, fearing some new alarm.

“Sunday, 23rd May. This morning we were wakened by the sound of the gong. It is the 15th day of the Moon, and besides our men possibly want to set the fashion. They have made a great display of bunting on deck; one of the flags is white and has written on it the following words: T’ien hoou cheng Mou.―Queen of Heaven, Holy Mother. Is not this homage offered to the Blessed Virgin? Yesterday’s fears are somewhat allayed, but the captain declares that he will leave as soon as the wind is favourable. We reminded him of his contract which bound him for two more days, but he replied that he couldn’t stay here any longer. Then we proposed that he take us to Ta-t’sing-tao, to spend only one night there, after which we would consider him discharged from his obligation, whether our boat came or not Ta-t’sing-tao was the place which had been fixed as a rendezvous in previous years, and we thought that our Christians might perhaps have sought refuge, and be awaiting us [page 78] there. But the captain refused to carry out this arrangement, maintaining that the locality was even more dangerous than Merinto, that it was under the administration of the same Magistrate, that letters were exchanged daily between the various Customs posts, that if we went to another locality we should certainly be followed there and watched, and that he would never agree to do so even though he were offered all the money in the worlds It is clear enough—we cannot insist But today there is only a gentle breeze from the west, scarcely enough to permit of our leaving. At midday the whole crew were served up with a kind of vermicelli made of flour, in place of the millet. We were the first to do justice to it, and had barely finished when three Korean boats, bearing blue flags just like the one that had visited us yesterday, were reported near the two Chinese junks; probably our turn would come later. We were told to stow away all our belongings and go down into the hold as quickly as possible. While we were carrying out these instructions, an infernal racket was set up on deck. Before resigning myself to descending into the hold, I poked my head out to see what was going on, and only then realised that the anchor had been raised and the sails set All this had been accomplished in less than three minutes, and already the island had begun to recede. I did not presume to blame our men; yet perhaps if they had made the best of matters, this second visit would have passed off as harmlessly as yesterday’s. I asked the Christian who was accompanying us to keep a look out and see if any Korean boats appeared to be following. Several of them seemed to be tacking in the same direction as we were, but gradually these all dispersed, some to the south and others towards the land, where they stopped and lay at anchor. So this is the end of the matter, and now we must go away from our dear and much longed-for Korea. Naturally our hearts are heavy, especially when we think of our brave colleagues in the interior who have such great need of help and succour! And then the boat sent to meet us [page 79] …has it been captured or prevented from setting out by some fresh misfortune? “Far from being discouraged at their lack of success, the missionaries began making fresh plans, but there was further unavoidable delay. Not until October was it possible to set out on a new expedition. The following is the brief account Archbishop Mutel wrote in later years of this voyage and his first experiences in Korea :

“This time we were kept at sea for eight days by bad weather, and the day fixed for our rendezvous had passed by the time of our arrival But our provisions were exhausted and we had to land somewhere in Korea, cost what it might Our junk approached the shore and, under cover of night, landed a Christian Korean, the scholar Thaddeus Kwon, who was acting as our guide. That night he walked forty kilometres in order to reach a Christian pottery-works, and returned next evening bringing with him enough rice to last for one day and the news that a Korean boat would join us the same evening. Apparently the boat sent from Seoul to meet us had been plundered by some pagans, who had carried off all the Korean clothes intended for us.

“Our junk set sail once more and cautiously proceeded up an arm of the sea. Towards ten o’clock at night the water became so shallow that further progress was impossible and we cast anchor. Soon afterwards a small boat came alongside, bringing a sack of rice for our Chinese and some Korean garments—contributed by the potters—for ourselves; one of them had given a shirt, another trousers, and by this means two complete outfits had been got together. Hastily and at random we donned our new costume. My share included a pair of trousers which, in addition to being very dirty, bore a huge stain of oil or grease on one leg. Good Martin Kim had thus deprived himself on my account!

“The little Korean boat bore us away; and our Christians, without slacking their oar, drew from beneath a board a small bottle of Korean wine and some persimmons; we [page 80] found everything delicious. About midnight we reached the vicinity of the pottery works : we were safe! Men were waiting for us on the shore, and soon our modest baggage was unloaded and we were led to the most substantial house in the village, which had been reserved for us. It belonged to the Christian Pak Seung-to, uncle of Fr. Mark Pak. This pottery works was called Pai-ma-tang and was situated on the sea-shore, near the market-place Taitan in the sub-prefecture of Changyun in Whanghai Province. Knowing that we were not yet accustomed to eating ordinary Korean rice, our Christians had overcome the difficulty by preparing chicken with the rice. But we were now in the early hours of Friday, 12th November. The circumstances were surely such as to free us from abstinence, but we were over-joyed at having arrived in Korea and did not know how to thank God for His protection, so we decided to leave the appetizing chicken and rice and content ourselves with a very frugal, meal. Our good Christians, who had doubtless been waiting for us since before midnight, were more mortified by this than we ourselves.

“The large boat having failed us, it was impossible to reach Seoul as had been arranged. We had to remain where we were. Our confinement was rather strict, since the coming and going of strangers was a continual source of danger. But the Christians kept good watch and we did not put our noses outside except at night-time.

There was a second small pottery works about twenty li away in the mountains. In turn the Christians came to see us and hear Mass. At the end of a month they proposed taking Fr. Liouville, to their own village, Keuk-naki, and establishing him there, and so it was done; he went there for Christmas. In 1881, at the feast of the Epiphany, I went to see him and also to take my leave of him, for I had received in the meantime instructions from Fr. Blanc to proceed to Paikchun in order to meet Fr. Robert, who should pass this place on his tour. It was a two-day journey for me, dressed in mourning costume and travelling by chair. [page 81]

There was always a room set apart for me at the inns, and as soon as I entered and took off the large hat which shielded me, I had to turn my face to the wall. When fatigued by one position, I had to change from one side to another in such a way as to keep my face hidden all the time. To be brief, the journey was safely accomplished, and by the evening of the second day I had arrived and installed myself in the little village of Toltari, another pottery works, situated about ten li west of the town of Paikchun.

“Some days later I had the great pleasure of meeting Fr. Robert there. He had left Paris only three months before me, but had had the good fortune to enter Korea three years earlier Speaking Korean fluently and thoroughly inured to the country, he made endless journeys, visiting the Christians. After some days together, he left to continue his work.

“There remains with me the recollection of a case which was then brought to him for judgment. A young married couple were at odds, and no one could establish harmony between them. The husband appeared first and recounted his grievances in full; whereat the Father said brusquely : ‘Doubtless the reason is that you beat your wife!’ ‘Oh, no,’ said the other, ‘I have never beaten her.’ ‘Well, since she is so ill-tempered, perhaps you would be well advised to beat her a little!’ ‘But when she is beaten, she is worse still.’ (So he must at least have tried it!) The wife was sent for; she sat down in a corner of the room, turning her back on her husband, and unbosomed herself in turn. The young couple could not be made to listen to reason. In the end, the Father has a sudden inspiration : sending for the parents, he bade them instal the young couple in a separate part of their household. And I heard that after this was done, peace returned as if by magic. As so often the case in Korea, it was all a matter of dissension between the wife and her mother-in-law.

“I was still at Toltari on the afternoon of 19th March, 1881, when a Christian arrived with the news that Fr. Liouville had been arrested in his village. [page 82]

“He had been visiting a sick person in the neighbourhood and the precautions which the Christians took to conceal him must have attracted notice, for two days later the Magistrate’s retainers from Haiju appeared in the village, searching for a thief whom they believed to be hidden there. Attempts were made to throw them off the scent, but in vain. Fr. Liouville was in the act of hearing Confessions for the feast of St Joseph, next day. In a twinkling all suspicious objects were stowed away and the Father was hurried off to a little house standing apart from the rest There he found some dirty old clothing to hide under, and remained still as death. In the course of the search, one of the retainers reached the house and, opening the door, noticed this bundle which seemed of no interest He lifted the covering and recoiled in fear at seeing his prize. Quite unabashed, Fr. Liouville asked the retainers if they had received orders to arrest him. The latter scratched their heads at this but declared that he was a fine capture. However, two of them went off to the town to ask the Magistrate’s advice, while the remainder guarded the prisoner. Soon the news spread that there was a European in the village, and people from all over the neighbourhood came to see this phenomenon. The next day was the feast of St Joseph, and Fr. Liouville told the retainers that he must celebrate Mass, and asked them to keep guard on the door to prevent the crowd of pagans from invading the room; and so it was done, the retainers at the back of the room hearing Mass and kneeling as piously as the Christians.

“The two messengers returned on the following day bringing word that the Father should be set at liberty. Whether they were acting on the Magistrate’s advice or were afraid of compromising themselves by reporting such an important capture will never be known.

The Father could not remain there; furthermore the villagers must disperse, since the Christians were still in danger. The following night he left and hid in the only Christian household of a village ten ]i distant Two days [page 83] later the house caught fire at the time of the evening meal, and he had to flee stil farther away.

“As for me, after hearing about the capture of Fr. Liouville, I judged it wise to make myself scarce. The Christians also wished me to leave but did not dare to tell me so, Moreover it was the only means of saving their village, since refugees from the other were already arriving and information might be given against them. I did not know where to go, but my advisers assured me that Seoul was the safest retreat. So I set off for Seoul—three days’ journey in mourning costume and travelling by chair.

“While passing through the Sai-mon Gate into Seoul, I glimpsed through the hangings of my chair an array of large cutlasses in a weapon-rack in front of the guard-room, and shivered. Twenty minutes later we arrived at our destination—a house in the Inseung-pou-chai quarter in the southern part of the city—and I was forthwith installed in a small and very secluded room. I was safe!

“Soon I heard about the trials Fr. Liouville was under- going in the course of his wanderings after his adventure in Whanghai Province. I sent him some Christian bearers with a chair, to bring him to Seoul He arrived without mishap at the end of ten days. “We both occupied the one small room, and, what with the board which served as an altar and the indispensable articles crowded beneath it, there was barely room to lie down. We had to place the mats which served as our mattresses in such a way that they overlapped for about a third of their width, and lie side by side as if we were in the same bed. In the daytime we had to converse in an undertone and stifle our laughter; but we did it all with right good will!

‘‘ There were at that time three missionaries in Korea besides us new-comers―Fr. Blanc, acting Vicar Apostolic, and Frs. Doucet and Robert; but these were all up-country and far away. The Superior soon sent us his orders : Fr. [page 84] Liouville was to go up-country to the Christians of Syou-syen in the district of Chungju and I was to remain in Seoul.

It therefore became necessary for me to find a less confined dwelling place. Hearing of a dilapidated house for sale near the Little West Gate, I said goodbye to Fr. Liouville, who would be off up-country in a few days, and left our jolly but untenable quarters to instal myself therein. Repairs were under way and the whole place was thronged with workmen when I arrived, so I had to spend the daytime immured in the house. Even this seemed likely to arouse suspicion among the slaves in neighbouring households, who had access wherever they pleased, and it was deemed wiser to send me elsewhere for a few days.

“So I took refuge in the house where Mgr. Ridel had been arrested three years previously. After being confiscated, it had been sold to the family of Peter Yi In-yeng, half of which was Christian. It was there that I baptized a child, who was later to become secretary-interpreter to the French Consul, in the arms of his yet pagan grand-father.

On returning to my new house in two days, there was a fresh alarm. The Chief of Police had appeared on top of the neighbouring City Gate with quite a band of his retainers and had scrutinized our house—or at least so we believed―in leisurely fashion; after which he descended by the wall, as though to examine it still more closely. We believed ourselves lost Yet nothing happened. I learned afterwards that the Chief of Police had been charged with the duty of repairing the Gate and had simply come to carry out an inspection. But how the good fellow frightened us !

“It was at this time that I received word of the Christians I had left in March. The village of Toltari had not been disturbed, but the little town of Paikchun, on the contrary, had suffered persecution. There were only three Christian families in the place, and before my departure these had begged me to fortify them with the Sacraments, as they already feared some misfortune would befall them. I accordingly visited them the night before leaving for Seoul, [page 85] and scarcely had I taken my departure than the Magistrate arrested the two leading Christians, Paul Yi the doctor and the aged Francis Pang. Especially the former―who related all this to me—was put to torture, and the marks were still evident on his legs. In order to force him to apostasize they had subjected him to bending of the bones. I asked him if it had been very painful and he replied, ‘It was terrible, but fortunately the intensity of the pain made one lose consciousness quickly—otherwise it would have been unbearable.’ Thus the Magistrate laboured in vain, but he confiscated the Christian’s house and all his property and drove him out of the town. He even had all his books burned in front of him, but Paul interrupted him and, pointing to his breast, cried : ‘Magistrate, you can burn them, for they are here,’ He reached Seoul with his old father, his wife and three children. Formerly in easy circumstances, he had lost everything.

“He set up as best he could in the capital, but being unknown and without any practice, he suffered adversity and even starvation for a time. He told me later that when he had nothing left in the house, he made all his family kneel down and recite the ‘Our Father’ together to ask God to provide their daily bread; and he declared that on each occasion some unexpected customer turned up, and they were able to buy provisions for the day with the money received for medicines. God has since blessed him with a return to his former prosperity.

“Scarcely had I spent fifteen days in my new quarters, than I was told that I must leave. The slaves of the neighbouring houses were whispering among themselves that some suspect was hidden in our house, and everything might be found out I fled at midnight, conducted by the aged catechist, Kim Ok Chai, but he got bogged in a pool of water and failed me as a guide. He had been too frightened to light his lantern! While passing through the City Gate in order to reach Mowha-kwan, I had another sight of the famous weapon—rack — without much more assurance than

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on the first occasion. I was welcomed by the family of Peter Sung, with his wife Susan Won and daughter-in-law Mary Kim, and stayed with them during the two summer months, comparatively at ease, though not entirely free from anxiety. The new house—which our Superior, Fr. Blanc, jocularly called the Palace of Thorns—had to be sold at a loss and another founds A small house was discovered in the vicinity of the royal palace, in the Nongpo-an quarter, and seemed suitable. I moved in at the end of September, and from it witnessed the revolution of 1882, concealed but far from reassured.’’

Korea at this time was passing through a period of acute internal stress. For centuries the country had been riven by the intrigues of rival political factions and disorganised by frequent conspiracies against those in power; to this prevailing state of near-anarchy a further complication was now added. Korea’s immemorial isolation from the rest of the world was threatened ; foreign powers were knocking at the gates; and the air was thick with every kind of rumour. It was not surprising that a broad and to some extent genuine cleavage should exist on the question of introducing overdue reforms and establishing relations with other countries. The traditional elements, though strongly entrenched, had been weakened by the retirement of the notorious Tai Won Kun, who had been Regent from 1864 to 1873 and had ordered the persecution of the Christians in 1866. On the other hand a really liberal and progressive party had begun to form under the leadership of men of high rank who were in office and consequently had the ear of the King.

While the reactionaries, therefore, and particularly the Confucianist literati, were doing their utmost to stir up disorder and prevent adoption of a more forward policy, the King and his advisers were cautiously moving in the direction of reform and innovation; the issue could perhaps have been quickly decided if the powerful Min faction, better known as the Queen’s party and family, had thrown their weight behind the progressives. But unfortunately for [page 84]

Korea, the Mins, though bitterly opposed to the Tai Won Kun and his followers, with-held their support; the reformers were thus forced to seek alliance elsewhere, and prejudice their whole case by an attempted coup d’etat in 1884; after which the situation rapidly crystallized, the Queen and her party turning to China for assistance and revealing their essential Conservatism, while the radicals—as they now were—enlisted the aid of Japan.

During 1881, while the position was still obscure, the country was seething with unrest The literati of several provinces presented numerous petitions urging complete sup-pression of Christianity and a strengthening of the barriers against foreign intercourse. The more exigent were arrested and exiled, but on 12th June the King promulgated a new anti-Christian edict―it was to be the last―clearly with a view to conciliating reactionary sentiment, in which he acknowledged that, despite the efforts of his predecessors, the “evil” persisted, and enjoined a more sincere following of the teachings of Confucius, Mencius, and other sages, since this would undoubtedly cause it to disappear without any further steps being necessary. Later in the year, however, a conspiracy against the King and government was exposed, and its leaders— supporters of the ex-Regent— beheaded.

In April 1882, Fr. Mutel was joined in Seoul by Fr. Blanc. Later, during July, his hopes were raised by the news that negotiations with the French Government were in progress; but nothing eventuated. It was a severe disappointment, and Fr. Mutel did not disguise his view that more firmness on the part of his countrymen would have achieved the desired end—without any necessity for summary action—and brought about religious toleration into the bargain.

Meanwhile, however, Seoul was thrown into confusion by the Emeute of 1882. Fr. Mutel’s experiences are best given in his own words :

“Following the treaty signed in 1876 between Japan [page 88] and Korea, Mr. Hanabusa was sent to Seoul as Charge d’Affaires, accompanied by a guard and some officers as instructors for the Korean soldiers. They lived extramuros, in the Mowha-kwan quarter, in a pavilion called Chun-yun-chung not far from the monumental gate later known as the Independence Arch.

“In 1882 a mutiny broke out among Korean soldier mal-contents who had not been paid for some months. The sacks of rice which were occasionally distributed among them were half-empty, whereas the troops drilled by the Japanese received their pay regularly―inde irae. Moreover, it was Sunday 23rd July, and not a drop of rain had fallen as yet The Japanese were to blame!

“Towards five o’clock in the evening some Japanese from the Legation were walking quite unsuspectingly in the town when the crowd began to riot and throw stones at them. The Japanese wisely turned back to their Legation, but on the way two or three were struck down and killed. The rest re-entered the Legation and barricaded the gates. The crowd tried to break their way in but could not do so. They then set fire to the building. The Japanese destroyed all secret documents, etc. and hid the rest at the bottom of a dry well; then, placing the Minister, Hanabusa, in their midst, they rushed out with drawn sabres. As soon as the gate was opened, the crowd ran away in fright, some even falling into a nearby pond. The gallant Japanese wasted no time in futile self-defence, but made for Chemulpo, which they reached the same night Seizing some boats, they stood out to sea and were picked up next day by a steamer.

That very night rain began to fall. Well had it been said that the Japanese were to blame!

On the morning of the 24th the rebel soldiery invaded the royal palace and, finding Min Kyen Ho, who was in charge of the government store-houses, inside, murdered him there. They even menaced the King, laid hold of the Queen Min and dragged her to the palace gate. Some wanted to tear her to pieces on the spot, others to conduct her to [page 89] the central square of Chong-no with more ceremony. While they were arguing about this, a loyal follower of the Queen, Yi Yong Ik, took her upon his back and carried her off, none knew where. (He was a made man from that day on; in time he became a Minister and was all-powerful about the year 1900). Shortly the rumour spread that she had been killed! The soldiers then scattered through the city, demolishing the houses of the great and pillaging here and there.

“The poor King could do nothing but appeal to his father, the famous Regent, who had been in retirement for ten years and was a personal enemy of his daughter-in-law, the supposedly-dead Queen. However, he came to the royal palace and endeavoured to subdue the mutineers. To this end, doubtless, he spread through the city—on the evening of the 25th—the rumour that the pedlars (at that time a powerful guild) were flocking from all over the country to the defence of the King, and that they were even then in the act of breaking down the East Gate and invading the capital Panic broke out!

“In a twinkling every house was empty; all sought refuge on Nam-san, which was soon white with people. I heard that our neighbours were digging holes in the ground and burying their valuables. In spite of my protests, the mother-in-law of my servant, Paul Kim Ye San-i, thought it was not safe to stay in the house and fled like everyone else. But she returned in half an hour, having been unable to force her way through the crowds Her teeth chattered with fear to such an extent that she was unable to eat any solid food for two days. About midnight a report spread that the pedlars were not arriving that night, but had camped ten li from the gates and would enter on the morrow.

“Next morning—not the least sign of the pedlars. But the crowd had had such a fright that they were seized with rage. A search was made through every quarter of the city and some poor men who were connected with the guild were killed in front of the royal palace. My house was only a hundred and fifty metres away, under the very walls of [page 90] the palace, so I knew all about it. Through cracks in the gate, which we kept carefully closed, I was even able to view the fine fellows trooping past, armed with enormous rusty cutlasses. The armories had been pillaged and everyone had turned soldier. We slept with one eye open, for especially in this quarter of the town the least incident would have led to our discovery. One night I had just gone to sleep when I woke with a start at the sound of a violent blow struck on the gate. I thought my last hour had come. I got up and went outside into the courtyards My servant was walking up and down, calmly reciting his Rosary...... Some children, throwing stones at a dog, had made a bad shot and hit the gate That was all.

“We were not always so serene. Among the supposed suspects―everyone at this time was suspect—was found a Christian; the Rosary he had on him made recognition easy. He was placed under arrest Our little flock was thrown into confusion. In my house everyone was overwhelmed. While bringing in my table of rice, my servant told me that if only I would leave the city, all danger would be averted. ‘But’, I replied, ‘I should be arrested before taking a hundred paces!’ He knew that well enough, and dissolved into tears. I leave you to guess whether my rice went down well! But, as ever, God took care of us.”

That Fr. Mutel’s fears were well-grounded may be judged by the following extracts from his letters written at the time, which present a vivid picture of the perilous situation in which he and his Christians found themselves :

“(24th July) …Amid a wild outcry and the beating of drums, the mob surged through the streets before the Min family’s palaces, which had all been plundered and destroyed. Whoever fell into their hands was mercilessly done to death. Meanwhile the lightning flashed and the thunder rolled, and the rain streamed down, that there was a truly infernal uproar. Filled with terror, we all remained indoors.

“(4th August) …Now rumour has it that the Regent is really intent on starting a persecution of the Christians in [page 91] order to divert everyone’s attention. Yesterday I had almost decided on flight, but today we recognize that this would have been a false and over-hasty move, which might have brought matters to a head. We remained, and up to now everything has been quiet. It looks as though the Regent intends to leave us alone this time. Some people make out that the King and the old Queen-mother have dissuaded the Regent from starting a persecution.

“The worst of it is that the robbery and plundering and destruction have by no means come to an end. The most complete state of anarchy obtains. The King has; in effect, been deposed; the Regent is powerless; and other Ministers have been murdered. The four thousand soldiers—real scoundrels these—no longer recognise any officers or obey commands. The mob is armed and the entire populace roars approval at every fresh outrage.”

Continuing Fr. Mutel’s narrative :

“The Regents return to power had been triumphant His enemy the Queen was dead and the customary national mourning was proclaimed. Black shoes and hats were replaced by white ones. Poor men observed the rite by pasting a sheet of paper on the crown of their black hats.

“There remained the diplomatic question. On the 15th August the Japanese returned in force; on the 20th they were received at the palace. The suzerain country, China, could not remain indifferent; she sent a fairly strong body of troops, commanded by a general, who camped outside the South Gate about this time. Negotiations proceeded. Meanwhile, the Chinese general, as protector, paid a visit to the Regent in his palace. The latter returned the visit the following day, but scarcely had he entered the camp than he was surrounded, by order of the general, placed in a chair and sent on board a warship at Namyang, a little to the south of Chemulpo. He was then taken to Pao-ting-fu, where he remained a prisoner for some years. Doubtless the Chinese thought he was the author of all the trouble. This was on the night of the 26th August From the morn- [page 92] ing of the 27th the rumour began to spread that the Queen was not dead at all, but still living; so the white hats began to disappear and the black ones to take their place! She had wisely remained in hiding at Chang-ho-won, two days’ journey from Seoul, whither she had been secretly con- ducted. On the 12th September she re-entered the palace in triumph. This was the same Queen that finally fell a victim to the Japanese conspirators on the 8th October, 1895.

“After these events my life resumed its normal course. It was somewhat closely confined. We took the precaution of not letting even the Christians know our place of residence; and if by chance they found out where it was, they were forbidden to come at all frequently, which instructions they duly observed. The catechists alone kept us in touch with our small flock. When required to administer the Sacraments, I would make my way after nightfall on the previous evening to the Christian’s house which had been selected as our meeting-place. Next day I heard Confessions and, by the second day, having celebrated Mass before daybreak, I would be either installed in a new meeting-place or back in my own house. I visited sick people after nightfall If it were necessary to pass through the Gates, which at that time were kept closed from eight p. m. to one a. m., I waited for them to open in the morning, and, after ministering to the sick person, returned to my house well before daylight But later I went out even in the daytime, if neces-sary.”

In addition to the care of the Christians in Seoul, Fr. Mutel had been assigned the two provinces, Kyungkeui-do and Whanghai-do, and it became his custom to tour these districts during the autumn. Later, he included a third province, Kangwon-do, in his circuit Many years afterwards, in November 1930, Bishop Larribeau was engaged in a Confirmation tour of this same district, and received a letter from Archbishop Mutel containing the following passage:

Above all, I hope you will not have any snow for your [page 92] crossing of the high mountain! There is a magnificent view for you to admire from the summit I can see it yet as I write, having twice made the descent in lovely weather, once on horseback and once on foot. I wonder if motor-cars now run easily down those rugged slopes! The first time I did it—in the autumn of 1882―I went full out all the way down. It was quite amusing, but next day my legs were in such a mess that I couldn’t get up from my mat. Good old times, gone past recall!”

Besides his ordinary work, Fr. Mutel was intent on carrying out his special commission : to advance the cause of the martyrs. The process had been opened and the first sitting held in May 1882, but further progress was obstructed by an unfortunate combination of circumstances. In little more than a year, however, Fr. Mutel was able to report that forty sittings had taken place and much testimony had been sifted.

Fr. Mutel had quickly become adapted to the Korean mode of life. His robust constitution withstood privations and hardships, resisted disease. Perhaps the most insidious foes which the missionaries had to counter derived from the truly appalling lack of sanitation then obtaining in the larger cities. A good description of conditions in Seoul at this time is given by Mr. H. A. C. Bonar, who visited the capital at the end of March 1883 :

“…The main streets are in their present condition quite passable for carts and other wheeled vehicles, but we saw only two or three of the former. As for the side streets, they are in a condition of filth and neglect difficult to imagine. Along the middle of the street there often runs a small stream of thick black mud, and on each side are continuous pools, into which the latrines of the houses open; dung-heaps in many instances occupy more than half of the road; other gutters run across the road and are perhaps covered over with rotten boards or large uneven stones, or not at all. The sight of many of these streets is most disgusting; not the slightest attempt at drainage or sewerage [page 94]is made and the air is poisonous with the offensive smells. Add to this a long row of blackened wretchedly built houses, a number of dogs, horses and bullocks’ skulls lying about, and one may have an idea of some of the streets of the capital of Korea. We were told that for a month or more the streets had been cleaned somewhat; it is difficult to conceive what existed before this attempt was made. A small stream runs through the city from west to east, but the little water in it is stagnant and is hardly to be seen among the heaps of rubbish thrown into it…”

As for the quarters in which the missionaries had to live and work, they were little more than mean hovels built of clay and stone, devoid of light and air, and often infested with vermin, and in the last stages of dilapidation. In the evenings, when the fires were lighted, the chimneys poured their smoke into the streets, while inside the houses the fumes and foul air were almost insupportable. A further trial was the food, which often nauseated the missionaries, consisting for the most part of pickled and salted fish and vegetables. Rice was somewhat of a luxury, and filled rather than sustained; while eggs and chicken were not often procurable. The martyr, Fr. Pourthie, had looked forward to a time when “our hosts will have something to offer us besides seaweed soup and decayed fish”, and even those who found the unusual food less distasteful were not immune from the internal disorders to which it frequently gave rise. Typhoid and dysentery were endemic in Korea, together with every kind of skin and parasitical disease, and the missionaries, with lowered powers of resistance, often fell sick.

And finally there was the discomfort and danger of going abroad. The mourning garments they were forced to wear consisted of a large umbrella-shaped hat of coarse white material, reaching down almost to the shoulders; a long cloak of grey unbleached hemp; and a hempen screen, about twelve inches long and six inches wide, stretched on two short sticks and held up before the face. It was an irk- [page 95] some enough costume at the best of times; and in the rainy season, when the roads were deep in mud, or in winter, when snow ana ice added to the difficulties of progression, even getting about the streets of Seoul must have been an arduous business.

In spite of all restrictions and difficulties, however, Fr. Mutel derived abundant satisfaction from the busy life he was leading. It had been worth the long wait in Manchuria to be afforded such ideal scope for missionary activity. He lived, as he said, in the very shadow of the palace, secure yet braced by the constant threat of arrest and punishment He worked unceasingly, administering the Sacraments to the Christians who flocked to the meeting-places in spite of persistent fear, giving daily proof of their loyalty and devotion. The example of the martyrs was a perpetual source of inspiration to him as to them, for many still lived who had been present at the executions and themselves witnessed heroic fervour and renunciation.

During these years of work and anxiety Fr. Mutel acquired a deep understanding of the Korean mind, as well as an unrivalled knowledge of Korean habits and customs. His familiarity with the written Chinese character gave him a deserved reputation as a scholar; his style of speech, too, was that of the literati and noblemen; and he possessed a dignified, even a majestic, bearing which singled him out from his colleagues. Small wonder then, that he had won the respect and affection of the Korean Christians to whom his life had been devoted, and that there was general regret when he was recalled to Paris early in 1885, to become a Director of the Seminary of the Foreign Missions Society.

His appointment “by unanimous vote of the Missions in Japan and Manchuria” was doubtless a great honour and he received congratulations from all sides, not least from Bishop Blanc, who had succeeded Bishop Ridel as Vicar Apostolic on the latter’s death in Paris the previous year, and now disclosed that he had for some time past been intending to nominate Fr. Mutel as Pro-Vicar. But the one [page 96] thought uppermost in Fr. Mutel’s mind was that he would have to leave his cherished work in Korea, perhaps forever; and he was broken-hearted. On the 8th April he wrote Fr. Coste as follows:

“The news you send me with some diffidence is only too true. Enough of congratulations and regrets at my leaving —in either there is risk of self-deception. Let us then merely say, as sincerely as possible : Fiat voluntas tua! After the first shock and upset, came concern—yes, and tears as well It seems to me that a missionary should not be sent to Korea if he is to be recalled, or recalled once he has been sent there. Well, there’s nothing to be done about it except obey. I leave in one month’s time. Meanwhile, please pray for me, as I feel the parting will be especially bitter.”

And so indeed it was for all concerned, whether French or Korean. In the years that followed, his name was constantly on their lips; there was no forgetting the stalwart young priest who had laboured among them with such assurance and been their loved and trusted friend.

“…I had to take a German steamer to Nagasaki”. he wrote, “still wearing Korean clothes, for I had no others. The metamorphosis took place on arrival, and when the good Korean who was helping me had to cut my long hair, he began crying his eyes out, and I was weak enough to follow suit You will understand that I was parting—it seemed likely forever—from a country which I loved and from Christians with whom and for whom I had worked and suffered......”

Great changes had taken place in Korea since 1880. Treaties had been signed, with the United States in 1882, with Great Britain and Germany in 1883. A number of foreigners had visited the country; some even were resident in Seoul such as the U. S. Minister and his Secretary, the British Consul-General, and the Foreign Office Adviser. A Government Hospital had been founded, and a Post Office opened. [page 97]

Yet the disturbances known as the Emeute of 1884, which broke out in December, showed that the country was still very far from setting down to a new era of orderly progress; it had rather entered a difficult and prolonged period of transition, the opening of which was signalized by poli- tical assassinations and spasmodic fighting between the liberal group backed by Japanese troops on the one hand, and the Chinese and Korean forces on the other, terminated only by the withdrawal and flight of the former from Chemulpo.

It was therefore hardly surprising that the missionaries did not yet consider it politic to emerge from hiding and abandon their habit of secrecy. But there was a general feeling that they were at last on the threshold of religious liberty. By December 1884 matters were sufficiently advanced for Fr. Mutel to write that, if the missionaries were even then to reveal themselves, the Korean Government would be more embarrassed than anyone else. The following year saw the beginnings of Protestant missionary work, and after the Treaty with France had been signed early in 1886 Bishop Blanc decided that the time had come for the Catholic missionaries to appear openly, even though the Treaty had caused general disappointment by failing to provide for their security.

From Nagasaki Fr. Mutel took ship to Marseilles, calling first at Formosa, where he met a young Lieutenant in the French Army who was later to become famous as Marshal Joffre. Years afterwards, in 1922, they were to meet again in Seoul during the latter’s Far Eastern tour.

Arrived in Paris, Fr. Mutel took over the Secretaryship of the Council and was made specially responsible for the Missions of Japan, Korea and Manchuria. He instructed the young seminarists in liturgy and dogma, and impressed everyone with the conscientious and zealous way he carried out his duties.

An ordered, disciplined life is often the condition for inner freedom. At heart Fr. Mutel remained devoted to his [page 98] late Mission; his chief joy was to receive news from Korea and hear of the great events unfolding, now that the Church was emerging into the light of day. Manifold works were being inaugurated : an orphanage, a home for aged people, a school for catechists, and the installation of the Sisters of Saint Paul, which he himself was able to arrange by negotiation with the Mother-house at Chartres. He kept in close touch with every development.

On the 21st February, 1890, Fr. Mutel received a telegram announcing the death of Bishop Blanc in Seoul Though deeply grieved at the news, he could not help wondering whether this might not perhaps be the signal for his recall to the Mission he longed to serve. In Korea likewise everyone’s thoughts turned to their beloved Fr. Mutel―surely he would return to them at such a time.

They were not to be disappointed. In August Fr. Mutel was nominated titular Bishop of Milo and Vicar Apostolic of Korea. The news was everywhere received with jubilation, though the Paris Seminary expressed much reluctance at parting with so useful a member of their staff. As for Fr. Mutel himself, he was at once overjoyed and overwhelmed. His happiness at rejoining his fellow-missionaries in Korea and sharing their life, their trials and successes, was qualified only by his concern at the heavy responsibility which would now devolve upon him. That he should serve God as a missionary in Korea was his one desire; it was henceforth to be the consolation and reward of his life.

The consecration took place at Paris in the Seminary Church on the 2lst September, 1890, in the presence of Fr. Mutel’s aged father, his brother and many other relatives and friends, as well as the two hundred and fifty seminarists. Cardinal Richard, Archbishop of Paris, officiated, consecrating the new Bishop of Mysore at the same ceremony. Immediately afterwards Bishop Mutel wrote to the missionaries and Christians of Korea, conveying his blessing and the assurance that henceforth he belonged wholly to them and to the country he held so dear. “...... I rest my hopes in the [page 99] Divine Compassion, of which I have received so many and such precious tokens, and the intercession of our Martyrs, in whom, after God, I place all my trust I hold it my duty to express this sentiment in the device I have chosen, which is: Florete Flores Martyrum…” A few days later Bishop Mutel ordained a number of young seminarists, two of whom had been selected for his own Mission and would accompany him to Korea. They embarked at Marseilles on the 14th December, after Bishop Mutel had spent a short time in Rome, and broke their journey at Singapore, in order to visit the Seminary at Penang, where some twenty Koreans were preparing to enter the priesthood. On the 19th February, 1891 they touched at Fusan, leaving again on the following day, and at length reached Chemulpo early on the 22nd. Their reception and the triumphal entry to Seoul, which took place on the evening of the 23rd, can be well imagined. The new Bishop made the journey by chair, and as he came in sight of the river Han, he beheld an immense concourse assembled on the far side to welcome him. Concealment had indeed been thrown to the winds; everywhere about the new residence, blazoned with the device : Florete Flores Martyrum, there were crowds and rejoicings. The contrast bet ween his first arrival in 1880 and his return in 1890 was almost too poignant—indeed, in after years he could never speak of the latter without emotion.

The number of missionary priests in Korea was now twenty-one and there were nearly eighteen thousand Christians. No Korean priests had yet been ordained, but forty were being prepared either at Penang or in Korea. No churches were yet built, but a magnificent site had been obtained for a future Cathedral within the walls of Seoul, and many other plans were on foot. Although he had followed these developments so closely, together with the concurrent changes in the social and political life of the people, Bishop Mutel was amazed to see the transformation which had taken place during his five years’ absence. Not only had the face of things changed; the entire outlook had [page 100] altered, for the Christians and missionaries above all, and the, country was in a state of ferment.

Dislike of innovation coupled with long-standing discontent at the rapacity of officials found expression in sporadic risings, culminating in the Tong Hak revolt of 1893-4, which precipitated the Sino-Japanese War. The Tong Hak sect had continued in existence, despite its suppression in 1864, and now became the focus for an anti-foreign revolutionary movement of such proportions that the Government was unable to offer effective resistance; an attack on Seoul was threatened, together with a general massacre of foreign residents. A great many native Christians were either murdered, or sought refuge in flight, and for a time three of the missionaries in southern Korea were in grave danger. The following is an extract from a letter written by Bishop Mutel at the height of the crisis, but before actual outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War : (Letter dated 15th June, 1894)

“.... Our Korea is at the moment going through a crisis, which would prove dangerous for any European power; yet here, as I hope, it will pass off without any specially serious, consequences. About thirty years ago, a sect was formed in the country which adopted as its badge the name of Tong Hak, i. e. Eastern Learning, in contradistinction to Catholicism, or Western Learning, and even at that time made rapid strides. This sect originally consisted of a number of scholars who were too proud to own that the Truth could come to Korea from abroad, and combined thus against the Catholics and their missionaries, the only foreigners Korea had yet seen.

“For a long while this sect was limited to a purely philosophical and learned society, but of recent years its members have felt called to purify the country from the foreign elements which were gaining a footing on Korean soil A further aim, less open, but no less real, is the overthrow of the reigning dynasty and their own rehabilitation by another, whose supporters should bear the name Chyung. [page 101] This revolution is foretold by a prophecy, according to which the Yi dynasty will not last longer than five hundred years, and this period came to an end in 1892. With the spring of 1893 the Tong Haks began their political campaign and openly published their revolutionary aims. From the southern provinces, where the party has its strongest support, they converged on the capital, threatening to expel all foreigners. With their arrival in Seoul, however, much of their bravado evaporated, and in the end they dispersed without accomplishing their object.

“During last winter the political agitation continued, especially in the province of Chulla, and the almost forgotten scholars were joined by other dissatisfied sections of the populace, those without position, the workless, and finally the general mass of the people, weary of the extortion practised by the magistrates. Orders were sent to the Governor to nip the revolt in the bud, but he promptly applied to Seoul for military support. A body of eight hundred soldiers were sent him by sea on the 6th and 7th May, and landed at the small port of Kunsan at the mouth of the Kun-kang. The rebellious populace had expected that a commission of enquiry would be sent to treat with them; when they saw that the revolt was to be put down by force, they rose en masse, and the soldiers refused to proceed without reinforcements. Four hundred men with cannon and munitions of war were accordingly sent down by sea in support Meanwhile there had already been skirmishes between the military and the insurgents, with varying fortune and some casualties on either side.

“About the 10th May a French warship, the cruiser ‘Forfait’ arrived at Chemulpo. The Commander and his officers came to Seoul and were granted an audience with the King. The former had orders to put to sea again within a few days, but on learning that there were some missionaries and numerous Christians in the disturbed province, he advised his Admiral accordingly and received instructions to remain in port.

[page 102]

“Up to the 28th May I was without news of our three missionaries in Chulla-do. I had persuaded myself that the actual situation was far less grave than one would suppose from the agitation it had caused in the capital but felt only partially reassured. Moreover, I wanted to obtain the latest news for the officers and men on the cruiser, so I telegraphed to Fr. Baudounet, who was living in the town of Chunju : ‘Quid de bello? Entisne in periculo? Responde hodie!’ I received his reply the same evening: “Bellum magnum; adhuc non sum in periculo’, and forwarded this information to the Admiral and Commander without delay They considered it advisable to stand by and continue offering their protection.

“A few days later, news came that the Tong Haks had taken possession of Chunju. Circumstances had thus quickly taken a serious turn. What had become of Fr. Baudounet? A letter arrived the day before yesterday, advising that he had fortunately been able to escape in time and had taken refuge with a Christian community in the mountains not far from the town. The other two missionaries were undisturbed, though not free from anxiety. May God protect them and their Christians! The latter are in mortal terror, having several times been menaced by the Tong Haks. The pagan inhabitants besides are scarcely more secure, and in many districts all cultivation is at a standstill.

Later. Further letters from our three missionaries in Chulla-do advising that they have so far been spared and that all danger is past,”

The merest show of force served to evict the Tong Haks from Chunju, and Fr. Baudounet was able to return to the town after an absence of only two weeks; but the position of the missionaries continued to be precarious. Bishop Mutel accordingly sent instructions to them to withdraw on Seoul; and two succeeded in reaching safety. The third, Fr. Jozeau, was murdered near Kongju on the 29th July by Chinese soldiers, both China and Japan having by this time become involved. [page 103]

In spite of the disordered state of Korea, the work of the Mission went steadily forward. In 1891 a Seminary was built at Yongsan, near the place of martyrdom; twice in later years it had to be enlarged, and finally a second Seminary was founded. Altogether sixty-four Koreans were ordained by Archbishop Mutel, and from the first he allowed no discrimination between them and his own countrymen. Without an intermediate stage they were placed in charge of mission posts after being ordained, shown every confidence, and treated indulgently—yet firmly when occasion de- manded. That this was the correct policy did not make it any the more easy to carry out; that it succeeded so admirably is a tribute to the Archbishop’s tact and judgment Not only did it make early provision for the indigenous Church of the future; it enabled gaps to be filled in the administration of up-country districts during a period of extremely rapid growth, with the number of conversions running to four and five thousand annually.

In 1893 the first church was built in the suburbs of Seoul, and work was soon begun on the Cathedral The activities of foreigners were still severely restricted : their residence outside a few Treaty-ports was forbidden and they were not allowed to set on foot commercial or other undertakings in the interior. Gradually a more liberal interpretation of these restrictions was adopted by the authorities, and permanent mission-posts were established in a few of the larger towns such as Fusan, Taiku and Pyeng Yang.

Naturally it required a great deal of circumspection to carry out the policy which such times demanded; but the new Bishop soon showed that he possessed in unusual degree the qualities of sagacity and discretion which were to make his years of office such a pronounced success. As he himself admitted : “After my day you will doubtless have more zealous Bishops, but probably none that are more wary.” By refusing to take risks he may have retarded the progress of the Mission, but he ensured its absolute security. Convinced of the necessity of laying sure foundations, he left [page 104] nothing to chance, acted always with moderation and sound judgment, and won the unbounded confidence of his mission-aries and people.

In particular Bishop Mutel saw to it that good relations were maintained with the Court, but solely with a view to safeguarding the interests of the Church. He asked for no special favours or privileges, while frankly setting the aims of the Church above all else. He refused, in spite of repeated solicitations from high quarters, to become involved in political disputes, and gave his unqualified support to the ruling authority, except where it threatened the security of the Church.

During the early years of his Vicar-ship, the Korean Court was a hotbed of intrigue. The venality of officials had long plagued the country, and now, with the arrival of the foreign concession-hunter, bribery more than ever became the recognized method of securing advantage. The King was surrounded with political and commercial schemers, ranging from Ministers of State and foreign Ambassadors to obscure Court officials and private adventurers.

From all such Bishop Mutel stood apart His distinguished appearance and familiarity with refined Korean speech cloaked no unworthy motive, were applied to no ulterior end. He wished only to pay due respect to the Sovereign and remain on friendly terms with high officials and legations. The favourable impression created by such obvious sincerity may be judged from his own brief note on his audiences with the King :

“The first time that I was granted an audience, Queen Min―later assassinated—was still living. Korean custom did not permit of her being present, but still less did feminine curiosity allow her to be entirely absent! While I was conversing with the King, standing face to face with him, I could see the Queen’s blue dress through slits in the intervening partition, and once, when I had forgotten what I had to say for the moment, I distinctly heard her asking her waiting-maids; ‘What’s that he said?’ [page 105]

“The King was pleased to have me relate in detail the infinite precautions we used to take when entering and remaining hidden in the country, and laughed good-humouredly at the particulars I gave him. When I recounted my adventures during the revolution of 1882, I thought I noticed a rustle of interest behind the partition. At the almost inevitable mention of the martyrs—I forget how it came about —the King said quickly: ‘Oh, as for that—it was not my doing!’ And indeed it was his father, the Regent, who had been responsible. This terrible Regent himself once sent me some small gifts and the message that he regretted what he had done to the Christians, and that he had been deceived!” Perhaps the most romantic episode in Archbishop Mutel’s long life was the secret conversion of the Regent’s wife, and his clandestine interviews with her during the years 1896 and 1897. His account of the matter is given below :

“In 1866 the Regent’s wife — the mother of the King- begged Bishop Berneux, some weeks before his martyrdom, to celebrate Masses for the prosperity of the kingdom. At the very time that her husband was beheading thousands of Christians, she was secretly studying her catechism, in preparation for her baptism. As soon as I returned to Korea as Bishop, she asked me to baptize her, for she had long been a Christian at heart. But it was impossible to grant her request; for in spite of her great age, she continued the household stewardship and was responsible for preparing the superstitious sacrifices.

“In the Spring of 1896, on the pretext of her great age, she at length resigned the office of mistress of the household, which then devolved upon her daughters-in-law. She be- came for good and all ‘jubilata’! She repeated her wish to be secretly baptized. It was the 11th October, and the place selected was the very humble dwelling of one of her Christian servants, Mary Ri, outside her palace but close to it

was the first to arrive after nightfall Soon afterwards the Princess arrived, carried in a chair resembling those used by the palace-women. The bearers did not know [page 106] her or suspect anything. I hid myself behind the door of the only room in the house, and when the Princess got out of the chair she was greeted as an aged relative, A pagan palace-woman accompanied her on foot When the door closed again the obeisances became deeper and more respectful. Then I was presented. Her dress was quite simple, so too was her manner; her vision was somewhat dimmed, but her hearing was very acute and her mind alert We had much to say to each other, but it was necessary to come quickly to serious business. I examined her on the prayers, which she recited as one long accustomed to them, and on Christian doctrine, with which she was quite familiar. She had been duly prepared. I baptized her as solemnly as place and circumstances permitted; a Christian, the daughter of the young King’s nurse, Susan Won, acted as Godmother. During the ceremony we heard the chair-bearers, somewhat the worse for drink, wrangling over some cash in the courtyard. Only the lattice of the door and a thin sheet of paper separated us from them.

“As I poured the baptismal water over Princes Mary’s forehead I saw what I have witnessed a thousand times—a face lighted up with a feeling of inexpressible joy. Afterwards I administered Confirmation, and this time it was her Christian servant who acted as Godmother. Further delay spelt danger. I took leave of the Princess and hid myself once more behind the door; the chair was brought forward to receive the visitor and bear her to her palace. When she was at a suitable distance I also came away.

“Next day the Princess sent someone to thank me and tell me that everything had passed without mishap, and to ask dispensation from abstinence, which she was not free to observe.

“A year later, on the 5th September 1897 to be exact, Princess Mary sent word to ask me to go and hear her Confession, also, if possible, to give her Holy Communion. This time it was decided that I should go and see her in her palace. I left in a chair at about nine p. m., bearing the [page 107] Blessed Sacrament hidden in my bosom. I was admitted by a side-gate and taken to the Christian servant’s room. When the chair had gone away, I was conducted across several courtyards to the apartments of one of the palace-women who was in the secret. On the way I nearly ran into the night-watch, which went the rounds of the palace precincts all night long, less it would seem to catch thieves than to give warning that a watch was being kept The watchmen were armed with staves fitted with movable rings and each time their staves hit the ground there was a hellish din. I was made to take shelter nearby and, as soon as the watch had passed, I resumed my way. It was a humorous thought that I was now smuggling myself into the very palace of the Regent, and on his account rather than on my own, as had formerly—thanks to him—been my wont I was made welcome at the house of an aged palace-woman; there also I found the one who had assisted at the baptism. I placed the Blessed Sacrament on a small table which had been prepared in advance, lighted a candle, and then mounted guard to wait for the Princess.

“At about half-past eleven I heard a noise in the adjoining room, and got up. The mother of the King had arrived, borne on the back of a slave; her attendants being asleep, she had availed herself of the opportunity to come unnoticed to the apartments where I was awaiting her.

“There were salutations and a few words of conversation; then the Princess asked me to hear her Confession. I did so, and after this, the prayers before Communion were read aloud to her. It was past midnight when I put on my surplice and stole, and brought forth the Blessed Sacrament I can yet see the Princess Mary kneeling to receive Communion and opposite her the Christian servant between the two pagan palace-women, all bowed and as if in ecstasy.

“Such was the First Communion of the King’s mother, eighty years of age, in the early moments of the 6th September 1897. It was also to be her last Communion. [page 108]

“I interrupted her thanksgiving for a few moments in order to take my leave and retire. I was never to see her again.

“Towards the end of the year she fell ill; for a few days her condition improved sufficiently for her to commend herself to my prayers and beg me, if possible, to make some sort of advance to the aged Regent, who was likewise very ill, in order to try and save his poor soul. I did not hear that she was any worse but on the morning of the 9th January, 1898, I was informed that she had died the previous evening.

“It was utterly impossible for me to approach her during her last hours. She knew this and was resigned to it in advance. But she had arranged with the Christian servant for the latter to remain with her until she died, and to suggest pious thoughts by means of ambiguous phrases previously agreed upon; and thus it was done.

“I considered it my duty to ask the King (Emperor since the 12th October 1897) for an audience in order to offer him my condolences and inform him myself that his mother had died a Catholic However, he had already learned this as a result of some indiscretion, and, fearing to hear such a thing mentioned before the Court, he replied that he could not see me then owing to the press of affairs at the beginning of the year, but would send for me later.

“I made similar advances to the Regent, in the hope of carrying out the dead Princess’s wishes. He thanked me effusively for my action but replied that, as he was on bad terms with his son, the Emperor, a visit on my part at such a time of serious political disturbance would be likely to harm both of us. Possibly this also was nothing but a pretext.

“I was obliged by my state of health to spend two months in Shanghai, and it was there that I heard of the Regent’s death, which took place on the 22nd February of the same year, 1898. Simultaneous State funerals were held for the Prince Regent and Princess Mary, his wife; but they were entirely pagan. Beyond the general prayers of the Holy Church, Princess Mary, after her death, had only the [page 109] humble portion of the poor: some few Masses asked for her by her Christian servants.”

Of all Bishop Mutel’s varied duties, none gave him more satisfaction than his up-country visitations. He would set off, usually in the autumn, on extensive tours, during which he worked as a plain missionary, hearing confessions, examining in doctrine, baptizing confirming and administering the Last Sacraments. The journeying was arduous: at times on foot, often by pony, or—least comfortable method of all—by chair or palanquin. A considerable distance, frequently over mountainous terrain traversed by bridle paths, had to be covered nearly every day. The “kongso” or meeting-place was usually an ordinary Korean dwelling, temporarily vacated by its owner. A board fixed to the wall served as an altar; and in fine weather, when a large number of people had assembled, the congregation overflowed into the courtyard. The work was unremitting, often continuing well into the night, and the food and lodging the poorest imaginable, usually consisting of rice or millet together with a few saucers of pickled or salted vegetables, and, for bedding, a mat on the floor and the coverlet forming part of the baggage. Finally there was little or no privacy throughout the stay at the kongso, which was continually thronged with people, men, women and children.

But in spite of the complete lack of comfort and pretentiousness, Bishop Mutel loved this work and found in it abundant spiritual consolation. There was, too, the practical side : questions of administration, facilitated by personal knowledge of the districts involved; the establishment of new mission-posts, and continual progress in many directions. However late he worked, the Bishop never failed to recite the Matins and Lauds of the succeeding day, and, as he declared so often, his supreme joy was the last pipe smoked before turning in, while chatting with a confrere.

During the early years of his Vicar-ship, the tendency was to seek out the Christian communities which had been set up in the mountains after the persecution of 1866; but [page 110]later more attention was given to the larger villages and towns, where there were fewer Christians but more chances of evangelization. Naturally journeys to the former localities were protracted and laborious—often taking as long as ten or fifteen days. But Bishop Mutel was tireless, and every year that passed saw one or other part of his immense Vicariate toured with such thoroughness that the most remote Christians were brought into contact with their Bishop.

Far better than any generalized description, the following extracts from Bishop Mutel’s diary during 1896-1897 will serve to give an impression both of the work and the way it was carried out :- \*

“Friday, 23rd October. We did not leave until 9:30 due to delay in hiring the ponies. Fr. D. accompanied me and the catechist, Joseph Cho, followed, mounted on the baggage pony

“24th October. Left at 9 o’clock. After travelling some forty li, we stopped at an inn for lunch. Towards 6:30 we reached an arm of the sea, where some Christians were awaiting us with two boats. It took an hour to cross the water. The whole village, headed by Fr. G., were assembled on the far side to receive us.

*\* In the autumn and winter of 1896-1897 Bishop Mutel toured the southwestern part of his Vicariate, especially Chulla-do. The whole trip lasted over three months, from the end of October to the end of January, during which time a large number of mission-posts and kongso’s were visited. The work of the ministry was unusually heavy, due to the large number of Catholics in the region―about eight thousand.*

*The following extracts from Bishop Mutel’s diary have been selected with a view to giving an impression of a typical up-country visitation and are not intended to present an exact record or itinerary. Consequently, many place names and other details—for example the number of baptisms, confessions, etc, which were usually noted down―have been omitted; while there has been a fair amount of editing and condensation. The whole account in its original form ran to some twenty page s of close print and has here been reduced to about one third.*

[page 111]

“26th October After recrossing the arm of the sea, we skirted the beautiful Haptek watercourse, irrigating the fine plain we were traversing. A short while before our arrival we saw on our left the village of Sinli where Mgr. Daveluy lived and where he was seized in 1866; and later, on either side, two villages which were entirely Christian until then. Nowadays—alas!—everyone in them is a confirmed pagan. The poor souls were quite terrorized by the persecution. Soon our cortege was enlarged by a company of Christians who had come to meet us, and we were over a hundred strong by the time we arrived at Yangchon, to be greeted by the sound of the church bell.

“28th October. Towards 11 o’clock we reached the ferry, and were in the town of Kongju by noon, our way passing: beneath the San-Syeng fortress, which is in a truly magnificent position. I sent my card to the Governor and asked to see him, but he sent back word that he would receive me later. The Christian, Mathias Kang, arrived during lunch, and shortly afterwards one of the Han-san prisoners, who had been bailed out by Kang. He seemed so wretched that I gave him some alms; and his wife and child rejoined him here. At about 2 p. m. I went to the Yamen and was very affably received by the Governor. He had thought I was Mgr. Blanc, who had been a neighbour of his in the Naktong quarter of Seoul and had met him occasionally. I did my best to put in a good word for the prisoners, but he told me their fate depended less on him than on the Minister of Justice, who will not listen to anyone. He offered me tea and a cigarette. I left the town by the gate leading to the ferry where poor Fr. Jozeau was murdered by the Chinese, and was shown the place of execution, the site of his tomb, and even the place where he was first buried.

“29th October. Just as we were leaving, some Christians arrived from a nearby village, bringing fruit and wine. They had come last night but, on finding thai I was already in bed, had returned home and walked the ten li again in the morning As we approached Fr. V.’s residence, Chris- [page 112] tians came from every direction to meet us, and before long Fr. V. himself with a large company. After stopping for a few minutes at a village where there were numerous Christians, we resumed our way to climb the final pass. A hundred Christians escorted us, the whole company strung out along the winding mountain path. Towards 5 o’clock we reached Toi-chai, situated in quite a large valley amidst the mountains. The church and priest’s residence were easily distinguishable by reason of their tiled roofs.

“31st October. The work of administration begins— hearing confessions all day.

“1st November. Mass at 7:30 followed by Confirmation. Christians came in crowds from places as much as fifty and sixty li distant for the Feast (All Souls’) and our rooms were crammed to overflowing all day long.

“2nd-12th November. Administering the Sacraments at Toi-chai and a number of villages and kongso’s in the same district.

“13th November. Left at 8. Route precipitous—sunken valley—wild crags. Before nightfall we reached Syeng-pul, where Frs. B. and V. took refuge at the time of the Tong Hak rising. Not far off was the cave in which they hid for fifteen days.

“21st November A Christian, John Ra, is threatened with the loss of the hill on which are his ancestral tombs, as well as those of some other Christians. He submitted a formal complaint to me, which I sent on to the local Magistrate. In the evening an express messenger arrived from Ra, all out of breath, with news that the hill was about to be desecrated. A certain Paik had made his appearance, accompanied by some of the Magistrate’s retainers and a number of pedlars, and was quite determined to inter his father’s body on the hill. On offering resistance, Ra had been hit over the head and obliged to yield to brute force. I sent some twenty Christians with a note in my own hand, and they were lucky enough to get the band of invaders to listen to reason; the latter withdrew, pending the Magis- [page 113] trate’s decision. Unfortunately the Christian who had taken the complaint to the town returned crestfallen, not having been able to deliver it

“22nd November. Administering the Sacraments all day. Towards evening we heard that Paik had himself gone to the town and obtained from the Magistrate a warrant for John Ra’s arrest the interment on the hill being reserved for litigation. Lies count for nothing with pagans: the warrant for Ra’s arrest states that he armed himself with a sword and used violence to prevent the burial, whereas Ra is the one who has suffered injury—and is quite badly hurt about the head and face.......... Next day we sent a servant to present our cards to the Magistrate and explain the whole affair to him.

“29th-30th November. Journeying to Chunju. We walked along the southern and western walls, where a great deal of destruction had taken place during the Tong Hak rebellion in 1894. A number of houses were in ruins.

“1st December. After an exchange of cards, we went to pay a call on the Governor at about 3:30. A rather commonplace interview ensued, the Governor shouting at the top of his voice—no doubt to give himself more confidence. On leaving, we paid a call at the barracks, where the entire provincial garrison of four hundred soldiers were stationed—all equipped in European style. We had to wait a long time for the table of wine which the two commanders wished to set out in our honour.

“3rd December At about 2 p. m. we climbed a small hill overlooking the town, from which we could see every detail to perfection. The town is square in shape, though slightly larger from north to south. The north-east corner is uninhabited, containing only some pavilions where archery is practised A river flows from south to north, at some distance from the walls however. The population was estimated at thirty thousand before the time of the Tong Haks, as many living outside the walls as inside, but must [page 114] now be anpreciably lower. The town is encircled by mountains on every side but the north-west, where there is a river-valley. We had arrived by this route.

“5th-6th December. Two very tiring days due to the large number of Christians to whom we had to minister.

“7th December. Today we fell in with a band of otter- hunters, carrying on their traditional calling and living largely at the expense of neighbouring villages, under the pretext of being Government hunters—which of course is a complete falsehood......

“9th December. Left for the next kongso, forty li distant First a big mountain, then the town of Changsu, and at length the new community of Pem-yeng-teng, a village comprising some twenty houses. There are Christians in fourteen or fifteen and Rood hopes of converting the rest Great fervour and devotion to the Faith—we should have a score of adult baptisms here. W have a large room, newly done up, and a still larger one for the women; but the walls are already crumbling due to the cold weather and the wind is up to his old tricks all through the house

“11th December, Last night there were eighteen adult baptisms and two more tonight, and, besides, several catechumens have come forward for instruction. There are great hopes throughout this district.

“12th December. We left by the same road. In the neighbouring villages everyone, man or woman, was outside to see us pass. This evening two brothers, both getting on for sixty, came from thirty li distant to make their avowal of the Faith, and—more remarkable—the elder had previously done his best to prevent his son studying Christianity.

“13th-15th December. Three days of ministration. About two hundred confessions heard and twenty adults baptized.

“16th December. More than a foot of snow fell during the night and we had to work round a mountain to reach the [page 115] next kongso, where the Christians from six small villages round about had assembled to receive the Sacraments. Ten years ago the village was entirely pagan, but now there are Christians in all but a single household. In 1887 the recent converts had to undergo a real persecution at the hands of the soldiery; but now the Christian are masters of the position.

“18th December. Last day here. The kongso house is quite well built and serves as a school, but the room is rather small and dark.

“19th December. Departure. After travelling thirty li, we reached the town of Chinan, where we lunched. It was thawing and the roads were very slippery. All the way Christians from the nearer villages came to meet us. We made a detour to avoid a mountain whose slopes would have been dangerous, and night had fallen before we reached the kongso. There a Christian fresh from Seoul told us that a formidable plot against the King has been discovered and a hun-dred people arrested, including several close relatives of the Minister of Justice.

“21st December. Weather cold. Baptism of a lad aged fifteen who was well prepared ana seemed very frank and charming. I gave him my own name.

“22nd December. On our way down the mountain we stopped at a village where Fr. B. administered the Last Sacraments to a sick person........ Later, at the inn, we were met by Christians from Chunju and twenty li farther away, and still more came to meet us in chairs or on horseback........ Letters from Seoul: there has been a plot right enough, but it is no clearer than that A letter from Fr. R. advised that Augustine and Kim Kyeng have been falsely accused and arrested, but some Christians had already told me this and added that Fr. R. had been able to obtain their release, so there was no cause for concern.

“23rd December. The Christians wanted to defray the cost of a chair, so we had to resign ourselves to getting a leg-ache. After twenty li our cortege had become quite [page 116] considerable: five or six horses or donkeys and nearly two hundred Christians. Fr. L. met us on the way, and at length we reached the church at Syou-ryou, where Fr. V. has been since Monday, administering the Sacraments.

“24th December. Today we heard about two hundred confessions. It is impossible to satisfy all the people, many of whom have come a great distance for the Feast About six hundred Christians were present, of whom four hundred recived Holy Communion, half at Midnight Mass and half at the morning Mass

“26th December. Left with Fr. L. for the next kongso, about thirty li distant There we found aged Christians and some irregularities: the son of one catechist and the father of another have got a bad name for themselves. We gave the best advice we could. A woman received the Sacraments for the first time since 1866.

“30th December. It snowed all night but was fine in the morning. ........ After travelling twenty li, I had to get into a chair sent by the next kongso. The bearers had great difficulty in progressing due to the snow and mud To bed at eleven o’clock after hearing confessions.

“31st December. Only a few Christians here. The kongso house is new and damp so we had to spend the night elsewhere. We wished each other a happy New Year and Fr. L. wanted to treat me to a small glass of Mass wine. This year I am at least dispensed from New Year’s Day calls, but my heart is with all my family—both temporal and spiritual in their good resolutions.

“4th January. Roads pretty bad. Two mountains, one of which was very steep, so that we had to put on Korean shoes to avoid slipping during the descent I have aching limbs and a touch of fever tonight Weather very warm.

“5th Januarys Southerly winds blowing in gusts and rain all day. The village is a small one and the Christians who have come here to receive the Sacraments are much put out at having to stay in it. [page 117]

“7th January. Left at 8:30. Once more we had to resign ourselves to travelling by chain In spite of yesterday’s rain the roads were good and we crossed the pass in no time. On our way we noticed a Miryek in the form of a sage, three or four metres high. Today’s journey was about one hundred li during which one hundred torches were burned. The neighbourhood is well wooded and tigers are common. Not far away a Christian child aged thirteen was killed by one, and similar tragedies are not infrequent.

“8th-9th January. Hearing confessions till late at night Extremely tired.

“11th January. The alarm-clock failed us, so we did not get up until 6:20 a. m. While Fr. L. was celebrating Mass, I had the unusual opportunity of watching the sun rise and checked my watch by it Old Ryu, aged eighty-eight is still living, and came to say good-bye after receiving the Sacraments. He travelled here on foot―over ten li across a pass—and is returning the same way.

“15th January. Several showers of cold rain. Roads muddy and difficult Lunch at 3 p. m. at the town of Tai-in. Raining―room cold and rice full of grits. Left at 4:40. My mapu and the Christians accompanying me had a quarrel with the inn-people, who refused us torches. Later on someone told me that the mapu had been injured and was being detained by a, petty Magistrate. Fr. L. went back with my servant to see what was going on, and soon fell in with the mapu, who had lost his hat and headband, but had secured some of the staves with which the inn-people had beaten him, and was dragging along an individual he had succeeded in capturing. Soon after reaching our destination, a messenger arrived and offered explanations and excuses for the incident at the inn.

“17th January. My servant set off, taking with him our cards to present to the Magistrate, for he has to explain the affair at the inn. Cold rain and, towards night, snow. My servant returned, having seen the Magistrate, who was a trifle indisposed, but promised to look into the matter.

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“18th January. Bitterly cold and we did not leave till about 11. At Chun-pul there was a rather fine Buddhist monastery. Fr. B. was awaiting us at an inn twenty li from Chunju and we had to proceed by the inevitable chairs.

“21st-22nd January. Confirmations. A fairly heavy snowfall—we shall have difficult roads and cold weather for the return journey.

“23rd January. Started at about 9 a and by 5 p. m. we had reached the kongso at the foot of Mt. Kyeiryong-san. Many confessions and baptisms—the whole village of twenty-five households is more or less Christianized, but they complain of ill-treatment by the Magistrate. I had thought the latter friendly, but he does not seem to set much store by my visit, for he has gone away to his country house, although (or maybe because) he knew when I should be passing through.

“25th January. Departure for Seoul, via Kongju and Suwon, the whole journey occupying over three days.

“28th January. Weather still cold. On reaching the ferry, I found Fr. D. there, returning from Sori-san. I reached my house at about 4 p. m. From the time I passed through the South Gate, I had the satisfaction of seeing the cross surmounting the Cathedral—the scaffolding around the steeple had been removed that same morning.”

During the years that intervened between the Sino-Japanese War (1894-5) and the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5), the progress of the Church in Korea was checked only by disturbances incidental to the disorderly state of the country. It was natural that Christians should ask the advice and assistance of their pastors when oppressed by the civil authorities, ana inevitable that the latter should resent interference, especially from an alien source. Furthermore, there were always a number of individuals who used a nominal allegiance to Christianity for their own ends and sought to implicate the missionaries in private squabbles. Bishop Mutel was frequently obliged to apply to the relevant authorities in Seoul for the redress of all manner of abuses and griev- [page 119] ances, and, however gracious his reception, was seldom able to obtain complete satisfaction. For one thing, he did not possess the patience necessary for oriental methods of diplomacy―he was direct and forthright where success could be attained only by suppleness and persistence; for another, the central government exercised little effective control over the provinces and could only ensure enforcement of its authority by despatching police forces or troops, measures which were at once costly and liable to produce worse disorders.

In May 1901 a serious uprising occurred in Quelpart, and some hundreds of Christians were massacred in the riots and mob-action that ensued. It was a time of grave anxiety for the Bishop and the whole Mission, while the two missionary priests on the island were in great danger until finally rescued by some French warships sent to their aid. Mr. W. F. Sands, Foreign Adviser to the Korean Court, who visited the island shortly after the outbreak, summarized the causes of the trouble as follows in a letter to the “Korea Review’’ in August 1901 :—

“The facts of the matter are that the Catholic Mission in Quelpart has had an extraordinarily rapid growth in the past two years, and where before that time there was hardly a Christian in the island, at the time of the massacre there was hardly a village which had not a certain number. The official servants and yamen-runners, who before had exacted what they pleased of the people, found that this was no longer possible with those who had become Christians. The priests stood between them and oppression...... It is possible that many people joined the Mission who had not its best interests at heart, because of the protection they received. This, however, is common an occurrence in every mission throughout the East, and is so well known to you gentlemen in your mission work that no comment is necessary.”

Two years later serious disorders broke out in Whanghai Province in northern Korea. Here again the same causes were at work, and the actions of irresponsible individuals [page 120] gravely embarrased the Mission and led to friction with the civil authorities.

Bishop Mutel greatly regretted such incidents and absolutely condemmed provocative behaviour on the part of his followers. Considering their pagan background, their many years of persecution, and the human tendency to “get one’s own back”, it is perhaps surprising the Christians in general showed so much restraint. For not only had they been granted freedom to practise their religion; they were backed by strong missionary bodies, and the Catholics in particular were tremendously proud of their Bishop and his nation-wide prestige.

A great change came over the situation with the close of the Russo-Japanese Wan The gradual Japanization of the country saw the introduction of improved methods of law enforcement and the eradication of many glaring injustices and corrupt practices. Bishop Mutel had always set his face against any interference on the part of his missionaries with the civil administration, against “playing at being Magistrate” as it was called, though there were occasions when action of some sort seemed imperative unless local abuses and tyranny were to proceed unchecked; with the establishment of more effective legal and police control, he now forbade any connection with civil or political affairs and himself refused to intervene except where a case had some general import As time went on, his contacts with officialdom became purely formal.

With the reduction in size and importance of the foreign colony, which was another effect of the Russo-Japanese War, Bishop Mutel was able to withdraw progressively from such polite formalities as were still observed. In 1910 Korea ceased to be an independent State even in name, and the official functions which had been such a feature of life in the days of the archaic Court and the foreign Legations finally came to an end. Henceforth a few official calls and an occasional reception given by the Governor-General would mark the limits of social obligation. [page 121]



There had been some ten thousand Catholics in Korea at the time of Bishop Mutel’s first arrival in 1880; by his return in 1890 the number had risen to nearly eighteen thousand; and by 1904 there were close on sixty thousand. Bishop Mutel realised that it was time to share the work with others and successively arranged for the German Benedictines to take up teaching work in Seoul in 1908; for a division of territory in 1911, the four southern provinces forming the new Vicariate of Taiku under Bishop Demange; and for further divisions in 1920 and 1927, when the German Benedictines under Bishop Sauer and the American Mary-knoll Fathers under Bishop Byrne respectively took over administration of the four northern provinces. More than sufficient work remained in the Vicariate of Seoul, for the five central provinces constituted an enormous territory which it was Bishop Mutel,s constant aim to treat more and more intensively.

By the year 1920, in spite of the interruption of the Great War, during which over a third of the French missionaries were recalled, there were nearly sixty thousand Catholics in the Vicariate of Seoul alone; and Bishop Mutel petitioned the Pope to allow him a Coadjutor. On Bishop Devred being assigned to this post, Bishop Mutel made over a great part of the work of the Mission—and all the honour and glory thereof―to the younger man, on whom he placed the greatest reliance. Himself he withdrew more and more as he was able to find time for the life of solitude and prayer he preferred.

The year 1920 also marked the thirtieth anniversary of Bishop Mutel’s consecration as Vicar Apostolic. The occasion was duly celebrated in the presence of seventy priests, of whom thirty were Koreans, ordained by the Bishop himself. In the following year Bishop Mutel was created a Roman Count and Assistant to the Pontifical Throne.

The next few years were a time of unusual happiness and toil, for once more Bishop Mutel was able to devote [page 122] much of his attention to the cause of the martyrs. It will be recalled that the process had been opened in 1882, the first session taking place on the 11th May; altogether one hundred and twenty-one sessions were held, Bishop Mutel presiding over the first eighty-six. The only circumstance preventing closure of the process was the continued inaccessibility of the State archives, which were known to contain valuable testimony in the form of records of the judicial procedure relating to the martyrdoms. However, in May 1899, Bishop Mutel finally abandoned hope of obtaining further evidence and authorized official termination of the process. The completed documents were accordingly sealed and despatched to Rome.

With the annexation of Korea by Japan in 1910, there seemed again some hope of being allowed to consult the archives, and at length, through the good offices of the Chosen Government-General, Bishop Mutel was granted access to them and permitted to study and transcribe as desired. Thanks to his knowledge of the Chinese character, the Bishop was thus enabled to translate in full the indictments, reports of trials, sentences and decrees of the Courts of Justice during the persecutions of 1839, 1846 and 1866, together with the Royal Edict of 1881 and other particulars bearing on the suppression and persecution of Christianity. He would set off early each morning, taking with him his lunch, and spend the entire day laboriously deciphering the Chinese text, returning in the evening when the Hall of the Archives was closed for the night He had become a schoolboy again, he remarked, and it made him feel younger every day.

His work provided much valuable evidence for the final General Congregation in Rome, which was held on the 18th March 1924 in the presence of His Holiness Pius XI, and created a very favourable impression. In the following May it was announced that the Beatification of seventy-nine out of the eighty-two martyrs whose cause bad been under examination would be proceeded with; and the celebration [page 123] took place at St Peter’s in Rome on the 5th July, 1925, both Bishops Mutel and Demange assisting.

The ceremony began at 10 o’clock with the reading of the Papal proclamation, in the presence of the Cardinals of the Sacred College of Rites and a large assembly of clergy. At its completion, everyone rose; the paintings representing the martyrdoms were unveiled; and the bells of the Basilica pealed forth to announce the glorious Beatification of the Martyrs of Korea. Solemn High Mass was then celebrated. At 6 o’clock in the evening, the Sovereign Pontiff entered the Vatican Basilica in full panoply, accompanied by eighteen Cardinals. After adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, the hymn of the martyrs was sung, followed by the Orison proper to the new Blessed, intoned by Bishop Mutel; and the proceedings came to an end with Benediction, also celebrated by Bishop Mutel, and presentation to the Pope of a beautiful reliquary containing relics of the martyrs.

On the following day Bishops Mutel and Demange were granted an audience with the Pope, and presented to his Holiness a precious souvenir of great historical interest: the original letter―a fine piece of Chinese calligraphy comprising over thirteen thousand characters on silk—sent to the Bishop of Pekin in 1801 by the Korean scholar Alexander Wang, petitioning aid for the Church of Korea.\*

The account of the Beatification of the Martyrs has been given in some detail for the reason that it marked the great triumph of Bishop Mutel’s life. He had worked for this almost above all else from his earliest years as a missionary; it was his greatest ambition thus to glorify God and ennoble the Church of Korea; and he was filled with happiness at its consummation. Some idea of the way he had identified himself with the cause may be gained from the following letter which he wrote at the time for publication:

\* Excerpts from this letter, together with an account of its composition, discovery and the execution of Wang, will be found in Dallet’s “Histore de l’Eglise de Coree”, Vol. I. pp. 200-208.

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“I have been a missionary to Korea since 1877, and for thirty-five years Bishop and Vicar Apostolic of this country which I love with my whole soul. I have known, and know, the children, the grand-children and the great-grand-children of the martyrs of 1839 and 1846. I have dwelt in the towns and villages where many of these confessors of the Faith were born, lived and were arrested by their persecutors. I have visited the prisons and courts which were the scenes of their sufferings and their heroism. I have knelt on the soil which was watered by their blood: in the mud by the Little West Gate and upon the sands of Sai-nam-te. I have endeavoured to walk the hills and valleys where passed the Blessed Imbert, Bishop of Capse, and his two missionaries, the Blessed Maubant and Chastan, whose apostolate prepared the way for the Bishops and Priests executed in 1866.

“Today I see these martyrs of nearly a century ago raised to the altars of the Church, offered to the veneration of the entire world by the representative of Jesus Christ Their triumph is the great happiness of my life. My God, I render thanks from a full heart for this very great joy, this glorious halo with which the Korea Mission is crowned......”

The two Bishops were on their way back to Korea in 1926 when they received a telegram announcing the death of Bishop Devred, Coadjutor. It was an occasion for Bishop Mutel to manifest that perfect trust and resignation which marked his everyday life; Bishop Devred had been as his own right hand—for six years the work of the Mission had been left almost entirely to his direction; but Bishop Mutel had no time for vain regrets. The news came after he had retired for the night, and he remained awake for only a few minutes. Thereafter his one idea was to get back and resume his position at the helm.

In 1925 Bishop Mutel was made a Chevalier of the Legion of Honour, and in 1926 he was created Archbishop. He let it be understood that these distinctions were not a [page 125] matter of indifference to him, more especially as he saw in them an honour for the Church of Korea.

On the 1st May 1927 Mgr. Larribeau was consecrated Bishop and Coadjutor; and next day the Archbishop’s golden judilee was celebrated. In a brief address Bishop Demange outlined the half-century of work and achievement that was being commemorated : first the brief delay at Tonkin and the longer period of preparation in Manchuria; then the life of seclusion, which the missionaries of that time were compelled to lead—of concealment during the day and work for their Ministry during the night; and finally the return to take command, since when none but God knew what work had been accomplished for the Church which had suffered such persistent persecution. The flourishing state of the Mission was manifest to all: a strongly constituted native clergy; Christians in such numbers and organization that three separate Vicariates had become necessary; churches and residential buildings; schools, orphanages, etc.; the whole crowned by the glory of the martyrs recently beatified. It was an enduring monument.

Nearly six years remained to the Archbishop, and they passed tranquilly enough; The perils and anxieties of earlier times had been succeeded by a period of steady expansion and consolidation. The Benedictine Abbey at Wonsan had just been opened and an increasing number of German and American priests were arriving to take over the work of evangelization. The impression that Archbishop Mutel made on all who knew him during these last years was deep and lasting. Even to appearance, he was august and saintly, a commanding figure, a great presence; while to those who lived and worked with him, had experience of his courtesy and kindliness, and saw how he was ruled by faith and discipline, he set an inspiring example. A few words of frank appreciation, written by a colleague after his death, convey something of the charm of his personality, without which this memoir would be incomplete : [page 126]

“……Everyone felt drawn to him, those who had not met him by what they had heard; those who knew him to enjoy his company and conversation once more. Right up to the last his mind remained active, his gestures lively and his whole bearing expressive. The ‘mot juste’ was ever at his command; yet he was always simple, never commonplace. All of the many visitors he had came away with a vivid and always favourable impression; naval officers, travellers and missionaries, all repeated the words of the Principal at Langres : A most distinguished Bishop.

“……He accepted the great constraints and afflictions of daily life with resignation, and was always pleasant and cheerful in converse. His missionaries might enter his house at any time of the day—he was at their service. If he were reading his breviary, he would close it smartly forthwith, and put himself at their disposal His profound charity showed itself thus naturally in much of his behaviour, which was always marked by forbearance, delicacy and tact;—by humility, too, for as often as his work permitted, he took pleasure in caring for such of his missionaries as were ill, rendering the least service without hesitation. How good he was, and understanding of human weakness, always ready to excuse others! How simple, too, and affable, even to the younger members and servants of the household, asking rather than commanding them, wanting as little as possible, and greatly appreciating their smallest services! The effect of all this — and the portrait is far from complete ― was to make him a personage truly great in his simplicity. No one made any mistake about it: priests and lay Christians alike experienced towards him feelings of affection and veneration whose depth and sincerity could hardly be exaggerated.

“It would be a serious omission to leave out mention of the great love which Mgr. Mutel always had for the ritual of worship. His faith always showed itself most strikingly therein. He celebrated Mass with incomparable dignity and [page 127] mastery, and arranged all ceremonies with great care, out of respect for their significance.”

In March 1932 Archbishop Mutel entered his eightieth yean His health remained good and his spirits were excellent; but as the year wore on, those around him noticed that he was somehow not quite his old self. But the work of the Mission continued. On the 17th December Archbishop Mutel ordained two deacons and five priests, bringing the total number of Korean priests ordained since 1896 up to ninety-three, all in the Vicariates of Seoul and Taiku. He presided at Midnight Mass on Christmas Day, and his intonation of the Last Blessing was specially remarked. His voice was strong and true as ever, but more than usually significant, for, as he later told from his death-bed, he had felt quite sure that it was the last occasion on which he would pronounce the Pontifical Blessing, and he had put his whole soul into it.

The Foreign Missions Society of Paris has allotted to each of its Missions certain hours on days fixed throughout the year, during which the priests of the appointed Mission take it in turn to pray before the Blessed Sacrament By this means the Society ensures a continuous intercession of God by its members all over the world. The time prescribed for the missionaries in Seoul was every Thursday morning, when each priest spent half an hour in the Cathedral, taking part in the ‘‘perpetual prayer”. To Mgr. Mutel had been assigned the period from 9 to 9:30 a. m.

Thursday, the 12th January, was bitterly cold (-18°C.) with a north wind. Devotion to duty, as remarked earlier, was a great characteristic of Archbishop Mutel, and it was a matter of course for him to go to the Cathedral at the appointed time. He remained long in prayer, despite the extreme cold. On returning to his room, he mentioned that he had caught a chill and thought he might have influenza, like two of his priests.

The next day he was worse, but would not change his usual routine. On Saturday the 15th his breathing had be- [page 128] come laboured and some anxiety was felt by his colleagues. A doctor was sent for and diagnosed severe bronchial congestion.

Still faithful to his rule, and not wishing to put anyone out, the Archbishop presided at supper as usual, but would only partake of a little soup, and retired to his room immediately afterwards, thus breaking his invariable custom of spending some time in recreation with his priests in order to ensure their own relaxation. He found himself unable to breathe when lying down and rose at midnight, passing the remainder of the night in his arm-chair.

On Sunday morning he celebrated Mass, but with great difficulty, being convinced—as he revealed later—that it was his last Mass, and wishing to offer one more Mass for the benefactors of the Mission and the souls entrusted to his care. Afterwards, his condition grew rapidly worse, and he was obliged to take to his bed. The Sisters of St Paul were called in for day and night nursing; but in spite of their care and the closest medical attention, pneumonia set in, and his suffering increased.

From the beginning of his illness, Archbishop Mutel had no illusion as to the outcome. He felt himself mortally ill, and repeatedly urged that he be given the Last Sacraments without too much delay. He summoned his Confessor and reviewed the whole of his long life with the frankness and simplicity of a child.

On Tuesday the 17th January, Archbishop Mutel renewed his profession of faith in the presence of all the clergy of Seoul as well as a number of catechists and other religious and received the Sacred Viaticum and Extreme Unction from the hands of his Coadjutor, Bishop Larribeau. Thereupon, in as loud a voice as his difficult breathing permitted, he blessed God for all the graces he had received, and especially this last―precious above all—of having time to prepare himself for his last journey. Then he bade all present adieu and gave them his blessing. [page 129]

Archbishop Mutel expected his end would come more quickly than it did, and it was almost a disappointment for him to continue living through the remainder of the week. He offered up his suffering for the conversion of sinners and pagans, rather than for himself—if indeed that thought ever occurred to him. Those around him said: ‘‘Monseigneur, say: ‘My God, I offer it to Thee’,” and his usual reply was simply: “Yes, yes (Bien, bien),” as though it were a matter of course. But one day his suffering was more severe, and he replied to the same suggestion: “Ah, yes―and many times over (Oh oui! a la 36 eme puissance!),” so that all present were deeply moved. His last night— from Sunday the 22nd to Monday the 23rd—was particularly distressful, and he obtained no rest at all At three o’clock he was unable to remain in bed any longer, even though he was not lying down, and got up by himself to sit in his armchair. “You are suffering a good deal?” said Bishop Larribeau. who was with him. “Yes, indeed; how hard it is to die! (Oh oui! Comme c’ est dur de mourir.)” He returned to his bed before six o’clock and did not leave it again. At half-past nine it was all over. His agony had been very short, and he had fully retained consciousness until almost the very end.

The body was re-clothed in the pontificals and carried to the Cathedral crypt, where, in spite of the cold, prayers were offered up continuously until it was time for the funeral to take place, on Tuesday, the 26th, at half-past nine.

As soon as news of the death began to spread, expressions of sympathy began to pour in from every quarter, testifying to the universal esteem in which the Archbishop was held. For many years he had been profoundly revered by all Christians, without exception, and all hastened to pay their last respects.

The sentiments of Catholics for their Bishop were largely shared by all those who had known him, even though they were not of the same Faith: English and American Protestants, Korean and Japanese pagans. His Excellency the [page 130] Governor-General, who had made frequent enquiries and presented a basket of flowers “to rejoice the Monseigneur’s eyes,” sent condolences as soon as he received word of his death, and was officially represented at the funeral Other members of the Government-General were present at the ceremony, in spite of the intense cold (-20°C.). as well as the French Consul—in full-dress uniform—the British and American Consuls, and numerous members of the foreign community of Seoul.

After Mass, celebrated by Bishop Demange, and the five ritual Absolutions, the procession to the cemetery took place, Bishop Larribeau acting as chief mourner, accompanied by Archbishop Chambon, Bishops Demange, Blois, Gaspais, Sauer, Breton, and the Apostolic Prefect of Pyeng-yang, seventy-three priests, and the Christians of the three parishes of the town, as well as many representatives from other parts of the country. The whole procession was more than half a mile in length, and the route to the cemetery extended over five miles. The spectacle was truly impressive and worthy of the great prelate it commemorated, who himself had been such an impressive figure. In the words of his friend and successor:

“His body lies among those of his colleagues, whom he knew one and all, in the place chosen by him; but we doubt not that his soul already has its reward.”

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Note : The results of Archbishop Mutel’s researches in the Korean Strate archives were published by the Societe des Missions- Etrangeres as follows :

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