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JAPAN

Korea

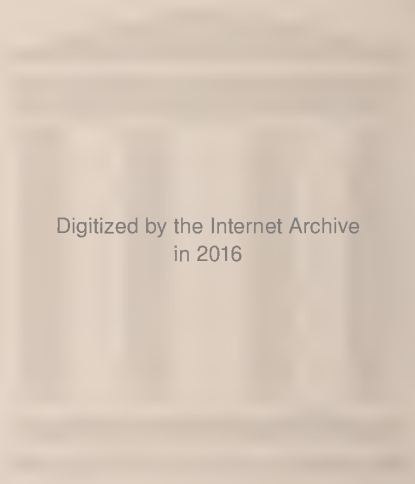
No.

Successes and Opportunities  
in Evangelizing the World

# Korea

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# Successes and Opportunities in Korea.

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## A STRIKING COUNTRY AND PEOPLE

THE peninsula empire occupies about eighty-five thousand square miles of mountainous and well-watered territory. Here live ten millions of Koreans, speaking one language and holding to the same traditions and history and the same forms of religion. There are but four large cities in the land—Seoul, Songdo, Pyengyang, and Taiku—embracing only one twentieth of the population, the Korean people being altogether agricultural in their occupations. We are laboring among a nation of farmers.

These people hold to three general forms of religion: Confucianism, the state religion; Buddhism, which shorn of its power and grandeur is now fallen into decay; and Shamanism or spiritualistic nature worship, the popular cult of the common people, holding them in abject bondage to dark superstitions, degrading practices, and insane fears and fancies.

In character the Korean people are naturally

friendly. To those who inspire them with respect and confidence they are the soul of generous hospitality. The Koreans are intellectually inclined; the national ideal is the scholar. Whereas in China the cast of mind is commercial, giving us a nation of merchants, and in Japan it is military, giving us a nation of warriors, in Korea it is literary, giving us a nation of thinkers. The Koreans are conservative. Conservatism is characteristic of age, and the Koreans are an old nation. At the time when our ancestors were wild savages, wandering in the forests of northern Europe clad in skins, practicing rites, holding to superstitions and living amid conditions far worse than those which prevail in Korea to-day, Korea had its king and government and had begun its existence as an independent people. That was three thousand years ago. For three thousand years they have walked those mountain slopes and along the river banks; for three thousand years they have toiled and struggled, seeking, hoping, despairing of a coming day. But there are bright spots of light and beauty in the picture. Let us look at some of them.

#### SUCCESSSES OF CHRISTIAN MISSIONS IN KOREA

Twenty-five years ago Korea was an unknown land. It had its place on the map, but its coasts were unsurveyed, its rivers unexplored, and the names of its cities unknown. No treaties with Christian nations existed; no commerce brought wealth to the people; no travelers visited the country, and the outside world was equally unknown to the Korean. He had heard of the white man and even seen a few specimens of that race, most of whom he had promptly killed and thrown to the dogs and ravens to eat. He had seen enough to convince him that the white man was a wild, thiev-

ing savage, whose language sounded like the twittering of sparrows and the chatterings of magpies, whose customs and ideas were immoral and blasphemous, whose costume and appearance were diabolical, and whose religion was the sum of all villainies.

### BARRIERS OVERCOME

This was the Korean's idea of the white man, written in his laws and literature and deep-grained in his nature. Two short decades ago America led the way in opening up Korea diplomatically, Christian missions immediately followed to put an end forever to such conditions as I have described, and in the van, commanding one wing of the advance guard, was our own Methodist Church. Missionaries were sent to found the work, and what a task confronted them!

They had to wrest from a pagan government and an antagonistic populace the right to reside within the borders of the land, to travel, study, teach, and convert; they had to face the peril and danger of the plague and pestilence, the sea, the mountains, and lonely places, the mob, robbers, wild beasts, and savage men. They had to master a barbarous tongue and make it the servitor of Christ, a language so perverse that one has said he doubted if a man could speak the truth with it. They had to stand firm and unflinching amid the loneliness and desolation of their situation. They did it. They built over against the institutions of heathenism the institutions of Christ. They set up the altar of the true God in the midst of the myriad altars of false gods; they cried forth into the noise, confusion and babble of false ideas and wild superstitions the eternal truth of God in Christ Jesus; and in eighteen years the prejudices and antagonism of ten millions of people three

thousand years deep in their heathenism have been conquered, and in their place friendly relations established. I submit that were this all we had to show it would be enough for the first eighteen years of lahor.

### VANTAGE POINTS GAINED

But not only have we secured for ourselves the right to work, but a revolution has been established in the thought and attitude of the people toward Christ such as has taken centuries to produce in other lands. Christianity has been vindicated from the base calumnies with which it was slandered. The laws in the penal code which denounce death to all who embrace our religion have been rendered a dead letter. From looking upon it as a religion fit only for barbarians and savages the lordly Confucianist cries out in amazement, "Your Christ is as great as our Sage!" One of the most honored and ablest statesmen of Korea said to me: "Go on with your teaching; Christianity is destined shortly to be Korea's religion. For three hundred years our land has not produced a really great expounder or exemplifier of the Confucian cult. We possess only the shadow of it. We are a land without religion, and Christianity must be accepted by us."

It rests with us to say whether Christianity when it is accepted by Korea shall be Roman and sacramental or evangelical and biblical in form. The attitude of the people has changed. Though they persecute and oppose our converts, they do it not because they think Christianity bad, but because they look upon our converts as traitors to their ancestors. They know Christianity is good. They expect its final triumph. Their attitude is one of anticipation.

## THE CHURCH FOUNDED

The foundations were laid when our Lord Christ shed his blood on Calvary's brow and opened to Koreans the gates of life. They were laid when God's Spirit moved his servants in America to send to Korea the banner of the world-conquering cross. In the human and temporal sense they have been deeply, solemnly laid during the past two decades. From among that populace with many a Saul breathing out threatenings and slaughter against Christ there have come Pauls who have become glorious workmen for Christ, building up his kingdom throughout the Korean empire. Fifteen years ago we reported our first membership—thirty-eight converts. To-day a host of seven thousand Methodists are enrolled in our churches, eager, earnest, and consecrated, and at their head stand four ordained ministers of the Gospel.

## THE BIBLE AND PRAYER HAVE THE RIGHT OF WAY

The Korean Church is a Bible-loving Church. Most of our male converts and a large per cent of the women can read. I once met an old man who had been converted at the age of seventy-two years. The frequent services through the week did not satisfy him. His heart was so full of love for God's word that he wished to read it for himself. He was ignorant of letters, yet at that advanced age this old man learned to read in order that he might be able to see for himself the glories of God in his word. Another old man named Mathew Yi was known never to be without a copy of the Bible in his hand, except when eating or sleeping. Our people love the Bible.

Wherever in the world you find the Bible loved

and honored, there you will find the family altar also, and so it is with the Korean. As a heathen he is, as Paul said of the Athenians, "too religious." Before the light of Christ dispels his darkness he peoples his home with specter demons. They perch on the beams and nest in the ceiling and walls; they enshrine themselves in the parlor, the kitchen, and the shed; they hide in the floor and the chimney. The Korean without Christ spends his life amid these death-shadows. But the Christian Korean erects in his home the family altar, and the darkness and gloom vanish, the dead shadows flee away, and in their train go many a superstition, many a cruel practice. The family altar stands for a Christian home, and a Christian home means love, sympathy, and cooperation. It means wife raised from the position of a servant and toy to that of a helpmeet and a companion. It means one wife and purity, not many wives and dehauchery. To-day in thousands of homes in the valleys and on the hill-slopes of Korea there are family altars where husband and wife and children gather in daily prayer for divine grace and guidance, and a heavenly Shekinah shines forth and changes a mud hut into a temple to the only living and eternal God.

#### THE KOREAN CHURCH AN ACTIVE CHURCH

From the very first the convert is more than a church member, he is a worker for Christ. He may be only an ignorant, untutored, uncouth farmer, but he knows and possesses something his neighbors have not, and he presses it home on them. There is an impulse within him to work for Christ. His soul is energized with new and glorious forces. He would not keep silent if he could, and he could not if he would. His heathen



neighbors will not permit him to remain inactive. From the day he publicly renounces heathenism by burning his fetiches and idols on the plot in front of his house he is a marked man. His neighbors attack him and his new beliefs, and he must defend them and prove their truth or surrender at discretion and go back to heathenism. He is strengthened by this process, and his testimony to his neighbors backed up by a changed life is powerful, because he speaks in the language and ideas with which they are familiar. Thus through this one man Christianity obtains a foothold in some heathen village; a few others join this first convert; they grow in grace, knowledge, and numbers. The first convert is recognized by the missionary as the class reader. Some baptisms take place. By the time their numbers reach twelve or fifteen families they put up a building especially for worship. It is not very beautiful in architecture or material. Like the houses of the believers, it may have mud walls and thatched roofs and paper windows, but it is their church! And I will tell you one thing about it: It is always just a little better than the houses of the converts. It is consecrated to God, and here they worship, and who shall say it is not as precious and beautiful in the eyes of the all-seeing Father as the costliest fane ever erected by the poured-out treasure of Christendom?

#### FROM AN OX TO A CHICKEN

And what is the result? Heathenism vanishes away. Dr. Noble tells of a hamlet of sixty families where we got a footing, and in the course of a short time forty families became Christians. Previously they had a yearly sacrifice to the demons, in which an ox was offered. But this year Chris-

tianity had made such inroads on the numbers of the non-Christian populace that those who remained contented themselves with offering a chicken to the gods! Ask me what is the result of our work? That is the result—the sacrifices of heathenism are dwindling from an ox to a chicken.

The work in these villages is built up and conserved by the native converts. Never has there been a time in the history of the work in Korea when there have been enough white men to properly shepherd God's Church there. Our native converts have done this as well as they could. They have served without pay of any kind, working on their farms throughout the week like the other Christians, but keeping the lamp of God burning.

#### A WORKING CHURCH A SPIRIT-FILLED CHURCH

Whence comes the power of these Korean farmers to stand firm against all the forces that a trained and intellectual paganism can bring to bear upon them? Whence comes their power to overcome the false ideas and debased practices in their own hearts, their homes, and their hamlets? Whence comes their power to meet and vanquish the skilled intellectual forces of Confucianism? Whence comes their power to stand unflinching and triumphant amid the fierce furnace fires of persecution? One answer alone there is: It is the Spirit of God.

#### THE KOREAN CHURCH A PERSECUTED CHURCH

There is not a man in our Church that has not suffered in his body, his goods, or his soul because of Christ. Some have been cast out in disgrace by relatives; children have been disinherited by parents, and parents abandoned by children; wives have been divorced by husbands because of Christ.

Some have lost property and temporal prosperity. Others have met cruel beatings, even nigh unto death for His sake.

### THE KOREAN CHURCH A SELF-SUPPORTING CHURCH

The Korean Church has made a magnificent record in self-support. It was to be expected. A Bible-loving, active, working, Spirit-filled, persecuted Church must do its full limit in self-support. For every paid helper we have there are fifty volunteer workers. Chapels are built, all running expenses paid, visitation to outlying classes maintained, and Christian literature bought and distributed out of the funds of the native Church. It is a sight to see a worshipping congregation when the collection is taken; rarely will a man allow the plate to pass him without a gift. Beginning in 1894, when we had 221 members, our Korean Church has contributed 17,530 yen, or over \$8,000, for the work of the Lord. How much this sum represents in God's arithmetic I will not venture to estimate.

This is some little part of the story of success in Korea. I will not speak of the wide-spreading influence of our Church on the national life and character, or of the indirect successes of Christianity in the world of Korean thought, but enough has been said to show that opposing conditions have been met and conquered, obstacles surmounted, and problems solved. The Church of Christ has been established, with its foundation in the bed rock of national character. We are weathering all storms of persecution and forging slowly ahead, in spite of the fiercest gales blowing from the pit. Our story is an uninterrupted tale of progress and success.

## THE OPPORTUNITIES OF CHRISTIAN MISSIONS IN KOREA

Light begins to stream in on Korea's darkness. The Eastern horizon is breaking into smiles with the glory of a new day. Christ has come, and Christ is the Light of the world. Fair indeed is the vision as we look out upon Christ's triumphs in Korea. But what a prospect greets us as we catch a glimpse of the golden day of opportunity in Korea.

Territorially Korea lies at our feet. It has been visited, explored, and mapped out in its length and breadth. Every province and the larger portion of the three hundred and thirty-two prefectures which constitute the empire have been visited and sown with Christian literature, and in many of these prefectures Christian converts reside and work for the Master. The distribution and location of Christ's forces in Korea constitute an opportunity of the first order.

There is an utter absence of many things which serve in other lands as serious competitors with Christianity. In Korea Christianity is the only thing in sight. No new political life, calling the people to consider questions of communal and national welfare, with the excitement incidental to local and other elections, breaks in on the monotony of their life. No expanding military and naval development appeals to their national pride. No public school system, with its multitudes of children and youth preparing themselves to take a worthy part in the affairs of life, gives hope for the future. No large industrial and commercial enterprises under native control promise relief to the widespread poverty of the Korean people.

And last, and most important of all, the black curse of a skeptical, infidel, impure literature has not yet found expression in the Korean language. As far as the life of the populace is concerned, it remains unchanged and undisturbed. The only new thing that breaks in on Korean quietude is Christianity. It alone speaks of a promise of improvement in communal and national conditions; it alone affords a hope of safety and security to the nation; it alone has an organized school system. The two secular newspapers published under native auspices are favorable to Christianity. The only weekly published in the land is the organ of the Presbyterian Church. The only magazine published is the organ of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The only literature to-day is that which comes forth from Christian sources. The two best selling books in Korea are the Christian Bible and hymn book. Therefore, I repeat it, Christianity is the only thing in sight. From the vantage point of this opportunity we can reach and influence the nation with exceptional power. How long this will continue to be the case we cannot say, for the devil is not yet dead. But while the opportunity lasts it should be improved to its utmost.

#### THE CONDITIONS AMONG THE PEOPLE AT LARGE AN OPPORTUNITY

Tourists tell us that two things in Korea strike them very forcibly: The pitiable condition to which the people have been reduced, and the amazing success of Christian missions. Korea's need, nor man, nor angel, nor seraph can adequately describe. Only the heart of the Eternal who, from the depths of his holiness measures so accurately all moral conditions, can know the depth of Korea's ruin and desolation. Oppression is

there in "cruel man-destroying power, that ravages kingdoms and lays empires waste and in pitiless wantonness thins states of half their people and gives up the rest to want." Oppression blights every budding promise of good. Vice is there paralyzing and destroying the life of the people. The typical Korean looks out on the world with the sense that the best things are gone. Purity and innocence, hope, life, and God are gone; and gone are those things which make for righteousness and truth, that in Christian lands are enjoyed in such lavish bounty that many ignore and even trample them under feet. Unknown are those priceless privileges of the Christian Church and her services and influences that pervade the air we breathe, that follow us from cradle to grave. The Korean stands and searches far and wide over the desolate gloomy wastes of his civilization for all these things, but they are gone.

A short time ago I was walking with a young Korean man, a patriot concerned for the welfare of his people. He said to me: "We look out into the future and see no ray of light. The night about us is deep and dark and cold. The hearts of my people are frost-bitten." Aye! that is it, frost-bitten by the dark, Arctic night of heathenism! Into conditions like these come the story of the Gospel with its promise of help, of better things, of a brighter day. Christ has seen the opportunity these conditions offer and he is there in Korea to-day. Sometimes beside the lonely missionary, cheering and strengthening him; sometimes with a persecuted Christian in his home, in prison, or in the death cell, even as he was present with his saints of old in the seven times heated fiery furnace; again, in the depths of the conflict with the forces of sin and darkness. We behold his form,

we see his pierced hand as it beckons us on to higher endeavor and nobler achievement. Shall we lag behind? God forbid it.

### OPPORTUNITIES IN THE NATIVE CHURCH

Equal with these opportunities that promise such large reward is the opportunity which lies before us in the native Church. Here we have a compact, enthusiastic, earnest body of men. Soldiers they are in their frame of mind where the forces of sin are concerned, filled with the Spirit of God, purified by persecution, and armed with divine truth. They ask, first of all, that we shall give to them in its entirety that sacred body of truth which has come down to us from our fathers, and which we are proud to pass on to other nations and coming generations. The Korean Christians desire to be more than Christians in name; they call for and demand the substance of Christianity. They desire to be saved from the fate that overtook Coptic and Abyssinian Christianity. The supreme obligation, the great task which confronts us to-day, recognized no less fully by the native Church than by the missionaries, is the great need of indoctrination. These men who have come from the rice swamps and barley fields, from the merchant's thoroughfares, and the teacher's mat demand that we should teach them, drill them, give them Christianity in its entirety.

And they ask us for leadership. In our native Church race prejudice has not as yet lifted its ugly head. The native Christians respect and honor their white brothers. They look upon them as carrying in themselves the highest attainments and the largest amount of force possible from Christian experience. They believe in them as captains and leaders, and for this generation and the generation

to come they turn their eyes and their hearts lovingly and expectingly to the overflowing camps of Christendom in search for that consecrated leadership which shall guide them to final and complete triumph in their land. They are full of courage; there is no intrenchment of the foe they will hesitate to storm; there is no point in the conflict so perilous but they will gladly thrust themselves into it in order to pluck victory for Jesus Christ. Give them, then, what they need in this their day of desire, realizing that upon our action at this time hangs the whole future of the Church of Korea.

### PLEA FOR A STRONG ADVANCE

The golden day of God's opportunity is upon us in Korea. Let us not sin it away in idleness.

The busy world shoves angrily aside  
The man who stands with arms akimbo set,  
Until occasion tell him what to do.  
And he who waits to have his task marked out  
Shall die and leave his errand unfulfilled.

I plead on behalf of ten millions of souls now slowly beginning to turn their eyes to "the Light of the World." I plead on behalf of a youthful Church, eager, anxious, ready for the fray, and only asking for sufficient and efficient leadership. I plead that our great Church may begin seriously, and in a manner commensurate with her vast resources, the work of evangelizing Korea. For I dare affirm that, moving forward from the vantage grounds of past success along the lines of our magnificent opportunities, the end is already looming in sight on the far horizon of Korea.

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