

In Northern Korea

By M. Bret

From the Foreign Missions of Paris, missionary in Wonsan (Korea)

This series of stories was published in the weekly *Les Missions Catholiques* of 1899, in 24 issues between April 14 and September 22.

Place names in North Korea are (mostly) spelled following North Korean romanization. This machine translation by DeepL has not been corrected for lack of time.

When he communicated to us the beautiful work of which we here begin the publication, Bishop Mutel accompanied it with the following letter, which we are happy to reproduce. Fr. Bret could not have wished for a more flattering preface than these laudatory lines from his venerated Apostolic Vicar:

“Finally, I have the pleasure of sending you for the Catholic Missions magazine an account such as you have several times been kind enough to request. This is at least the impression that remained with me after reading the manuscript of Father Bret. He had the good fortune last winter to take the Gospel to the northern borders of our mission in Korea in regions that were new to many and even to us, missionaries in Korea. His expedition was both eventful and blessed by God. He was able to write an interesting account of it, so I asked him to get to work. I hope with all my heart that this work will please your readers.

M. Bret, born in the diocese of Dijon in 1858, has been a missionary since 1882 and in Korea since 1892.

1.

A soul of good will. -Journey to Korea. -Primitive navigation. -People in no hurry-A word that is missing from the Korean lexicon.

Have you ever looked at a religious map of Korea, for example the one we owe to the tireless activity of Fr. Launay of the Foreign Missions?

If you have successively gone through with interest the little red crosses which designate either the presence of Christians or the residence of missionaries, you will undoubtedly have noticed that certain provinces, more especially blessed by God, evoke the image of ripe meadows dotted with flowers, while others, on the contrary, recall the idea of vast and arid deserts.

Among the latter is the province of Hamgyong, the most extensive, if not the most populated, of all Korea: it is at least 800 kilometers long and extends along the eastern coast from the beautiful port of Wonsan (see engravings P. 169 and below) to the borders of China (Manchuria) and Siberia (Vladivostok).

O my God, in your unfathomable plans, have you forsaken these poor inhabitants of the North? And would the angel who appeared to the centurion Cornelius have no more such messages to carry in the world? How can you reconcile this apparent abandonment with your sincere desire to save all men?

One day when we were discussing these interesting questions at Yongsan Seminary (see engraving, p. 174) before a dozen theologians, a traveler came to the Wonsan rectory. He was a six-foot tall man, dry, black, with an austere face and short, jerky speech.

“Is this the home of the Catholic priest?

Yes,” replied Father Vermorel.

Finally,” he cried, “thanks be to God!

They asked about his name, his country and the purpose of his journey.

Here is his account:

“I lived on the banks of the river Tumen, and while cultivating my small field, like the neighbors, I felt the inanity of superstitions, I felt in my soul a thirst for truth that neither the pagan books, nor the answers of the scholars were able to satisfy.

“In 1894, a new sect appeared and began to spread the doctrine of the East (tong-hak): it taught the existence of one God and the necessity of good works. Seduced by these beautiful appearances, I joined the sect; but, before I could take an active part in its undertakings, its leader was arrested and put to death by order of the government in Hoeryöng. This gave me pause for thought, and after serious examination I realized that I had mistaken the shadow for the light. Since these reformers were executed as rebels in the name of the Korean government, they did not profess the same doctrine as the French priests in Seoul, whose disciples they claimed to be.

In order to be completely sure of this and to instruct myself in the Catholic religion, I set out for the capital; but passing through the square (see engraving p. 177), I met some Christians, I learned that your religion is the same as that in Seoul; I therefore stopped at your house and begged you to complete my instruction and baptize me.”

Well! friend reader, what do you think? Here is a brave Korean who leaves his family, his home, for the interests of his soul. Doesn't this make some of the faithful of Europe blush at their reluctance to attend Mass and hear the word of God? Pilate said: *Quid est veritas!* and turned his back. And this poor mountain man does not hesitate to undertake a journey of 950 kilometers on foot to learn the truth!

His name is John Baptist Kim,

There are many Kims in Korea, and more than once this name has illustrated the splendor of the Korean Church. As for the name John the Baptist, Fr. Vermorel gave it to him wisely: he is, in fact, a precursor.

As soon as he received the grace of baptism, J.-B. Kim wanted to share it with his parents and returned to the mountains in the North.

Shortly afterwards, he returned accompanied by twelve catechumens, and it was I who had the joy of receiving him. I would have liked to give these twelve neophytes the names of the twelve apostles and to send them back to convert their compatriots; but four of them and J.-B. Kim himself, frightened, on the one hand, by the hostile dispositions of the pagan population among whom they lived, attracted, on the other hand, by the presence of the missionary and the ease of receiving the sacraments often, settled in the vicinity of Wonsan.

However, it was necessary to take advantage of the movement of grace. Held back myself in Wonsan by pressing work, I sent to the North an experienced catechist who held small meetings from house to house, teaching the catechism, reciting the prayers in common, refuting the objections of the pagans, resolving the difficulties of the Christians, explaining the ceremonies of the ritual and the missal, etc. After three months, he returned to the North to teach the catechism.

After three months, he came back and told me that the harvest was ripe for the sickle and that all these good people were longing for baptism. But I could not be ready to leave until October 1897.

When, for the first time, Bishop Mutel appointed me to go and found this new post, I saw the realization of a long-cherished dream. I was finally going to be able to travel through almost the whole of the vast district entrusted to me! I would visit the various towns along the way: Tokwon, Munchon, Kowon, Yonghung, Chongpyong, Hamhung, Hongwŏn, Poukchyeng, Riwŏn, Tanchŏn, Kilju, Myongchon, Kyongsong, Puryong and Hoeryŏng. I would receive at each stage the visits of the curious and would benefit from the occasion to sow in the souls of good will the seed of the divine word, leaving to Providence the care to fertilize it and to give it growth.

Alas! until now this beautiful plan has remained in the state of a project.

To realize it, one would have had to have a horse – which my budget does not allow – or to be twenty-five years old and walk those 725 kilometers ... which is even more impossible for me. And then, for these kinds of expeditions, it is not enough to put one's rosary in one's pocket, one's breviary under one's arm, to take one's cane and one's hat and to say: "Off we go." It is necessary to have with you all that is necessary to offer the Holy Sacrifice, from the altar stone and the antependium to the host iron and the Mass wine. In addition, it is necessary to carry a supply of books and objects of piety, such as rosaries, crosses, medals, scapulars, etc. There are no stores for such items in Korea, and if a Christian has to travel a hundred kilometers to buy a catechism or a picture, most of the time he would rather do without. So, while reducing my luggage to the strict minimum, it would have been necessary to hire several coolies to carry it and thus increase the already considerable expenses of the journey. These considerations determined me to take the first steamer leaving for the North and to disembark at the port closest to the post I was going to organize.

The coastal service on the Korean coast, from Chemulpo to Kyongsong, is currently carried out by two small steamers belonging to the Government, the *Hyenik* and the *Tchang-riong*. They usually stop eighteen times between Chemulpo and Kyongsong, the two terminal points of their circumnavigation.

For the sake of completeness, I must add that a special service connects Chemulpo to Busan, passing through Orihpo, Tjinnam-hpo and Oiam-hpo (hpo means port) on the west coast, but belongs to a particular company.

These steamers, like everything else in Korea, are not models of accuracy and regularity. In this case, they were kept waiting in Wonsan for two months.

Finally, the *Tchang-riong* is reported. *Deo gratias!* I embarked at once, on December 21, under the auspices of the apostle Saint Thomas; and we raised anchor the next day, at 2 a.m. We thus left, heading N.N.E.; spinning along very gently at eight knots per hour and sailing full of hope, sheltered under the folds of the national flag.

At the first moment, usually, the passengers, after having settled comfortably in their cabins, take a look at their new home and get acquainted with their fellow travelers. For me, this last point is already settled in advance: I am the only passenger of my kind.

As for the ship, it was far from being a “floating city”; it was not even close to the liners of the Messageries or the Transatlantiques: it was simply a 600-ton ship, built in England and bought for \$40,000 from Germany.

It is mainly intended for the transport of goods which are stowed in the hold, in the steerage, and even on the bridge, taking up all the space if necessary, except for a part of the steerage at the back, reserved for native passengers who often prefer this mode of locomotion for fear of the thieves with whom the roads are infested at certain seasons.

“You have your Korean steamship company; use it, nothing better, we will not go and cut your feet off. But don’t interfere in the service of other companies (Japanese or Russian): each one at his place, and we’ll have peace. That’s agreed, isn’t it?”

“Yes,” replied the Koreans, “that’s right.”

And this is how the Japanese load ten times more goods in Wonsan every year than the Koreans do in their own country. Oh, the Koreans are good sheep and the Japanese are clever.

I had plenty of time to make these reflections during the three hours that I waited for the only authorized boat that was then stuck to the sides of the *Chang-riong*. Finally it arrived and we got on in all haste; but we still had to wait for other travelers. Then our boatman does not set out before having collected the price of the passage: he knows his compatriots. Each one must pay a ligature, that is to say a string of 100 sapèques; on the number, it is not rare that five or six, even ten or fifteen, are lacking. It is so easy to make a mistake! Our man keeps his cool and counts them one by one, giving us a good example of patience.

Finally we set off. Arrived at the steamer, no staircase. We hoisted ourselves by a piece of rope, we insinuated ourselves by the port of the cargo, from bundle to bundle we crossed the steerage, we climbed by a vertical ladder and finally, by a hatch, we emerged on the deck.

Before making my way through the crowd of travelers to choose a roost, among the many natives who swarmed in the room, I had the happy inspiration to go and greet the captain. If it is true that a benefit is never lost, I believe that one could say the same of a politeness. The brave Captain Gundersen received me very cordially; he had already heard about me from one of his compatriots who was an assistant to the Korean customs: “He had wanted, he said, to meet me for a long time, he was delighted to sail with me,” and finally he asked me fraternally to share his cabin and his provisions with him.

One could not be more kind. I gratefully accepted such a gracious invitation.

On December 22, we arrived in Soho where we dropped anchor at 7:30 am. There is an agent of the Company in each port of call; he provides the boats or junks for loading and unloading. We scan the shore from the ship with binoculars, but nothing moves, in spite of the repeated and almost impatient calls of our siren; on land, everyone is asleep (To match this village, which is entirely immersed in sleep, I could quote another one that I found one day entirely immersed in drunkenness).

It is not necessary to be a great clerk to find the explanation of this phenomenon which has nothing to do with optics or acoustics.

First of all, Koreans are never in a hurry. They know the motto of our neighbors across the Channel: Time is money,” which they translate as “Never do the day before what

you can put off until tomorrow: Besides, isn't this steamer carrying the national colors? It is a Korean ship, so it should not be in a hurry.

"Besides, they think, it has made a contract with us, committing itself to take our goods: it must therefore observe this clause, even if it means waiting one more day. You passengers, on your ship where the wind is blowing, are no doubt cold and in a hurry to get out; but you have no idea how good it is to sleep in the late morning in our Korean thatched cottages which are real heaters; otherwise, you would shut up your whistle which spoils a little late sleep.

They are right, these good lazy people: really it is not hot here. Icicles form all around us and float on the water like countless jellyfish. A fresh breeze drives them away and disperses them, but when it stops for a moment, all these ice cubes weld together and threaten to take us prisoner.

However, in this respect, there is nothing to fear: we are not in Vladivostock and we will be able to get out without the help of an icebreaker. But what is really holding us captive is this junk which persists in remaining stranded.

A railroad is being built between Seoul and Chemulpo. It will take time for our good Koreans to learn at their expense that the train does not wait for late passengers. It seems to me that I can already see them, these great innocents, waving their long pipes and shouting from afar to the engineer:

"Hey there! Wait a moment, please. What the hell! You can see that there are still people on the road behind us. Stop your machine!"

However, time goes by: lunch has been replaced by tiffin, and the agent still doesn't come; the captain goes up to his bridge "as high as he can climb", and still sees nothing coming,

To distract ourselves, we look at the landscape. In front of us lies a cemetery, at the foot of a small wood of fir trees. On the right and on the left, several hamlets spread out on the shore. Next to it, an islet, covered with bush and forest, is burning. Yesterday, some fishermen, after having lit their pipes, forgot to extinguish the fire and, today, all this precious fuel is only a vast inferno whose ashes will be used to fertilize the nearby fields. Anyone who has travelled in this country has seen such a spectacle more than once; negligence and carelessness being one of the characteristics of the Korean people.

This reminds me of something one of our Sisters of St. Paul of Chartres said in Seoul. The good nun, having under her command an interesting battalion of three hundred and twenty-two brats, in whom the qualities of the race were already beginning to emerge, strove, in her frequent mercurials, to inculcate in them ideas of order and discipline.

One day, when she deplored the apparent lack of success of her eloquence on her young audience, she had a brilliant idea: she would post, at the doors, at the windows, in the corridors and other most frequented passages of the house, various signs with appropriate inscriptions, with the sole purpose of recalling to these little scatterbrained ones, in a concise form, the quintessence of her maternal exhortations. No sooner said than done. She starts with the most troublesome point of the rules: punctuality.

But here an unexpected difficulty arose. The venerable Sister called upon all her memories, searched all the recesses of her impeccable memory: there was no trace of a Korean word equivalent to punctuality! She questioned her companions: same negative result! At the end of her resources, she decides to call the chaplain of the establishment, a veteran of the apostolate, as learned as modest, who thinks for a moment, smiles and is satisfied to answer:

“I will consult my confreres”. After consultation, we were obliged to recognize that the word, as well as the thing, does not exist in Korea.

“But,” someone will say to me, “if it is by this train that you intend to make us travel the 175 kilometers which separate your two parishes, we are not at the end of our story.”

Sorry, dear reader. First of all, this slowness of my story is local color, and then I take you as witness that it is the fault of the agent of Soho, and finally I admit that you are right and I will try to be more expeditious in the future.

2.

From stopover to stopover. -Korean fisheries. -Legitimate curiosity. -A benevolent audience. -The Christmas banquet.

We are in front of Soho, the first port of call of our maritime journey (see the map p. 191). But we are going to turn back, because the breeze is freshening, night will fall and it is not safe to stay where we are in an open cove which is an anchorage, but not a port. We are going to sleep an hour south of Soho, in the shelter of a small island, and tomorrow morning we will be here again under the orders of Mr. Agent.

On December 23, at 8 o'clock in the morning, we note with pleasure that a certain number of inhabitants are awake, more or less. The agent presents himself, stammers a few excuses and unloads various goods, iron, cotton, cloths, medicines. He has finished at 11 o'clock and leaves on his junk fringed with ice cubes.

I could not help but remark to the captain:

“That boy,” I said, “is lucky that I am not the commander of the *Chiang-riong*. With what pleasure I would have burned his politeness to teach him to be exact another time! You have spent several tons of coal uselessly, and the regularity of your voyage is compromised.

“No doubt,” he replied, “but what can I do? I am simply in charge of the navigation and responsible for the safety of the ship. The rest is up to the purser, who must report to the higher authorities on how he has managed the business and provided for the interests of the Company.

We set sail in our turn and, after a three-hour journey, stopped at Chongjin, a pretty bay protected by a line of rocks forming a natural breakwater. On the left, steep cliffs; on the right, sheer rocks crowned with greenery; on the shore, numerous moored boats prove that we are in a district where fishing is flourishing, and the very particular aspect of the villages attests to the industry in which the people of the country are engaged.

All around and above the houses, large scaffolds are erected, equipped with transverse poles from which the Koreans hang fish to dry. In order to protect the fish from the

rapacity of the winged creatures that swarm along the coast, they surround them with nets. Flocks of seagulls, gulls and cormorants (as well as countless magpies and crows) hover and circle around this larder with their plaintive cries. This kind of construction does not exist in the South; it is here that we meet it for the first time, but we will see it from now on at all the stopovers until Kyongsong.

The fish which is found in abundance in these parts is the *myeng-thai*, rather similar to the herring, but two or three times bigger. I do not know its French name and I heard officers say that it does not exist in our European seas. It is fished with a net; after having gutted it, they take out all the insides: eggs, milt and entrails, which are salted separately to be consumed on the spot or delivered to the trade under the name of *tjyet*. The rest is dried and not salted. The head is left on; it is used to skewer the fish in rows of twenty to be cut up for retail; thirty of these skewers are tied together with straw ropes and form packages of 600 for wholesale. Large quantities are shipped all along the coast, inland as far as Busan, and to Japan, under the characteristic name of *pouk-e* (fish from the North) which denotes its place of origin.

After having disembarked a few packages, several of which were destined for Hongwŏn, a city 90 lis (36 kilometers) away, we left at 4:30 a.m., escorted by herds of porpoises which seemed to want to compete for speed with us and frolicked by leaping so close to the hull of our ship that they could easily be harpooned. We also saw a large whale emerge very close to us, while on the horizon the columns of water, launched by the vents of these enormous mammals, revealed their presence in considerable numbers.

At 6 o'clock, new stop. We are opposite Sinpo, in a bay quite well sheltered by the Red Cape Island. There are also many fishermen.

We anchored close to the mainland for the convenience of transshipment, but further north, to the west of the island, is a better anchorage currently occupied by a Russian whaler whose masts we can see behind a fold of land.

On the 24th, a little before noon, we continued our route. Two hours later, we arrived at Sinchang near the mouth of a river; 40 lis away is the town of Pukchŏng. The very numerous huts of the fishermen prove the richness of the country. The merchants come on board to collect their parcels and bring the goods which are consigned to them. With what flexibility they insinuated themselves into the good graces of the commissioner, reminding him that they had large provisions of fish to send to the South by the return of the boat and begging him not to forget them! In fact, as the cargo to be taken exceeded the capacity of the vessel, not all requests could be granted: some were simply rejected, others were admitted in proportion to the stock in store.

The curious also flock, from everywhere, to see our steamboat: it is the first time in their lives that they are in the presence of a marvel of this kind and I understand their enthusiasm to enjoy such a spectacle. They shout Oh! exclaim Ah! and exhaust the whole range of Korean interjections which is much richer than ours. With their eyes they measure the altitude of the mainmast, probe the depth of the hold, gauge the capacity of the hull, calculate the strength of the machine, estimate the value of the furniture and only leave

satisfied after having visited everything, from the bow to the stern, examined everything, touched everything, smelled everything, admired everything, from the captain's cabin to the crew's toilet.

Poor people! After having smiled a little at their naivety, I feel touched with compassion and I approach them. While the merchants are courting the commissioner and whispering in his ear their offers of bribes, I can see that, for the moment, I have nothing to hope for from these souls eager for profit and more disposed to worship Mammon than the God of the Gospel; but the same cannot be said of the interesting crowd that I have before me.

From the way in which I advance towards a group, one senses that I am going to speak and immediately they hasten to form a circle around me.

Alas! poor speaker! How much I regret being a latecomer to this beautiful mission of Korea, whose idiom I am still far from mastering! My Christians understand me half-heartedly, or rather guess at me, accustomed as they are to my jargon; but these pagans, who probably have never spoken with a European... And then – I noticed it just now while listening to the reflections they were exchanging among themselves – the dialect they speak is different from that of Wonsan, and even more so from the beautiful language of the capital. If only my catechist were here! But the unfortunate man is lying on his plank, momentarily wiped out by seasickness, even though we have been at anchor for an hour in a sea of oil. But what does it matter? Back to human respect and blessed be the humiliation which can procure for some souls the eternal salvation! So I start a conversation by asking several of them their names, their age, their countries, their jobs. They answer me politely and, as I expected, ask me in turn about my country, my residence, my name and my occupations. I told them that there were many believers in Seoul, Wonsan and many other places in Korea, and I ended by urging them to enter the holy church.

What was going on in their hearts? That is God's secret, but I did not see any skeptical smile, any derogatory remark, or any mocking remark. On the contrary, one of them, emboldened by the approval of his neighbors, added:

“How can we study your doctrine and embrace the religion you preach to us, if we have no one to teach us?”

Is this not the testimony of a Christian soul? Is this not the literal translation of the words of St. Paul: *Fides ex auditu... Quomodo audient sine predicante?*

I answered that, the number of missionaries being very insufficient, the bishop could not send them everywhere; later on, no doubt, they would have a pastor: in the meantime, they should avoid evil and do good, and if circumstances led them to pass through Wonsan, they would be sure to find books, brothers and a father. And from the bottom of my heart I addressed to God this supplication which I beg my readers to repeat here with me: *sumus, Domine, operarios in messum tuam.*

However, the night is approaching, the most blessed night of all, the night of the 24th and 25th of December, when the Son of God made man came down to earth in the form of a little child to save the world. What moving and charming memories are crowding my heart! But what? I am going to spend this beautiful feast alone, without even having the consolation of celebrating holy mass!

At this thought, a shadow of sadness darkened my soul and threatened to plunge me into melancholy, when suddenly a hand rested on my shoulder and the captain said:

“It is, tonight, Christmas Eve; I propose to invite my mate and the engineer to share our dinner; what do you think?”

“But certainly,” I replied, “with great pleasure.”

A quarter of an hour later we were gathered, all four Europeans, in the narrow lounge around a nicely decorated table. The cook had gone to great lengths to vary the menu, the captain had drawn an old bottle from his trunk, and each of the guests, calling upon his memories, recounted in turn the interesting circumstances in which he had spent the most memorable Christmases of his life. One, as a young schoolboy, had scaled the walls of his boarding school and crossed I don't know how many miles in the snow to share the family Christmas Eve; another had once celebrated Christmas with some unfortunate shipwreck on a South Sea rock; another, ... what do I know? In short, the evening passed very happily and pleasantly.

When the time came for the toasts, we raised our glasses in honor of the captain, who had spared us this pleasant surprise. In response, he simply drank to his health and to the health of our respective families, who had gathered at the same time for the traditional cake. Belonging to such distinct nationalities, a patriotic toast was quite delicate; my three guests being Protestants (and probably of different sects), the religious toast offered no less difficulty. Our worthy amphitryon wisely contented himself with mentioning our good old and dear relatives at home; this recollection, combined with the solemnity of the moment, brought a touch of tenderness even to the tanned faces of these old sea-wolves.

When the bell struck the last quarter (midnight), my companions, tired of the day's work that was ending, with the prospect of an equally hard day that was soon to begin, retired and I remained alone on the bench that served as my bed each night. But sleep refused to come to my eyelids: I had not deserved it by the work of the day and the memories which one had just evoked were too sharp to allow me rest.

3.

The night of Christmas. -A storm. -Fishing. -Russian whaling boats. -On board of the Nicolai. -Continuation and end of the sea voyage.

Not being able to celebrate Mass sacramentally, I wanted, at least, to offer it spiritually by uniting myself in intention with all the holy priests whom I had the happiness of meeting on the path of life.

So I successively transported myself by thought to the minor seminary of Saint-Bernard in Plombières-lès-Dijon, and I thought I could still hear the fading echoes of the orchestra accompanying the *Pastores*. A little later, I found myself in the Church of Saint-Bénigne in Dijon, where I attended the solemn Matins sung by the venerable canons of the Cathedral Chapter. Naturally, I also saw again the beloved Seminary of the Rue du Bac, the crown of venerated directors, the joyful swarm of aspirants of the Foreign Missions, who made the vaults resound with the beautiful hymn: *Midnight, Christians, it is the solemn hour...* And then, how could I forget Pulo-Pinang, with its General College, where I spent the first twelve years of my priesthood? Here they are, those long lines of illuminated arches, its lanterns and its gigantic screens made and painted by our dear students who competed with art and imagination, and, above all, the splendid scenery of the incomparable tropical nature with the Southern Cross as a crown! And now here I am, an eleventh-hour worker, in the northern heights. While my Wonsan flock in the miserable thatched cottage which serves

as their chapel (see engravings on pages 198 and below) and pray for the happy crossing and the prompt return of the absent pastor, heading north, I sail ever further to the peaceful conquest of the souls for whom Jesus was incarnated. Christmas! Christmas!

How long did this state of mind last, half dream, half prayer? I could not say, ... I completed my pilgrimage in the land of dreams. I was reminded of the reality of existence by the monotonous song of the stevedores counting their packages.

The work does not advance quickly, because many boats are absent, occupied with fishing, and the unloading is completed only at midday. The last junk, seeing a strong breeze, begged our captain to turn back a little and tow it to its mooring.

The breeze rises frighteningly, the crest of the waves is crowned with a white foam, the waves break on the rocks with a horrible crash. I watch with a palpitating interest of anguish the efforts of the boatmen to escape the imminent danger; it is marvelous that the poor overloaded skiff has not already capsized under the violence of the wind. Fortunately, a better rigged boat flies to its rescue: the poor people who spent a bad quarter of an hour are finally saved. We all breathed a sigh of relief. Was it really a man, the poet who dared to say:

*Suave mari magno, turbantibus oequora ventis,
E terra magnum alterius spectare laborem!*

Our steamer, which is not however a simple boat, starts to roll and to pitch terribly; so we hasten to leave on the next station, Chaho, which we reach in less than two hours.

There, at least, we are completely sheltered, and this place has not stolen its name (Chaho means sheltered lake), as it is, moreover, easy to convince oneself, by glancing at the map on page 191. It is the only port worthy of the name between Broughton Bay and Possiet Bay.

In the midst of all the foreign names with which our maps are bristling, I am happy and proud to greet here a French cape, Cape Petit-Thouars.

The fisheries are numerous and the inhabitants very comfortable, judging by their dwellings, which are no longer modest thatched huts, but rather buildings of quite good appearance with their tiled roofs as in the capital. At 20 lis, in the interior, is the city of Riwõn.

At the end of the bay of Chaho, I see two Russian whalers, the *Nicolai* and the *Georgié*. Ah! what pretty little ships!

In 1891, the tzarewitch Nicolas Alexandrowitch (the present czar), during his famous trip to the Far East, sailed along this same coast where we are and met, like us, innumerable whales. Struck by the wealth that could be obtained from this well-managed fishery, he inquired about the procedures used for this type of fishing and expressed his astonishment that they were still reduced to such primitive gear. On his initiative, Count H. Keyserling, then lieutenant on board the *Pamiat-Azowa*, had the two whaleboats we have before us built.

While we admire the slenderness of their hulls and the harmonious elegance of their contours, a canoe is detached from their side and several visitors come forward. It was the captain of the *Georgié*, Mr. Morton Petersen, who came to greet his compatriot Captain Gundersen. We got to know each other and he took me on board.

This boat is a kind of schooner whose foremast carries a jib where the lookout stands. As soon as he has signaled a whale, the helm is turned and the hunt begins at full speed. In the meantime, the captain or another skilled marksman takes up his position on the forecastle, next to a small gun, mobile in all directions, to which a shoulder stock is attached. He follows the movements of the beast, aims two feet back from the vent and fires at short range.

The projectile is made of cast iron and contains one and a half pounds of powder; its front end is cone-shaped and its rear end is provided with a very strong line which is wound on a steam winch. As soon as the whale feels touched, it jumps up and the traction exerted on the rope triggers a mechanism that determines the explosion of the shell.

Then the poor beast, if it is not almost struck dead by the discharge, begins a vertiginous race which the steamer tries to neutralize by heading backwards with all the speed of its twelve knots, while a sailor constantly sprinkles the pulley with water to prevent the friction from burning the rope. In spite of this, in some cases – when the whale is very vigorous or only slightly injured – the boat is dragged so quickly in the wake of the monster, that, to avoid any accident, they are sometimes obliged to cut the rope, and the cetacean will perish on the high seas or run aground on some distant shore.

It is conceivable that it takes uncommon skill, combined with long experience, to strike this game in a vital place, for, in addition to the continual rocking of the boat, which must necessarily hinder the shooter, the whale does not always follow a straight line and at the water's edge: it dives and disappears to emerge at irregular intervals and variable distances, sometimes to port or starboard, sometimes forward or backward, according to the need to breathe or to the stratagems suggested by its instinct. So it is not surprising that the *Nicolai* was only able to catch four whales during the month that had just passed; but, in the same period of time, its lucky competitor, Captain Petersen, - a real sea wolf, this one, who has been in the business for eleven years – had caught fifty-three!

When a whale is mastered, it is towed to a certain point on the coast where teams (Japanese in this case) cut it up; then the quarters are sent to certain factories specially equipped to extract the oil. The bones of a whale alone, I was told, are worth up to 200 dollars (1,000 francs).

The brave captain did us the honors of his ship with perfect friendliness. As we entered the saloon we saw in front of us the icon (the Russians do not have statues, but only images in relief somewhere between the picture and the statue and which they call Icons, from the Greek word εἰκών (Image),) of St. George, the patron saint of the ship.

The *Nicolai* is built exactly on the same model, but has St. Nicholas as its patron. We belonged to various nationalities: a Catholic Pole, two Orthodox Russians, two Protestant Germans, two Norwegians also Protestant, and me. Fortunately, there was no need to get into the hot ground of political and religious questions; everyone tried to speak English as best they could, which served as our common language, and we got along perfectly.

Our hosts, whose calendar was thirteen days behind, were not yet ready to celebrate Christmas; but, out of consideration for their guests and also, no doubt, in the hope of cutting the monotony of their harsh fishermen's existence by a merry evening, they gave their cook orders accordingly.

If a sweet smell of Russian leather floating in the atmosphere had not warned us that we were on an extension of the empire of the tzar, the samovar which decorated the table and the menu of the dinner, including sakouska, caviar, vodka and cetera, would have told us so. However, the final health was given in Norwegian by this single suggestive word "Skoll!",

which literally means cup and skull and, in its brevity, involuntarily recalls the ancient times sung by Ossian, when the Scandinavians used to stop on the battlefield to sing a triumphal hymn while drinking beer and mead from the skulls of their enemies.

Finally the time had come to part, the captain pushed courtesy to the point of taking us home in his skiff, while the youngest officer, accordion in hand, chanted the movement of the oars to the tune of the *Marseillaise*.

The next day, at daybreak, the two whalers paraded in front of us and bid us farewell, to which we responded with a joyful hurrah, wishing them a safe journey and success in the adventures of their fishing. As for us, our boat was ready to leave only at 10:00 am. 1/2.

At 2 h. 1/2 in the afternoon, we dropped anchor in front of Sarai, a small anchorage 30 lis (12 km) from Tanchön.

After having disembarked two hundred and seventy parcels, we set sail at 6.15 am for Sarahko, where we arrived at 9 pm. The sandy beach is very low and hardly allows us to approach the shore; to avoid any accident, we are obliged to throw the probe several times. In front of us is a bunch of trees, on the right we see a village and at 10 lis is a big market. But what makes the importance of this point, it is that it is on the road of Kilju, a rather considerable commercial center located at 70 lis (28 kilos) from here (Towards the middle of 1893 with the aim of giving a new rise to the import and export, the small city of Songjin, at 80 lis of Kilju, was declared by the government open to the foreign trade). The whole day of the 27th was spent unloading goods, of which the following are the main samples: rice, paper, cotton, iron, tobacco, medicines, salt, bamboo, sugar, Japanese matches, American oil, etc.

This is the last day I will have the pleasure of spending with the captain. We are good friends; whenever his service allows it, he likes to come and chat with me. We talk about his illustrious compatriot, Dr. Nansen, who crossed Greenland from East to West, which until then had been considered impassable, and who has since almost set foot on the North Pole. We also leaf through some British magazines: there is a lot of talk about the gold seekers of the Transvaal and Alaska.

Quid non mortalia pectora cogis, auri sacra fames?

On the 28th at 6:30 a.m., we set out to reach at 9 a.m. the not very interesting station of Sapo, at 120 lis from Myongchon. The sky became overcast, a few flakes began to flutter, we raised anchor at 10:30 am. The snow now fell heavily and formed a thick curtain which hid the coast from us; the captain was obliged to be constantly on his guard.

Finally, the same evening, at 5.30 pm, we arrived safely at Tekeumi, the end of our maritime journey.

Although the hour does not seem very advanced, the sun has already been down for forty-five minutes and the natives are about to do the same. Moreover the commercial movement being not very active and the state of the sky not very engaging, nobody accosts us and we wait for the next day to put us in communication with the shore.

On the 29th, my accounts settled, I bid farewell to the crew on board and to lady... civilization. How are things going to happen from now on? I have no idea. Here I am in a new country: in the care of God!

4.

Landing. -First Christians. -Impressions of a first walk. -Preparations for the trip in the interior. -

Just as I was about to jump into the first boat to land, a Korean, then two, then three, prostrated themselves in front of me saying: "Praise be to Jesus Christ" This is the greeting with which all Christians in Korea greet each other.

That's right! I recognize Luke, the leader of my neophytes, surrounded by several catechumens who have come to meet me. *Deo gratias!* Here I am freed from a big worry for the material side of the expedition: these people know the itinerary and will get me out of trouble better than I could do alone or even with the help of the scholar who is accompanying me.

We disembarked at 10 am. Our first concern is to get some change. The inhabitants of the interior know neither money nor banknotes, or at least they only have faith in their sapèques. A few Japanese bank-notes, discreetly nestled in the bottom of my pocket, turn into several bulky bundles of ligatures that a man can hardly lift. In this blessed country, even if your purse is poorly furnished, you need a workhorse to carry it.

My people are then busy getting me an oxcart to carry my luggage and they absolutely want to rent a horse for me to ride; both to spare my "noble" legs and to preserve the prestige of my rank. I have no choice.

During this time, I go out a little in the countryside to recognize the surroundings; but my walk is quickly finished.

After having climbed a hillock which deprived me of the sight of the landscape, I found myself in front of a second hillock, second climb; third hillock, third climb; fourth hillock, and so on; I will spare you the rest. I would not have brought this vulgar detail if it were not typical. In your travels in Korea, you may cross mountain ranges, climb peaks, cross passes, but ninety-nine times out of a hundred you will finally find yourself in the presence of a mound that will limit your horizon at a short distance.

Moreover the snow, with which the ground is covered, makes these ascents rather painful. I turn back towards the sea where my attention was attracted while disembarking by a kind of fortification, which crowns the steep hill dominating the bay. -

There stands, in the middle of an enclosure of walls, a rather beautiful house covered in tiles, to which gives access a pretty arched door in cut stones. It was formerly the residence of a mandarin in charge of purging the region of the brigands who infest it. It is the property of the State and today completely deserted.

What a beautiful chapel could be installed in this building! My catechist must have read my mind, for he murmured: "If you only had all these abandoned stones for the construction of your church in Wonsan.

I answered him with a heavy sigh, moved at the memory of this church in Wonsan, so necessary and yet not built, for lack of resources, moved also at the sight of this government house dilapidated and falling into ruins, an all too faithful image of other multiple ruins in this beautiful Korea, our adopted country, which we love as a second home.

Alas, public buildings like this one, once beautiful in their own way, are not rare in Korea, and they are slowly disappearing because of the carelessness of the administration, and it is not necessary to go far from the capital to see this.

Whoever needs a stake or a plank, or even firewood, comes clandestinely to get supplies there and the day is close, no doubt, when there will be nothing left at all. One can then say in pure truth: *Etiam perire ruinae*. How can we not think of restoring these buildings, of putting them to new uses, or at least of selling the materials to remedy the chronic anemia of the Treasury? And what is most lamentable is that the same procedure is applied with impunity to the poor governmental machine: apart from honourable exceptions, it is a matter of who gets a ministry, a prefecture, a position as a councillor or even a simple clerk. I don't know who dared to compare this country to the small kingdom of Elide, because there was once a ruler there named Augias, whose stables were the talk of the town.

While ruminating on these reflections, I returned to the village and saw a new group of five people who were heading my way: they were still catechumens who had walked their 100 miles to greet the first Catholic priest they had ever seen. They had come in greater numbers; but, after waiting several weeks, finding that the hoped-for steamer had not arrived and that their purse was running out, some of them regretfully returned to their homes.

Those who remained led me to the inn where they were staying, and they urged me to enter and rest.

"We would have liked, they said, to receive you in the best one in the village; but there was no way, Father, please excuse us."

"This inn is very suitable," I replied. Besides, missionaries are not demanding: Our Lord did not even have a stone on which to rest his head, and he taught us that the disciples are not above the Master. So don't worry. But, by the way, why do you say that it was impossible for you to settle in the inn?"

"Well, here it is: Though we have not yet received baptism, we nevertheless regularly recite our morning and evening prayers, the Angelus, Benedicite and Graces, etc. When the master of the inn saw this, he recognized us as Christians and sent us away, saying that his house is not for people of our kind.

"That's good. What is the name of this individual? I think I know some of his family members: he is a descendant, if I am not mistaken, of some hoteliers who lived in Bethlehem in the time of the emperor Augustus. I will go to him and congratulate him as he deserves."

The preparations for the journey are completed. Here is the small cart on which our effects are hoisted. It is curious, this machine: 1 m. 50 in length, 0,70 broad; with massive wheels, without spokes, all in wood, with enormous rims of the same metal; the axle projects 0.60 on each side, which gives the vehicle an original aspect and prevents it from tipping over completely in the difficult passes. Add to this the movable sides according to the nature of the load and you will have an idea of the small carts that one meets from Hamhung to the extreme northern border. This proves, at least, that the roads are to some extent passable, which could not be said of many other regions. A single ox is harnessed by means of a curved piece of wood which is attached to the stretchers; this sort of yoke is placed on the neck of the ox and fixed by a rope which passes through the dewlap, in much the same way as the Sinhalese harness their trotting zebus.

Here, on the other hand, is my mount: it is a pony which does not look too bad under the beautiful saddle that Mr. Granzella, officer of the Chinese and Korean Imperial Customs, gave me before leaving. To tell the truth, the horse is not dashing, but neither is the rider: they are therefore perfectly suited.

The small caravan is divided into two sections: one will accompany me and carry my suitcase with my blanket; the other will go with the cart to help the self-propelled vehicle to always follow the right way, either when a doubt arises on the road to be taken, or when a temptation arises about a package to be attached; moreover, it will serve as a scout and will signal the vicinity of the thieves.

At noon, the column moves and crosses, without leaving any stragglers, the 3 kilometers which separate us from the city of Kyongsong. But this beautiful speed could not last: it is our first stage, we must slow down. I try to negotiate to try to gain a few more leagues: "the packages are not heavy, the distance covered is not very considerable, it seems to me that it is very early for a stopover; we could go to supper and sleep a little further on."

It was a waste of time! My people have decided among themselves to spend the night here, and nothing will make them change their decision. It goes without saying that, if I were dealing with pagan coolies, I would speak in a different tone of voice, and I would know how to make them obey me, but they are Christians, who serve me out of pure devotion: a little condescension is required on my part.

Besides, my excellent neophytes do not lack pretexts to draw my adhesion; they must have studied rhetoric somewhere. They very respectfully tell me that I am not in France (I had already realized this), that one undertakes a great journey at dawn, but never in the afternoon, that I will be too tired, that I must rely on my guides to take care of the expedition, etc. I nod and say that I am not going to be able to make it. I nodded and resignedly repeated Pandora's famous answer to her brigadier.

However, it is a question of using the few hours which separate us from the sunset. In spite of the snow and the biting cold, we go for a walk in the city and the inhabitants soon know that a French missionary has arrived. Some of them surround us and listen to our conversation, in which they gradually take part. They are very polite, and I doubt very much that a Korean, arriving one day in a European city, would be treated by the people with the same deference.

It must be said that authority is strongly represented here, and the scoundrels do not dare to raise their heads too much: in the city there is a mandarin in charge of the whole district and a governor who has the northern half of the province of Hamgyong under his command; since the new reforms, there are also a few squads of police officers (see engraving, p. 214), the last ones one meets while going up north.

And, as if to give a striking relief to this remark, here is that at the end of our conversation, clamors from the yamên reach the ramparts where we are and from where we dominate the city.

What is it?" we ask,

"Nothing."

What else?

"-It is his Excellency the Governor who is having a malefactor caned, and to cover the patient's howls of pain, the satellites, at each blow, utter in measure the chorus of cries that you hear."

5.

The city of Kyongsong. -A little apostolate. -Hunting promises. -Continuation of the voyage.

From the top of our observatory we embrace of the glance the panorama which unfolds at our feet and, for lack of other instrument, we measure it with the glance. Kyongsong is a walled city, having the shape of a regular rectangle from 600 to 800 meters broad on 1.000 to 1.200 meters long. At each angle a turret or mirador is drawn up; each side is bored in its medium of a large door (See the engraving p. 223) indicated according to the name of one of the four cardinal points; all around the enclosure reigns a way of round inside and, outside, a ditch... with dry.

The walls, well built, are still in good condition. The inhabitants of the ten neighboring Kol (cantons) were requisitioned for their construction and provided thirteen years of labor to complete this gigantic work. Within the walls, the houses are covered with tiles, but most of the inhabitants live in thatched cottages outside the fortifications. One estimates at 10.000 souls (An official census gives for the city of Kyongsong 1159 fires! men, 3.9801, women, 3.556, that is to say 6757 inhabitants. But if one takes into account the manner in which the census was taken in Gorée, one must estimate that the figure of tome is rather below than above the reality) the figure of the population, and to say that, on this number, there is not a single Christian!

While I prayed to God to enlighten these poor souls, a student named Kim came up to me and declared that he wanted to become a Catholic. I encouraged him in his good intention and, while sitting there, in front of everyone, my catechist gave him a brief presentation of the truths to believe and the commandments to observe. We will see later that this good man persevered. For the moment let us return to the house.

We are hosted by an honest family who has heard of the Catholic religion and is not far from embracing it. Unfortunately, like many Orientals, these people are eclectic: they would like to become Christians, but on condition that they are allowed to continue their superstitious practices. This is the old question of rites (Chinese or Malabar), which is repeated at every step in our apostolate.

While the evening meal is being prepared, I teach the son of our innkeeper to make the sign of the cross and I amuse myself by making him take an exam on the most common Chinese characters, because this very intelligent seven-year-old boy is already going to school and will soon begin studying Confucius. Poor little angel!

Little by little the visitors came, my room was invaded, all my belongings were examined, but so nicely that I could not complain about it. I am overwhelmed with questions about our western countries, our customs, our language... I answer them as best I can, trying to bring up the religious question from time to time. We discuss the problem of good and evil, conscience, the immortality of the soul, the origin of the world, the end of man, the existence of a creator and remunerator God, etc., vital questions which have the privilege of making humanity palpitate under whatever latitude it is encountered.

Do not believe, however, that at the end of the session all my volunteer listeners beg me to confer baptism on them. No, that is not how it happens.

In my garden I have sown lettuce: in a few days it has emerged, in a few weeks it has reached its growth and destination, in a few months it has been forgotten. I also sowed trees. They took many months to germinate and to show the end of their nose. They grow slowly and will not bear fruit for many years. My great-nephews - that is, some of your children, dear reader - will owe me this shade? But is not faith the great tree of which the Gospel speaks, which puts down its roots in this earth and spreads its branches to Heaven, where they will produce the fruits of eternal life? What is born quickly, lasts little. How then can we expect a sudden increase without a miracle? We, useless workers, do our ministry of sowers of words obscurely; your good prayers then attract the dew of grace, and the effluvia of the Holy Spirit will make these spiritual plants grow in the celestial Jerusalem to adorn the garden of the Father of the family. - But when? - On the day marked by divine Providence: one year, twenty years, or fifty years, what does it matter? Time passes quickly in these interesting talks. Quite before nightfall, we dismissed our kind visitors and the next day we continued our journey.

We leave at 8 o'clock. To our right stretches the coast from which we are gradually moving away, to our left runs the mountain range that divides Korea from north to south into two large slopes: we have to cross the whole series of foothills that run from west to east and die on the shore.

Few are the travelers that we meet, all well wrapped up from head to toe. Some of them - Chinese - are even equipped with three small fur cases: one for each ear and the third... for the nose. We are not yet at the carnival! But it is so cold! I can't stand it anymore; my feet are half frozen and my hands are numb, I get off the horse to warm up a bit. Suddenly, a shot rings out behind us. Is it a brigand who wants our purse or our life? No, it is a peaceful Korean hunter who has just shot a pheasant. We call him and he approaches without being asked.

"Do you want to sell this pheasant?"

"I don't say no."

"How much do you want for it?"

"Forty sapèques. (about 0 fr. 20)."

"It's a deal. Do you kill many like that per day?"

And the colloquy continues, while the sapèques are checked one by one.

I take the opportunity to examine the hunter's weapon. It is a rather long rifle, with a single barrel, which ends in a pistol grip. It is loaded like our stick guns, by introducing first a coarse powder of Korean manufacture, then a paper wad, and finally iron shot as pellets. The hunter then slipped a small amount of fine powder into the pan and set out to find game. When he sees a game, he hastily lights his wick, either with a lighter or with a common match, aims and pulls the trigger. The hammer strikes the ignited wick and has no other effect than to maintain the immediate contact of the wick (archaism is allowed to describe such an arquebus) with the fine hunting powder, the only one whose ignition is assured. Little by little, the coarse gunpowder, carried away by the force of the example, decides to ignite in its turn and the shot ends up going off, not without making a long fire, as our Nemrods say; but

the shooter doesn't get carried away: he always continues to put the beast to the sword and, with everyone putting in their good will, the piece generally remains on the ground. Witness this pheasant that spreads the bright and warm glow of its golden feathers brighter than the pale sun that illuminates us!

In fact, I have seen more than one disciple of Saint Hubert armed with a recent model, central percussion, bouncing batteries, choke-bored, top-lever, often coming back with a lighter carrier than his native competitor provided only with his antediluvian escopette. The main point is to know your weapon well, the habits of the game, the terrain it frequents and not to spare any effort. In this respect, the Korean is second to none. It is not only the innocent feathered game that he hunts in this way; with this primitive machine, he is not afraid to confront the most terrible of beasts, the tiger itself.

I once saw one of our Christians stalking a deer with four bullets in his pocket. Instead of the deer, it was the tiger that presented itself: with the first shot, it lay dead at his feet and reloaded without losing time. A roar answers him, it's the tigress who advances: he kills her in the same way. A third feline enters the same hole in the forest and leaves his skin in turn. The whole thing had not lasted half an hour. This was a successful hunt!

Ask our explorers and sportsmen if they have accomplished many such feats with their express-rifles. The secret of our Koreans - it was, if I am not mistaken, the method of Jules Gérard - consists in shooting almost only at point-blank range or, as one of our Christians used to say in his picturesque language, "only when one feels the strong breath of the tiger on his face". Yes, but to get to that point, one needs an imperturbable composure that the most sophisticated weapons do not give or make up for.

So the Korean hunters are a precious corps that the government knows how to use as auxiliary troops in case of need. These are the people who held us in check at Kang Hoa in 1866 and who rendered real services to the cause of order during the various revolts that bloodied the country in recent years.

In spite of this digression, we arrive towards midday at the small city of Syou-syeng, after having made our 35 lis (14 kilometers).

The Koreans usually eat only two substantial meals: one in the morning and the other in the evening, guided by the sun. Towards the middle of the day, they generally content themselves with a simple snack. We do as they do, and, after a light refreshment, we continue our journey.

The main street is obstructed by a gathering.

What is this? The crowd gravitates with a busy air around a small cubic hood of which a Chinese man does the honors. On payment of 0.05 Francs, everyone is admitted in turn to contemplate the wonders contained in the box. One sees there, it seems, landscapes, palaces, towers, pagodas, soldiers, ships, great men like Li-hongtchang, and also, unfortunately, creatures cut to the toes. This Chinese man exploits the curiosity and passions of the crowd by means of a stereoscope. He must earn quite a bit, because his customers are too busy to bother and we pass almost unnoticed.

Twenty-five lis (10 kilometers) further, we stop to spend the night in the village of Tjyang-hang. It seems that we are far from the civilized centers: one finds here neither candle, nor oil, nor vegetable oil, not even a gas spout or a small arc lamp; people do not

seem, either, to know lighting with acetylene; at least I did not hear about it. All our lighting is reduced to finger-sized chenevottes, more than a meter long. They have been soaked several times in a mixture of bran and rice flour. The particles of rice flour that have fallen to the bottom of the bowl and the gluten contained in the bran adhere quite well to the chenevotte and coat it with a protective coating that moderates and regulates its combustion. To support this new type of candle which burns horizontally, a hole the size of a bottle neck has been made in the partition and the ashes which fall constantly are received in a wooden tray. Here is the device which will light us (?) during two long winter months.

The next day, we leave a little before 8 am. The view on the right and on the left is bounded by two rows of almost parallel hills; these valleys which follow one another quite uniformly are hardly more than 200 to 400 meters wide. We go up the course of a small river and cross one of these tributaries on a rather pretty bridge (See the engraving, p. 222). The monotony of the landscape is only broken by the flight of a few pigeons, the appearance of a few ducks and many pheasants.

Finally, at 11 h. 1/2, after having covered 40 lis, we stop at Pou-ryeng, a small prefecture of 150 houses, of which at least half are *extra muros*.

While the rice is being prepared, I climb the ramparts and reach a point overlooking the whole city. The kids start to surround us, drive us in the streets, make us visit an old ruined mandarinat and bring us back in triumph to our lodging.

This whole district is very poor: one cannot cultivate rice there; cereals grow there with great difficulty in sandy fields, where there are more stones than soil. But the population seems to us sympathetic: the men hurry around the court of our inn outside the East Gate and the children, more familiar, penetrate until the room where they assail us with a crowd of questions, while devouring the snacks which we give them in reward of their good services.

6.

A curious legend. -The first day of the year. -Meagre treat. -Megalithic monuments in Korea.

From our inn, we see rising in front of us the mount Pou-tchyouun, famous among the scholars because of a legend which is connected with it and which one can read in the Chinese collection entitled *Sa-Keni*.

Here it is, as I gathered it from the mouth of a Korean graduate.

Once there were two young men who were studying together. After a certain number of years, one of them ascended the throne of China and the other, Em-tjareung, remained a simple solitary philosopher in the mountains of Pou-ryeng.

“In the midst of the splendors and delights of the court, the Son of Heaven did not forget his former companion in literature; he commissioned a skilled painter to paint a

portrait of Em-tjareung and entrusted it to satellites with orders to search everywhere and bring to the capital the one whose features resembled the painting entrusted to them.

“When they arrived at the foot of Mount Pou-chyoun, the Emperor’s envoys noticed a man angling in the stream; they approached and looked at him. There was no longer any doubt: it was indeed him, it was Em-tjareung, the guest of his Majesty.

“They prostrate themselves before him, they tell him of the honor that awaits him, and they urge him to come up to the court. No answer. Absorbed in his deep contemplation, the bohemian philosopher remains impassive and continues mechanically to fish.

“Knowing in what esteem he is held at the court, the envoys do not dare to put their hands on him and, after several useless instances, go to report their mission to the emperor.

“New invitation of the emperor, new refusal of Em-tjareung. -

“Finally, on the third occasion, Em-tjareung went to the emperor, in whom he always affects to see only his former colleague. Unconcerned with etiquette, he sat down and even lay down in the presence of the monarch, and indulged in other incongruities towards him. He constantly refused the highest dignities. Ah! he was a wise man

“And a lout!” I added, interrupting my interlocutor, who had been taken aback. The most sublime philosophy does not exempt one from being well brought up.

After all, when you think about it, isn’t the human mind the same under all meridians as also the love of singularity? What a striking resemblance between the conduct of the Korean cynic towards the Chinese emperor and that of Diogenes towards Alexander! How well one sees their colossal pride through the holes in their coats!

At 1 h. 1/2, I get back in the saddle. Shortly after, on our right (the maps all place the old Musan on the left of the road), we see rising ancient ramparts, like the enclosure of a city; but, in the place of the gates, there remain only vast breaches. Looking inside, we notice with surprise that the houses have been replaced by cultivated fields: the few thatched cottages are all located outside the walls. This is the ancient city of Musan.

Ah! if the stones could speak, what interesting stories would they tell us of the bloody dramas of which these places were once the scene? But they are as dumb as the natives are ignorant. All I could learn about these ruins from the most educated inhabitants, even the prefect of Pou-ryeng and the governor of Kyongsong, is that, several centuries ago, the citizens of this city, ransomed relentlessly by bands of plunderers who periodically came down from the North, finally gave up and moved their homes to 45 kilometers from there where they founded the present city of Musan.

About three quarters of an hour later, we leave on our left a path that winds in the mountain, it is the path that leads to Musan.

This city owes its fame to an important concession, which was made these last years by the Korean government. The Russians obtained the exploitation of immense forests, almost the last ones, alas! which remain in this country formerly so admirably wooded. The Koreans, an unconscious people if ever there was one, instead of distributing their mountains in regulated cuttings, cut down all the trees they can get their hands on, big or small, without thinking of the next day.

The immediate result of this blindness is that these bare peaks are no longer able to retain rainwater and bring disastrous floods, and the next result is that, in the not too distant future, we will be obliged to buy timber... in America.

At 20 lis (8 kilos) from Puryong, my tired companions propose a halt: we cross the river which descends from the great mountain range, and we spend the night in the small village of Mouneungtai.

The following day, January 1st, I want to offer to my people a small treat to inaugurate the new year. Vatel is summoned; I put at his disposal a suitable number of sapèques and give him *carte blanche*,

“Father,” he replied, “what do you want me to do? Today is the eve of Sunday, it is impossible to kill a chicken (until now, in Korea, we have observed the abstinence of Saturday); on the other hand, we are far from the sea, the stream is frozen and the fish do not travel in the mountains. How can we deal with it?”

“Are there no eggs in the locality?”

“There are none at present. We are fortunate to have been able to obtain a few handfuls of rice, because the people of the country usually eat only barley and millet.

“Well, blame the vegetable kingdom. No doubt, in this season, there are no fresh vegetables; but couldn’t we find beans or potatoes?”

“We will have potatoes in Hoeryŏng; as for beans, I do not know what you mean.”

“Ask the catechist,” I replied, and I began to pray my rosary.

Lunch time came. The menu was exactly the *carte blanche* I had given the cook. The bowl of rice was accompanied only by a cup of Kim-tchi, an indescribable garlic and chili paste “the smell of which,” said Colonel Chaillé-Long, “would frighten away an American skunk.” I forgot, there was still a saucer of toratji.

“Quès aco?” you will say.

It is the dried roots of these bellflowers which swing to the breath of the summer zephyr their bells of satin-blue. It is very poetic, as you see; but I must add with M. Ysabeau “that well-bred cows and self-respecting rabbits would refuse to eat them”.

“Bon appétit!” I said laughing to my confused people to comfort them, “By way of seasoning, remember that today the little Jesus shed his first tears with the first drops of his blood.”

This thought uplifting our souls made us forget the meager pittance we had on our table and our meal was undoubtedly more cheerful than that of the Korean emperor,

In front of us, on the azure of the sky, the great mountain that we are going to cross is outlined.

At first, we walk one hour in a steep road, then we turn abruptly to the right and begin the rise of Musan-ryeng. After one hour of climbing, we stop to breathe at the highest point which separates the two basins.

From this summit, I had hoped to discover in the distance the city of Hoeryŏng and the promised land. New disappointment, so common in Korea and to which I could not however get used: our glances are stopped by the ramifications of the chain which undulate at our feet and rise to close us the horizon two or three kilometers farther.

On the edge of the road stands a small temple in the honor of the genius of the mountain. It is a simple construction of clay covered with tiles; inside, some Chinese

inscriptions and an image. These kinds of pagodins, whose walls are about 1.5 meters high in all directions, are found on all the important passes of Korea. In the less important passes one sees at least one fetish tree at the foot of which is a pile of stones. Each devotee picks up his stone more or less near the top of the mountain according to his degree of piety and brings it to add to the pile; some even deposit a few sapèques there. As for the tree, the axe and the saw respect it, the pagans hang from its branches shreds of cloth or paper, straw and bags of rice, etc.

As similar customs exist in other countries, it would be interesting to compare with ours the superstitious beliefs and practices of the peoples of central Africa, the Bedouin tribes, the Transjordan, the Indians, etc. We also have megalithic monuments in Korea, as in India, Syria and Brittany. One of my colleagues has undertaken a study of all these questions; but, until now, absorbed by the care of the ministry, he has not yet been able to bring his work to a successful conclusion.

7.

In a Christian graduate's degree. - A stroke of grace. - Difficulties in Hoeryöng. - Letter to the mandarin. - Late and insufficient answer. - A strange audience.

The descent of the mountain does not offer any difficulty and is carried out in 40 minutes. We finish our 40 lis (16 kilometers) in the morning, and we stop at Hpougsan at 11:30 am. for dinner.

Five lis later, we pass a hamlet coquettishly sitting on the bank of the torrent.

"Father," my people say, "this is where the graduate Nam lives, a fervent catechumen. If we pass by without seeing him, he will not be able to console himself; you would do well to set foot on land and enter his house for a moment to rest.

"I know you good apostles, you are never in a hurry. If we stop for a minute in this house, we will be there for two hours.

"No," they replied, laughing, "we will leave immediately, but it is good that this family sees you and hears a few words from you. This catechumen lives with his elder brother and his old father, who have not given him a moment's rest since he wanted to become a Christian. Your presence will encourage the young man and intimidate the persecutors."

I let myself be convinced, and we entered the courtyard. Immediately the graduate seized the bridle of my horse and invited us to enter his house.

"Do you still have your parents?" I asked him after he had greeted me.

"Thank God, I still have my father.

"I will be happy to see him. And don't you have a brother?"

"Yes," he replied, glancing around, "and here he is."

The elder brother, whose fierce eye shone with a dark fire, jerked like a trapped tiger. He had hoped to be able to satisfy his curiosity and then escape incognito; but it was too late. Seeing himself pinched, he made good his bad luck, and came bravely to welcome me.

“You know” (we generally treat our Christians with respect because we regard them as our children, and treat them accordingly; as for the pagans, they are strangers to us, and we address them according to the rank they occupy in society), I said to him, “that your younger brother is preparing to embrace the Catholic religion. It is fitting that two brothers should have but one heart; I hope, therefore, that you too will become one of us.”

“We’ll see later,” he replied with a roguish air. “For the moment, religion is badly noted around here, and it would be imprudent to engage in it.”

Sensing a threat from him and wanting to be sure, I added:

“What do you mean? What are the slanders that are being made against our holy religion, and what is there to fear for its followers?”

He did not unmask his batteries and contented himself with answering:

“I do not know what the Christians are accused of, but the people of the village assure us that this doctrine is forbidden, and they are determined to expel from the region all those who would like to enlist among you.”

“The Catholic religion is by no means proscribed; it has adherents throughout Korea and even in Seoul, under the eyes of the government; I myself, who came here only to preach, travel with the permission of the emperor.”

“I don’t say the contrary; I don’t know.”

“I don’t say otherwise, I don’t know.”

“Well, who are these people who take the liberty of threatening the Christians? When I tell this to the mandarin of Hoeryōng, he will not fail to ask me the names. What are they? I want to know them.”

At this prospect of an unexpected inquiry, the foe of the Christians brought up the white flag, and remained silent. He could not name any names, he was not sure, he thought he had heard, etc.

To note in passing, this vulgar incident is the faithful image of what takes place in the high consular and ministerial spheres: with the Orientals, if one wants to have recourse to the finesses of diplomacy, one is generally at the bottom of the pile: but, when one goes straight to the point and speaks firmly, the obstacles are smoothed out and the difficulties disappear.

While I was muttering *in petto* this apophthegm, the elder brother discreetly slipped away into the kitchen and never saw him again that evening, which made me augur badly for his future conversion.

The principal adversary thus giving up the battlefield to us, the graduate then introduced the author of his days. He was a good old man, quite green for his seventy-eight years; but who, with an impassive face and half-closed eyes, seemed absolutely deprived of sight, hearing and speech.

After having tried in vain to corner him, in a very elevated tone, a few polite phrases in the ear, we continued the conversation between us, that is to say, Luke, the leader of the Christians of the North, Joseph, my catechist, and the bachelor (graduate) who later received the name of Jerome at baptism. As usual, the conversation revolved around the great subjects of prayer, the original fall and redemption, and the final destiny of humanity with the means that the Church puts at our disposal to enable us to reach it.

Suddenly, the good old man’s face lit up: he looked at each of us in turn and finally came out of his silence. Without letting anything show, he had followed with interest everything we were saying and, touched by the grace, he ended up joining the conversation so that we could explain to him what he could not understand. Naturally he had his little

objections, which were not very difficult to resolve, and our man immediately began to make the sign of the cross and to learn the Ave Maria. Struck by his good will and in consideration of his advanced age, I promised him to baptize him the following month, on my return, if, in the meantime, he continued to prepare himself with zeal.

In the meantime, five Christians from the North, on hearing of my arrival, came to pay me their respects and give me information about their region. The catechumens there are numerous and fervent; but a powerful party has formed against them and has sworn their destruction.

This hostility, after having thundered since June, broke out last October on the occasion of a building in the town of Hoeryōng, which a Christian had bought to serve as our meeting place and temporary chapel. This house was very suitable for the locality; but, as it had remained uninhabited for some time, some repairs were indispensable. However, the notables of the place, considering the use to which it was to be assigned, forbade the entry of the new owner and even, of their private authority, affixed seals to it. In addition, for three months, they showered our poor neophytes with all sorts of insults.

“I congratulate you on your long-suffering,” I said to the envoys, “but how is it that you have waited until now to inform me of events that go back so far?”

“At first we hoped to be able to settle the matter alone without giving you the embarrassment of an intervention; then, seeing you so happy to come to us, we thought that you had plenty of time to get acquainted with the other side of the coin.” 1

“This delicacy honors you and I am grateful to you. Nevertheless, if you had warned me earlier, I would have given orders to the mandarin in Seoul, and today everything would be ready for us, whereas tomorrow morning, when we enter the city, we will have no place to stay.”

“That is precisely why we are now addressing the issue. If you will write to the mandarin, we will carry the letter tonight, he will give orders, and tomorrow everything will be ready for your entry into the city.”

“I doubt very much that it will go as quickly as you seem to think. In any case there is no time to lose.”

So I dictated to the catechist the following letter:

“Il nam tong, January 1, 1898.

“Dear Mandarin,

“Business calls me to Hoeryōng. In order to settle it, I will need to stay in this city for a longer or shorter time. Since I cannot stay at the inn all this time, I asked a local to put me up in his house. He willingly agreed; but I learn that some individuals have prevented the owner from repairing the house and have even had the audacity to seal it. Without doubt these people do not know that I am traveling with a Korean government passport: they are going against the order of the Emperor who recommends to all officials to treat me well and to give me help and protection. I therefore beg you to instruct them and I hope that the said house will be inhabited promptly, for I must arrive tomorrow.

“I would still have several things to communicate to you; but that will be for our next meeting, since I will soon have the honor of seeing you.

“Yours faithfully, etc.

“L. Brett,

“French Apostolic Missionary.”

The next day, January 2, we continued to follow the innumerable zig-zags of the river which marked our route.

Finally, after 35 lis (14 kilometers) in a steep path that Boreas swept over and over again, irreverently whipping our faces, we stopped at an inn in Pong-eu-mi to wait for the mandarin’s reply.

The answer did not come. I still want to go ahead - *la furia francese* - my people tell me that it is impossible: we have to wait. It gets complicated, I foresee that things won’t go smoothly and that there will be flaws in the process.

This reminds me of the story of a friend of mine who, like yours truly, is not very strong in music. We stopped one day in front of a piano shop in Shanghai. My companion saw a few new pieces of music that he liked and was determined to buy them.

I said to him, “That’s very good, my dear; but this piece seems to me to be difficult to play for a beginner. See, there are five flats in the key.

Bah!” he replied. I don’t mind: when there is more than one, I scratch the others. Well, I think I’ll have a lot of flats to scratch too.

Finally, after a long delay, the answer of the mandarin arrived and did not cause us a mediocre surprise. In two words, here is its content:

“I hope the great man Paik, (that’s my Korean name) had a good trip. You are kind enough to tell me that you have a passport from his Majesty, so please be so kind as to send it to me so that I can have a look at it. It will be my pleasure to receive your precious visit,

“Kim Ha Yen,
“Prefect of Hoireng”

As for epistolary courtesy, nothing is missing; but also as for oriental finesse, it is perfect: exquisite politeness, but not a word about my request. In all my letter only one thing struck him: I have a passport, he wants to see it. With our European ideas, this seems quite natural; but here it is contrary to custom. If we were in Japan, where at every step a policeman more or less politely requires you to show your passport, I would submit without a murmur to this annoying formality, because it is accepted; but in Korea, it is unheard of. At the very least, the mandarin is within his rights, but to demand it too strictly, is it not insulting, as the legal axiom says: *summum jus, summa injuria*? Finally, there is no need to procrastinate: he wants to see my passport, he will see it; but I cannot part with it, I will carry it myself.

On the way, then! In an icy wind which underlines energetically the -20° of my thermometer, we complete the 25 lis (10 kilometers) which separate us from the famous city of Hoeryōng. Already the ramparts rise in front of us. All along the way, small groups of

catechumens come to meet us and we form a squad of about thirty people when we arrive at the southern gate.

There, in spite of the harshness of the season, a group of curious people are hovering around: you can easily read the malice on their astonished faces. They obstruct the passage and, to our polite prayer to make room for us, they answer with insults and threats. I push my horse forward, the populace ends up settling down a little and my people follow through the gap.

I am first led directly to the house which we bought; after having noted that it is uninhabitable, I go to the court accompanied by the mob. There, in the courtyard, a considerable crowd is already stationed, but calmer. I see a satellite and tell him to take my passport to the mandarin as a visiting card.

Immediately, the mandarin, surrounded by his assistants, advances on the staircase to receive me and leads me into the lounge. According to the local etiquette, we leave our shoes at the door and we sit down on the fine mats which cover the parquet floor.

However, to my deep amazement, the mandarin, his eyes fixed on the document that I have just given him, remains plunged in his reading and does not seem to suspect our presence. It is 1 h. 57. I respect his contemplation and do not want to disturb him. On my side, to distract myself, I contemplate the majestic pose of my... interlocutor (?), I make the inventory of the apartment (pretty screens, some books, brushes, dispatches scattered on a small table, the inevitable seals of the prefecture, tea service, pipes, a spittoon and a... chamber pot). I stare at the curious people who are standing on the threshold of the open door to attend the hearing for free and count with interest the nails of my brodequins.

When this ceases to amuse me, I consult my watch: it marks a little more than 2 pm. I said to the catechist who was annoyed by this silence: "I assume that the noble mandarin has never seen a passport in his life; as it is the first time, it absorbs him to such an extent that he forgets that we are here.

The catechist - an old hand, a former companion of Fr. Deguette - was hardly impressed by the majesty of the place; he burst out laughing.

The mandarin looked up and wanted to know what the European had said that was so witty. He immediately folded up the passport, placed it respectfully on the table and asked if we had made our journey without suffering too much from the cold. The opportunity to enter into the matter *in medias res*, as the ancients used to say, offered itself, and I seized it by the hair.

"I thank you," I replied, "we had an excellent trip. Only you will agree with us that it is not warm; I hardly see the possibility of going to spend the night in a room where one has not made a fire for four months and whose doors and windows are open to all the winds, "

8.

End of the hearing. Ill-intentioned population. -First mass celebrated in Hoeryöng. - A tour of the city.

The mandarin was beginning to show some interest in us, when a remark from the audience made me turn my head. My eyes met a man with a false look, who said with a crafty air:

“About the house, there is a simple way to fix it. Call the seller, ask him if he agrees to the deal: if so, the house is yours to do with as you please; if not, you have no right to enter it.”

It goes without saying that the rascal had, in advance, lectured the former owner. I asked the catechist, “Who is this individual who has come up with this bright idea?”

“That’s the substitute.”

“Well, tell the substitute that for the moment I have the honor of speaking to the mandarin; later on, if he is asked for his opinion, he can give it. As for the house, it has been sold in due form for more than four months, the money has been paid, the title deeds have been delivered: there is no need to come back on the accomplished fact. For the moment, I have only one question to ask the mandarin: Does he have the power and the will to enforce our life and our property in the city of Hoeryōng or not?”

Instead of the categorical answer I wanted, the mandarin served us a few cups of tea and called the notables. They came to the courtyard and knelt down in the foreground, the crowd stood behind. On the stoop the secretaries of the prefecture were crouching, and while a herald with a high and intelligible voice, repeated, every two or three sentences, without ever hesitating and by decorating them even a little, the words of the mandarin.

The latter showed them all my passport and, for nearly half an hour, gave them an address which can be summarized in these terms:

“Now that you have seen his passport, if you create obstacles for him, the affront will reach my person and will reflect on our emperor himself. What do you have to reply?”

The notables struck the frozen floor of the court with their foreheads and answered in chorus:

“We did not know; please forgive us, we have acted badly out of ignorance.”

I had risen to my feet so as not to lose a detail of the scene so interesting which was unfolding before me.

“You see,” the mandarin remarked, “they acknowledge their fault and beg your indulgence.”

“That’s good,” I said, raising my voice, “I am satisfied and ready to forget the past; but don’t do it again: in the future you won’t have the pretext of ignorance to excuse yourself.”

With that, the mandarin dismissed the audience and closed the door to the courtyard; then the conversation continued in a friendly manner between us.

“It is clear,” I observed, “that we are far from Seoul. In the capital the people are well disposed towards us, and often even the ministers honor us with their visits, while here your constituents....”

“Oh, please don’t say my constituents, please say my savages, for in truth they are not paik-syeng citizens, but real barbarians, ya-min.”

I looked at the many spectators who crowded the antechamber: they listened without batting an eyelid to these unflattering words. The mandarin continued:

“Except for a few rare Russian travelers, Europeans never come and they don’t know how to behave. When the mandarin wants to teach them politeness, they simply chase

him out of his district, as they did to me in Kil-tjyou. So I assure you that I will not miss them.”

“Are you going to leave?”

“Yes, I have already received my change and I am waiting for my successor from day to day.”

“And what is your new prefecture? Are you going to move closer to Seoul?”

“Alas, no. I am going one hundred lis further north, to Tjyongsyeng.”

“Well, we hope to meet again.”

“I hope so with all my heart, for I desire to make further acquaintance with you in any case, either at Hoeryöng or at Tjyong-syeng, count on me.”

As it was nearly four o'clock, I took my leave of the mandarin, apologizing for having absorbed so considerable a portion of his precious time. He smiled and added:

“You will not be able to occupy your house to-day; therefore, please do me the pleasure of accepting hospitality in a building dependent on the *yamên*, which I am accustomed to place at the disposal of my guests of distinction.”

After a new onslaught of friendly protestations, we parted, and the mandarin returned to his quarters; but, during our short journey to the lodging so graciously granted, we were again followed by a boisterous crowd—and stones began to rain down. One of them, which was undoubtedly intended for me, struck the man who held the bridle of my horse. I immediately turned around, my determined air intimidated those present; they fled, shouting, “His look is terrible.” Shortly afterwards, a servant of the mandarin came to inquire whether we were comfortably installed and brought us two chickens and a stearin candle on behalf of his master. However, popular curiosity was far from being satisfied: they had seen our face and our costume, but what was in our boxes? To clear up this mystery, about fifty children and young people assailed us until the night with their annoyances. To coax them I distributed to the most polite some candies, cigarettes and other small things; if my supply had been more considerable, I would have won all the hearts.

At last the darkness covers the earth; we lock the gates of the court and we prepare to take a well-deserved rest; but we had counted without Mr. the substitute. This rascal had bribed several rascals who, over the surrounding wall, threw stones right up to our door and graced our sleep with alerts that we could have done without.

On January 3, before dawn brought back the intruders, I set up my missionary altar on two boxes and had the consolation of offering to God, for the conversion of the region, the first mass to be celebrated in these parts.

In the morning, the mandarin came to return my visit of the day before. He arrived, preceded by a simple servant and followed by a young man who carried the seals, because a mandarin never separates himself from these insignia of his dignity.

I received him in my camp and made him sit beside me on my blanket folded in four. Fortunately, I had some cigars and a bottle of rum in reserve, a gift from my good friends on the Russian cruiser *Creysler*. I admired with what charming good-naturedness the high official was able to bend to the circumstances and share my meager booty.

In turn I wanted to get some fresh air and to familiarize this turbulent population with the sight of a cassock. After having put some Christians in charge of our belongings, I was about to leave when my catechist pointed out to me that it would be prudent not to venture out without the protection of two satellites... in case of eventuality.

So he wrote a bill to the mandarin who immediately sent us two of these interesting characters. One was young, jovial and even mischievous, a true type of Korean gavroche. The other, an old madman, had the mobile physiognomy of a monkey and involuntarily reminded me of Janus with a double face; while with his big voice he was chastising the hooligans and ordering them to move along, one corner of his mouth was looking threatening and his right eye was glaring with buckshot, but at the same time the other corner was grinning and the left eye was blinking with an air of encouragement. I wouldn't be surprised if, in the evening, after having laid down his uniform, this old devious man was one of the first to lend a hand to the freebooters of the area.

In any case, these policemen accompanied us only for form's sake and were powerless to repress the provocative attitude of the crowd as well as to defend us against their mockery, their impertinence and their threats. In fact, I am convinced that the prestige of my brodequins, capable of inadvertently crushing a toe like a baked apple, made those who swallow corns on their feet think twice and contributed more effectively to protect us against the jostling than the good-natured appearance of the representatives of the authority.

9.

Description of Hoeryŏng. -Family evening. -Philological digression. -The Epiphany. -Fervent catechumens. -Some tribulations.

Hoeryŏng is shaped like a quadrilateral much longer than it is wide and has about 5,000 inhabitants. Its ramparts are still in fairly good condition. The houses are fairly well built, but often have the peculiarity that the roof tiles have the concavity turned towards the sky. It is a saving of half and it seems that the leaks are rare once the gaps have been carefully grouted with clay.

As everywhere in Korea, each house is surrounded by a hedge, which serves both as a fence and an umbrella for the building. Indeed, when the wind whips the rain against the adobe walls, they easily deteriorate. To obviate this inconvenience, palisades are woven out of reeds and need to be frequently renewed; here these palisades are generally made of willow branches and can last for about ten years.

The only somewhat spacious street is the one that, from the southern gate, leads to the mandarinat near the eastern gate. There is only one original building worth visiting: it is a large store where the Chinese periodically come to sell their goods: cloth, haberdashery, edibles, etc.

In spite of the efforts of the authorities, trade languishes and on the market place there is hardly anything but firewood. One must hear these good people speak enthusiastically of the "admirable stores of Wonsan", just as the inhabitants of Wonsan swoon when they speak of the supplies of Seoul, while the city dwellers of the capital obtain their supplies from Changhai, Europe or America.

This is how the world goes. And everyone is right: everything is relative here below and the happiest people are, in short, those who ignore the false needs of civilization and know how to be satisfied with little.

The men are generally taller and more vigorous than in the South. They wear the same hairstyle, but have a stronger toupee (literally and figuratively). Their costume does not differ from the other provinces, except in winter when travelers dress in dog skins from head to toe, which gives the landscape a gamey look.

The women have a special way of arranging their hair; but, not having studied the process, I cannot describe it and I humbly decline any competence in this matter. Their camisoles (was it because of the cold?) are sometimes longer and more modest than those I have seen anywhere else in Korea.

The mothers have a very elegant way of plaiting the hair of their babies, who look delightful under their brilliant costumes of pink, red, green, mauve, purple, etc. cotton or silk.

While noting these details, we are still walking and we arrive at the gate of our house. I notice with pleasure that the work is well advanced: undoubtedly the plastering is not yet dry and the paper which must cover the doors is not stuck everywhere; but at least we will be at home. I have our luggage brought in and we are settling in right now. -

What a delightful evening spent with the family and these dear neophytes! We like to repeat the word of the psalmist: *Quam bonum et quam jucundum habitare fratres in unum!* I am overwhelmed with questions about my relatives in France, and I try to gather some information about the country. I admit that it is not easy, because I have difficulty in understanding my interlocutors and my catechist, who should help me, does not realize with his Korean brain the interest that these details can offer to me or to others, and he prefers to tell for his own pleasure stories which, in my turn, leave me perfectly indifferent. So much it is true that... *de gustibus non disputandum.*

The dialect differs enough from that of Wonsan and even more so from that of the southern provinces that a foreigner – even a Korean – has difficulty in making himself understood at first sight. The pronunciation seems harder and more sibilant. Thus Tj becomes Tz or T. S is pronounced while singing and is sometimes equivalent to Sh, as in Canton, and sometimes to Ch, as in Saint-Flour. The diphthong Oi is pronounced Oai; Eut becomes I.

Local people tend to put most nouns in the nominative, especially those that are usually left to the radical; the same goes for cardinal numbers.

Many words are simply disfigured by the patois pronunciation (1).

1) Thus Meihkori for meihtari (shoes). Kamhti for kamhtou, (cap). Konyain for koyangi (cat). Mountzi for montji (dust). Kamdzyei for kamtja (potatoes). Samai for samal (dress sleeve). Pyangouri for pyengari (chick). Pyengsari for pyeng (bottle). Mosayul for word (nail). Hoai tjoai kyeng for hoi tjoi kyeng (act of contrition).

Others, on the contrary, are so different that they are unrecognizable (2).

2) Shissouai for sihpyo (watch). Kousai or koumoki for koulhtong (fireplace). Naigouri for yenkeui (smoke). Pinireuko for naksong (truncated recitation). Papouriko for tchaksong (wrong recitation). Ollita for sokita, (cheating). Mouseukei for mouestnya (what?)

The grammatical forms of the conjugation show remarkable divergences (3).

3) Animneita becomes anioueita, ... isn't it)

Keisionika becomes kyeipsioniong (... is there?)

Ikesi mouesionika becomes ikei mousi kiniong (What is this?)
Otairo kasinanika becomes oturo kasiopnarika (Where are you going?)
Itjyeparyetsapneita becomes nitsosseukouma (I have forgotten)

The proximity of the border has not failed to rub off on the idiom and several words bear an undeniable stamp of foreign origin. Thus, while in the ports open to European trade, matches are commonly referred to as *matchi* (from the English match), in the North they are called *pitjikai*, which obviously comes from the Russian *spitchki*.

In the same way it would be easy to multiply the quotations of Chinese import.

I had often heard Korea referred to as *tai-kouk* (large kingdom); here, for the first time, I found the expression do *syo-kouk* (small kingdom), applied to Korea by the Chinese and Koreans themselves.

And now *paulo majora canamus!*

The day after tomorrow is Epiphany, the anniversary of the day when the Magi, the first fruits of gentility, came to prostrate their crowns at the feet of the divine Savior. It is a question of offering to the Child Jesus a bouquet worthy of the occasion. All the Christians present here wish to take communion on this day and, to enhance the brilliance of the solemnity, we will have twenty adult baptisms.

Let's get to work and not waste any time!

During this triduum of preparation, moral exhortations follow the study of doctrine and prayer alternates with examination.

Each one recites the prayers and the catechism in turn. If a candidate fails this test, which is proportionate to his age and intellectual culture, he is sent back until he knows what is required.

But in a cradle Christianity such as this, no one would want to run the risk of such a misfortune: for weeks, every night before going to bed, the father of the family sees to it that the household imperturbably recites the prescribed task. The poor women, who most of the time do not know how to read, take on their sleep, after the hard work of the day, to be taught orally by a brother or their husband; they put such a zeal into it that little by little they arrive at knowing perfectly all their catechism, questions and answers. What a pleasure it is to preside over such sessions! No one hesitates, no one stammers, no one gets confused: it is admirable.

My role consists only in making sure that everyone has understood correctly. I ask and have someone ask a few additional questions; we give the explanations that are asked for and the difficulties that are proposed to us; we bring examples of comparisons appropriate to the taste of our audience, we quote a few sentences from Holy Scripture or a few lines from the Lives of the Saints; then we give a rehearsal of the baptismal ceremonies, we explain the symbolism of the rites and the meaning of the prayers; finally, we exhort the recipients to repent of their past faults.

This care absorbs the greater part of the day.

While I myself go about my exercises of piety, the catechumens take advantage of this free time to recite their rosary and encourage each other to renounce the devil and superstitions, to endure persecutions without wavering and to persevere, whatever it takes, until the end.

In the evening, when I lie down on my mat to forget the work of the day, these dear Koreans, who are undoubtedly as tired as I am, only take a rest after having again recited (or rather chanted) in particular all their catechism, all that they know of prayers and a respectable number of rosaries. I fall asleep, gently lulled by this melody from heaven. But some spend the whole night; it is the vigil of arms: tomorrow they will come out of the sacred bath knights of Christ and of the Gospel.

Oh yes, I am proud of my Christians. What firmness in faith! What delicacy of feeling in these pagans of yesterday! What mysterious intuition of things that no one has ever taught them! Certainly the action of grace is visible: we touch it, so to speak, with our finger. The Holy Spirit does not need our poor ministry and he knows, when he pleases, how to infuse souls of good will with a fervor that human eloquence is equally powerless to suggest and to portray.

Oh! what a sweet perfume of piety emanates from those beautiful days, the memory of which still embalms my soul as I write these lines! These neophytes offered the pure gold of their charity and the incense of their prayers to God with great heart. So that nothing was missing from the symbolic gifts whose memory we were celebrating, the sovereign Master demanded myrrh in the form of daily tribulations.

10.

An unfortunate individual put in the shade. - New mandarin. -The mystery of the conversion. - Excursions to the surroundings. - New difficulties.

From February 3 to 11, every evening, from 8 to 10 o'clock, individuals, ambushed on the city walls or posted in front of the main entrance of our house, regularly threw stones at us, which hit the doors, broke the tiles and piled up in the courtyard. Their weight varied from a pound to a kilogram, and we owed our salvation only to the solidity of the building and to our precaution of keeping ourselves carefully barricaded inside.

In addition to these nocturnal alerts, which the darkness made more painful, we still had to endure innumerable harassments; but I will not undertake to describe them in detail, because, if they did not weary the patience of the Christians, their account could easily weary that of the readers. As for yours truly - who has the reputation of being patient, even very patient... not for long - I confess that he was the most nervous of the group; his Gallic blood was boiling in his veins and, if these madmen had managed to break down our door, the first one who crossed the threshold would have spent a bad quarter of an hour.

On Epiphany vigil, during the exams, I was constantly distracted by a dialogue coming from the next room. There was a large, slightly greedy voice speaking unpolitely; other voices, very humble, responded with marked obsequiousness. In the long run, this intrigued me so much that I was obliged to interrupt the session to find out what it was all about.

It was a certain bachelor, Kang, who had summoned my guests to leave the house and wanted to throw us into the street first, so that we could be expelled from the city more easily. When the scene had lasted half an hour, I thought that it was too much and I secretly warned the mandarin with a bill. The affair succeeded like a charm. In the twinkling of an eye, two satellites arrived and picked up Mr. Bachelor and deposited in jail without further ado.

At nightfall, the delinquent's relatives came to beg us to release him; I wrote to this effect to ask for his pardon and he was soon set free.

As our mandarin was about to be transferred elsewhere, I did not dare to bother him further about our difficulties and I waited.

His successor arrived on January 10.

Before I went to greet the rising sun myself, I sent him my card according to Korean etiquette. My catechist asked if he had had a good trip, told him about the awkward, even perilous situation we had been in for a week, and asked for his protection:

"I know all that," said the official, "my predecessor told me about it. But you know the Korean law that a mandarin does not do business for three days after his arrival at a new post.

My catechist discouraged me from visiting in person, and I left it at that. The mandarin was right: we still received stones here and there; but the organized hail ceased after three days.

In the meantime, small groups continued to flock to us and received one or other of the seven sacraments every day, except for extreme unction and holy orders.

"But," you will ask, "how do you go about effecting these conversions?"

The answer is quite simple: it is not we who operate the conversions, they are done as in the good old days. For example, Saul is knocked down on the road to Damascus and Jesus Christ sends him to be instructed by Ananias; God, through the ministry of an angel, inspires Cornelius to call St. Peter; the prince of the apostles comes and baptizes the centurion.

History repeats itself, it is said; we have the proof before our eyes. Someone comes along and says to me

"What can I do to rise above the vulgarities of life, to escape the temptations and bad examples that surround me, to attain the happiness I long for; what can I do, in a word, to save my soul?"

I instruct him and baptize him; but the first idea comes from God and the first blow is the blow of grace.

This means that it is in your power, dear readers, to cooperate as much as we do in these conversions. Every time you do a meritorious work, prayer, mortification, almsgiving, etc., you obtain a grace, and if you direct your intention on our side, it is a grace of conversion for our poor infidels. Rejoice then, for great will be your merit and your reward before God.

The following week, as the number of aspirants to baptism became less considerable, we took advantage of our relative leisure to take a few walks in the vicinity and visit our new converts in their homes.

The first object which was to excite our curiosity was naturally the Tumen River, which serves as the boundary between China and Korea. It flows three quarters of an hour north of the town of Hoeryŏng; its width varies from 30 meters to 50 meters and it divides into several arms which join a little lower down. Despite the harshness of the cold, it is not

frozen. The melting of snow in spring and the monsoon rains in summer make it roll with tumultuous waves that the boats do not cross without danger.

Below the border, the land is poor and sandy; beyond, the aspect changes: the soil is black and very fertile. However, the orographic system is the same on both banks of the river. It is necessary to go 25 kilometers farther to note a change of decoration: there the vast plains of Manchuria replace the tormented nature of the mountains of Korea.

The Chinese are hardly ever seen in this region, the vast majority of the population remains Korean. The costumes are there to convince us. And then the inhabitants have spread their bedding here and there on the hedges to let it take the air; it is indeed the national cover, such as one finds it everywhere in the empire: inside, white in theory, practically very pronounced isabella color; outside, blue on the side of the feet, red and white... dark on the side of the head.

Another criterion of nationality is the mode, I was going to say the architecture, adopted for the buildings; all that we see here is indeed Korean. I have heard the Italians boast of their Tower of Pisa because it is leaning; well, if that is a merit, the Koreans have a much greater right to be proud, since most of their buildings stand upright in spite of – and in defiance of – the laws of the vertical. In any other country these buildings would collapse; in Korea, not at all. The reason for this immunity is said to be idiosyncrasy. Oh, how beautiful is Greek!

Tai-tjong-Kol (or Tai-tjong-tong, kol and tong mean valley), a village of about thirty houses, is located 7 kilometers from the city. There we are very well received. The population is animated by good feelings and does not molest the family of Christians to whom we go. As a result of this visit, three people belonging to two different houses promised to enlist in our ranks.

On our way back from this and the following excursions, every time we passed through the city, we were insulted and pelted with stones; but I began to get used to it and no longer thought of complaining about it. After the example of my glorious patron, I consider these stonings as an addition to my apostolate, and I value these stones as precious stones, since they will earn us a crown in heaven.

11

A trip in China. - More tribulations. - Excursion to Manchuria. - On the Korean border. - Unexpected homage.

Hak-syei-kol (or Hak-syei-tong), 7 km from the city, is a small hamlet inhabited by five Christian families. To reach it, it is necessary to cross the Tumen river and, for the first time, I tread this ground with various fortunes, formerly Korean, today Chinese and soon undoubtedly Muscovite.

Our presence arouses public curiosity. A follower of Bacchus insists on interviewing me. If I grant permission, this lout will disrespect me, and I will lose all consideration in the minds of this formalist people; if I refuse, he will want to force the issue, and repression will

be necessary. However, the nearest mandarin lives 50 kilometers away and will not bother for so little.

To get out of this embarrassing dilemma, I bring forward the time of our return, and we are already on our way when the unfortunate visitor appears.

At Sakikol (or Sakitong), 6 kilometers from the city, things are not going so well. Out of 400 houses, I have there only two families of neophytes, whose chief is Luc, whom I have established at the head of all the Christians of the district. In order to take revenge for the breaches that the zeal of this valiant man has made in his empire, the devil has long been creating difficulties for him. This time, my passage seems to be a favorable occasion to redouble his animosity.

While I am in the house, a gathering occurs at the door; according to their deplorable habit, several of those present have left their reason at the bottom of the bottle. The most exalted of them, an old man named Rim, began by insulting us; then he wanted to enter our room by force and rushed at my catechist. We rush in. We seize the furious man, we put him in the hands of the witnesses of this scene, making them responsible for what will happen until the wretch has finished drinking his wine. Finally, we return to the city.

During the night (January 20), I was told that Rim, assisted by several thugs, had moved into Luc's house, chased away the wife and children, and started to break all the furniture.

What to do?

Sakikol, being on the other side of the river, was not under the jurisdiction of Hoeryöng, so the Chinese mandarin in Tjong-syeng, 100 lis (40 kilos) away, had to be contacted. Luc therefore wrote a request in Chinese, and left at once. He will sleep on the way to Isaripatkol, and tomorrow, at dawn, he will report to the *yamên*.

We are hopeful, for last week a catechumen from Hak-syeng, having been mistreated without reason by the pagans of his village, won his case with the same mandarin: the two notables who had taken the liberty of devastating his home were tied up, imprisoned, and sentenced to repair the damage.

Alas! the days follow one another and are not alike. We were going to run into an obstacle that we had not foreseen. In China, there is a court vacancy ten days before and ten days after the New Year. For this reason, Luc was not allowed to present his case. This regrettable delay was followed by other delays due to events that we have yet to relate, and it is impossible to say when or if justice will be done in this case.

Until now, apart from the inhabitants of the neighborhood, I had only administered the sacraments to able-bodied people in the full force of their age; there remained the old men, women and children whom distance prevented from coming to us in the heart of winter. Placed in the alternative of either abandoning them or going to their homes, I decided on the latter, despite the difficulties it presented.

As for the spiritual jurisdiction, I had asked Bishop Mutel to put me in order; but, from the civil point of view, it was not without inconvenience to enter Manchuria without being provided with a passport of the Chinese government. Moreover, in a country where the

spirits were in ferment, the natives could always, in case of danger, easily evade prosecution; it was not the same with a European.

But had I come so close to back out? Was I going to be satisfied with a glance at this promised land without having the consolation of setting foot on it? These people will have to get used to the sight of a Catholic priest some day; why not right now? The future is ours: *non praevalent!* After the first shot has been fired, we will definitely remain masters of the battlefield and if, in the melee, I receive some scratches, am I not a missionary for that? From the Crib to Calvary, Jesus Christ teaches us that nothing is fruitful apart from suffering. Besides, I have my Korean passport: if need be, it can be used to prove my identity and perhaps my... honorability.

Alea jacta est! What does the Rubicon matter when it comes to the conquest of souls? The Gospel knows no borders, for its divine Founder said to it: "Go and teach all nations. Onward!"

As the country on the other side of the Korean border was not safe, we left in the city what we had most precious and what was not indispensable for the journey and we left, counting on making only a short stay, ready to withdraw if the danger became too serious. Our plan was to make two stops: one at Sari-pat-kol and the other at Sam-ouen-pong to give the catechumens every facility to come and receive baptism within a radius of a few kilometers.

On January 21, we left as early as the proverbial Korean slowness allows. I led the way on a large steed, the catechist followed on a more modest mount and the rear guard was made up of half a dozen Christians. After five lis (two kilometers), we cross, on the ice, the Tumen, which forms a bend almost at right angles and now flows in the N.N.E. direction.

The border is marked by a post of Chinese soldiers whose number varies according to the occurrence. At present they are there, under the orders of a sergeant, about twenty, occupied with the serious business of lunch; but the sentinels are watching... in the form of two determined dogs. These faithful guardians of public order and the integrity of the territory come to sniff (I speak about the dogs) the hocks of my horse and my own calves with an air of little reassurance. Their barking brings out the guard.

I was aware that I was not quite in order with the authorities, so I did not wait for the policemen to come and ask for my papers, and I sped away. "Speeding away" is an unusual expression in Korea, where ponies generally walk at a senatorial pace; but there are exceptions to every rule: the proof is that my gentle steed, in three beats of a gallop, put the smuggler out of reach.

At some distance, I stop to see if my suite will get out of this bad situation without any trouble. After a moment, everyone rallies in full.

"Well! How did it go?"

"Oh, very simply. The soldiers asked us who you were and to what nationality you belonged. We answered that you were French and that your name was Father Bret. The Chinese didn't understand much, and after shivering for two minutes in the breeze, they hurried off to continue their interrupted meal and left us alone."

Basically, they are good people and later, when I got to know them, I had only to praise their services.

Around noon we reached Syeng-ti-kol, twenty-five lis (ten kilometers) from the city, and went to dinner at a catechumen's house in the last house of the village. All the peasants open their doors to watch the procession.

Until now the pagans have been rather debonair towards three families who are preparing to embrace our holy religion; they have learned of the harms that have been inflicted on us with impunity and they are beginning to wake up: the sight of the European produces in them the effect of red on a bull.

A big devil runs to ingest a few cups of wine to give himself courage and, when we pass again, he camps proudly in the middle of the road and pretends to make me get off the horse,

“Stop him!” he shouted at the top of his voice. “Seize the bridle of his horse!”

At this command, several red-nosed citizens form the circle; but none of them—not even the leader—dares to put forth a hand. The simple sight of the badine, which serves me as a whip and with which I do not even threaten them, is enough to hold cowardly eyes in respect. I spur my horse and we quietly march on the ice without responding to their provocations.

The road continues to follow the river until opposite Hak-syeng; the inhabitants of this village, softened by the lesson which they received lately, have the good idea to remain peacefully at home. Then, turning abruptly to the West, we sink into a high valley which leads us to Sari-pat-kol.

From afar, I see a crowd all dressed in white, massed on the road that it intercepts. What is this about?

This group does not look very worthwhile.

If it were less compact, it could be a deputation of catechumens who have come to meet us to welcome us; but there are too many of them... Well, we're going to have more trouble. Ah! it is really beautiful to be a pioneer; but all is not rosy in the profession.

I approach and I feel a certain relief at the sight of the peaceful intentions painted on the faces. However, my concern did not quite cease, for the most considerable figure stood out and shouted in a stentorian voice:

“Grab the horse's bridle!”

An assistant executes the order, I let him do it. Then the haranguer changing of tone:

“Great man,” he says, “in spite of the bitterness of the cold, you have deigned to do us the favor of visiting our mountains, we are deeply grateful to you and we have the honor of offering you our most respectful greetings.”

Now that was not on the program! It's beautiful and a change from previous receptions. However, if I had planned it, I could have improvised an appropriate response at my leisure. To add insult to injury, my entire party has stayed behind and I am alone with a kid to teach me the way. Interpreters are like umbrellas: cumbersome when you don't need them and often absent when you do,

I hasten to make my mouth into a heart and to answer more or less in these terms:

“Gentlemen, I cannot tell you how touched I am by your approach. For a long time I had heard about the interesting population of these mountains and I am happy to see today that your good qualities have not been exaggerated. For the moment, it is late and I have a legitimate impatience to gain my lodging; but soon I will have the pleasure to meet you again and to make with you more intimate knowledge.”

They pretended to understand and told me that, in spite of their strong desire to possess me longer among them, they dared not detain me any longer. The night was approaching: besides the difficulty of walking in the middle of the darkness, the encounter of wild beasts in the forest was to be feared. They therefore let go of my horse’s bridle and wished me a safe journey.

The ride was finished; we entered a maze of steep gorges and after one hour of zigzag ascents, we reached the hamlet of Tjâ-eui-Tong which was to be during several days our center of operation.

12

Looting of the residence of Hoeryöng. - An admirable Christian, Thaddeus Ti. - Perspective of bloody persecution. - The obligatory flight.

The house of John Baptist Kim, the first Christian of the North, was arranged as a temporary chapel; it is the largest of the locality and many catechumens find there asylum during the few days which precede and follow the reception of the baptism.

Sheets of white paper glued to the walls mask the nakedness of the adobe, a few strips of cotton cloth fixed to the rafters take the place of a bâлдаquin, a large curtain running from one column to the other divides the audience into two choirs: men on one side, women on the other. The altar is primitive; but the missionary has put all his art and heart into it. The same God who once did not disdain to descend into the desert under the tents of Israel, still delights in living with the children of men; but, alas! we do not have the happiness of preserving the Blessed Sacrament.

To make up for this and to satisfy the common devotion, I use a method taught to me by a zealous apostle of the Bahnars: from the consecration to communion, I make the mass last as long as possible.

Here we are again, as a family, far from the tumult of the city and the dangers of the main road! The sky finally seems to be calming down over our heads. We are in an environment inhabited almost exclusively by Christians and the attitude of the pagan notables, just now on our way, is a guarantee of peace and security. *Deus nobis hæc otia fecit*, Let us thank God and take advantage of this leisure time free of alarm to make the ministry we have to fulfill fruitful.

Alas, this bright future of hope was not long in coming, and the apparent tranquility we thought we were enjoying was only the calm that precedes the storm.

While I was at Kim's house, bandits ransacked our oratory in Hoeryŏng. A member of the family who had been entrusted with the care of the building ran to warn the mandarin. Some satellites arrived and made five arrests. The culprits were sentenced to be caned and thrown into prison.

But the pagans, in order to avenge their incarcerated co-religionists, are about to give a hard time to the one who denounced them to the authorities. The mandarin understands the gravity of the situation, withdraws the Christian from the fury of the rabble and gives him asylum in a corner of the *yamên*. The bandits keep watch around the ramparts to seize him as soon as he tries to flee from the city. But, at nightfall, a watchman discovered a poorly guarded point of the fortifications and informed the mandarin, who immediately made my Christian escape secretly.

He crossed the border and arrived on the 24th, at noon. His name was Thaddeus Ti and he deserves a special mention. I had noticed him a long time ago, because he is one of the twelve who, last May, came to receive baptism from my hands in Wonsan.

He is a young man of 24, well built, with regular features, a lip shaded by a budding moustache, and an intelligent face that is rarely illuminated by a fleeting smile like lightning. I had always been struck by the precocious seriousness stamped on his face. Seeing him young, full of strength and health, with a charming wife and a little girl, I could not explain to myself this extraordinary gravity: I understand it today. In addition to the preoccupation of feeding and raising his young sisters – a whole lot of them: Flora, Florence and Florentine - this poor young man is the only head of a Christian family in the whole town of Hoeryŏng, which has about 5,000 inhabitants. He is constantly being harassed by the pagans and has lost the expansive cheerfulness so natural to his age.

However, the rioters, hearing that their main victim had managed to escape, seized his old father, beat him, insulted him and chased him out of the city with all his family. Then they went in force to the mandarin and freed the five prisoners.

And now, to whom can we attribute the responsibility for these serious events? I have no hesitation in pointing the finger at a certain Tjyen, the same deputy who openly declared himself against us during the hearing on January 2. I consider him as the soul of the movement directed against us and in particular as the instigator of this night attack, because, as early as January 18, he had said verbatim to a pagan, brother-in-law of Thaddeus:

“In a few days, the people will rise up to drive out the European. There will be a great affair: tell your relatives to take flight right now.”

On the first news of this attack, on the morning of the 22nd, I wrote to the mandarin of Hoeryŏng to ask him to kindly put in safety what remained of my luggage and to give the order to repair our house, because I was about to return to the city. But this worthy magistrate left my effects for three days at the mercy of comers and goers, in a house open to all winds; Only then did he entrust what was left of it to honest pagans; as for the repairs, he did not make any and did not even deign to answer my letter.

At the same time, I thought I should inform Bishop Mutel of what had just happened, and the prelate was willing to communicate my letter to the Minister of France who immediately took steps to help us; but, in spite of the zeal and eagerness of Mr. Collin de Plancy, all this took time,

First of all it was not necessary to think of sending a telegram. Telegraphic communications ceased in the North beyond Wonsan. The post office itself, a happy progress of recent institution, does not transmit the letters to Hoeryŏng, but deposits them in Kyensyeng, where it is necessary to have a correspondent and a personal mail. Fortunately,

we had a catechumen there. I sent him a Christian of good will, who walked 135 kilometers to put my letter in the box. From there to Seoul, 800 kilometers; in about twenty days, the Bishop will know what to expect. As for the reply, I asked His Grandeur to kindly address it to the catechumen in question, who will send it to me by express.

That done, we resume our ministry and continue as before the course of our instructions, examinations, etc. I have the consolation of conferring baptism on eleven adults; but it is no longer the calm and recollection of the preceding weeks.

Oh, these messengers of Job, how often they have gripped my heart! For it was not a personal misfortune that they were announcing to me, but the disaster of these poor neophytes whom I loved, following the example of Saint Paul, as a mother cherishes her newborn child. The audacity and impunity of the scoundrel in Hoeryŏng did not fail to embolden the prowlers of the surroundings. It is a rule that the borders serve as a hideout for a number of crazy individuals, ready to cross over to the other side to avoid the punishment due to their misdeeds. When, there too, they have compromised themselves by new crimes, they return to their first stay and thus shuttle back and forth, until they finally fall under the avenging sword of the law.

Mrs. Bishop, an English traveler of some celebrity on account of her excursions into unexplored countries, once said in a lecture at Changhai:

“Of all the savages I have ever met, the least trustworthy and interesting are the Koreans.”

This judgment is certainly not flattering; let us hasten to say that, in its generality, it is too severe and therefore unjust; but, if we restrict it to the riparians of the Tumen, I am not to contradict it.

Events will provide the proof.

First, in Sakikol, where the bandits had already looted the home of Luc Pak, they devastated the house of a poor widow in her sixties, and threatened to kidnap her two daughters, aged 18 and 20. We know what such a threat means when pagan corruption is grafted onto native Korean corruption. All these grieving people come to seek asylum in our hamlet.

Then, in Haksyeikol, the infidels ordered the Christians to leave the village, or else they would set fire to their houses. All of them flee to the mountains and take refuge near us, except for a brave young man who proudly answers:

“My father is sick and unable to get up, I cannot leave him alone in this state; kill me if you want, I will not abandon him.”

The executioners, touched by this filial piety, had the humanity to spare both of them.

To these alarms, already serious in themselves, were added other rumors, even more sinister, which presaged nothing less than a bloody persecution, but whose falsity we fortunately discovered several days later.

There were about sixty of us there. All these poor people looked up to me as if to their savior, and the greatest pain I experienced during that time was to see them suffering

without being able to relieve them. While our hosts generously provided for the newcomers, I tried to console and comfort them. The epistle and the Gospel of the martyrs' feasts, which we had been celebrating for ten days, were full of teachings which borrowed from the circumstances a poignant topicality; I also admired with what heroism my flock - *oves in medio luporum* - continued to quietly recite their catechism, in spite of the anguish of the present hour.

“When you are regenerated by baptism, you will be better able to withstand the shock of persecution, and you will have a patron in heaven who will protect you.

Finally, on January 26, the situation worsened to such an extent that a tragic outcome seemed inevitable. We feel that we are on a volcano whose subterranean noises and strange shudders announce the coming eruption. I urge my Christians to pray, and myself, too distracted by their comments, I go out into the courtyard to say my breviary.

O unforgettable moments, solemn and terrible, like those which precede a great battle! I found again to recite the divine office a fervor comparable to the beautiful days of the sub-diaconate and the priesthood. I must admit that the words that the Church puts on the lips of her Levites at Prime were quite appropriate, and I have never understood their meaning so well nor tasted their intoxicating flavor so well. Listen rather:

To the King of the ages, Immortal and Invisible, to God alone, honor and glory forever and ever. So be it!

Let us give glory to God!

Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy on us.

You who sit at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us. Arise, Christ, help us; and deliver us for your name's sake,

.....

Extend your mercy upon us, O Lord, for our hope is in you.

The death of the saints is precious before the Lord. May the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the saints intercede for us before the Lord, so that we may obtain help and salvation from Him who lives and reigns forever and ever, So be it!

My God, help!

Lord, Lord, Lord! Quickly, quickly, quickly! Help, help, help!!!

Towards midday the alarming noises redouble; they are no longer only vague rumors which one can believe exaggerated; on all sides arrive catechumens announcing a vast uprising which has for objective to drive us out or to exterminate us.

I try to reassure my poor Christians and to inspire in them a confidence that I myself no longer share. I realize the gravity of the situation; I renew the sacrifice of my life and my preparation for death. Ah! certainly, the presence of these brigands is a famous preacher and I do not remember any retreat worth this day of January 26.

Finally, at 1 pm I had just been served dinner, I had barely swallowed two spoonfuls of rice, when an extraordinary stir suddenly occurred in the next room.

“What's the matter?” I cried.

A corner of the curtain was lifted and a head appeared, its features upset, its eyes frightened. It was my catechist who answered me in a strangled voice:

“Father, they are there.

“Where?”

“At the entrance to the valley.

“Who saw them?”

“A pagan, the nephew of Tchoi Pierre. He is coming now.

“Let him in.

A well-built man came in out of breath.

“Did you see the brigands? Are they numerous? Do they have weapons?”

“There are at least a thousand of them, gathered from the eight surrounding townships, armed with clubs and spears, with a flag and about forty guns. They come here and they are stopped at Ssari-pat-kol for a drink.”

I immediately call my catechist with the leader of the Christians and we hold a council.

What to do?” I said.

“Flee, there is no alternative.

“Is the danger, after all, so imminent? We have an hour before us.

“Not at all; the bandits must have set out on the trail of the messenger. Father, please leave your dinner here and let us flee.”

A memory crosses my mind: a general once lost a great battle for not having wanted to interrupt his lunch in time. But I am not Mayenne and my bowl of rice is not worth a melon: I have the table removed.

I still have a scruple and I say to my entourage:

“If we run away from a handful of miscreants, their audacity will increase and we will have no security anywhere. A Frenchman does not retreat like that.

“Is it not said in the Gospel: “If they persecute you in one city, flee to another? And did not our Lord himself go to Egypt to escape a persecutor? And later, when they wanted to stone him....

“It’s true, but I don’t want any panic: we will only flee at the last minute. Let us first try to parley with them. 1

“Father, if the bandits could listen to reason, we could agree with you; but didn’t you notice what the courier said? We must not think of arguing with drunken brutes.

I thought for a moment.

That morning at the Mass of St. Polycarp, the Church reminded us of the words of St. John: God showed us his love by giving his life for us; following his example, we too must give our lives for our brothers, and we must give our lives for the sake of our brothers.

“Well,” I said, “all of you, run away; as for me, I am staying. The good shepherd gives his life for his sheep. They are looking for me, they are after me: once they have taken me, they will leave you alone.”

They immediately cried out:

“Not at all. If the shepherd falls, the sheep will be scattered. You must come with us.

“No. You run away; I’m staying.

“If you stay,” added the catechist, “I must also stay. Isn’t the catechist’s place with the Father?”

“And I,” continued the Christian leader, “cannot leave you either, and no one here, I guarantee you, will want to leave unless you leave. So we will all stay and we will all be killed together.”

I knew my Christians well enough to know that he was telling the truth,

The prospect of being responsible for such a massacre made me reconsider my decision and I gave the signal to leave.

13

A heroic retreat. - The hospitality of the villagers of Ho-tahyen-po. - A guard corps of Korean soldiers. - The prudence of the snake. - A mandarin audience.

I gave the signal to leave. But if I resigned myself to the retreat, I did not want at any price a rout. I sorted out my belongings, taking only the bare necessities, chalice, missal, holy oils, etc., indispensable for the administration of the sacraments, and I ordered to sacrifice everything that would have overloaded my poor Christians and delayed their march: books, saddle, trunk, linen and blankets.

There was still a bottle of mass wine, which could not be easily carried away. I drank a sip and passed the rest around the nearest ranks in memory of one of our martyrs who took the same precaution before going to the torture.

However, the catechist urged me to hurry up:

“We are at the bottom of a funnel. Father, come quickly; they will surround us.

Taking pity on his emotion, in spite of my half-laced brodequins, I went out into the courtyard and climbed the steep sides of the mountain with the bitter satisfaction of the captain who, in a shipwreck, leaves the deck of his ship last. Fearing that our compact column would attract the attention of the enemy, we spread out along all the paths of the mountain. Our objective was Hotchyen-po, where there are four houses of Christians and, an hour and a half later, a post of 200 Chinese soldiers under the command of a Chinese mandarin.

Arriving at the top, we stopped in the shelter of enormous rocks to breathe and judge the situation. Before us stretched vast plains, cut off in the distance by high isolated peaks. Behind us no brigand was yet in sight; but, in all directions, we could see small groups of fugitives.

We hailed them to rally them. Among them I met poor women who were walking painfully, their feet bare and bloody from the brush, a heavy bundle on their heads; others carried their babies on their backs in the Korean style; the old men and children hobbled along as best they could.

All these people, forgetting the anguish of the moment, the uncertainty of tomorrow and their own miseries, felt sorry for me. Not a recrimination, not a murmur, not a sigh. The only tears that were shed on that day were by... me; but they were tears of admiration.

From the heights overlooking Sédan, King Gulllaume, seeing our cuirassier squadrons pass by, fearlessly dashing forward to meet the machine-gun fire, could not hold back a cry of praise: “Oh, the brave people!

I too, in the presence of so much calm, patience and generosity in sacrifice, repeated the tribute of the victor to our unfortunate soldiers: “Oh! the brave people! God loves the gifts that we offer him without skimping and with joy: today He must be happy with us!

In truth, all that was needed was a death or two to add a beautiful page to the history of the Church of Korea, already illustrated by so many exploits. Alas, the divine Master was satisfied with our good will this time. When I think about it, I can't help feeling a certain regret: we were all so well prepared, we would have entered heaven straight as a cannonball. Anyway, let's hope that the opportunity will come again

Seeing that we were not followed too closely and that on the contrary my presence could be useful to prepare the ways by leading me to the authorities, I took the head of the column. To avoid explanations which would have degenerated into complications, we crossed the pagan village of Sàsyoũhpel at a gymnastic pace.

Finally, in the pale light of the stars and the new moon, we climbed a steep mountain - a real ascent of Calvary - and we came to the village of Ho-tchyenhpo, where our arrival at night raised the noisy protests of all the dogs of the district; but fortunately the inhabitants did not notice my presence.

My companions had the good idea to lodge me with a Christian, whose house, situated a little apart and leaning against the hill, put me, at least on one side, safe from indiscretions. Several people stayed with me, the rest were distributed among the other Christians and some pagan relatives or friends.

The vanguard arrived at seven o'clock, and we ended up having supper; but it was impossible for us to sleep: the barking, announcing the successive arrival of the poor stragglers, continued until the middle of the night and the thought of feeling our brothers on the road at such an hour and in such a country did not leave us without causing us a burning concern which drove away all sleep.

The next day, great excitement in the locality when people learned that the travelers who had been delayed the day before were none other than the Christians on the run with their pastor. It must be said that these people are not the finest and that their feelings towards me left a little to be desired, witness this word of one of them: "If the Father comes to our village, we will kill him."

Also, knowing the malevolent dispositions of the population, my guides had not consented with very good grace to lead me there; but they did not have better to offer me and there, at least, I could invoke the support of the mandarin.

Before giving the inhabitants time to recover from their surprise and to hatch some plot, I left the village and went early to the praetorium, five lis (two and a half Klm.) from the Tumen River and one hundred lis (40 kilos) from Hoeryõng. -

Here are the great gray brick walls of the mandarinat, surmounted by flags and surrounded by the barracks of the troop; horses all saddled neigh in front of the door; soldiers with their large yellow breastplates, decorated with hieroglyphs, quietly smoke pipes.

How will this happen?

If I had come in the afternoon in a crew with a valet to present my card, I would have been ceremoniously introduced into the mandarin's apartment and everyone would have said, "He is a great man of the West!"

No doubt, but it is not about etiquette for the moment. My business cards are God knows where, I have no horse, my saddle is in the hands of brigands, my clothes attest that the thorns that made the hedge on the road did not observe the alignment very well on my way.

Anyway, I continue to advance. People have seen us: the curious come out from everywhere, dressed in their beautiful festive clothes, and whisper in the ear; the soldiers approach and everyone surrounds us, including the greasy waiters.

A lot of curiosity, eagerness, familiarity, but not to the point of outrageous importunity, nor to absolute disrespect.

The questions come from all sides without always waiting for the answer; moreover, to make sure of their dispositions towards me, I pretend not to understand, although I grasp a few small sentences here and there.

"Do you speak Chinese? -- What is your precious homeland? - I don't understand. - Do you know this character (It is written with the tip of my finger in the palm of my hand) - His suit is not made of cotton, it is made of cloth; it is lined, it must be warm. - And this muffler, how thick it is! Feel this, it's real sheep's wool. - Look at these shoes, they're solid! - And his hat! - But it's not a hat. - Ah! it's a cap; I've never seen one like that (it was a Pyrenean beret), - And that beard, only Europeans have hair like that; he mustn't be cold, etc., etc."

And constantly joining the gesture to the word, I was palpated on all the seams without me believing prudent to protest too loudly: the success of our cause depended on the sympathy that we were going to inspire.

At last an interpreter arrived; he was a Chinese who spoke Korean, but a stringy Korean, the likes of which I had never heard before. In short, I answer his questions as best I can:

"I am French; I am a Catholic missionary, I have been here for a few days, I will leave soon; I have been in Korea for four years; I have several houses: one in Seoul, one in Chemulpo, one in Busan and finally one in Wonsan where I usually reside."

The houses of our Society belong to my colleagues as much as to me; but my interlocutors did not make this reasoning and, from that moment on, I was the object of a respectful admiration. -

Nevertheless, it was not natural that an owner of so many buildings should travel in such an outfit: there must have been a story about it. In this case, the rest of the mandarin and the soldiers were compromised: goodbye to the "drinking" and the opium parties! We'll have to start campaigning... unless we can get rid of this troublesome European, by telling him that the mandarin is not here.

My good angel warned me of the danger, and I replied with the caution of a snake, which is, by the way, quite oriental.

The dialogue continued in these terms:

"Why have you come here today?"

"To see the mandarin."

“I hear you, but what do you have to say to him?”

“Oh, nothing. I heard that he is a man of distinguished merit, and as I was passing by, I wanted to greet him. That is all!”

“Oh, well, that’s different. Please enter the antechamber. I will announce you.”

The antechamber was... the guardhouse. An acrid vapor of tobacco, odoriferous sticks, buffalo, boots with something bland reminding rather well the odor of the Prussian soldier, seized me in the nostrils and in the throat; while a thick fog was deposited on my glasses and I found myself for a moment blinded and suffocated; but that did not last.

These good people noticed my discomfort; they offered me one after the other several cups of hot tea which comforted me.

And then, to complete my recovery, a fluent voice comes out of the ranks and a young man of about twenty says to me:

“Do you speak English?”

This is too much happiness. Lost in a land of wolves and hearing English, even pidjin English (English jargon), is almost like being in Europe and hearing your mother tongue. This young man is a Shanghayan, secretary of the mandarin; he knows the Europeans and admits their superiority. From that moment on, he takes me under his protection and I must declare that his assistance was precious to me in the future.

The mandarin has finished his lunch, I am introduced into his apartment.

I have already visited Chinese interiors, but in tropical countries where the constructions are light and where there are no heating appliances. Here it is quite different: the building is solid, as in Manchuria. The room is vast and high, illuminated by glass windows; the seats consist of heavy massive armchairs; one whole side of the room is occupied by the *kang*, a kind of spacious bed in masonry, criss-crossed with sinuous channels through which the heat circulates and the smoke escapes from the fireplace.

The room is paved; in the middle stands a small white wooden table lined with bricks forming the scald, each one in turn approaches burning coals to warm his hands, the boy puts his teapot on it and smokers light their filibus, long sheets of rolled paper used to maintain the fire of their pipes.

The walls are decorated with business cards, fans and Chinese sayings that celebrate spring, autumn, mountains and woods, clear streams and blue clouds. I also notice a tiny map of Korea oriented in the Chinese way, i.e. the South at the top of the page, and a colossal sword with this inscription: the great bliss of green tarragon.

As soon as my inspection is over, the mandarin enters.

He is a small man with a common face, but where a sharp and intelligent eye shines. He is 37 years old and I am very happy about it, because I find myself his elder. It is a superiority like any other. In China, where old people are respected, it is not bad to be a certain age, whether you are a consul or a missionary. Besides, my mandarin recognized it at once: with good grace he called me his “elder brother” and treated me accordingly.

After several polite questions about my name, my country, etc., he asks where I come from and if I had a good trip. I answer him that my trip was excellent until yesterday and I take the opportunity to tell him about the events of the day before.

“I am sorry to disturb the rest of the New Year; but the public order and the safety of several families are at stake. I beg him to arrest the culprits and bring us justice.

He took note of my Korean passport, served me tea and English cookies, made in Germany, and tried to reassure me.

Don’t be afraid,” he said, “I’m here with my men: no one will dare to attack you.”

“Oh, I don’t fear for myself. The body dies only once; as for the soul, it is immortal, and then I hope to go to heaven, but it is for my Christians that I implore your protection.

“I will send a soldier, and everything will be arranged.

“I know the value of your braves and the cowardice of our assailants, but don’t trust them; I think you would do well to send a larger troop.

Oh,” he said, smiling, “you don’t know Koreans: they are tigers in front of weak women and unarmed children; but in the presence of one of my soldiers, they flee like hares.

We parted very amicably, with the promise to meet again.

14

More bad news. - Serious concerns about the portable chapel. - Interviews with the mandarin. - Fervor of the Christians.

On leaving the *yamên*, I find two of my Christians waiting for me at the door: one, Joseph, is a hunter by profession who knows all the nooks and crannies of the mountain; he had hidden himself yesterday in the woods to see how things were going to turn out; the other, Pierre, is a farmer by trade; he stayed at the scene of the disaster until the last moment to try to save everything he could. Both of them witnessed last night’s scene of vandalism.

The robbers arrived at dusk, numerous and armed as we had been told. At first they approached cautiously, for they feared that I was hidden in some defile with one of those terrible European 52-shot rifles whose wonders they had heard about. Seeing that nothing was moving, they invaded the houses, looting everything they could find, destroying what they couldn’t take away, and finally setting fire to our nine houses. Then, seeing Joseph’s silhouette through the trees, they fired a few shots at him, fortunately without hitting him.

At this news, I turned to the interpreter who had accompanied me to the street.

“He said, “Take these two men to the mandarin, they are eyewitnesses; he will no doubt be pleased to take their statements and to ask them for further information so that he will know what to do.

Back at home, I urged the catechumens to prepare themselves carefully for the reception of baptism.

However, I was in the grip of a grave concern: most of the Christians had joined us unharmed, except for one family, precisely the one that had been responsible for saving my chapel. So here we were without vestments, missal, chalice, or anything else required to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice! Moreover, the ritual and holy oils had also disappeared; it was impossible to confer the solemn baptism.

On the other hand, the reports start again in a region until then unscathed, and the mails of Job besiege me again. In Samouenpong and Pouhtyeikol, the neophytes are chased

away and their houses destroyed: the mandarin refuses to hear them and to give them justice. It is quite clear that it is my presence which fuels the fire of persecution.

Powerless in any case to protect my flock, I am thinking of corralling all those who are sufficiently disposed, of giving absolution to all those who have already received baptism, and, after having thus conferred on them the grace to resist the enemy's ambushes, I will cross the border in secret, traveling by night, taking up, if necessary, the mourning garment of the old days; I will go to Seoul, to Peking, if necessary, to plead the cause of my Christians, to claim their rights and to avenge their innocence. Without revealing to them the depth of my thoughts, for fear of frightening them before their time, I prescribe fervent prayers for my intentions and I abandon myself to the care of Providence.

In the evening, the interpreter came in the name of the mandarin to visit me and to inquire if I needed anything.

As for this one, in spite of his beautiful insurance of the morning, he went up on horseback, took with him a captain with forty of his best soldiers armed to the teeth and went on the place of the disaster by recommending to his escort not to leave him by an inch. He confirmed the accuracy of our assertions, verified the extent of the damage, drew up a plan of the burned houses, searched the smoking ruins to try to discover the nature and importance of the destroyed objects, and made an inquiry which led to the arrest of about ten culprits.

Meanwhile, we were still without news of my poor chapel.

Along with the objects of worship had been lost a notebook to which I attached great importance, for it contained the list and address of all my neophytes and catechumens, my register of baptisms, confirmations and marriages, linguistic notes on the local dialect, a copy of all my official correspondence with the mandarins, and my travel journal. With this notebook lost, I was left at the mercy of my puny memory (memory in my case is the faculty that forgets), i.e. unable to present a detailed report to my bishop and a documented complaint to the French ministry.

All this was not exactly cheerful and did not give me much of an appetite; so, at 10 o'clock, I was still fasting, not only from the ecclesiastical fast, but even from the Eucharistic fast.

Suddenly a certain animation spreads in the next room. They are newcomers. I hear: "Praise Jesus Christ! Amen! could escape! Believed lost ... much suffered; ... the chapel of the Father "

At these words, a burst of joyful exclamations reaches me through the cracks of the partition. I can't stand it any longer, I suddenly open the door and jump into the middle of the group.

Deo gratias! It was, in fact, my chapel saved almost miraculously, God knows in what state, but complete, so that we could still offer the Holy Sacrifice.

Before listening to the dramatic account of this rescue, I had two trestles placed on which a plank was spread and I had the joy of celebrating a mass of thanksgiving; it was precisely a feast of the Blessed Virgin.

With what devotion all our faithful attended!

While having lunch I asked for the details.

The day of our hegira, my hosts in Tja-emi-tong wanted to take charge of my chapel. This family consisted of the father, the mother and a small boy: Zacharie, Elisa beth and Jean-Baptiste. They distributed the objects among themselves and followed an indirect road to join us.

Halfway there, exhausted with fatigue, they put down their packages and sit down to breathe. While getting up, they look around and see a party of brigands. Quickly they lay down, hid their precious bundles under the brush and slowly fled in another direction.

The next day, making a long detour, they returned to the hiding place, throbbing with emotion. O happiness! the treasure was still there.

They brought it to us happily, when we least expected it.

On January 29, in response to an invitation from the mandarin, I went again to the praetorium, accompanied by the first interpreter, a sergeant and four soldiers who came to fetch me with a horse. This escort was very useful to us, in that it enlightened the minds of the population, showing that we were well regarded by the authorities, and that the bandits were on the other side.

The mandarin received me very cordially, had me served dinner and asked me how I wanted the matter to be arranged.

This question surprised me at first. He had the principal criminals in his hands and could interrogate them; he could happily summon the victims to his bar and obtain the desired clarifications; he knew the law and was a magistrate to apply it. Instead, he asked me for my opinion and almost for direction.

I had come with the prospect of having to respond to the calumnies that might be hurled at us, but not at all prepared to sit with the judge on his bench. So I was puzzled for a moment; then suddenly a ray of light came to my mind and the situation became clear to me.

This mandarin, who came from Tien-tsin and was familiar with foreign politics, knew how things were done in the capital of the Son of Heaven,

T'sung-li-Yamen said to the representatives of the powers:

“An ignorant and imbecile people have caused damage, we recognize this and are the first to be sorry. What reparation do you demand?”

And interminable sessions are spent discussing the figure of the indemnity.

Why didn't I foresee this earlier? What could I not have done to consult a colleague who was used to this kind of business? But I was alone and time was short. If, at least, I had been born in Normandy...; but I am only a poor Burgundian ignorant of the art of chicanery and, alas! there was never a trial in my family.

So I answered quite simply: “I ask for: 1° the punishment of the main culprits to atone for the miseries we have endured; 2° an indemnity to repair the losses we have suffered; 3° a proclamation to restore our reputation and ensure the future?”

This little three-point speech seemed to make an impression on the mandarin; he winked at his assessors and I saw that the matter was going to turn out well.

He began by telling me that wisdom had spoken through my mouth; he recognized the validity of my complaints and promised to grant them in principle; but practically we still had to confer together for a long time and discuss the number of criminals to be punished, the type of punishment to be inflicted on them, the amount of the sum to be paid, the text of the proclamation to be posted. All that put us in expenses of rhetoric and required on my part of many trips to the yamên of which I would have well done without.

At the same time, I did not forget the business pending on the other side of the border. On January 28, I wrote a new letter to the prefect of Hoeryông, asking him to repair our house and to provide for our safety by asking the governor of Kyongsong for reinforcements, if necessary.

To make sure that this letter reached its destination, I sent it via Tjyong-syeng through the former mandarin of Hoeryông. But everything seemed to be in the way of our plans. While we were enlisting the support of the mandarins of Tjyong-syeng and Hoeryông, these gentlemen, fathers and mothers of the people, were happily banqueting at the governor's house in Kyongsong.

In spite of all these setbacks, the blessing of the good God was visibly on us. Not a day went by without at least one or two catechumens coming to be baptized, and we continued in the midst of the most varied vicissitudes our way of life which I described earlier in Hoeryông.

One day, a poor woman, who had not been able to save anything from her clothes and whose clothes were even more ragged than mine, put on her husband's clothes to receive baptism properly. This scene would have been comical in other circumstances; but our recent calamities made it truly touching.

Christians came from afar to ask for the sacraments and received them with edifying fervor.

By the way, here is an expression used everywhere in Korea; I take the liberty of pointing it out, in passing, to those who are curious about literature; to those who like to study the customs of a people through its language. "To receive the sacraments, that is to say, to confess and to receive communion, is said: Rem videre (to see the matter, the thing). This is enough to confuse all the pagans in the world. For my part, I have always found in this expression a singular flavor, which reminds me of the law of secrecy of the first centuries of the Church. In fact, the Church in Korea has also gone through terrible persecutions and is just emerging from the catacombs. This memory comforted us and set us on fire. After all, what were the daily miseries we endured compared to the countless torments our elders had triumphed over!

I lived in a small room overlooking the kitchen and consequently the stable, since in all this region the domestic animals are housed at the back of the kitchen without any separation. In my room where I said mass, there was hardly any room except for the altar, the celebrant and the server; the rest of the audience was relegated to the vast kitchen at the back of which a cow was ruminating and a mule was pawing. The comparison with the stable of Bethlehem was striking and offered itself to the mind. How often, as I turned to the Orate fratres, my eyes moistened with tears at this memory!

O Father of mercies, thanks be eternally given to your infinite goodness who deigned to send us your divine Son every morning to console us in this miserable thatched cottage with mud walls oozing with dampness!

It was necessary to interrupt the ministry frequently to go to Yamen and try to settle the pending affairs. I recommended to the solicitude of the mandarin my Christians of Pouhtyelkol and Samouenpong, whose situation was very precarious; but, although this last post is only 1.5 kilometers away, it does not come under this prefecture and I had to resort to another mandarin, that of Tjihataso; 50 kilometers from here.

In one of these hearings, one of my Christians, who speaks fluent Chino, pointed out to me that the official interpreter did not translate our words faithfully. This could have had serious disadvantages. From then on, the mandarin wrote in Chinese characters on loose sheets of paper what he had to say to me; my catechist gave me the translation and I dictated the answer.

It is undeniable that ideographic writing is very advantageous: thanks to its knowledge, one can make oneself understood in all the Far East, from Cochinchina to Japan.

15

New interviews with the mandarin and new alerts. - Singular slanders.

In spite of my desire to get it over with as quickly as possible, the game had to be postponed again. On the occasion of the New Year, under the guise of going to wish his neighboring colleague a happy new year, my mandarin went all the way to Houn-Tsouen to consult his superior who, it seems, is at the head of 5,000 soldiers (February 1).

The state of mind did not let him worry. He had just learned of the occupation of the bay of Kyo-cheou by the Germans to avenge the death of two Catholic missionaries and he feared that if such an adventure occurred, his country would have to cede yet another piece of territory and above all he would lose his place, if not his head. He also urged me to move in with him, but I politely refused: "I must be in the midst of my Christians to instruct them, to console them, to strengthen them and to protect them by my presence; besides, in the praetorium, how could I carry out my exercises of piety and celebrate holy mass?"

I explain these motives frankly to him; he understands them and gives me four soldiers under the orders of a sergeant to accompany me and to defend my residence. I said that it was not necessary. Faced with his repeated requests, I am obliged to give in and accept this honorable and... expensive guard.

Indeed, five people to feed and to lodge, it is not a small matter for us who are already ruined and in charge of poor neophytes. So, the very next day, I called the sergeant and told him straight out.

"Your moral support is enough for us. I will give you a letter of thanks for the mandarin and you will return quietly to your quarters. The country seems pacified; besides, the danger will not suddenly burst like a bomb on our heads. You are only an hour and a half away; we will call you in case of an alarm.

"... Without doubt," he replied, "you are right in your point of view; but the mandarin is absent, I cannot ask for new orders. Before leaving, he entrusted me with your precious person, I am a soldier and I only know the instructions.

“Bravo! But then how to make?

“There is a way to arrange it; you will see.

The mayor of the village was summoned and told: “If your constituents were all peaceful citizens, there would be no need to summon the maréchaussée to protect the European. Since it is because of the people of the village that the presence of soldiers is necessary, it is therefore up to the village to maintain and pay the defenders of public order.

What was said was done: our braves settled in a large house nearby where they did not bother us at all and from where they could easily lend us a hand.

However, after a few days, the mayor, all grieved, came to tell us that the burden was weighing heavily on the budget of the commune and asked us to send the troop back to its quarters. We explained the situation to him and he himself went to present his grievances to the mandarin’s deputy. The quartermaster thought that he had already saved the rations of five men for a week, that he risked losing everything by trying to earn too much: he therefore decided to send their daily food to the soldiers who continued to guard us without arousing the recriminations of anyone.

The mayor of the village, although a pagan, rendered us several services. At the beginning, he was very opposed to the establishment of Christianity, and he looked down on the catechumens and had more than once threatened to expel them from his village. The courtesies I extended to him and the welcome I obtained from the Chinese authorities gradually changed his way of thinking.

In one of these talks, I asked him what was the cause of the prejudices and animosity that people generally harbored against us. At first he was a bit reluctant and finally gave me the desired information. Here are his own words:

“- Public rumor accuses you of throwing drugs into the wells, springs and fountains, where the people are accustomed to get drinking water. Whoever drinks this water is bewitched.

“No way! What does this bewitchment consist of?

“Immediately after drinking this drug, the person experiences a change in his interior: he no longer recognizes his parents, he blindly follows the magician; as the crowd attaches itself to your steps, he can no longer resist your will and becomes a Christian in spite of himself, if it is your pleasure.

“Ah! truly! Here I am, without knowing it, a kind of Merlin the magician... But this drug, who saw it? -.

“I have not seen it, but others have told me that they are small pills wrapped in red paper. When you crush them, you find blood inside; they dissolve in water and give it the extraordinary properties I have just reported,

“By the way, do you believe in all this nonsense?

He hesitated a little, smiled, and confessed that he had believed it until the last few days.

Then I made an aside with my catechist, “In the time of Tertullian, in spite of the discipline of the arcane, the pagans, having vaguely heard of the Eucharist, accused the

Christians of slitting the throat of a child in their meetings and devouring its flesh covered with flour. Could it not be that a distorted interpretation of the sacrament of baptism was the origin of these ridiculous fables and odious calumnies directed against us? By the merits of the precious blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the holy water acquires a regenerative virtue which gives the newly baptized supernatural life and ... “. The mayor overheard a few words of our conversation and interrupted us:

The mayor overheard a few words of our conversation and interrupted us: “Don’t bother to look for the explanation of this rumor; the true origin is this: Three centuries ago, during the Korean-Japanese war, the Koreans were victorious and invaded Japan; the monks then killed 300 Japanese, skinned them and brought back the skins as trophies. As for the Japanese, they kept the corpses, drank the blood and made the pills in question... it is said.

“That ignorant children add folly to such nonsense is fine, but you, Mr. Mayor, your education should put you above such childish credulity. Now that you recognize the absurdity of these old wives’ tales, it is your duty to enlighten your fellow citizens and to help us destroy such a fatal error.

That’s not all,” he continued, “They also accuse you of dragging the crowds after you and depopulating the country.

“That’s a good one. I’m not dragging anyone along. All these people followed me because they wanted to massacre them. If we had waited for the brigands on foot, the country would have been depopulated.

“And then, they still say that you are Japanese.

“Thank you for the compliment! I thought I was handsome...

“Oh, we don’t like those people: they come here to cheat the poor people, they insult our women, they have plans for our territory, they are insolent...

“Come on, that’s enough. Let’s break it up. I never do politics after eleven o’clock at night. Besides, it’s time to go to bed. Good night!”

On February 6, I learned that the mandarin had returned the day before from Houn-tsouen. Finally our fate will be settled! Will we be outlawed? Will we obtain justice? Patience! We are not yet at the end of the story. It seems that our case is serious and nobody feels competent to judge it. The case will be brought to Jilin, the capital of the province, where, I am told, there is a garrison of 20,000 men. Four days later, the mandarin numbered the documents we had written in our previous meetings and took the whole file with him to Jilin.

On January 31 I wrote to the mandarin of Tjihaso (Pouk Kang) to recommend the Christians of Samouenpong and Pouhtyelltol to him: I reminded him that the treaty with France grants the free exercise of the Catholic religion, and I asked him to protect the person and property of my followers, to have the ruins raised and to prevent new disasters. This official - a Manchu - for all answer sent me his card and told me that he did not know me. Nevertheless, he immediately dispatched soldiers to observe the damage in the above-mentioned Christianities and referred, like his colleague in Tjipongsyeng, to Jilin, to obtain a course of action.

On February 11, we had another alarm, the last one, but well conditioned,

The bachelor Kim, father of the mayor of Hoichyenhypo, head of a large and powerful family, several members of which have occupied and still occupy minor local dignities, an avowed enemy of the Christian name, called Benedict and told him:

“- In Searipatkol they have burned, in Samouenpong they have demolished the houses of the Christians, elsewhere they have driven you out. If we remain quiet here, they will say that we are not men. Consequently, the people of the village have decided to evict you from the four houses that you occupy: Benoit, Emile, Martin and Thomas. Go away! As for the European, we’ll see what we can do. My catechist brought Benedict into my room and interpreted his words to me. The courtyard is filled with pagans; in front of the door stand the envoys who are waiting for our answer.

This time the Christians are dismayed. I quickly consulted the principals.

“What do you think? What should we do?”

Father, let’s flee,” they answered in a low voice and as if trembling.

“Where?”

“In the mountains (always the scrub!).

“You will die of hunger and cold there,

“But we cannot stay here: the population is all against us; there is no way to go up such a torrent.

“No, the population is not all against us. Besides, don’t we have the support of the authorities? Where will we be safe if we are not here? If we let go at the first word of these insolent people, their audacity will know no bounds; as for me, I regret having fled from Haripatkol and this time, I will stay at all costs. We are not birds to fly like that on the mountain; I trust in the Lord. In Domino confido; quomodo dicitis animae meae: transmigra in montem sicut passer?”

Then, raising my voice so as to be heard from outside, I said to the catechist:

“Here is my answer. Go and tell your master that we are observing the laws of the land, that we are Christians with the permission of the Emperor of China and that we will not leave. The people of Haripatkol and Samouenpong have done wrong and will be punished. If you too wish to suffer punishment, come and drive us out and destroy our houses; but we will not leave, even if we die!” -

At the same time that I was saying this proud language in front of the crowd, I sent a courier to secretly carry a letter to the mandarin’s deputy. I warned him of what was happening and, fearing that he would invite me to take refuge in his house, I added:

“I personally am not in any danger, but the danger of my disciples affects me as my own danger. Please give a lesson to this bachelor Kim, either by letter or in person.

This hostile attitude of a part of the population was the result of the mandarin’s slowness in issuing the proclamation he had promised me. He said, “This hostile attitude on the part of some of the people was the result of the Mandarin’s slowness in issuing the proclamation which he had promised me.

A noise of galloping horses resounds suddenly. Three horsemen dismounted: they were the deputy, the first secretary and a captain. Some soldiers arrive shortly afterwards.

A difficult moment. - Ineffective mandarin protection, - Some characteristic features.

I begin by quickly informing the three civil servants who come to my aid of the situation.

The substitute sends the interpreter to seek the bachelor Kim. This one, for a long time untraceable, finally appears. He is a tall and handsome old man, who would be venerable if his gait were simpler and smelled less like a pose; but, draped in his morgue, he comes forward with the ridiculous solemnity, borrowed from Confucius, that noble Koreans affect, sits down with a compassed gravity and begins, with a high voice, to harangue us as if he had come to judge us all.

I glanced at the deputy to remind him of his duty and his functions.

The poor young man is all bewildered: short-sighted as a mole, he sees dangers everywhere and shakes in his silk breeches. He asked the Chinese interpreter what the old man had said. The unfortunate interpreter, in all this pathos, has only seen blue and stammers I don't know what.

Another interpreter - this one unofficial - a Chinese-speaking Korean, wearing a tail and a Chinese costume with a headdress, the insignia of his dignity (saing-you) superior to that of the mayor, interrupts him and starts to put everyone on trial: the missionary and his people, the Chinese authority and its representatives. He is a relative of the bachelor Kim and naturally he takes up the cause of his family.

Everyone shouts, or rather screams, in their own language: it is a real Babel. The situation is exceptionally serious.

The substitute is petrified at the thought of the responsibility which falls to him: indeed, it would only take a spark to set fire to the powder keg, an imprudence for the fight to turn into a tragedy,

The vehement speech of the new speaker inflamed the ardor of the old man who called me an adventurer and, without provocation of any kind, rushed at my catechist to box him. That is not in Confucius. Immediately, the Chinese interpreter delicately seizes the old man by the armpits and evacuates him to the yard.

A moment of calm occurs. I take advantage of this moment to present an argument:

“- If our religion were bad, the emperor would prohibit it; now, not only does he not prohibit it, but he authorizes it - see the treaty; - therefore it is good. Whoever maintains the contrary does injustice to the emperor.

The Chinese interpreter comes to the rescue and supports my argument:

“- The most wise Son of Heaven authorizes the Catholic religion in his States; therefore, it is good. You, people, must respect the freedom of Christians; but you, Christians, must not force anyone to embrace your religion.

Rest assured,” I replied, “far from forcing anyone to embrace our holy religion, we do not even accept all those who ask. In addition to other requirements, to be admitted to baptism, one must know by heart twelve pages of prayers and fifty pages of catechism. At present, there are more than fifty people who ask for the grace of baptism, without being able to obtain it yet, Judge if we make conversions.”

The saing-you, a Chinese Korean, did not consider himself beaten; seeing that he could not fight on the ground of reasoning, he addressed himself to passion, and turning through the half-open door to the crowd that filled the courtyard:

“You are the people,” he cried; “it is up to you to see if you want to keep this foreigner and these followers of the foreigner among you!

While he was addressing this provocative appeal to the people, a Christian crept up to him:

Father,” he said, “the houses of Benedict and Emile are being demolished.

“Who?

“The old bachelor Kim.

This time I couldn’t stand it any longer. I stood up like a spring and, interrupting the palaver, I said to the Chinese:

“I said to the Chinese, “While you are talking nonsense, the one you were supposed to be chastising is destroying our houses.

Everyone leaves and curiously goes to enjoy the spectacle; my rank forbids me to do the same and I remain alone guarding our effects.

The captain, a decided-looking Muslim, wanted to arrest the culprit right away; the deputy prevented him:

“His family is powerful, that will create a big problem for us. Let’s make the Saing-you and the mayor responsible for the peace of the village instead.

This measure, which is very common in China, was successful.

The damage was limited to a few broken doors at the homes of three Christians; only the house where I was staying suffered no damage.

In the evening, the old bachelor Kim walked through the streets of the village rubbing his stomach and exclaiming:

“Ah, now I have done a good job, I am happy!

He met the father of my host, Jacques, an old man of 60 years, and, not daring to devastate his house because of me, he vomited against us the most coarse insults.

Jacques was satisfied to answer:

“Your mouth is not clean.

Immediately the furious old man rushed at him and hit him with repeated blows.

This was the end of our trials.

In short, this protection of the mandarin was almost illusory and it is a wonder that we were all able to escape unharmed. First of all, the very principle of the authority of the mandarins is less and less recognized by the people, as proven by the numerous insurrections or riots in China; then, just as an electric current loses its strength little by little as it moves away from the dynamo, so the authority always weakens as one approaches the borders.

As for our escort, I do not fear to be mistaken in affirming that it would flee at the least serious alarm. The rifle of the soldiers is decorated with a small red pennant which gives them a martial air, but they hold it by the end of the barrel. This produces an unpleasant effect. Is it an atavistic inheritance in these unfortunate people? Is it a remnant of the old habit of raising the stock in the air?

Whatever it is - I have noticed it in China as well as in Korea - they are there only to protect our lives, not to protect us from insults, let alone from annoying annoyances. Aren’t they the first to enter my room as if it were their own, at all hours of the day and night?

At the yamên, while the mandarin tried to treat me well, I was the object of the jeers of the soldiers and the crowd outside. Once I even saw some soldiers through the window

rallying and bullying one of my Christians; I drew the attention of the mandarin; he gave the order to stop. The rascals withdrew to... to start again a little farther away out of my visual range.

It is right to say that perfection is not of this world.

How could it be otherwise? An abyss separates Christians from pagans.

The latter are content with their moral superiority and, it must be admitted, are sometimes inclined to take advantage of it; but these possess, as they say in the palace, and, moreover, they are the immense majority.

In their eyes, the Catholic religion is a novelty and, consequently, a dangerous thing for the East, a routine country par excellence, which pushes conservatism to the point of fossility; it comes from abroad and by that very fact is suspicious to any good patriot whose policy until now has been a policy of exclusion; It prohibits the cult of the ancestors, and, in this respect, seems antinational to all the followers of Buddhism and Confucianism; it proscribes the concussion and, from this point of view, must displease the majority of the Chinese and Korean civil servants, to limit myself to the countries which occupy us.

The blood of our soldiers had to flow on the battlefields in order to break down the barriers that paganism opposed to Christian civilization and to make it possible to conclude treaties with the nations of the yellow race, protecting the missionaries and assuring the natives of freedom of conscience.

But who was entrusted with the execution of these treaties?

To a pagan government, whose authority is exercised by pagan mandarins, who employ pagan subordinates and soldiers!

In these conditions, it is already beautiful to obtain a half-justice and a quasi-protection. However, France cannot maintain a gunboat in every port and a landing company in every prefecture of the Far East.

At the yamên of Hotchyenhypo I found two Chinese acting as interpreters for Korean affairs: one, a good man, of whom I will have occasion to say a word later; the other, a hardened heathen who was not afraid to say this to my neophytes:

“The French missionary, by winning his case, has dealt us a fatal blow and our pagodins are beginning to disappear: to appease the angry spirits of Heaven and Earth, you must take an ox and offer a sacrifice.

Naturally, our people did not do this and no one dared to force them to do so. But what to think of such an official? How can we believe that he faithfully performs his duty when religion is at stake? For my part, I once saw him at work: he translated or rather betrayed, according to the Italian proverb, my words with so much reluctance and circumlocutions, that the mandarin had the good taste not to call him again during our affair.

A respectful smoker. - Rogue. Touching faith. - Prefect and mandarin. -
Surprising lesson of things. - European shoes. - Plants and animals. - Korean cuisine.

We had to be patient until we were masters of the position. It was not necessary to give our adversaries even the shadow of a pretext to justify the hatred and the prejudices which they nourished against us.

I remember that one day, on board the Chiang-Hong, two Koreans entered the cabin. The captain offered the younger one a cigar; the latter modestly refused, claiming that he could not accept in front of his uncle. The captain then turned to the other and said:

“Here, you smoke, old man!

The eyes of the Korean shone with lust, but, having met on the partition the portrait of the emperor and the imperial prince of Korea, he replied:

“If you will give me this cigar, I will smoke it at home; but here, how could I have the audacity to smoke it in the presence of the image of our august monarch?

It is that, indeed, until now, except for some points where the contact of Europeans and Japanese is changing the received ideas, smoking in front of someone whom one must respect, is considered as an insult.

Now, in Hotchyenhyo, insolent 22 to 25 year old ruffians entered our house at will, sat in my room without permission, chatted, sneered and smoked their vile puffs under my nose. If it had been in London, I might not have minded; who knows? I might have enjoyed it. But that bitter northern tobacco, whose smoke grabs you by the throat and suffocates you... And then, to top it all off, these rascals spat on the very mat where I was sitting. We suffered all this without saying a word for fear of raising a persecution.

Ah! if it had been in my good city of Wonsan, I assure you that they would not have continued this maneuver for long. But here, even if I had been within my rights in inflicting a just correction on them, as soon as I had left they would have taken their revenge on my poor Christians, and the mandarin would not have failed to reply:

“What do you want? It is very regrettable, but there has been provocation!

February 10. - It is a great consolation for me to reread here the epistles of Saint Paul, the immortal model of apostolic workers. I am more and more convinced that the Christians who have just sprung up before my eyes are neither less fervent nor less generous than the nascent Churches of Ephesus, Corinth or Macedonia, and I can truly address to my flock the compliments of the Apostle: “You are wise and you bear patiently with those who are not. You are wise and bear patiently with those who are not. You even suffer them to enslave you, to devour you, to strip you, to treat you with haughtiness, to strike you in the face. (II Cor. xi, 19-20.)

Sitting on my blanket, I was quietly reciting my breviary, and here again these rascals come to harass and provoke us: they approach me, leer at me, persecute me. My eyes riveted to my book, I try not to look at them to avoid the trap they set for me.

Emboldened by my apparent indifference, one of them comes forward and pulls at my beard. Despite myself, I pause. In the distance of my childhood memories, I see a triptych: in the first picture, a Gaul passes his hand through the white beard of a Roman senator sitting on his curule chair; in the second, an ivory stick falls on the head of the reckless one; in the third, all these venerable senators lie slain...

If I were not a missionary, I think I would cheerfully pay with my head for the pleasure of applying a pair of sonorous blows on these insolent cheeks. But shush! this distraction has already lasted too long: let us continue our interrupted breviary,

In the town of Hoeryōng I had the happiness of conferring 68 baptisms; in Tajeni-Tong, a hamlet of the village of \$sari-pat-Kol, I was at my 11th, when we were chased away by hordes of bandits; in Ho-tchyen-Hpo I had just collected the 51st, but the other catechumens were not ready and I had to postpone them to a later date, to their great regret. In the meantime, we taught them as best we could.

I had taken with me the illustrated popular Bible of Abbé Drioux. This work, in spite of the eminent services it had rendered us, had been judged too heavy at the time of our hasty departure on January 26 and it had been abandoned to save more precious objects. But a child, at the thought of the beautiful engravings which caused him so much pleasure, could not bring himself to lose such a treasure and managed, at the risk of his life, to save this book from the fire.

As a recreation and also to help my stricken eloquence, we frequently leafed through this interesting volume... .

One day, a beautiful monument of Greek architecture struck the astonished eyes of the assembly.

“What is this?”

“It is a temple of idols.

A cloud passed over the foreheads of the listeners.

How?” asked one of them anxiously. Are there idol temples in Europe?

“Oh, that was before the coming of Our Lord.

“Do they still exist?”

“No. Only the ruins remain, which are preserved in memory of the triumph of Christianity.

“They exclaimed, breathing a sigh of relief. Then they add with a laugh: “If the devil has not been able to preserve such a magnificent edifice, how will he be able to prevent the destruction of the miserable pagodins that he has here? -

Indeed, they are puny boxes of 0.80m high with a simple wooden shelf bearing this inscription:

“Throne of the great King of Heaven, Preceptor of the Kingdom.

“Seat of the spirit of the great King of Heaven, Master of the Tree.” . .

Nothing that even remotely recalls the magnificence of the pagodas of India and China.

However, we were still without news of the turn of events south of the border. Seeing that my letters of January 22 and 28 to the mandarin of Hoeryōng remained unanswered, on February 7 I decided to write directly to the governor of Kyong-syeng to explain our situation and ask for his support. In order to emphasize the seriousness of our position even more, I even asked him to send me a few police officers to escort me to the seaport on my upcoming return.

My courier made his 320 kilometers on foot, and, after an absence of five and a half days, brought back to me the answer worded as follows

Please excuse me if I do not send you the policemen, I need to have all my forces at hand at the moment; but I have just reiterated the orders already given so that you will be treated well and the Christians will not be oppressed. I hope that you will return to us safely.’

I had thus, in part, achieved the goal I had proposed.

The next day I received a letter from the mandarin of Hoeryöng: He had given orders that our common house should be repaired, but as it was cold, it would take some time.

Indeed, the thermometer showed -21 degrees, but this was only a pretext put forward by the cunning prefect. On the 13th, a Christian brought me news from Hoireng: the population refused to repair our house; the recalcitrant pagans were too numerous, he said, for us to dare punish them.

Who will live, will see!

At that time, I used a stratagem which was fully successful. As the heathen Koreans came to my room, I, who was usually careful with my papers, left all the business cards and official letters I had received since the beginning of the campaign lying around in a mess.

What was easy to foresee happened. The Koreans, a curious people, immediately noticed the red seals of the prefect and the governor on the envelopes, and they whispered about it among themselves. They were very curious about it. --

To the first one who politely asked me to make these dispatches known, I granted permission. He read them aloud, and everyone, astonished to see that these large civil servants were dealing with me on an equal footing, began to have a better opinion of us and respected us more than before.

From that day on, not only did the Koreans come to visit us regularly, but some Chinese from a neighboring district, unable to obtain justice from their mandarin, also sought my support. In spite of my destitution and the precarious state in which I was reduced, their instinct had not deceived them: in the Catholic priest they had guessed the friend of the small and humble, the father of the poor, the protector of the weak and the defender of the oppressed. However, for the moment, everything was limited to good words on both sides.

These talks were not always about business or religion. The conversation successively touched on the most disparate subjects, and a Pico della Mirandola would not have been superfluous to answer competently all the questions of *omni re scibili* which the assistants proposed in turn.

My catechist, who had gained a certain Western vogue through contact with young confreres fresh from Paris, spoke to them about the things of Europe and certainly! He did not mince his words. He described to them in his own way the basilica of St. Peter in Rome, the Eiffel Tower, airships and submarine boats, as if there were all of this in the smallest villages. He told them that with our powerful telescopes, we could count the citizens of Mars if that planet was inhabited, that a cannon shot in France over Mont Blanc would reduce a whole regiment of Italians to pulp in their own country, that we were going to drill a tunnel under the English Channel and throw a bridge over the Behring Strait, that our surgeons, when a patient has a stomach ache, open his abdomen, clean the viscera, put them back in place and sew the whole thing back together again very neatly, Then he confused with pleasure and with the best faith in the world the telegraph and the telephone, the phonograph and the graphophone and remained entangled in the workings of the cinematograph.

I was then called in to settle the debate and to project a luminous ray into the darkness. It was also necessary to explain the universal attraction, the rotation of the stars, the cause of the tides, the phases of the moon, the theory of eclipses; to enumerate all the kingdoms of the earth with their dimensions and populations; to indicate the speed of a horse,

a train, a steamboat. A real Encyclopedia! Then the insatiable curious asked how cloth is made, how stockings are knitted, how leather is tanned, how long our European shoes last...

“How long do our European shoes last? But that depends on the kind of life you lead. If you remain blissfully crouched in your room all day, like this fat man, they can last indefinitely; if you run day and night in the steep mountains, like those brave Chinese soldiers after the thieves, you will soon see the end of them.”

This answer was unexpectedly successful, and the questioner remained confused by his naivety.

By the way,” I added, “I know a recipe that allows you to save half the cost of your shoes,

“What do you mean?

“By making them last twice as long.

“And what must be done?

But it’s very simple,” I answered with unflappable seriousness, “when you walk, make your steps twice as long.

But it’s true!” they exclaimed in unison, after thinking for a moment.

Now, good night!” I said, holding my ribs, “and don’t forget my advice.

They withdrew, saying:

“How come we didn’t think of this before? Ah, really; Europeans are more perceptive than we are.

And for several days I amused myself by spying on these big ninnies who came and went, extending the compass with all their strength (see the engraving on p. 366), It was hilarious, to use an expression that academics hardly ever use except on the boulevard.

Botanists would probably like to know which plants are specific to this little known region. I regret to be unable to satisfy them. On the one hand, the winter is not favourable to herborization, and the persecution kept us shut up; on the other hand, my oral researches led only to a rather meagre list of strange names that the most recent dictionaries do not allow me to translate into any language.

The disciples of Saint Hubert will ask me if there are not magnificent hunts here, as in almost all the new countries. I met flights of rock pigeons composed of a hundred individuals, pheasants in groups of a dozen, flocks of bustards and ducks; the season was too advanced for wild geese. Hare and partridge as well as quail are said to be present. I saw superb black eagles, foxes abound and wolves are not rare, The inhabitants spoke to me about a strange animal, the seung gnier; grey coat, a little bigger than a strong dog, It has neither the claws nor the jaw of a feline; it kidnaps calves and even horses. The bear devastates the oat fields, the leopard and the Manchurian tiger wage war on deer, roe deer, etc. and domestic animals often become their prey. However, these big beasts are shy, if I may say so, and generally flee the presence of man, so that it is extremely difficult to reach them: during my entire stay I did not see a single one.

Also, the most fruitful hunts we had, were aimed at another category of carnivores, smaller, it is true, but not less ferocious, since they are not afraid to attack the king of creation. Although huge numbers of them are being destroyed daily, the race does not seem to be dying out any time soon and Korea seems to be their favorite habitat. They are usually

hunted down at night by candlelight (when available). What do you want? Not everyone has the virtue of a Saint Benedict Labre!

And how did you live?" our housewives may exclaim. I will tell you a word about our kitchen: it will be done soon.

The country is too dry and too mountainous to allow the cultivation of rice. Our ordinary meal consisted of a barley and potato porridge: it doesn't slide very well. For a change, a porridge of small millet, what we give to the serins at home! It's as succulent as sawdust; sometimes sorghum with small black beans; from time to time balls of dough or rather steamed bran balls. No fruit.

As a drink, water... I was going to say pure water; but that would be inaccurate, because the well where we got our water is located in the courtyard below the dunghill. For the Koreans, this does not have much of a disadvantage, because, not knowing the theory of microbes, they do not feel the effects; but it was not the same with the author of these lines: having been by misfortune for many years an assiduous reader of the Cosmos, he offered a ground too well prepared for the culture of these pitiless colonies (and there are people who claim that the French are unfit for colonization!) So he had to force himself to drink only boiled water, except in the courtroom, where the mandarin poured him a glassful of Chinese wine in a thimble, hoping to get into his heart through the esophagus and make him more amenable to negotiations.

It would be wrong of me to take pride in this, for after all, my poor Christians were offering me the best they had. They ate nameless scraps and cared little, in the energetic words of Saint Jerome, to choose precious dishes to make... (how can I finish my sentence? Saint Jerome says that in one word, it is true that it is in Latin), to make the ingredient with which they fatten the fords

Korean hospitality is proverbial and this quality redeems several defects in my eyes: Charitas operit multitudinem peccatorum. Some even find it exaggerated, in the sense that it encourages national parasitism; but if one is so meticulous, what will remain to be praised and admired in this world and especially in this peninsula?

If this is the natural virtue of the pagans, how can I describe the supernatural charity of the Christians, of whom I could say with the apostle: erat credentium multitudo cor unum et anima una? Each one brought what he had and all, without distinction of mine and yours, lived on the common mass.

In the presence of the absolute destitution of my neophytes, after having distributed to them the little I had left in money, clothing and provisions, I took out two loans which enabled us to subsist for some time. But the absence of the Chinese mandarin was prolonged, the indemnity that he was supposed to bring us from Jilin, in case our lawsuit would be definitively won, did not arrive; besides, I had no more ministry to fulfill and my wine of mass was coming to an end. God knows, however, how we save our five liters per year in Korea, where we only take water for ablutions at Mass. In short, for these reasons I decided to leave.

Sadness of the departure. - Our escort. - My interpreter. - A heroine.

On February 15, I took leave of the employees of the mandarin who treated me as well as they could; the next day I went back down to the border.

Common miseries endured for a noble cause, it has been said, bind solid bonds. The separation was painful and the farewells very touching. Faustin especially, an old man of 74 years, and Félicité, a good old woman of 80 years, happy chosen ones, baptized on the threshold of eternity, wished me a safe journey with tears in their eyes, not hoping to see me again here on earth; the children and the young people, not being able to bring themselves to leave me, wanted to accompany me to my home; the other Christians asked me once again not to forget them and to plead their cause in high places. My heart was in my throat: on returning to my residence in Wonsan, I was leaving the lion's den, but I was leaving my poor flock behind and I was not without concern for their fate. One last time I turned around, blessed the faithful in the presence of the assembled pagans and climbed the mountain.

A dozen Christians accompanied me. The substitute of the mandarin absolutely wanted to give me an escort; it consists of a small military mandarin on horseback with his orderly, of Tchang the first interpreter, also on horseback, and of four soldiers. They also provided me with a pony harnessed with a high Chinese saddle on which I am perched as if on the hump of a dromedary.

The soldiers, like the famous firemen, are "full of noble ardor" and sing cheerfully to charm the leisure of the road. Their chest is decorated with a long string of metal cartridges.

Each rifle is decorated with a small red pennant that gives them a martial air. They carry it on their shoulder, but in the opposite way to our troopers, i.e. holding it by the end of the barrel. Could it be an atavism? An unconscious remnant of an old habit of raising the stick in the air?

We stop at Oi-tol-pak. The sight of the soldiers produces a marvelous effect on the population: they welcome us with respect.

The interpreter - a fat, jovial man - takes me to the village chief and without further ado asks for two pipes. He is known everywhere: he is the one who travels around the country to collect the taxes, he is an important character as one would say the tax collector in our countryside. So everyone bows to him.

Here!" he cried, feeling his sides, "I forgot my tobacco. Mr. Mayor, pass me your joke. Don't be alarmed, I'll only take two pieces, one for Father Bret and one for me.

Thank you," I replied, after considering alternately the mouthpiece of the instrument and that of the owner, "I do not smoke.

Then poor Chiang, whose features were already blooming at the thought of savoring a good puff, put down the two pipes with a disconcerted air,

"If you don't smoke, I won't smoke either," he said resignedly.

The poor devil has been so charming to us from the beginning that I don't feel brave enough to inflict this mortification on him. This awful pipe that has already passed through so many mouths is the peace pipe. Let's not be proud and let's silence our repugnance!

Come on," I said, smiling, "give me that pipe and let's smoke together.

The gaiety is reborn as if by magic and the verve sparkles at once.

What do you call this gentleman?" asks the mayor, pointing to me.

“He is Father Paik, a French missionary who came here to teach us the Catholic religion. It is a very good doctrine; you should all follow it. There would be no more thieves or bad people in the country: it would be very good for us.

And here is my improvised catechist who starts preaching with aplomb as if he had done nothing else all his life! The whole village came to listen to him with their mouths agape. He nods to his acquaintances in the crowd, asks about such and such a person whom he does not see, asks the name of one or another whose face strikes him and challenges him in these terms:

“You should become a Christian; you know how to read, you would learn the catechism very quickly... Here is one who seems intelligent, I urge him to become a Christian... And this one, what a good head! Say, my boy, with a face of honest man like yours, you miss only one thing: it is a pity that you are not a Christian, etc., etc.”

No mockery in his words: we are amazed, but we take him seriously and I would not be surprised to find catechumens in this village next year when I return, if God gives me the grace to pass by here again.

His pipe is finished, I gently let mine go out, we salute and get back on our horses.

At 2 1/4 hours, we arrive at the village of Almital which counts several Christians and many catechumens. I recommend that they prepare themselves carefully for the reception of the sacraments, I leave my catechist with them and, taking Joseph the hunter as my guide, I leave at once to visit Tja-eui-tong which is, or rather was, an hour and a half away and which, last month, almost became our tomb.

Four mountains (!) seem to block our way; we climb them with difficulty because of the ice which covers their steep sides and, in spite of the breeze, we stop for a moment at each summit to catch our breath.

Here we are in front of the ruins: two here, one there, three farther and three farther still. A heap of ashes, some sections of charred beams, iron fittings twisted by the violence of the fire, fragments of crockery scattered about, that is all that remains of the houses of our poor Christians! *Sunt lacrymae rerum...*

I am led to a kind of underground passage which has its own history.

It was a silo where the Koreans, lacking a cellar, kept their provisions for the winter. In the adjoining house lived a young couple. When the brigands approached, François packed up his most precious belongings, told his wife to join him in Ho-tchyen-hpo, and set off without delay to join our caravan.

In other, more chivalrous countries, the husband would not have separated from his wife: he would have waited for her, protected her on the way and, if necessary, made a bulwark for her with his body. But, alas! we are in Korea where the condition of women, as in most pagan countries, leaves much to be desired. It will take several generations for the Christian spirit to infiltrate to the marrow and correct this barbarity of morals.

However, the husband takes the lead. The poor woman, in the weakness of her twentieth year with a baby at her breast, is afraid of such a long run in a hostile country and decides to hide in the potato silo. With her takes refuge a small neighbor of 5 or 6 years.

The persecutors arrived, searched the nooks and crannies and discovered the unfortunate girl. They seized her, tore her away from her retreat, insulted her, put a spear to her chest and said:

“Answer or you are dead! Doesn’t your religion teach immortality? Do you not commit infamies in your meetings? If you deny it, see this spear, it will pierce your heart.

No, that’s not true!” replied this brave woman nobly; what you are saying here is awful. I am in your hands, you can kill me, but you will not make me betray the truth.

Desperate to overcome the constancy of this heroine, moved perhaps by the sight of the innocent creature she was clasping in her arms, the executioners turned their threats against the child.

“Come on! You, tell us the truth or beware! Didn’t the European throw drugs into the wells and make you drink the water? If you don’t confess, we’ll kill you. ,

And they brandished their weapons threateningly.

The poor boy answered yes to everything they wanted, and immediately a record of his answers was drawn up to serve as an accusation against me. It goes without saying that our enemies had the modesty not to present this document to the mandarin. I sincerely regret this, as it would have allowed me to catch our slanderers and have them punished as they deserved.

Two days after this event, as soon as I learned of it, I had the mandarin give the order to deliver this catechumen who joined us at Hot-chen-hpo and was baptized - in men’s clothes - under the name of Françoise. I took advantage of the occasion to preach to the husbands about their duties towards their wives.

19

A little angel. - Various episodes. - On horseback. - A French chassepot.

In addition to the nine burned houses, I saw others, whose doors and windows had been broken and the furniture looted; but the neighbors, honest pagans, had begged the brigands not to set them on fire and the latter had yielded to their prayers.

At first, unaware of these details, my Christians had given me only the list of the losses suffered by the fire and I had asked for compensation on January 31; learning of this new damage a fortnight later, I presented a new claim on February 15.

However, not all the losses were financial, but there were irreparable losses, such as property titles, family papers, examination diplomas, etc.

The sun was about to disappear on the horizon; however, before returning, we made a detour to visit a fresh grave surmounted by a cross in this now deserted valley. Under this mound lies a little angel, victim - at least indirectly - of the storm that had scattered us all.

The sister of my guide, seeing the road to Hotchenhpo intercepted, had not been able to join us. During four days and four nights, she wandered in the mountain dragging with her a seven years old boy and carrying a three years old baby on her back. Who will tell the privations, the sufferings and also the merits of Anne, this generous Christian?

One evening, exhausted, she still had the strength to light a brazier and fell from exhaustion beside her two children. While she was sleeping, the younger one threw himself into the fire. The poor mother suddenly woke up: distraught, she rushed to the fire and realized with pain that there was no more hope. She quickly fetched water and baptized her child. Alas! perhaps it was already too late... Nevertheless, I hope in the infinite mercy of God and I like to think that Our Lord will have opened the doors of Paradise to this dear little

one, who died as a result of persecution. Didn't the Church place on the altars the little Innocents, whom Herod's fury crushed without mercy, *ceu turbo nascentes rosas*?

Finally we take again the way of Almitai, exhausted, we collect several times snow to support our forces. The night has come completely: they come in front of us with branches of fir tree as torches.

After supper, the neophytes gather and give me a candle to brighten up the vigil; but I ask for mercy: the steps and counter-steps that I have just made, joined to the heat of the room, plunge me into an insurmountable drowsiness and I give in to Morpheus' poppies.

Quickly! Get up! Today we have twenty-five baptisms, not counting confessions, communions, confirmations and marriages. Alert! By the way, what about that candle? There was a candle around here last night. Did the rats eat it? In its place I find a string. O beauty of transformism!... But no, it is not a string, it is the wick; as for the stearin, it mowed in my stockings, in my notebooks, a little everywhere. I should have been wary of it: I read London on the label: these English rascals only sell junk!

The thermometer consulted answered: + 28° centigrade, temperature of Singapore, and - 13° outside. This is not bad for Manchuria, in the heart of winter. Admit that the Korean heaters deserve some praise.

Immediately after mass, the Chinese soldiers came to wish me good morning, and without further ado, settled down at my place to chat. This was not my intention.

My braves," I said to them, "you know how pleasant your company is to me, but you also know that we did not come here to string beads: therefore take this tobacco string (tobacco is sold by the string) and go smoke in the neighboring house. When I need you, I'll call you.

The whole day was devoted to the ministry of souls, and the next day we continued our journey.

My little military mandarin had been ordered to escort me to Hoeryŏng and to return immediately. He also wanted to go to sleep that evening in the city, which was only 25 kilometers away. This arrangement did not appeal to me, and here is why.

If our house in Hoeryŏng was not in a position to accommodate us, as I had reason to believe, where were we going to spend the night? In the open air, unless the prefect made a room available to us, as he had done in the past: in that case, I would become his servant - which I wanted to avoid at all costs, in view of a complaint to be lodged in Seoul against him - and we would be exposed to the vanities of the plebs, as we had been during our first stay.

A good general, a friend of mine often told me, can be defeated, but he must never be surprised.

So I decided that we would sleep in Syengil-Kol, from there we would leave early in the morning and arrive in town before noon. If we could stay in our house, we would stay there for a while to collect the last baptisms, raise the morale of the catechumens and try to get the necessary repairs done. If not, I would return home as soon as possible to bring the whole affair to the minister of France and ask for his intervention.

On the way, we meet a group of Christians, deputies of the inhabitants of Syengti-Kol with this message:

“As our village is situated on the road to Hoeryǒng, we cannot oppose the passage of the missionary: let him come on foot and without pomp! But if he arrives on horseback and with a whole procession, he can count on us to drive all the Christians out of the village after he leaves.

My people consult with the newcomers. I interrupt them:

“- Reserve your deliberations for matters that are worthwhile. I will make my entry into Syengti-Kol today on horseback; I would make it on an elephant, if I had the good fortune to own one of these pachyderms! Do not let yourselves be frightened by these vain threats; rather, wish that they be carried out, for the Chinese government would not tolerate this affront, and it is the pagans, on the contrary, who would be banished from the region.

In fact, everything went smoothly.

Our arrival had been reported to Hoeryǒng. In the evening, an envoy of the prefect arrived: the repair of our house had been started the same day (February 18) and the magistrate asked me to rest for three or four days in Syengti-Kol until everything was ready to receive me.

“I have no orders to receive from your master, I have warned him long enough in advance, go and tell him that I am not to be made fun of with impunity. I will go to Hoeryǒng when I please.”

As we were about to leave the Chinese territory, my escort leader wanted to offer me a farewell lunch for the next day in the post of the soldiers who guard the border. I refused at first, fearing that this would cause a delay and hinder my plans for Hoeryǒng. He promised me that it would not make us lose time. I thought that we had everything to gain by accepting. This restless population, seeing that we were treated well by the masters of the country, would not fail to conceive of us in a higher light and would respect the Christians more in the future. So I agreed and a soldier left immediately to make all the preparations.

The next day, we got up very early, made the ten kilometers which separated us from the Tumen river on an empty stomach and arrived at the station around 9 a.m. (In the vicinity are coal deposits, the specimens which I had in front of me were not famous; but it must be said that they had been collected almost at ground level; I think that by digging a well or a gallery, one would arrive at a better quality). This time we were well received; I made friends with the dogs of the post and the soldiers extended their hospitality to all the people who accompanied me. The guard consisted of twenty men, or rather twenty tigers, as they call themselves. One of them, the naked mero five, came to me with his rifle and asked me if I knew this weapon and how to handle it, where it came from and when it was made. On the stock I read this inscription in Chinese characters on red paper:

“The great spiritual bliss of the fifth tigr.”

Sheltered!” Topffer would have said. On the barrel were engraved these words: “Saint-Etienne, 1870. Alas! it was a French chasse-pot, which had come to ground there to remind me of the image of the wounded fatherland.

We take leave and at 11 h. We took our leave and at 11:30 we arrived in front of our house. The large breach in our porte cochere is still open, the surrounding walls are broken in several places; in a corner of the courtyard are piled up the heaps of stones with which we were assailed. Only the walls of the house' and the roof are intact. The military mandarin and the interpreter try to pull me out of this melancholy contemplation.

"You know that we have to give the prefect of Hoeryōng a document concerning you.

Indeed, when I left Hotchyenhpō, the deputy gave my escort a curious letter addressed to the prefect of Hoeryōng. Here is the meaning of it: "Father Bret, a French missionary, having come to our area to preach the holy religion of the Master of Heaven, an ignorant and imbecile people rushed upon him and his disciples, mistreated them and threatened them with death. On hearing this news, we, the mandarin of the Great Kingdom, snatched the great man from peril, protected him day and night, provided him with an escort, and today have the honor of placing his precious person in your hands. Please see that he is unharmed and give us a proper receipt. If, afterwards, any damage occurs to him, you will be responsible for it."

I didn't want to honor this official who had been luring me for a month with a visit at any cost. On the other hand, it was a safe bet that my words and my actions would be reported and commented on to the Chinese mandarin. So I answered:

"What are you saying to me about going to see the prefect? I have nothing to do with him; he was unable to prevent the disturbances, stop the looting, or order the restitution. Ah, no doubt, if he were a worthy magistrate like your mandarin of Hotchyenhpō, I would go and greet him with pleasure. But this individual... As much as I respect the authority of which he is the custodian, I despise him because he betrays Justice. Such a man does not deserve to live in the yamên "

Nor did I agree to send my catechist, I only added one of my Christians to the escort to attest that I was still alive. Then I dictated to my catechist a letter to the Chinese substitute, thanking him for his kindness and recommending my Christians to him once again.

However, the crowd had massed in the courtyard, silent at first, as long as the escort was there, then soon boisterous, as soon as the soldiers had gone to the courtroom. The sight of this mocking rabble in front of our dismantled house indignantly made me feel indignant. I turned to her:

"What are you laughing at, you bunch of pirates! Look at these ruins: they are the work of real savages! I am going to Seoul and you will hear from me soon. In the meantime, get out of here!"

At my threatening gesture, these hundreds of men fled. Oh, how cruel and cowardly the crowds are!

20

On the way to Puryong. - Mandarin and Missionary. - A legitimate revenge. - A triumphant journey. -

I went out myself a moment later, accompanied by half a dozen Christians, and we all took the road to Puryong on foot with the wind at our backs. I would have liked to walk

until nightfall and sleep as far away as possible from the town of Hoeryŏng, over which we had shaken the dust from our feet when we set out, but my tired people suggested a stop at the Pon-geumi inn, the same place where, six weeks before, we had anxiously awaited the mandarin's reply.

Circumstances were quite different.

At that time, we considered the future as a dark abyss capable of swallowing us up, a sort of rickety tunnel under which we would enter with the rather justified fear of seeing it collapse on our heads; now, thanks to God, we came out of it alive in spite of the setbacks and greeted with hope the return to the light.

I always get more joy out of seeing the sun shine after a storm - even when I've had some of the shower on my back - than I do out of contemplating a dark, storm-laden sky.

So we had not had only misfortunes in this expedition. We had cleared a new corner of the vast field of the Church, spread the flag of Christianity and civilization far and wide; We had made the name of France known and loved, regenerated more than one hundred and fifty people in the waters of baptism, laid the first foundations of Christianity that everything foretold would be fruitful. Finally, by a special assistance of Providence, we had remained within the bounds of moderation and patience in the midst of the most provocative events and we were confident of finally obtaining justice in high places, if there were judges in Berlin, that is to say in Seoul,

I was deep in thought when suddenly a commotion broke out in front of the inn. My people hurried to look through one of the holes in almost every door in Korea. It is like in Europe when the jailer puts his eye to the devil's hole in the dungeon to see without being seen.

"It's the mandarin!" they said half-heartedly, a little excited.

Is he coming to arrest us? Would Pharaoh repent for having let the Hebrews go?

"Eira! Eira!" shout the satellites in a low voice.

Eira is a Korean word that is rather difficult to translate, because, for elasticity, it would give points to the least vulcanized rubber, It means: Whoa! make way, here comes the big man; line up, you scoundrels, and stand respectfully." All this and much more is contained in this interjection as honorable to the one in whose favor it is uttered, as it is contemptuous of those to whom it is addressed.

Immediately the door opened with a bang and the mandarin made his solemn entrance.

As I thought I was stopping only for a minute and as the inn was excessively dirty, I had entered all booted up and was sitting on a half-empty trunk, the only remnant of my luggage.

The mandarin approached and stood before me. Seeing that I did not get up, he finally sat down on the floor, that is to say at my feet, he did not look proud at all; he could feel that he had come to Canossa: it was clear on his face, -

We look at each other at first without saying a word like two dogs of faience, Then he greets me and asks about my health,

I acted surprised and politely asked my entourage: "Who is this gentleman?"

"He is the prefect of Hoeryŏng.

"I did not know that there was a prefect in Hoeryŏng. On the basis of the treaties, I asked for his protection several times in the name of my passport and did not even get an answer. In the end, they deigned to tell me that the cold would prevent our house from being

repaired promptly. If there had been a prefect worthy of the name in Hoeryŏng, things would not have happened like this. -

This lesson, given in the presence of everyone, with an irony that my ignorance of the delicacies of the language made even more biting, produced on the old mandarin the effect of a thunderclap. He tried to apologize, but stammered and remained short.

I was enjoying my triumph.

Someone in his suite, probably one of his secretaries, noticed his chief's embarrassment and came to his aid. I immediately cut him off.

"Who is this individual? This question is not his business. The matter is between the mandarin and me. It is not customary in Korea, I think, for inferiors to speak in the presence of their superiors before being questioned. I have nothing to do with this servant.

In order to give himself composure, the good man, who had been thus apostrophized, insulted the master of the inn:

"How! Rascal, is this how you receive the mandarin? You don't even lay out a clean mat for him to sit on honorably!

I intervene.

"The truth is that the mats are old and torn, but the room is heated, and there are doors and windows that close here. It's not like our house in Hoeryŏng, where doors and windows were broken, the furniture ransacked, and now there's no way to live!"

I thus entered into the heart of the matter without taking gloves, reserving them to protect myself from the cold on the way.

This reprimand was made at point-blank range, without passing through the channel of the interpreter, who could only have softened the angles, that is to say, diminished its value.

Seeing that I was not in an easy mood, the mandarin turned to the catechist and said:

"- I would like to treat the missionary properly. Persuade him to come with me: I will offer him chickens, wine, etc.

I am not a fish," I replied, "I am not taken by the mouth. I am not a fish," I replied, "I cannot be taken by the mouth.

Which was rendered as follows:

"The Father thanks His Excellency very much, but as he is already on his way, it would be very difficult for him to turn back.

The mandarin continued: "Urge him to accept. I have come here to sweep him off his feet: if I return alone, I will be dishonored in the eyes of my people.

"I don't care.

Which was translated:

"As the wind blows from the north, if we go back on our steps, the Father will have the dust in his face, which is what forces him to refuse your invitation.

This time I couldn't stand it any longer and answered briskly:

"It is true that it is the north wind that blows, but if it were the south wind, I would not go back.

"I will treat you magnificently.

"Oh, I know your welcome. You have not been able or willing to protect me, nor to repair our house; how will you be able to grant me the repairs I demand?"

“Come, I beg you.

“If our house were repaired, I would go.

“I will put an apartment at your disposal.

“Your apartment is known. The hospitality of Hoeryŏng is famous, and it will be even more so when I have announced to those who are entitled how the people treat the mandarin’s guests.

“This time everything will go well, I promise you.

“- Thank you.”

After having repeated his requests at least ten times, until he was ridiculous and got nothing but a smile for an answer, he called out to Luke, the leader of the Christians.

“Come on! Bachelor Pack, use your influence to bend the Father to come with me.

Luke, caught between two fires, hesitates and does not dare to return to the charge.

“Here is a good one now!” I cried. When the captain has ordered a movement from the right flank, does the corporal come and whisper in his ear that the left flank would be preferable? That may be the way you do it at Hoeryŏng, where you take the word of your cook, but I warn you that such currency is not used here. -

Of all my answers it seems that this one was the most admired.

Luc, who after all was in the presence of his own mandarin and whose nationality did not allow him the same freedom of language, contented himself with answering:

“- Since the beginning of The Expedition, I have had the honor of accompanying Father and I know from experience that once he has said no, it is no. I beg you not to insist anymore.”

The poor mandarin, who was repulsed by the whole thing, looked down in confusion and, noticing my shoes and my powdered clothes, said:

“I have compassion on such a great nobleman (the higher the word in Korea, the more noble you are) to travel on foot. Rest in this inn; tomorrow I will send you a horse.

“I don’t have time to wait; I’m leaving right now.

“Where are you going?

“I am going to Seoul.

“- To Seoul... ?

“Yes, I have urgent business to attend to there. Goodbye, mandarin. Be well. If you are still here next fall, we will meet again.”

And we left without turning our heads, leaving the mandarin mortified in the inn.

Naturally, the scene that had just taken place was the subject of long conversations.

This mandarin,” the Christians told me, “is an old man of 60, very narrow-minded; until now he had not yet exercised a magistracy; but his younger brother, an interpreter at the Russian legation and all-powerful in the capital, has just given him this position, without which he would never have been able to break through.

In fact, if there is a nation where favoritism is displayed with impudence, it is Korea. The government should meditate on the profound words of Montesquieu: “When, in a country, there is more advantage in courting than in doing one’s duty, all is lost.

The mention of the younger brother, the famous Kim Hong-ryouk, made my interlocutors' foreheads furrow.

Father," they said, "this man is the rainmaker, and he will cover up for his elder brother, and we will have difficulty in obtaining justice.

"- Bah! Do not worry. The Tarpeian Rock is near the Capitol and God will have the last word.

We went to sleep in an isolated inn five lis (2 kilos) away. Fortunately, there were no other travelers than us: this allowed us to have mass the next day, February 20, januis clausis propter metum Judaeorum.

- As it was Sunday, we did not set out very early in the morning, and we were well advised to do so, because at 9:30 a.m. a satellite arrived from our mandarin of the previous day with three horses and three men to drive them: one for me, one for the catechist and one for the luggage. Real haridelles, but free of charge. We accept: it's as much as taken from the enemy.

At 10 o'clock, I mounted Rossinante and we followed a small stream in a steep valley of serpentine shape. After half an hour of rest in the small walled city of Hpoungsan, we leave at 2 o'clock.

This time I travel like a great lord, armed with a stick, the satellite opens the way ten steps in front of me and shouts to all: Eira! Eira! He says to the pedestrians: "Pull over to the side of the road!" to the horsemen: "Get off your ox or horse!" (see engraving, p. 397), to the carters: "Go to the next field!" to the smokers, that is to say to everyone: "Down with the pipes!

As long as the procession passes, all these travelers stand still and respectful. When we are at some distance, if one of my people has stayed behind, the passers-by ask him in a low voice:

"Who is this strange mandarin?

"Paik, a French missionary!" he answers proudly.

Our Christians were jubilant: this was the beginning of our rehabilitation.

As for me, I try to keep up with the circumstances and especially not to lose my balance on the Korean saddle, to which I am not accustomed. This cavalcade entertains me enormously. It seems to me to hear Aman proclaiming in the streets of Susa the praises of Mordecai and repeating the word of Ahasuerus: Sic honorabitur quemcumque voluerit rex honorare! Although these honors are addressed to an unworthy person, I rejoice because of the glory which will reflect on the religion

21

- Continuation of the journey. - A hen is requisitioned. - Gold mining. - A charming mandarin. - Potatoes fried in lamp oil.

To joyfully celebrate our victory and to put something other than laurels in our mouths, my people want to buy me a chicken. They are not expensive in the country, but, I do not know why, they are rare and the farmers refuse to sell them.

I can easily agree to this; but the satellite got wind of it. Does he want to give us a specimen of his power? Does he only hope to catch some reliefs? A mystery! Still it is that he puts an extraordinary zeal to chase these birds.

He enters a peasant's house:

"Eira! We need a chicken.

"I don't have one!

I don't have any!"

- "Order of the mandarin of Hoeryŏng!

"-Bring it anyway. You're still lucky we're paying for it, manant!"

And the chicken comes, it is even a chicken.

It is so true that authority is a sacred thing, even when its depositary has no other sign than a green cord on his belt and a handful of red hairs on his hat!

At 3 h, 1/4 we went down to an inn near the top of the Musan mountain to spend the night. Temperature -17°. The next day, while arriving at the foot of the other slope, I notice works of canalization which do not hit me the first time. They are excavations for the extraction and the washing of the gold that this small river rolls in its bed. It was impossible for me to know how much gold is collected in these parts, but it is not considerable.

In Wonsan, 2,500,000 francs worth of gold powder are exported annually. This precious metal is found in Yonghung, Keum-syeng, Hpyengyang, Mokhpo, Busan, etc.; already American, Russian and German companies have obtained important concessions. The total export for the whole of Korea is 7,500,000 fr, according to customs statistics; if we add what is smuggled in, we come close to the figure of 12,500,000 fr per year.

After two and a half hours of walking, we are in front of the old Musan. I do not have the courage to go and visit these ruins: they remind me too cruelly of those of Hoeryŏng and my heart still bleeds at the memory of my poor Christians without shelter in the middle of winter.

One hour and three quarters later, here are the ramparts of Puryong. We go down to our inn and our postilions bring back their horses.

The satellite, while wishing us a good trip, shows us a letter that he pulls from the ribbon of his felt: it is addressed by the prefect of Hoeryŏng to his colleague of Puryong and we suspect that it concerns us.

Indeed, a few minutes later: Eira! Eira! Here is the mandarin who comes to visit us. His colleague tells him in substance that I have suffered a lot, that I have a bitter heart and that I am going up to Seoul to lodge a complaint; he begs him to treat me well, to pour a balm on my wounds and to calm my wrath so that I will not be too mean in my report to the French ministry.

This mandarin is charming and treats me as well as he can. He has difficulty in making himself heard, because of his hoarse voice.

He asks me if I have many conversions. About this we talk about religion.

I know, I know," he says (half out of courtesy, half out of boastfulness), "it is a sublime and very moral thing.

The Decalogue is recited to him: he approves warmly. These words of the magistrate in front of a large pagan audience are already something.

Well," my catechist adds, "since this doctrine is beautiful and good, you should embrace it. Why don't you become a Christian?"

He hardly expected this logic. He hesitated, visibly embarrassed, and then answered: "Books are not enough. How can I become a Christian if I don't have a teacher to teach me?"

And he invites me to settle in his town.

Without doubt there is a lot of oriental politeness there; I am nevertheless persuaded that a stay of a few weeks among this well disposed population would be rewarded by several baptisms.

Ah! when will we be numerous enough to effectively occupy all the points of the territory?

During the conversation, servants arrive from the yamên, bringing two tables loaded with victuals. I think I see Agamemnon sending presents to appease the anger of Achilles with light feet.

After dinner, the mandarin urges me to stay until the next day; but I do not let myself be seduced by his courtesy. One day's delay is enough to make me miss the boat. I thanked him and got ready to leave

Seeing that my determination is irrevocable, he also offers me three horses to replace those which have just returned to Hoeryông. One has all the difficulties of the world to solicit them in this poor sub-prefecture: we wait for nearly one hour. Finally they arrive; but we have fallen from Charybdis into Scylla: they are gaunt, stubby, limping rosses. I ride one of them so as not to affront the mandarin; but the walk is so painful for the mount and the rider, that when we leave the city, it is a real relief to get off and finish the road on foot.

Fifteen lis (6 kilometers) further on, we stop for the night. While entering the inn, I see with pleasure a small Japanese tin lamp. Finally we will be delivered of these sempiternal shenpots!

"Maitre d', do you have any oil?"

"Not much, but there is some.

Bravo! we will be almost illuminated a giorno this night. We can see that we are approaching the capital of the province. Some time later (alas! I did not know it until two hours later), the innkeeper accosted my catechist:

"The "big man" speaks Korean.

"Without a doubt.

"He asked me if I had any oil.

"Ah, really? I'll tell you why. He loves fried potatoes. Cut your apples into small, thin slices, throw them into the boiling oil and serve them hot: you'll see how he'll enjoy them. Our man immediately goes to the kitchen to give orders, comes back to my room, empties the contents of the lamp into a small cup that did not shine by cleanliness and disappears again. -

Thinking that he was going to clean and refill the lamp, I did not worry about this maneuver; it is hardly if I paid attention.

Supper was served, the inevitable kim-tchi was flanked by two assistants: a hard-boiled egg and a saucer of fried potatoes.

Let's eat! Let's taste these French fries, delights of the kid from Paris. They are a bit scorched and have a slightly empyreumatic smell, but one should not be too demanding when travelling. Besides, didn't St. Bernard, my illustrious compatriot, swallow a glass of oil, thinking it was wine? Which, in my opinion, was doubly meritorious on the part of a Burgundian,

When I had finished, the hotelier came to remove the table. I asked him for a light; he brought the antique chenevottes.

He brought the antique "chènevottes". "But what about this lamp, my good man? And this lamp, my good man?"

"Sir, it is out of oil.

"How? You told me earlier that there was some.

"That's true, but you ate it.

"Did I eat it?"

"Yes, with the potatoes.

"Ah, you wretch! Did you cook the potatoes with the oil from this lamp?"

"Of course. There was no other. I didn't know!"

It was useless to get angry with the rustic mountain man and too late to turn back. What do you want? One cannot enjoy all the pleasures of life at the same time.

22

End of the trip on the ground. - An unfortunate meeting. - Poignantly ugly, it will cinder you! - The crossroads of the monuments. - Arrival at the seaside. - Painful disappointment.

On February 22, we got up before dawn and left at 6 am.

I gave a last look at the steep mountains whose picturesque character rivals the most beautiful sites of Switzerland. No gigantic trees: they are thin coppices, puny firs, stunted oaks, a dwarf vegetation covered with an immense mantle of azaleas. The heights are lowered in hills, of which the poor ploughman cultivates until the top of the fast slopes. In narrow valleys, the torrents leap and roar on their rocky beds. The rocks are covered with a singular moss, a kind of ivy, dried sedums and *ampelopsis veltchiana*. The road is lined with willows, maples, black thorns and wild vines.

In the distance, three travelers come to meet us. While admiring the beauties of nature, I walk cheerfully in front of the column with a more cheerful step than the people who follow me. It is true that most of them carry a pack on their back, while I have nothing, not even a stick in my hand.

It was, no doubt, this last circumstance that inspired boldness in the approaching individuals. One of them began to sing a couplet to my address and, when he passed by me, he said to his acolytes:

"I nôm poara" (Look at this scoundrel!)

"Be careful with your words, you scoundrel!" I answered, staring at the rodomont.

With a glance he consulted his companions and came to place himself in front of me. Our eyes met like two swords. He raised his staff to my face and, waving it threateningly, said:

"- Soon all the scoundrels of your kind, we will kill them with our own hands."

The test was too strong for my nerves, which had been stretched like a spring for two long months. I was about to retort, when my biceps suddenly broke out in one of those movements that theologians call a primo-prime and fencing masters a boot,

Fearing that I had hit him too hard, I looked around me. At first I saw only two Koreans who said to me with great reverence:

“He did wrong, Lord, please forgive him...”

Finally I saw my citizen struggling two or three steps away at the bottom of a ditch full of snow.

The military historians teach that the attack is more appropriate to the French genius than the defense: I believe that they are right.

In any case, my future assassin emerged all sheepish and came to apologize to me:

“I beg your pardon, great man, I took you for a Japanese. As you have neither soul nor horse, I did not know that you were noble.

“He who serves his country well doesn’t need ancestors... nor a horse to be noble. Another time, beware of judging people by their looks: you could be cooked even more,

“I won’t do it again,” he said, dusting himself off and tucking in his poor hat, flattened like a pancake.

Time will tell if he learned his lesson.

This scene had lasted less time than it takes to describe it. I continued quietly my road. Arrived at the top of a small rise (8 h, 3/4), I turned over to see if my people were following me and saw them at a distance who were giving the beating to my individuals of earlier.

What had happened?

My insulters - for they were all three in collusion and were about to do me an ill turn if my first blow had not disconcerted them - my insulters, I said, had no sooner met the Christians than they asked them:

“What kind of European scoundrel is that who precedes you on the road? The rascal is not light-handed!

. “What! you rascals, that’s how you talk about a nobleman who travels in the name of the emperor of Korea!

And they gave them a well-deserved beating,

An hour later, we passed on the right Psiek-Ker (the crossroads of the monumental stones), so named because, in this place, there are many large carved stones, in the form of tombs, bearing praiseworthy inscriptions in honor of the mandarins whose administration has left excellent memories in the locality. They are the equivalent of the statues we erect to our great men and must be accepted with the same grain of salt. We meet them at every step in Korea.

In front of us stretches a plain and the fragrance of the breeze brings us the news that the sea is near. We crossed the dangerous zone: we are saved!

I know a little Carmelite who will leap with joy when she reads these lines. She is too modest to take credit, however small, for the success of our apostolic undertaking. I respect her humility; but I know her charity well enough to hope that she will thank in my name her pious companions on Boulevard Carnot in Dijon for the precious help that their fervent prayers have given me. For my part, I can assure them that our neophytes, in their

white baptismal robes, did not fail one day to recommend them to God, when they asked for a hundredfold in this world and in the next for all their benefactors, known and unknown.

Five lis (2 kilometers) further, here is the small city of Sy-ou-syeng where we taste a cup of Korean vermicelli made of buckwheat flour.

Shortly afterwards, on the left, we saw the bay of Chyengtjin, which was incomparably better sheltered than Tek-eu-mi, and which would have replaced this stopover for a long time, if it had not been for the proximity of Kyongsong.

At 3 o'clock, we are in sight of the ramparts of this city and soon after in our inn.

Our first concern is to inquire about our boat. No chance! The Chiang-Ryong arrived on the 16th and left on the 19th, so we had to wait indefinitely.

23

An influx of catechumens. - A wreck from the persecution of 1866. - Touching story of Peter. - Visit to the governor. - The big door and the little door. - Russian officers in Kyongsong. - Arrival of a courier. - Interesting news.

Three days later, our catechumen, the bachelor Kim, invites us to go and live in his house which is spacious and safe from the indiscretions of the curious: there we can safely say mass and administer the sacraments. Other catechumens came from the surrounding area and I had the consolation of conferring five baptisms and several confirmations.

There I also had the good fortune to meet Pierre, a wreck of the great persecution of 1866, which claimed so many victims among the clergy as well as among the faithful, and whose dramatic stories are still on the lips of many people.

The story of this unfortunate man is simple and touching.

Baptized at the age of 13 by Mr. Maistre, he soon moved to a suburb of Seoul where he married a Christian woman of his age eight years later.

The future smiled on the young couple; but at that time - the real Terror - when the Regent had sworn to drown Catholicism in streams of blood, who could count on tomorrow?

On the eve of the wedding, before the couple could live together under the marital roof, the persecution suddenly increased: the Christians of the capital separated to escape more easily from the rage of their executioners and fled in all directions. Peter went first to the province of Chyungchyeng, then wandered from village to village for nineteen years and finally came to a village thirty miles from here.

During all this time until this year, in spite of the pagan environment which surrounded him, having to persevere neither the examples of the faithful, nor the exhortations of the priests, nor the grace of the sacraments, he continued not less to recite his prayers and did not forget his catechism. I was able to convince myself of this when he passed without flinching the examination that I made him take before admitting him to reconciliation,

Far from any Christian center, deprived of communication with his former co-religionists, and unaware of the extent to which the Korean church had been able to rise from its ashes, he was waiting confidently in the good Providence, when, five or six weeks before, a strange rumour swept the country.

It was rumored that a French missionary had been massacred with his followers on the left bank of the Tumen River and that the fire had destroyed the last vestiges of this Christianity. This news produced an excellent effect: it drew the attention of the public to our

work and made the Christian name known everywhere, an advantage that is not to be despised in this century of excessive publicity.

Peter, at this news, remembered his twenty years, the religion that had brightened his youth, the sacrifice and triumph of his fathers and brothers in the faith. Impatient to know exactly what he had to fear and what he could hope for, he came to the city to seek details and learned with joy of our upcoming arrival.

This was, moreover, the theme of all the conversations from one end of the chief town to the other: the common people who travel a lot peddled more or less erroneous stories; the governor who had received my call, as well as the consultations of his two subordinates about our affair, spoke about it with his advisers and his secretaries.

In this connection I resolved to go and visit the governor: I owed him a thank-you and wanted to obtain the text of the two proclamations he had issued in Hoeryōng in our favor.

So I went to his palace, accompanied only by my catechist, and gave my card to the concierge, asking if the governor was visible.

“- I will go and see. In the meantime, please enter the Praetorian Room. An oblique glance showed me through the half-open door a half-dozen scruffy individuals shouting in a tabâgio. What would I have done in this mess?

Thank you,” I answered. I came to see the governor, not the Praetorians. If he can receive me, I will enter his apartment directly; if not, I will return another time. Go to inform yourself promptly; I will wait one minute here in the square, “

He returned shortly afterwards and silently handed me the governor’s card. Having received mine, His Excellency did not want to be late in courtesy, nor did he want to appear to be skimping on the card.

“- Well! Does he receive me, yes or no? Speak.

“- Yes, sir, come in,” he said, stepping aside, after opening a door for me.

Here I believe it is necessary to open, not a door, but a parenthesis, to explain a point to readers who are not familiar with the Far East.

The mandarinates are accessed through two doors: the small one, similar to our ordinary doors; and the large one, in the style of our carriage doors. When one arrives on horseback, or in a palanquin, or when one is a guest of distinction, one is introduced through the large door; the satellites, the valetaille, the common people circulate through the small door. It is more or less the same as in your country, the service staircase and the staircase of honor. The Koreans and the Chinese know perfectly well to which door their social position entitles them; but they easily imagine that Europeans do not understand these subtleties and they take a malicious pleasure in fooling them in this way.

This understood, dear readers, I leave you to think what grimace I made, when one opened me... the small door.

Personally I was not worthy to pass even under the caudine fork of the doorman and I do not make any difficulty to recognize it; but I was the only representative of the religion

and of France and I believed of my duty not to let scorn the honor of the cassock and the national flag. So I answered:

- When I go to the mandarines, I am never introduced by the small door.

“But the large one is for the exclusive use of the governor.

“So my visit is done. Men of my rank enter through the big door or not at all. Let’s go back to the house.

“- But no, I beg you, do not do this affront to my master,”

During these talks, the governor had come out of his salon and, surrounded by his assessors, had advanced to the porch to receive me. I could see him clearly through the small doorway which they insisted on keeping open for me; for his part, he was no doubt wondering how this comedy would end. He then dispatched one of his servants to inquire about the cause of my delay.

“- First of all, go and ask your master if it is by his order or without his knowledge that I am being refused the honors of the great door.”

It goes without saying that the great door opened at once with two wings and I crossed the court, proud as Artaban.

The governor received me quite well, asked me to sit down on a European-style chair and had me served tea with a cigar. -

After the first usual courtesies, he asked me to excuse the rudeness of his pipelet, who, by ignorance, had disrespected me. Holy water of court! He seemed flattered when I thanked him for having protected us; but he could not communicate to me the text of the official documents: he had not kept a copy.

The rest of the conversation did not rise above the most insignificant vulgarity, and of the words which fell from his lips, none is worth reporting.

However, the days passed monotonously while we waited for the steam: the ministry was over, the cold and the snow prevented us from going out, and, except for my faithful Luc, all the Christians who had accompanied us had returned to their homes. I almost regretted the more hectic life on the frontier. Although the winter was exceptionally mild, I noted the following temperatures: March 1: -18°; March 2: -16°; March 4: -15°; March 8: -13°; March 17: -13°; March 20: -9°.

And to think that we were closer to the Equator than Nice!

Touched by my sighs, divine Providence provided me with an oasis in the desert of this life of waiting.

One fine evening - March 1 - I learned of the arrival of a Russian officer with his suite, and almost immediately a Korean interpreter brought me his card. It is the captain of the general staff, A. Loubentzoff, on a geographical tour. His mission consisted of an artillery captain, a quartermaster lieutenant, eight non-commissioned officers or soldiers, four interpreters and a cook. She collected information on the province: population, products, culture, livestock, etc., she noted the altitudes, drew the map and measured her route by means of the odometer and the pedometer. I learned from her that the distance between Hoeryöng and Puryong is 51 kilograms 870 meters, and that from Puryong to Kyongsong is 52 kilograms 650 meters. We are far from the native estimate which gives 120 short lis for the first distance and 100 long lis for the second.

The two officers speak French and are perfect gentlemen. I will never forget their cordial hospitality, nor the delightful hours spent in their kind and learned company. For the first time, no doubt, Kyongsong heard tirades of Horace, Virgil and Homer, of Dante and Petrarch, declaimed in the language in which they were composed.

The governor, who has the reputation of getting fat on the sweat of the people, was very assiduous with the newcomers. At the same time that he used the pretext of illness to excuse himself for not paying me a visit, he frequented the officers' houses every day in the hope of obtaining some of the superb gifts with which their vans were filled. Oh, the old fox!

The captain, however, held him in high esteem, and had made him pay for the trick of the little door, which had been played on him: due to a misunderstanding, it is true, the governor waited half an hour in the courtyard before being admitted to the captain's house.

The day after their departure - March 8 - as I found myself more isolated than ever, a courier from the North arrived, who bravely made his 270 lis (about 110 kilometers) in two days,

Here is the news:

Our Chinese mandarin is back from Jilin and tells me that he holds the indemnity we claimed on January 31 at our disposal; for that of February 15, he begs me to desist; there is no question of the punishment of the guilty. Besides, the poor mandarin is returning to Hotchyenppo, only to pack his belongings.

There are countries that condemn their unfortunate generals to death. It seems that China still follows this system.

His superiors thought that with a little vigilance he could have foreseen the uprising and smothered it in its infancy: consequently, they thanked him for his services,

When one learned of his change, there was a great movement in the region. The chiefs of the thirteen townships of which the mandarin's jurisdiction is composed, gathered at Hotchyenppo to bid farewell to the old incumbent and to pay homage to the new one, whose investiture they received. On this occasion there was a beautiful ceremony with a lot of tchin-tchin, of which the Celestials seem to have the monopoly.

I will not undertake to describe the pomp and splendor of it; I will limit myself to reporting the speech that concerns us:

I am happy to note that the two magistrates, no doubt on orders received from Jilin, had the loyalty to hold the following language before the crowd:

"Gentlemen chiefs of cantons, we have learned with sorrow that in most of your districts the inhabitants have insulted, abused, driven away and threatened with death the Catholic priest and his followers. However, if we regret this violence, one thing has greatly contributed to comfort us, and that is that, in one of these cantons at least, the missionary and the Christians have been defended and protected. We would like to thank the chief of the canton of Hotchyenppo for his good behavior. The missionary has come to preach moral reform and civilization to you; in this respect our hearts beat in unison with his. Henceforth, if anyone dares to molest the Christians, he will be punished according to the full rigor of the laws.

This tactic was very clever and is a credit to the foresight of the Chinese authorities, since since then the country has remained calm and quiet. But history has its rights: here is the truth. This chief of the canton, famous for his "good behavior", is the same fiery interpreter, a relative of the bachelor Kim, who insulted us, appealed to the people in spite of the mandarin's substitute, and almost set fire to the powder keg on the memorable day of February 11, 1898.

But all's well that ends well.

Then the new mandarin called the Christians and told them:

"I am from Moukden where there are many Catholics, and they are numerous all over China. Go in peace and fear nothing: your affairs will be settled.

On March 11, a new subject of thanksgiving. This time it is from the south that I receive a whole package of letters.

First there is one from Bishop Mutel. The venerated prelate, suffering from a cruel illness, forgets his own troubles to think of ours:

"The honor of suffering persecution for the faith does not prevent you from feeling the bitterness of the trial. You have received the baptism of fire, you have just earned your spurs...

Don't forget to tell us the story of your epic. Before leaving for Shanghai or Hong Kong in the hope of finding a cure, I recommended your case to my two provosts, as well as to Mr. Collin de Plancy, asking them to use all the means of diplomacy for your deliverance.

After reading this letter, which was a thousand times too complimentary of me, I instinctively lowered my head for fear of unhooking the stars, and resolved to write what had happened to me. -

The first provost informed me of the steps taken by our energetic minister in Seoul at the ministries of foreign affairs and the interior to ensure that our rights were respected. An official document from the government had just been sent to Hoeryōng to remind the rebels of their duties.

You have stepped on the devil's head," added Fr. Doucet, "so don't be surprised or frightened to see him wagging his tail.

The letters of my confreres, marked by a masculine energy, breathed rather joy with a touch of envy than compassion. It seemed that I had written to them:

"Think, brave friends, we fought at Arques and you were not there!

It is that we missionaries are not frightened by distant journeys; on the contrary, we are attracted by them, and when the spice of the unknown is added to it, some adventure to be run, some danger to be faced, with the certainty of saving souls and a secret hope of gathering the palm whose era seems closed for us, then we are all ready and our bishop has only the embarrassment of choice, as once when Napoleon asked among his grenadiers for a man of good will.

I also find in the number a charming epistle whose author is one of my confreres who registers the most neophytes in the North. I asked him one day how he went about his miraculous fishing. He smiled finely and showed me the worn-out grains of his rosary: "Here is my net! This year, after having conferred more than three hundred adult baptisms, he again found a way to take with his twin camera a number of the pictures that have illustrated these pages.

To top it all off, here is a letter from my parishioners in Wonsan. It is rather sad. The flock of this fold is worried about the prolonged absence of their pastor. No more mass, no more instructions, no more sacraments for a quarter. Has the Father abandoned us?

And then death took its toll on the flock. When it did not enter like a thief during the night, we went to call my neighbor fifty kilometers away; but some cases were sudden and my confrere was himself on an apostolic tour three hundred kilometers to the south: the poor sick died without extreme unction. Let us always be ready!

The final note is more consoling: 86 catechumens, sighing after my return to receive baptism.

Oh, how I long to go and open the gates of heaven for them!
Will the boat never arrive? Will we always be stuck?

24

Walk in the surroundings. - Carriers of sea water. - Annoying laws ingeniously turned. - Arrival of the steamer. - A hasty boarding. - Last steps. - Conclusion.

March 21st. -It is just three months since I embarked at Wonsan for the North. How much my inaction and my immobility weigh me down! Let us at least go out for a walk in the countryside.

At the foot of the ramparts, children are launching their kites; others, smaller, are having fun kneading snow cakes. Happy mortals! Among them I hear the fills of our host, who, from morning to evening, alone or in public, recites his Angelus aloud. He has no human respect

On the way out of the city, we meet women with jugs on their heads (see engraving above).

“Is it water they are bringing?”

“Yes.

“But they come from far away; there are plenty of wells here.

“Oh, it’s sea water.

“Sea water? For what use?”

“They use it for two purposes, either to prepare kimtchi or simply to make soup. In both cases, it is a saving of salt.

A little further on, here comes on a cart a monstrous cannon of formidable caliber.

“What is this mechanism? It’s not an artillery piece, I suppose?”

“No, Father, it’s a barrel.

“A barrel? No way!

“Yes, it is, a Korean barrel.

We approach and I find myself in the presence of a huge tree trunk hollowed out inside and also filled with sea water, which is being carried away.

Poor savages! It would be so easy to establish saltworks on the coast. Instead, they go daily to the sea to draw water loaded with salt... and many other things.

We head west to an isolated pavilion in the plain: this is where the authorities stand when they attend the capital executions.

In front of us, on the side of the mountain, we see a small bonzerie which does not look flourishing. With the icy slopes the ascent would present too much difficulty today; let us turn north towards the temple of Confucius. -

In the vicinity there are some beautiful trees which it is forbidden to cut down; but our Koreans are industrious (except for salt) when it comes to their interests. They start by removing the bark all around the tree at 0.5 meters from the ground: as the sap can no longer circulate, the tree dies; when it is dry, the foot is slowly charred until it falls down by itself. Then it can be cut down with a clear conscience: the majesty of the laws has not been violated.

This reminds me of a subterfuge in use in Siam.

One hardly expected
To see Siam in this matter,

Sorry! We do not deviate too much from our subject, because, in my opinion, the Siamese are cousins of the Koreans, at least under the report of the laziness.

The Siamese, who likes to eat well without working much, would like to eat a buffalo grill from time to time when his means allow it.

But there is a difficulty! The law - are they annoying, these laws! - under the fallacious pretext of protecting agriculture, forbids the killing of these domestic animals.

How to do it?

One chooses two warlike representatives of this horned gentry and ties them up so loosely in their stables, that, deceiving the surveillance of their guardians, the animals in question take the key to the fields and provoke each other in single combat without witnesses. These duels are serious; one or the other, if not both of the adversaries remain on the field.

At the death and dying rattle, the owner comes running in tears and has no other consolation than to cut himself some steaks and roast beef.

As for the law, it immediately opens an investigation into the victim's flanks, removes a good slice and declares that honor is satisfied.

After having climbed the hill of Seung-am (literally: rock head of bone, because its top is peeled like the sinciput of the aforementioned), I turn around to examine the landscape and I see near the coast a small steamer with its plume of smoke: it is the Hyenik!

At last! We will see Wonsan again.

How had he entered without blowing a whistle? If we had not had the happy inspiration to make this walk, he could have left without allowing us to suspect his presence and would have left us doubly mortified for several more weeks. It is true that the other boat having stopped here for four days, this one is probably not about to leave.

Luc suggests going, the next day, to get information at the Tkeumi agency; but my catechist, impatient to see his family again, urges him to leave at once, while we go home to tie up our luggage.

At the end of an hour and a half, Luc came running out of breath:

“Well, what news?”

“Father, the boat is leaving! Run quickly, if you want to catch up with it.

“Are you crazy? If it’s leaving, there’s no point in running; you must leave on time, or follow it by swimming!”

“- That is, the agent told me: “Everything is unloaded! There is no cargo to take, the accounts are settled, the boat will leave incontinently; but, as long as it has not skidded, you have a chance.”

I don’t hesitate for a second. Ordering Luke and our host to take charge of my belongings and the catechist to follow me, I set off with all the speed of my legs.

As soon as I could see the steamer, I realized that there was not a minute to lose: its chimney was spewing torrents of thick black smoke, a sign that it was under pressure. I was afraid of arriving too late. With my eyes fixed on the goal, I invoked the Star of the Sea while redoubling my efforts. For a moment, I thought that my frantic race had become useless; I had just seen the boat shaking.

I stopped, chose a tree some distance ahead as a landmark, and aimed anxiously.

O happiness! The boat was still motionless. I had been the plaything of an Illusion of the senses with imagination as my accomplice. I promise then a mass of thanksgiving. At last I arrived panting and drenched in sweat just as the last boat was returning to shore. I dangle a big tip in the eyes of the boatman and decide to return to the steamer.

Standing on his deck, the captain sees me and delays the signal to leave. He is a good Swede, with whom I have already had the pleasure of making the tour of Korea, from Chemoulpo to Gensan.

Good morning, Father,” he said, holding out his hand, “I was only waiting for you to weigh anchor.

Thank you very much,” I replied. “But my boy and my suitcase are a little behind, couldn’t you wait a moment and take them on board too?”

He said, “It is because the breeze is coming up and it is not good here.

At least,” I insisted, “let them hear your siren.

At the shrill calls of the steam, the latecomers doubled their pace, jumped into a boat and finally arrived.

At five o’clock, we set course for the south. Deo gratias!

The Hyenik is a little larger and more comfortable than the Tchang-riong: it contains two cabins and a lounge for first class passengers; but we pale in comparison. I arrived like a beggar, without a penny in my pocket: they were willing to give me credit until Wonsan. In 1894, when the Tonghaks were threatening to overthrow the government, it carried 800 soldiers from the capital to Kounsansan to maintain order in the uprising province of Tjyen-la. A little later, when hostilities were imminent between China and Japan, he went to a point on the coast to secretly take the royal family to Chiné; but in the meantime the Japanese landed 3,000 men at TChemulpo and cut off the retreat. After waiting in vain for ten days at the rendezvous, he had to weigh anchor.

The staff consisted of two Norwegians: the first mate and the mechanic, who gave me a warm welcome. Like most Europeans, they did not have a high opinion of Koreans and asked me about my trip,

“Do you think, Father, that your converts will hold out?”

“Certainly. I believe in witnesses who have their throats cut,” said Pascal; I believe in the perseverance of Christians who risk their peace of mind, their possessions and sometimes their lives every day to remain faithful to their religion and to obey their conscience. There are no dilettantes among them; no one professes Christianity as an amateur

During the night, we pass in front of Sa-hpo and Sarahko without entering them. So much the better! We will be sooner at home.

22 March. - We stop in Sara! I time to embark 46 parcels and anchor in Chaho around noon. There we take a serious load, 1.520 packages, but the snow gets in the way and hinders the operations.

March 23rd. - The snow, for the first time this year, ends in rain: it is the harbinger of spring; but it makes us lose a day, because we have to stay down until the weather is fine,

March 24th. - The sky clears up: the whales, all happy, chase each other and throw their water jets far away, which sparkle in the sun and fall back in a dew. We set off. On the way, we greet Sin-chang with a hat tip, that is to say a whistle, without stopping: the wind is too strong, we will come back later, after having touched at the next better protected port. At Sinpo we embarked - 2,411 packages of fish. The breeze increases in violence: we go to sleep in the shelter of the Red Gap island.

March 25th. - We continued towards the South and loaded 883 packages at Chongjin.

March 26th. - The calm allows us to retrace our steps to Sin-tchang, where we receive 2,231 packages of pouk-e, which brings our load to the respectable figure of 4,254,600 fish, with an approximate value of 62,500 francs and a smell that I leave you to guess.

March 27th. - We set sail early and went directly to Wonsan, without even saying hello to the people of Soho. To ease my conscience, I simply threw over the railings this aphorism of Vauvenargues: “One is not born for glory when one does not know the price of time.

March 28. - At daybreak, we landed at Wonsan, the prettiest of the open ports in Korea, just in time to celebrate the holy mass of which I had been deprived for so long,
The expedition is over,

Here is my balance sheet: I have spent 429 piasters; but I have gained an almost equal number of white hairs: this is, moreover, the only chance I had of becoming venerable

Let me conclude by thanking those who have had the patience to read me to the end and to recommend to their prayers these interesting Christians of the North, so that their cause may triumph, their numbers may increase and their fervor may be maintained,

And if, while praying for the flock, you will be kind enough to have a little remembrance for its poor shepherd, I shall be amply rewarded for this modest work.

END