

## EDITORIAL

IT is to be most distinctly understood that this is not a sectarian magazine, not an organ of any special sect of Buddhism, whose characteristic teachings are to be promulgated here. It is true that three of the promoters of The Eastern Buddhist Society belong to the Shin Sect and that the editorial office of the magazine is now in the Library of a Shin-shu university. The editors themselves are students of Zen Buddhism, but this does not mean that they have a sort of partisan spirit which makes them write exclusively for Zen. They are in fact not at all so narrow-minded, their sympathy is broad enough to cover all kinds of human beliefs that have any foundation in a genuine experience of the soul. The object of this magazine as was plainly announced in the first number is solely to expound the spirit of Mahāyāna Buddhism and disseminate its knowledge among non-Buddhist peoples. It has a far larger scope than being a sectarian organ. Our standpoint is that the Mahāyāna ought to be considered one whole, indivisible thing and no sects, especially no sectarian prejudices, to be recognised in it, except as so many phases or aspects of one fundamental truth. In this respect Buddhism and Christianity and all other religious beliefs are not more than variations of one single original Faith, deeply inbedded in the human soul. Why then should we confine ourselves into a narrow channel and survey the world from there? Therefore, even when we state that we are exponents and propagators of Mahāyāna Buddhism, we do so from a broader point of view, and not from any bias or sectarianism. Lest our announcement in the first number should be misinterpreted if that could be possible, we reproduce it here in part.

“In conformity with one of the provisions made by the Eastern Buddhist Society, we have decided to publish the present magazine. It is to appear bi-monthly, that is, six issues a year, containing about 384 pages in all. We should like to publish it more frequently, but all depends on how the public support it.

“A few words may not be amiss to preface the publication of this sort of a magazine. In the first place Buddhism, especially Mahāyāna, is very much misunderstood in the West. It is forgotten that Buddhism is a living force still actively at work in moulding the destiny of the East. It may be found clustered with many superstitions of antiquated beliefs, but this is also the case with other living religions. As long as everything living has its historical background, it is inevitable that it harbours something of anachronism in it. The thing, however, is to dig into the essence of the matter, and this is what is undertaken by the present magazine. If our humble attempt succeeds even to a modest extent in dispelling some of the misunderstandings entertained by foreign critics concerning the true spirit of Mahāyāna Buddhism, we shall be content with the result.

“Aesthetically, the Japanese arts come from Buddhism, without which Kyoto and Nara, two main birthplaces of the arts in Japan, would have long been robbed of their attractions. Even the minor arts such as tea-ceremony, flower-arrangement, landscape-gardening, and the composing of *Hokku* or *Haiku*, all of which are now closely interwoven with our daily life, would have suffered greatly if the influence of Buddhism had been withdrawn from the culture of the Japanese people. The art of fencing so vitally concerned with the making of the samurai in the olden days, strange to say, was also the outcome of the Buddhist doctrine of life and death.

“Ethically, the teaching of mercy based on the idea of

oneness of all things has deeply affected the Oriental outlook of life. The doctrine of karma and transmigration has also left its moral marks on the people. Even in these days of science and free research, we have Buddhist masses read over the dead, human or animal, that helped the specialists to be enlightened on some obscure points in anatomy, bacteriology, medical chemistry, and so forth.

“Philosophically, as an Indian product, Buddhism is highly tinged with intellectualism. Before the introduction of Western sciences, Buddhism has been the storehouse of logic, metaphysics, theology, psychology, and cosmology. One of the chief reasons why so readily the Japanese could assimilate the highest flights of Western intellect was no doubt due to the Buddhist training through which the Japanese have gone for many long centuries. When all these facts are considered, we realise how much Buddhism has done for the Japanese and for the East generally.

“Lastly, Japan is a sealed country to the outside world as far as scholarly work on Buddhism is concerned. This is inevitable owing to the linguistic difficulties. Of course, Japanese Buddhism has its own problems which are not necessarily of interest to other peoples. But as one of the modern nations Japan cannot stand away from the rest of the world, not only politically and socially, but intellectually and spiritually. It will therefore be one of the functions of this magazine to report scholarly activities in this country in connection with the study of Buddhism.

“Hīnayāna Buddhism in Pāli has found many able exponents, but the study of Buddhism in Sanskrit and especially in Tibetan and Chinese has not been so zealously pursued. Except by a handful of scholars, Buddhism known as Mahāyāna has not yet received scholarly labour. In fact, Buddhism preserved and expounded in the Chinese language is a veritable store-house where not only the lost Indian wisdom but

the genius of the entire East lies buried and awaits a thorough excavation. Besides its being a living faith, Mahāyāna Buddhism is, when it is historically considered, a great monument of the human soul. Its struggles, its yearnings, and its triumphant and joyful cries are all recorded in it. The Mahāyāna, therefore, is not the sole heritage of the East, and must be made accessible to the West."

The editorial office of *The Eastern Buddhist* has been transferred to Kyoto, as the editors are now associated with the Otani Buddhist University (Otani Daigaku) of the Shin Sect. Kyoto is a city or rather the city of Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines. Wherever one's steps are directed one is greeted with them, and almost every one of them has an illustrious history, sometimes most closely connected with the Imperial Family and with the advancement of culture in the country. At Mount Hiei which presents a commanding view in the east of the city there is the headquarters of the Tendai Sect, while in the southern quarters where now the Railway Station is situated we have one of the Shingon head-temples and the two Hongwanjis of the Shin sect. The five centers of Zen Buddhism are scattered over the city and at each one of these temples there is attached a monastery where Zen discipline goes on as in the olden days. Take away all these temples and shrines and monasteries from Kyoto, and not only would the city lose its picturesqueness and its classical aspects, but the country as a whole would suffer the loss of its most precious art treasures. But the question is whether the present-day Buddhists of Japan are satisfied with the historical value of their religion, that is, with its past glory and its past contribution to the culture of the Japanese people. History never pauses, it always moves forwards, and if the Buddhists forget to advance with the tide, they are sure to be left behind. We want to propagate the spirit of Buddhism in which we

firmly believe, but at the same time we must understand it as quite full of organic vitality which can assimilate other things for its own constant development. If old Buddhism created Kyoto, a new one ought to be growing in the meantime to form its new center somewhere in the Far East. When Kyoto is too busy in maintaining its old traditions and arts, it may steadily be undermining itself. To a certain extent, let the past bury the past, in order that Buddhism may grow more and more in vitality and in its assimilating power.

There are various indications to show that new interest is awakened in the study of Buddhism in Japan. One of them is the publication of some of the important Buddhist scriptures in the Japanese language and that of the sacred texts of the different sects of Buddhism in a handy collected form. Up to now all the texts and scriptures of Buddhism have been studied in the Chinese translations except such as were written by the Japanese Fathers especially for the common people. This naturally confined the study of Buddhism to those who were especially conversant in classical Chinese and also in Buddhist terminology. Whatever defects there were in the methods of propagation of the Buddhist teachings they were principally concerned with the enormous amount of the literature and its highly intellectual character. These as it were overwhelmed those who at all entertained the idea of delving into its secrets. If possible, a new translation in Japanese may be attempted from such original Sanskrit texts as are still extant, but this will lack in historical or traditional authority which plays a very important rôle in things appealing to the emotional life. While such an attempt is a great desideratum in many ways and is really one of the objects of the Eastern Buddhist Society, probably the easiest and at the same time an efficient method of propagating Buddhism as well as that of stimulating its study will be con-

verting the Chinese translation into readable Japanese. That the publication of such works finds good public support shows where the tide of thought is tending at present in this country. That a certain class of literature shows an inclination to take its subject-matters from the rich mine of Buddhist lore, also testifies to the fact above referred to. Byakuren's *Anglimala*, Kurada's *Shinran Shōnin and his Disciples*, Naka's *Devadatta*, Takaji's *The Blood of the Larger Amitayur Sutra*, and others, treat the subjects from quite a modern point of view while retaining the spirit of Buddhism. We know that the lives of such personages as Nichiren, Honen, and Shinran have been dramatically treated and staged. But the treatment was conventional and there was almost nothing appealing to the modern critics. Things are however growing different now. Buddhism is being supplied with new blood by these young writers.

Owing to the removal of the editorial office, the editors have not been able to publish the present number in time. But as they get settled gradually in the new quarter the work will proceed regularly.