

NOTES

DR Rabindra Tagore paid his second visit to Japan on his way home from China early this summer. The Buddhists greeted him enthusiastically as before, as a most representative man of India, which is the country of the Buddha, the founder of the religion professed by most Japanese. He delivered a lecture at the Public Hall, Kyoto, to the largest audience that has ever assembled under this roof. He talked on the modern abuse of the sciences which ought to be servile to the spiritual welfare of humanity and not to be utilised for exploitation. He said, among other things, that truth is to be embraced reverentially and in an humble spirit, and therefore that when its missionaries come among a strange people they ought to be full of humility. They cannot claim the monopoly of the truth, they are just as mortal and liable to sin as the people among whom they come. Therefore, it is a great mistake on their part if they ever betray the slightest sign of a sense of superiority and assume an air of pride and self-importance towards others. When they do this, they at once break off from the truth they imagine they have comprehended. This is exactly the position we take with regard to all forms of truth and its propagators. As to the abuse of science we see so many harrowing instances of it all about us. We often wonder if the sciences are really helping to enhance our spiritual enlightenment instead of teaching us how effectively to murder, how rapaciously to exploit, and how mercilessly to crush individuals as well as nations. As long as our hearts are not cleansed of impurities, anything and everything they touch will necessarily be contaminated.

Dr Lewis Hodous, of the Kennedy School of Missions, Hartford, Connecticut, U. S. A., who was a long resident in China

as missionary, has a new book entitled *Buddhism and Buddhists in China*, which belongs to a series of books on the World's Living Religions, edited by Frank K. Saunders and Harlan P. Beach. In this book the author expresses some of his views concerning the "Christian approach to Buddhists." These views are deeply tinged with a spirit of tolerance and sympathy and the editors of this magazine are highly impressed by them, especially as coming from a Christian missionary in the Far East. We say this because some of the missionaries are sometimes unnecessarily prejudiced against Buddhism which they think is a temple of Satan. Such ignorance betrays, on the part of the Christian missionaries, nothing but an utter inability to comprehend their own religion. Professor Hodous refers to a Chinese Christian leader who "longed for the mystic silence and the beauty of holiness which would open [the windows of the world of spiritual reality and throw its light upon the problems of life," and suggests that the esthetic element in Christianity may well be emphasised in the future as never before in the missionary activities in China. The author also proposes to give a place to contemplation and meditation in the Christian Church of China, and writes as follows: "Christian Church of China should develop a technique of the spiritual life suited to the East. The formation of habits of devotion should be emphasised. Intercessory prayer should be given a larger place. Contemplation and meditation should be regarded not merely as an escape from the turmoil and strife of the world, but as a preparation for the highest life of service and sacrifice. Buddhist mysticism united the whole universe and was the great foundation of Chinese art, literature and morality. The spiritual world of Christianity must likewise seep through into the very thought of Asia and inspire the new art, literature and morality which will be the world expression of a Christian universe." Christianity so far laid an unusual stress on its moral, doctrinal, and social aspects. But as the East is more idealistic than the West where modern Christianity has been matured, the people

here want to see Christianity not in its too-earthly garb but in its inner mystical raiment. For instance, when Christ says about not thinking of the morrow or about the lilies of the field which neither toil nor spin, he sounds the depths of the Oriental mind. Christianity as depicted and demonstrated by its representatives in the East as well as in the West savours too much of modern materialism.

In this respect Professor Pratt of Williams College is quite right when he speaks in his lecture on "The Nature of Christianity" in the Peking Union Medical College, to the following effect: "Christianity is not a collection of Anglo-Saxon conventions. This assertion again is of course a platitude, yet it too needs stating. Not that any one would explicitly deny it. But there is a large number of persons who regard 'Christian civilisation' as including among other essential things certain methods of dressing, of eating, of talking, of building, and the rest. Of course we should be told, these things are not so important as theology: yet there is a sneaking feeling that no land can be called fully Christian until it does things in the way they are done in 'God's own country.'" This is preëminently true with some of the Christian agents in the Far East. They often fail, in spite of their open declarations, to distinguish what is merely accidental from the essential in their religion and life. When Gandhi was accused of his non-cooperation movement which might result in narrow cultural and intellectual nationalism, he exclaimed: "I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the culture of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any of them. Mine is not a religion of the prison-house. It has room for the least among God's creation. But it is proof against insolent pride of race, religion, or colour." The East has its own life and ideals which it wants to develop according to its own inner necessities and does not wish to see them replaced by those

of Western or "Christian" civilisation. We have no wish to be exclusive or ego-centered but are far from being satisfied with an artificial grafting of alien ways of thinking and living. When we have adopted them it would be when they were thoroughly assimilated by ourselves so that no alien air any longer clings to them.

According to the report of Dr Taiken Kimura, professor of Indian philosophy at the Tokyo Imperial University, who recently came back from China after attending what the Chinese Buddhists termed a World's Buddhists' Conference, Chinese Buddhism is evidently moving towards a revival after so many years of quiescence. While this must be no doubt just an initial step, it seems to promise much, especially when we are told that the principal actors in it are householders and not the priestcraft. Their interest in the study of Buddhist faith and philosophy is quite genuine and full of enthusiasm. They are not yet acquainted with the modern spirit of criticism, being contented with the traditions of Buddhist scholarship, so says Professor Kimura; but this does not prevent their being the vanguard of a Buddhist renaissance in China. We wish to see the real spirit of the Buddha revived among our friendly neighbours, their scholarship is not an essential question. In olden days there were many Chinese Buddhists who came over to Japan to found Zen monasteries here, and there were at the same time many Japanese monks who went to China to learn of whatever they got directly from the Indian missionaries and scholars. Buddhism was thus transplanted in Japan after China had it assimilated in her own ways of thinking and feeling. This was natural and good. Zen cultivated in us a simple unaffected temperament with which to comprehend nature and life, while the Jodo awakened in us a deep religious sentiment to look beyond the present unsatisfying world. Zen and Jodo are the two forms of Buddhism that have really entered the inner life of the Far Eastern peoples, Japanese and Chinese.

Whatever other aspects of Buddhism may affect us with various degrees of potency and success, it is through Zen and Jodo that we can come in intimate touch with the inner experience of the Buddha. The Chinese Buddhists have expressed their desire to have another Buddhists' Conference in Japan next year, and the Japanese Buddhist Federation we are told has the idea under consideration. We are sure that this kind of intercourse between China and Japan will no doubt pave the way to better understanding and closer friendship in matters spiritual. After all, China and Japan are one racially and culturally, and their sincere and unprejudiced cooperation is needed in every way to establish a new Eastern centre of spiritual force against the encroachment of commercial militarism and mechanical civilisation.

A Buddhist nun, early in October this year, set fire to a fine old Zen temple in the centre of Kyoto and reduced it to ashes within an hour. Her motive is variously interpreted, and some are inclined to regard her as too idealistically disposed. There is no doubt about her being somewhat mentally unbalanced, due to her past unhappy experiences with life, which grew very much aggravated by recent ones. But it is suspected if she did not find a sort of justification, though quite superficially, in some well-known historical incidents in the lives of the old Zen masters. We know Tanka's bold work of consigning the Buddha's wooden images into the flames and an old lady's burning a hut where she used to shelter a Zen monk. In those ancient days Zen devotees seem to have been so absolutely absorbed in the freest demonstrations of what they understood of Zen, paying no attention whatever to the loss of material property, the desecration of things considered holy, and even the destruction of life. They were all above such trivial incidents of existence. Their ideals were of the highest order, and they were justified in doing what they thought the most legitimate thing at the moment from the Zen point of view. While the

recent case of incendiary is of course far from being classed under the same category as these, there is something in her idea as well as in the present status of Buddhist life which makes us think twice before we can judge her unconditionally. Can we really throw a stone at her without turning that stone into a boomerang upon ourselves? Before the whole edifice of an institution called Buddhism now so heavily covered with old dead material, may burn down one of these fine mornings as the Zen temple did this time, we must pause and reflect within ourselves what to do with it.

Professor Nishu Utsuki's English translation of the *Smaller Sukhāvati-vyūha Sūtra* from Kumarajiva's Chinese version is published by the Nishi-Hongwanji Press. The sutra is commonly known in Japan and China as the *Amidakyo* (阿彌陀經, *a-mi-tō-ching*), and is one of the three principal sutras constituting the foundation of the Shinshu faith. It describes the Pure Land of Amitābha, where, the Buddha promises, all the aspirants will finally attain to the highest realisation of truth known as "anuttara-samyak-sambodhi." The one condition in which rebirth in the Pure Land is assured is the invocation of the name of Amitābha Buddha; for no amount of merits or virtues achieved by oneself will be available for the purpose. The English translation has notes and collations at the end of the book, explaining the proper names, technical terms, and other terms. The print is clear and neat.

Mr Albert J. Edmunds' recent *simhanada* as resounds in "A Dialogue of Two Saviors" profoundly touches the spirit of one who looks upon the world from the unsectarian point of view. The Dialogue was carried on in "a Hall of Silence in the other world," where, singularly enough, there exist as in this world time and space-relations; it took place in August, 1922. Perhaps the two saviours were too concerned with our earthly human affairs so that they, like good Bodhisattvas, re-

fused to enter into Parinirvana and really to enjoy the silence of the Pure Land. The saviors are also learned and versed very well in all modern and ancient lore, especially on mystical and spiritualistic subjects, and correct the various wrong readings and later alterations in the bibles. Mr Edmunds is visible in the words and personalities of Christ and Buddha. In spite of their scholarly attainments their hearts are bursting with love for their fellow-creatures. While Buddha acknowledges that Christ's wisdom "wrought a truth of personality," Christ concedes to Buddha "the intellectual strength of his Dharma." Finally, against the defiant declaration of Demiurge:

"Build on, poor fools,
Build in the universe that eye sees not,
Build there, but never here, where life is mine:"

they agree to issue this joint proclamation:

"Get thee behind us, Demiurge accurst,
Master of fragments, king of floating isles.
Thou madest will to wither Intellect.
To dwarf and stultify the larger man,
To curb, to shrivel reservoirs of truth.
Our empire is not thine; in thy seen worlds
Of birth and death, torture and wickedness,
We ne'er aspire to found a house for man.
Our missions are to call him upwards thence,
Teach him to know the nothingness of sense,
Build him a City o'er the sunset bars,
Find him a home beyond the farthest stars."

The Mahayanists may say however that these "seen worlds of birth and death" are worlds of Nirvana and Bodhi; the chasm between the two lies in one's own subjective Ignorance; get it enlightened and there most vividly opens up a course upwards to "a City."