

After a photograph by C. B. Waite

ENTRANCE AND FACADE, RUINS OF MITLA

The Buddhist Discovery of America

A THOUSAND YEARS BEFORE COLUMBUS

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IN a comfortable building on one of the more quiet and retired streets of the city of San Francisco there have lately been established the headquarters of a Japanese Buddhist Mission to America. The object of this mission is not only to keep up the teaching and practice of Buddhism among the fast-increasing numbers of Japanese who have come to live in California, but it also embraces the more ambitious hope of spreading the knowledge of that cult among the people of America. A director and four priests, all having received a good English education in Japan, have been sent out by the wealthy members of the "Shin-shiu," or True Sect of Buddhists, and are already actively at work. About five hundred Japanese attend the regular services of this Oriental church, which are of course conducted in the Japanese language. The Young Men's Buddhist Association connected with it numbers over two hundred members.

Three branches are established at other cities of California. There is a separate service on Sundays in English, at which twenty or more Americans are generally present, of whom eleven have already been converted to Buddhism, and have openly professed that they take their refuge in Buddha, in his gospel and in his order. The church is called the Dharma-Sangha of Buddha.

There are various features connected with this mission that are of deep interest and importance. Perhaps the most extraordinary feature is its well-authenticated claim to be the successor and counterpart of an early Buddhist mission to America which existed in the fifth century, and which, like the present one, consisted of five Buddhist priests. It seems almost incredible that just at that notable period when the Dark Ages commenced in Europe, through the western influx of barbarian tribes, Buddhism, "The Light of Asia," was carried eastward across the

wide waters of the Pacific, and began to spread the first rays of its dawn upon the American continent. It is easy to see that this is a subject well worthy of most careful study and investigation, promising to fully repay the labor involved. It opens up new theories and explanations

to Mexico for the express purpose of examining the ruined temples and other antiquities of a Buddhist character which are to be found there. Other persons have spent much time in making investigations on this and similar lines. The result is that, link after link, a chain of evidence of the early arrival of Buddhist missionaries in America has already been found, which is sufficient to satisfy the judgment of all who are not wilfully sceptical.

The ease of making a trip from Asia to America along the Kurile and Aleutian islands to Alaska strikes one at the first glance. Starting from Kamtchatka, which was early known to the Chinese, and to a certain extent under their control, the voyage in an open boat or canoe, following the great thermal ocean current, could at most times of the year be undertaken without the least danger or difficulty, it being unnecessary to be more than a short time out of sight of land. From Alaska down the American coast the journey would be still easier. Such a trip, compared with some of the well-authenticated wanderings of Buddhist priests, especially of those who travelled overland between China and India, is a mere trifle. Each part of the journey from Asia to America would be as well known to the natives of the various chains of islands in the fifth century as it is now. Hence the zealous missionary, determined to fulfil the commands of Buddha and carry his gospel to all lands, would merely have to press on from one island to another. The natives of each island would tell him of the large continent farther east; and thus he would ultimately find himself in America.

The direct evidence of this early Buddhist mission, though chiefly based on Chinese historical documents, covers also the traditions, histories, religious beliefs, and antiquities to be found in America, extending all the way down the Pacific coast from Alaska to Mexico, as well as to many localities lying at a considerable distance inland.

From early times the Chinese classics, as well as the historical, geographical, and poetical works, allude to a country or continent at a great distance to the east of China, under the name of Fusang or Fusu. Its approximate distance is given



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ELEPHANT-FACED GOD; EVIDENTLY AN AZTEC IMITATION OF THE INDIAN IMAGE OF GANESHA

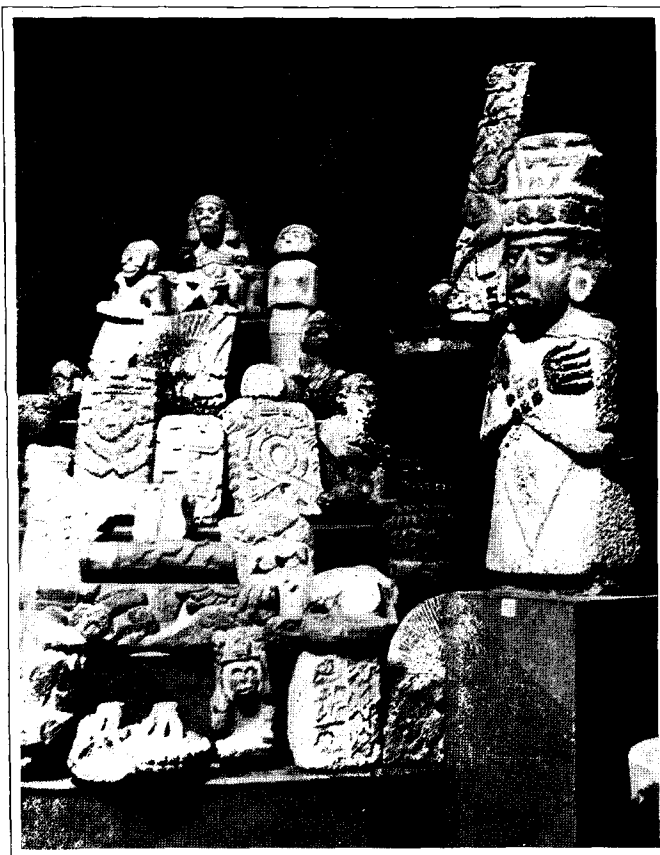
as to the origin of the various religions and civilizations which the Spaniards found among the native tribes and kingdoms in the sixteenth century.

The former director of the mission at San Francisco, the Rev. Dr. Shuye Sonoda, before leaving California last year to study in Germany, made a visit

as twenty thousand *li*, or above six thousand five hundred miles. Its breadth is stated to be ten thousand *li*, or about three thousand two hundred and fifty miles. A wide sea is said to lie beyond it, which would seem like a reference to the Atlantic Ocean. It grew a wonderful kind of tree called the "fusang," from which the name of the continent is derived. The name would seem to imply that this is a species of mulberry, but every part of the description is utterly unlike any known species of that tree. What answers most nearly to the description is the Mexican *agave* or *maguey*. In ancient poetry the name of this land is used

as a synonym for the extreme East, and many fabulous or fantastic accounts are given of its marvels. No doubt during the many catastrophes that overtook Chinese literature, whatever knowledge existed of this distant land became distorted, vague, and even contradictory. Yet enough was known with certainty to fire the enthusiasm of any itinerant Buddhist priest who wanted to spread his religion to the utmost bounds of the world. He would know of those who had gone to preach the Buddhist faith in the extreme West, and would naturally ask why he should not go to the extreme East.

The narrative of only one visit to the land of Fusang is on record in Chinese history, namely, that of Hui Shen, a native of Cophène, or Cabul, which was the great centre of Buddhist missionary exertions in early times. Since this ac-



After a photograph by C. B. Waite

FIGURES OF BUDDHIST IMAGES NOW IN THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF MEXICO

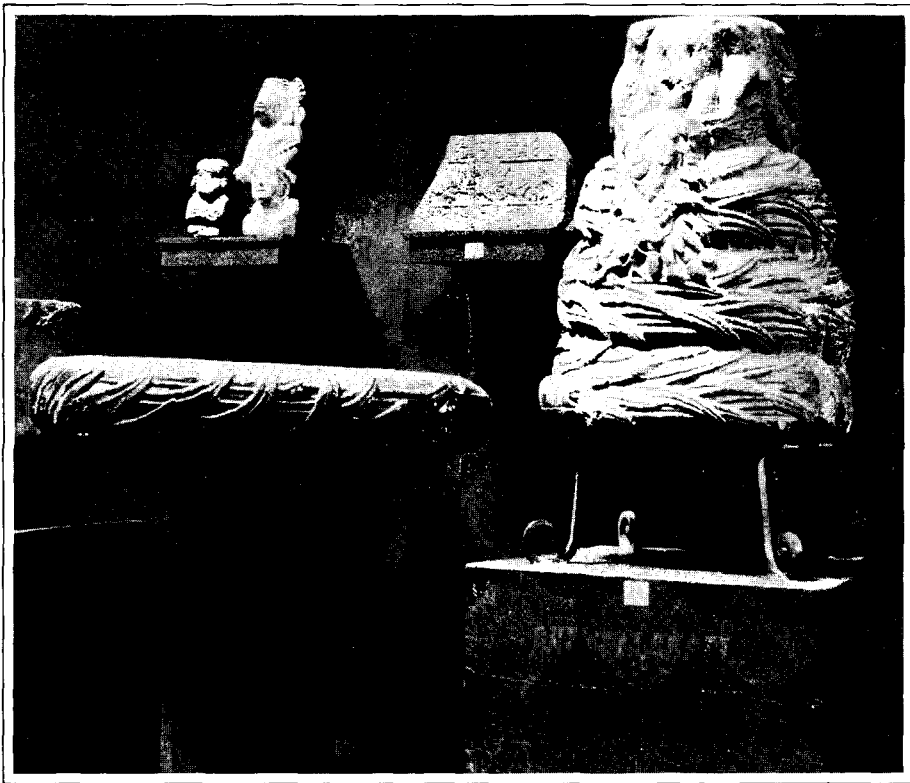
count was considered of sufficient importance to deserve a place in the imperial archives of the Liang dynasty, and is handed down with the full authority of the great Chinese historian Ma Tuan-Lin, there should be no doubt as to its authenticity. Any attempt at fraud or misrepresentation would have been easily detected at the time, or before very long, and would have been of no advantage to the narrator, who certainly had nothing to gain but everything to lose by deception. His short story contains nothing marvellous or unnatural, and the internal evidence of truthfulness is such that only a foreign critic would ever suppose it might be a figment of the imagination.

The narrative states that there was a Buddhist priest named Hui Shen, originally a native of Cabul, who in the year 499 A.D., during the reign of the em-

peror Yung Yuan, came from the country of Fusang to King-chow, the capital of the dynasty of Tsi, situated on the river Yang-tse. The country being in a state of revolution, it was not till the year 502 that he had an opportunity of going to the court of the emperor Wu Ti, of the new Liang dynasty. He gave presents to the emperor of curious articles brought from Fusang, among which was a material looking like silk, but the threads of which could support a great weight without breaking. This was evidently the fibre of the Mexican agave. He also presented a mirror of a foot in diameter, possessing wonderful properties, and resembling those in use in Mexico and other localities in America at that time. The emperor treated him as an envoy from Fusang, and deputed one of the four principal feudal lords, named Yu Kie, to interrogate him respecting the country, and to take down his story in

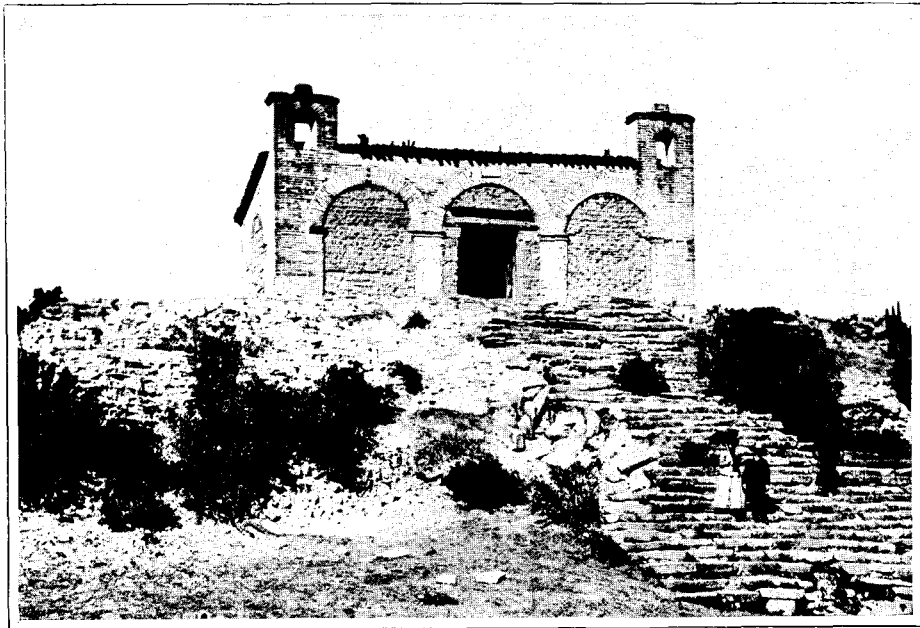
writing. This was accordingly done, and we have what is undoubtedly the original text, with only perhaps here and there a typographical error which can be easily explained.

Among other things, Hui Shen said that the people of Fusang were formerly in ignorance of the doctrines of Buddha, but during the reign of the Chinese emperor Ta Ming, of the Sung dynasty, or A.D. 458, there were five bikshus, or Buddhist monks, from Cabul, who travelled there and promulgated the knowledge of the doctrines, books, and images of Buddhism. Their labors were successful, so that they ordained monks from among the natives; and thus the customs and manners of the people were soon reformed. He gave particulars of the journey through the Aleutian Islands, and Alaska, with the length of the route, and a description of the inhabitants. He described the country of Fusang as



After a photograph by C. B. Waite

ASTRONOMICAL IMAGE REPRESENTING THE DRAGON WHICH CAUSES ECLIPSES BY SWALLOWING THE SUN. FOUND IN THE TEMPLE AT UXMAL



After a photograph by C. B. Waite

RUINS OF PYRAMID AND TEMPLE AT MITLA

twenty thousand *li*, or six thousand five hundred miles, to the east of Kamtchatka, and also due east from China. It grows great numbers of fusang-trees, which when they first appear aboveground are like bamboo shoots, and the people eat them. Threads are spun from the skin of the plant, which are woven into cloth from which clothing is made, or else it is made into embroidery. They also use the fibrous material of the fusang for making paper. These and many other features seem to point unmistakably to the Mexican agave. Red pears are mentioned which agree in description with the fruit of the prickly-pear, while grapes are represented as plentiful. There is plenty of copper, but no iron; and no money value is put on gold or silver. Their markets are free, and there are no fixed prices.

The manners and customs of the people, their forms of government, their marriage and funeral ceremonies, their food and clothing, the method of constructing their houses, the absence of soldiers and military weapons, cities and fortresses, are all particularly noted, and agree with what is found in no countries border-

ing on the Pacific, except on the continent of America in general, and in Mexico in particular. To suppose that Hui Shen could have invented all these statements, and that his story can be satisfactorily explained upon any other theory than that he had actually made the journey which he so truthfully and soberly describes, is to say the least of it absurd.

But it is time to take another view of the subject, and search for proofs of Hui Shen's visit among the early inhabitants of the American continent. There exists in Mexico a tradition of the visit of an extraordinary personage having a white complexion, and clothed in a long robe and mantle, who taught the people to abstain from evil and to live righteously, soberly, and peacefully. At last he met with severe persecutions, and his life being threatened, he suddenly disappeared, but left the imprint of his foot on a rock. A statue erected to his memory still stands upon a high rock at the village of Magdalena. He bore the name of *Wi-shi-pecocha*, which is probably a transliteration of Hui Shen *bik-shu*. Another foreign teacher is described

as coming with his followers to Mexico, named Quetzalcoatl. He landed on the Pacific coast, coming from the north by way of Panuco, and was most probably the leader of the party of five Buddhist priests that are already referred to. Hui Shen may have been one of the five, from the rest of whom he may afterwards have become separated, and then returned to China alone. The teachings ascribed to these visitors closely resemble those of Buddhism.

The religious customs and beliefs of the nations of Mexico, Yucatan, and Central America, their architecture, their calendar, their arts, and many other things which were found by the Spaniards when they conquered America, exhibit the most surprising coincidences with the details of Asiatic beliefs and Asiatic civilization. So much is this the case that those independent observers who have known nothing of the story of Hui Shen have been convinced that there must have been some kind of communication between America and Asia since the beginning of the Christian era. Thirty-five of these coincidences are given by Mr. Edward P. Vining, of San Francisco, in his exhaustive study of the subject, contained in his work entitled, *An In-glorious Columbus*. He says: "Almost any one of these coincidences might be fortuitous, but it seems impossible that so many coincidences could have existed unless the civilization of one continent was to some extent borrowed from the other." It may be added that the majority of these coincidences point most unmistakably to Buddhism, and if not actually introduced by Hui Shen and the party of Buddhist priests which he mentions, they must have been introduced in some similar way.

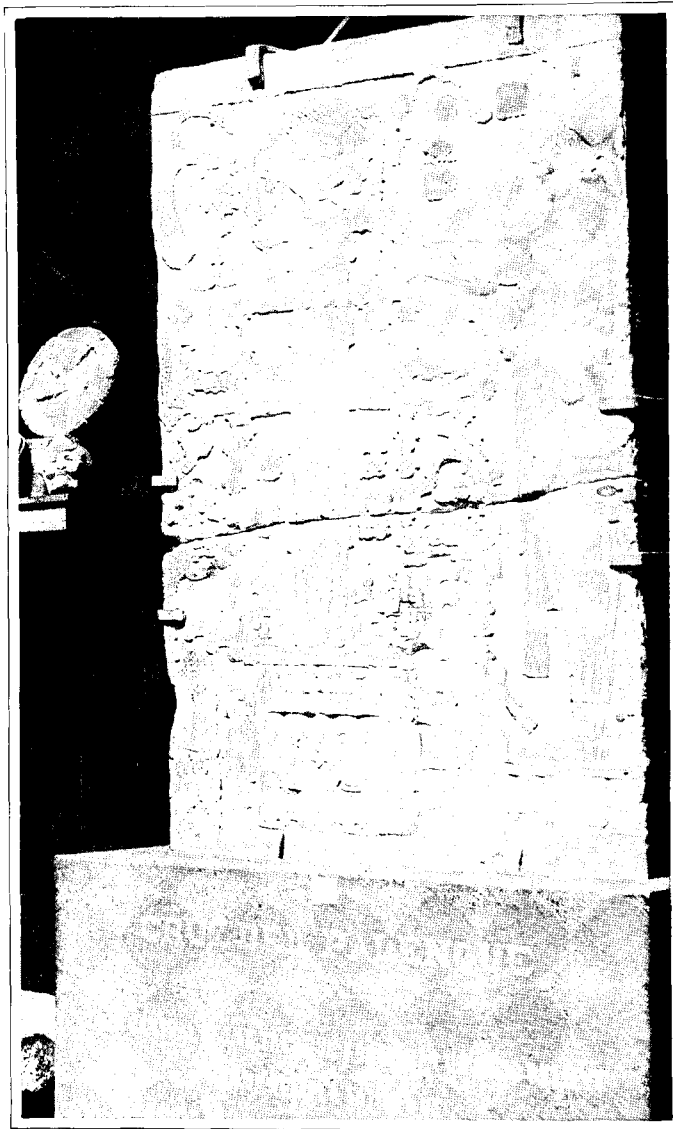
Searching for traces of Buddhist origin among the old names of persons, places, and things in America brings to light some curious facts. The name "Buddha" is not in general use in Asia, but instead is used his patronymic, "Gautama," or the name of his race, "Sakhya." Hence we may expect to find these names constantly recurring in America. In the places Guatemala, Huatamo, etc., in the high-priest Guatemotzin, etc., we find echoes of the first of these names. In Oaxaca, Zacatecas, Sacatepec, Zacat-

lan, Sacapulas, etc., we find more than a hint of the second. In fact, the high-priest of Mixteca had the title "Tay-sacca," or the man of Sacca. On an image representing Buddha at Palenque there is the name "Chaac-mol," which might have been derived from Sakhyamuni, the full rendering of one of Buddha's names. The Buddhist priests in Tibet and North China are called "lamas," and the Mexican priest is known as the "tlama." A deified priest or lama, who is said to have lived on a small island near the Colorado River, had the name of Quatu Sacca, which seems to combine the two names Gautama and Sakhya. No very great value, however, is due to any single case of these resemblances to Buddhist names, but there being so many makes it highly probable that they are not all accidental. Again, it is worthy of notice that if "fusang" was used by Hui Shen to represent the magney or agave plant, then as Mexico signifies "the place or region of the agave," it follows naturally that if Mexico was the country he visited, he would call it the country of the "fusang."

When we come to look for visible traces of Buddhism among the antiquities of Mexico, we are soon amply rewarded. Images and sculptured tablets, ornaments, temples, pyramids, etc., abound that cannot well be ascribed to any other source with the show of reason. Among these may be mentioned the following: A large image found in Campeachy representing accurately a Buddhist priest in his robes.—An image of Buddha at Palenque, sitting cross-legged on a seat formed of two lions placed back to back, closely representing images found in India and China.—An elaborate elephant-faced god (1) found among the Aztecs, which is evidently an imitation of the Indian image of Ganesha.—A Buddhist altar or table of stone found at Palenque.—Figures of Buddha sitting cross-legged with an aureola around his head, and placed in niches in the walls of the temples at Uxmal, Palenque, etc., being the exact counterparts of the images found in niches both inside and outside of Buddhist temples in China, Japan, and India.—A perfect elephant's head sculptured on the walls at Palenque, the

elephant being the usual symbol of Buddha in Asia, and no elephants being found in America.—An old Mexican image now in the Ethnographical Societies' museum at Paris, and depicting Buddha sitting in the usual cross-legged attitude, with an inscription on either side, one of the characters being evidently intended for the Chinese character for Buddha, but engraved by a sculptor who did not know the Chinese written language.—On the walls of the temple of Uxmal there are astronomical diagrams and images, representing among other things the dragon which causes eclipses by swallowing the sun—a thoroughly Chinese notion—but instead of scales it is covered with feathers (2), showing the idea that it can fly.—The enormous temples or palaces at Palenque and Mitla (3), (3a), (3b)

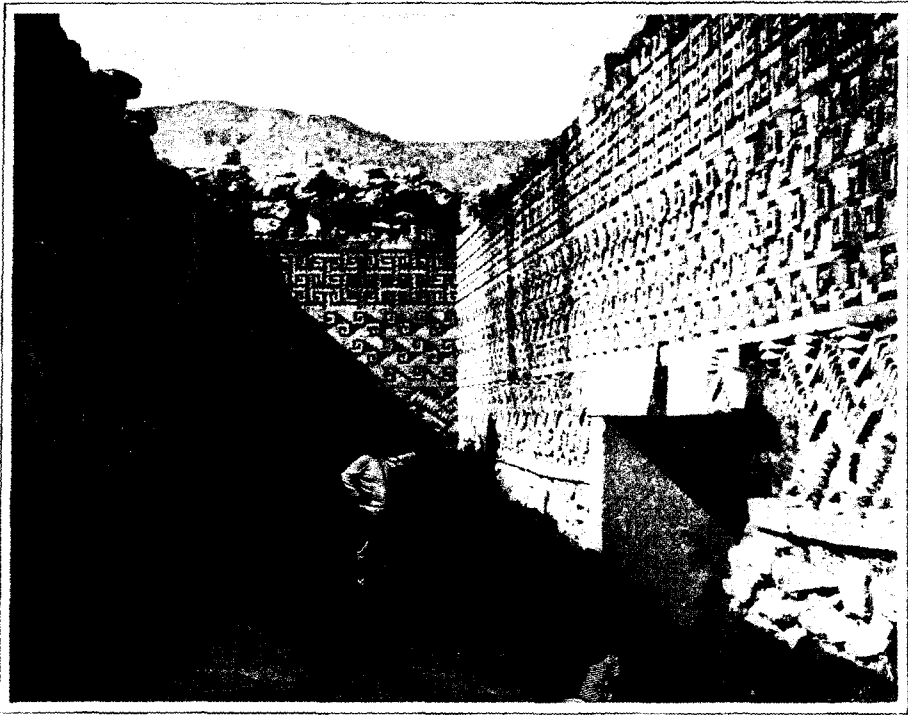
are almost the counterparts of Buddhist temples that are found in Asia, particularly in Java, North China, and Mongolia, the large pyramidal base and the mode of construction all seeming to point to Buddhist origin.—The ornaments in the walls of the temples in different parts of Mexico are similar in design to those of many buildings in China and India; particularly the pattern known as the "Greek fret" or "Greek key" pattern,



After a photograph by C. B. Waite

BUDDHIST CROSS, OR SYMBOL OF BUDDHA, CARVED ON A PILLAR
AT PALENQUE

which is found in an almost endless variety of diamond fret, labyrinth fret, meander fret, double fret—having the fillets interlacing at right angles—and others for which we have no names. These may be seen to advantage in pictures of the walls of the "Room of Mosaics," of Mitla (4), (5), at Uxmal, and elsewhere.—There is a Buddhist cross, or symbol of Buddha, carved on a pillar at Palenque (6).



After a photograph by C. B. Waite

ROOM OF MOSAICS IN A TEMPLE AT MITLA, ALMOST A COUNTERPART OF BUDDHIST TEMPLES FOUND IN JAVA, NORTH CHINA, AND MONGOLIA

It must be acknowledged that there are many difficulties and inconsistencies in Hui Shen's account of the introduction of Buddhism into Fusang, or America. These, however, are easily accounted for when it is remembered he was a native of Cabul, speaking Chinese imperfectly, while Yu Kie, who had never travelled, must have failed to understand some of his statements. The account was written before printing was in use, and hence in the copying many errors may have crept in. Furthermore, the Chinese characters are subject to changes, in the lapse of time, both in sound and meaning. Again, when the Spanish overran America they soon abolished all the features of the indigenous civilization, which they supplanted by their own. Hence proofs which may then have remained of the introduc-

tion of Buddhism in the fifth century may have been soon swept out of existence.

Above fourteen centuries have elapsed since Hui Shen and his colleagues pressed on from one unknown land to another to spread the light which they possessed. Their faith was strong enough to enable them to brave all toils and dangers. They accomplished their task, and the success they achieved may yet prove to have been much greater than is generally supposed. At any rate they have the honor of being the pioneers; and now they are followed by the members of the Japanese Buddhist Mission, who are working in San Francisco. Dr. Shuye Sonoda may be able to find many traces of his predecessors when he goes to preach among the Mexican Indian tribes, as he intends ere long to do.



The Fourth Gentleman

BY E. DUVALL

THE hotel lay peacefully somnolent in its post-dinner nap; it was the breathing-time of day with the proprietor, old Peter Shurick.

His father and grandfather before him were keepers of the old Villenoy Inn, known as the "Heron and Dove." When Peter, on the death of his father, took the inn, he built the hotel, scarcely more than a stone's-throw from the inn, and there lived and ended his days. The inn itself he used as an annex, and assigned to it the unmarried men.

It was against the shady side of this old inn, just clear of the fern-bed, that we four were sitting on that August afternoon: the Rector, a tall, ascetic man, mighty in the Fathers, but correspondingly weak in human nature; the Doctor, a celebrated member of that fine profession whose esoteric view it is that Providence would have done better to consult *it* in the making of man; old Peter; and myself.

Peter settled his chair at a more comfortable angle on its back legs, skilfully worked it along the wall into deeper shade, and said: "It's a mighty good thing we all haven't the same likings; for if we had, we shouldn't get the tenth of the good out of life—no, nor the knowledge either." He wriggled his chair still nearer to the Rector. "Now, say, if we all took to telescopes and star-gazing, where would be farming? or if all had a liking for doctoring, where would be preaching? No, sir; it's the diversities of men that give life its go and flavor."

The Rector looked at him wistfully; the Doctor put down his newspaper, and said, briskly, "What did you do with your young man?"

"Drove him to the 1.50 train," was the slow answer. "I gave him his choice between that and the summit, and he took the train."

"You made him go, then?" said the Rector, half reproachfully.

"Well, sir, I didn't exactly *make* him go, not just to say *make* him; but I put it to him that I wouldn't be responsible for his stayin'," said Peter, blandly.

The Doctor grinned, and the Rector sighed.

"There's a heap o' boys here this summer, little tags runnin' round loose, and maybe you don't know how takin' a swishy-swashy young man like that is to a boy. The little fellows hear his big talk, and think *him* big. But I know his breed—he was raised right over there in the town—knew his father and grandfather before him. They all had the loose-hung, swearing tongue, and he's inherited it. But I won't have it. It's one of the few things I won't put up with."

Peter hitched his chair along a little nearer, tilted his shoestring hat more comfortably back, adjusted his suspenders by several rapid shoulder-shakes, and swept us into a little convenient heap by a comprehensive look from under the bushy brows.

The old man seemed to be slowly gathering up his thoughts, and, after a short silence, said:

"There are things that run in families—like the color of hair and eyes, and cast of feature—which, any more than the outward likeness, we can't explain. All our family have, and have had, a horror of swearing; I had it naturally, and was brought up to have it. My grandfather's grandfather was a French silk-weaver, named Suricas, who, after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, came, by way of the Channel Islands, to England, and from thence here. He was an austere, silent man, not like the common idea of a Frenchman, and about all we know of him in the family is that he had a mortal dread of oaths. It's said that every generation of us has a queer experience. I don't know how that may be,—it's never come to me,—but my fa-