

THE GUIMET MUSEUM.

BY THEODORE STANTON.

THE Guimet Museum of Religions was founded at Lyons in 1879, by M. Emile Guimet, who, though a manufacturer and active business man, has long devoted his leisure hours and a large part of his ample fortune to the study of ancient religions. Ten years ago the valuable collections which M. Guimet had brought together were transferred to Paris and presented to the State. As early as 1882 M. Guimet had come to the conclusion that Lyons, essentially an industrial city, was not suited for the development of the museum. He felt that there it could not render all the service it was capable of rendering to the learned world. Its proper home, he held, was in a great capital like Paris, where it is now one of the most interesting objects to the tourist and to scholars from all parts of the globe.

At the start M. Guimet never imagined his collections were to become so important. For his own amusement and edification, he early began bringing together divinities, books, religious manuscripts, and sacred objects in general. Then he called to his aid natives of various countries whose duty it was to explain the meaning of these gods and their paraphernalia. Finally, the fame of his collections spread throughout France and foreign lands, till specialists and students began to correspond with M. Guimet or visit him, bringing or taking away information. So it gradually dawned on the founder of this museum that he had builded much better than he knew and that he had created something of universal interest and value. From that moment the Guimet Museum became an institution.

M. de Milloué, the scholarly director of the Guimet Museum, thus describes its object: "To propagate a knowledge of Oriental civilisations and to aid religious, artistic, and historic studies by

means of sacred images and books, objects of worship and art, found in its collections,—such is the aim of this foundation. But the history of religion, the primitive purpose of the museum, remains its principal object.” He further says: “As a museum of religions needs, above all, to be a collection of ideas, we have especially tried to present a rigorously methodical classification, which in itself is a clear demonstration. Taking each people separately, we have classed its religions according to the chronological order of their appearance and subdivided them into their different sects and schools whenever the exactness of our information rendered this possible. In each one of these subdivisions we have grouped the different representations of the same divinity so as to well bring out the modifications which time or the progress of ideas has occasioned either in his characteristic traits, his form and attitude or in his attributes and his mythical significance. Whenever possible, we have also displayed in our glass cases those objects associated with the divinity most remarkable for their rarity, antiquity, artistic perfection, or the material used in their construction.”

The museum building is situated in the Place d’Jéna, near the Trocadéro and the Seine, and is composed of four wings, three stories high, and a round central tower where is kept the library, which consists of some twenty-five thousand volumes. In two galleries on the ground floor is a collection of Chinese and Japanese ceramics brought together chiefly on account of their artistic and industrial value. A third gallery contains original monuments and casts from the ancient cities of Siam and the celebrated temples of Angkor, a ruined city near the frontiers of Cambodia.

On the floor above is a room filled with objects used in fire worship, a gallery divided into five rooms containing objects relating to the religions of Cambodia, Birma, Siam, Annam, Tonquin, Siberia, and the popular religions of the Chinese province of Fuh Kien. Six more rooms on this floor are given up to the religions and history of Japan and two more to Japanese art.

On the next floor are to be found four rooms devoted to the religion of ancient Egypt; others where are exhibited Japanese pictures and engravings and antiquities of Italy and Greece; six more where are monuments of archaic Greece, Assyria, Babylonia, Phœnicia, and Cappadocia; specimens of the Mussulman arts of Occidental and Central Asia and a very important series of Corean objects.

Though the great mass of the objects of the Museum came

from the generous hands of M. Guimet, the list of other donors who are continually enriching the collections is long and contains many distinguished names. I note among them Count d'Attanous, M. Gorges Clemenceau, ex-Deputy; Haky-Bey, Baron Huc, Major General Littleton Annesley, Count de Montefiore, Prince Hespère Outomsky, Admiral Marquis de Han, Governor of Formosa, and Baron Textor de Ravisy.

The Museum catalogue is drawn up with remarkable skill, and is full of instructive information. Instead of a dry list with number and name of the objects exposed, its pages are replete with valuable artistic, historical, ethnological, and religious notes, which add a new and fuller meaning to the objects with which you are brought face to face. M. de Milloué is to be congratulated on his conception of what a catalogue should be and on the successful way in which he has given form to his conception.

A number of important publications are issued, under the auspices of the Museum, by M. Ernest Leroux, 28 rue Bonaparte, Paris. One collection is known under the general title of "Annales du Musée Guimet." More than a score of volumes have appeared, covering the whole subject of religious history, idol worship and various archæological questions pertaining thereto. All of these works are costly, the price of some being as high as sixty and seventy-five francs per volume. This expensiveness is occasioned by the illustrations and maps, some of which are of very rich design. Many well-known scholars, as Max Müller, for instance, are the authors of the best of this splendid collection.

A cheaper and more popular series of works on similar subjects is issued by the same publisher, likewise under the direction of the Guimet Museum. Here we find Amélineau's essay on the Egyptian monks, Milloué's history of the Indian religions, Sayce's history of the Hittites, rendered into French by M. Menant of the Institute, and several other like books which are put at the low price of three francs and a half per volume.

Nor must I overlook another publication of the Museum,—M. Jean Réville's semi-quarterly, *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*, with contributions from such distinguished scholars and publicists as Maspero, Darmesteter, Albert Réville, Gaston Boissier, Whitney, Goblet d'Alviella, Bonet-Maury, de Pressensé, Sabatier, etc.

But the interest of M. Guimet's creation is not limited to its collections, its library, and its periodicals. A few weeks ago, for instance, a Buddhist lama from Thibet, the first to come to Europe, conducted at the Museum a service according to the religious

rites of the Gelugpa sect founded in the fourteenth century. In the library room, which, some years ago, served as a temple to some Chinese bonzes, was raised a rich altar, surrounded by the various utensils necessary for the ceremony, and seated on a sort of throne was the lama Agouan Dordji, advisor and preceptor of the Grand Dalai Lama of Lhasa, who performed the service before a goodly number of the faithful. A Mongol of Transbaikalia, named Buddha Rabdanof, translated into Russian the priest's words, while another interpreter put them into French. The whole affair was peculiarly interesting in many ways and threw an entirely new and living light on the nature and scope of the Guimet Museum. "There is nothing dead about this place," was the commonplace but true remark of a visitor that day.

Any account of the Museum would be imperfect if no mention were made of the exploring expeditions which M. Guimet is continually sending out for the purpose of collecting new materials for the Paris galleries and cases. Thus, for the past two years, he has been directing the excavations on the site of the Roman city of Antinoë, between Memphis and Thebes, in Egypt. It was hoped—and the hope has been fulfilled—that the labors on this spot would furnish fuller information concerning a period of ancient Egypt still but imperfectly understood,—that on which the Isiac and Roman worship was united in one of those hybrid religions so common under the Roman Empire. M. Alexandre Gayet, who superintended the work, has succeeded in finding in the necropolis of Antinoë a large mass of objects which furnish much new information concerning the religion, art, and customs, of the lower and middle classes of Egypt from the third to the seventh centuries of our era. Although this collection is, I believe, eventually to find its way to a Lyons museum, it is now on view at the Guimet Museum here.

But the good that can be said of M. Émile Guimet does not end with his benefactions to these valuable collections which bear his name. He offers a shining example in these troublesome days of labor discords, of what a wise capitalist can do to unite in friendly activity employer and employee. In fact, to this amicable co-operation is due the Guimet Museum; for without the fortune gained as an active and successful business man, M. Guimet would never have had the leisure nor the funds necessary for the creation of his great collections.

On July 20, 1895, was celebrated at Neuville-sur-Saône, a little manufacturing town near Lyons, the centennial anniver-

sary of the birth of Guimet's father and his own nomination as officer of the Legion of Honor. Around the banquet table were gathered all the workmen of the Guimet Chemical Works. But the interest I find in this ceremony does not centre so much in the honors which the French Government then conferred on M. Émile Guimet, as in the things said of him by his own em-



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ployees. One of these, the spokesman of the Fleurien-sur-Saône works, remarked that "for three-quarters of a century, that is, since the foundation of this business, perfect concord has reigned in our midst. This fact is more eloquent than any words. An Egyptian proverb says that you must mistrust the Nile, for, the legend runs, once having drunk of its waters, you can drink nothing else and you forget your country. Our relations with you,"

continued this intelligent workman, turning towards M. Guimet, "have had this same captivating effect on us. As soon as one enters your employ, he never wishes to quit it. So in these degenerate times, when it is the custom to renounce God and master, I do not hesitate to pray the gods to accord our offspring a master like you."

But this marked affection of these workingmen and working women for the head of the business is not limited to M. Guimet,—it extends, on the contrary, to the whole family, to father and grandson also. Thus, another speaker said: "When your son shall begin under your guidance to take up the work of his father and grandfather, he will have simply to follow the dictates of his own kind heart and his ardent wish to be like you, the beloved head to whom young and old confide their troubles and joys sure that they will be heard and aided."

While, therefore, the name of Guimet will be handed down to posterity associated with a famous Paris museum, will be found entered in all the guide books in many languages for years to come and will be on the lips of scholars the world over for generations yet unborn, for quite other reasons this same name will be remembered and blessed in the humble cottages along the valley of the Rhone far into the coming century; and I feel sure that if M. Guimet were told that he must choose between these two classes of homage, he would not hesitate a moment in his choice.