

When Japan Shut Herself From The World

When the three Portuguese adventurers, under the guidance of their Chinese-junk captain—without any credentials, and all of doubtful antecedents—first made their appearance, driven by stress of weather, rather than their own good will, to an unknown coast, it proved to be that part of Japan owning the sovereignty of the Prince of Bungo; and we find the Japanese, though vigilant, manifested no reluctance to admit the strangers. They showed them much kindness even, and no obstacle was interposed to a free trade with the inhabitants, in the interchange of such commodities as they had with them. The natives and strangers were ultimately so well pleased with each other that, by an arrangement with the Prince of Bungo, a Portuguese ship was to be sent annually, laden with *woolen cloths, furs, silks, taffetas*, and other commodities needed by the Japanese. This was the commencement of European intercourse and trade, carrying us back to 1542-5.

A few years later, *Hansiro*, a Japanese noble, fled his country for 'an act of homicide' (having run some fellow-subject through the body, no doubt), and took refuge in Goa. There he was converted and baptized.

This proved the second link in the chain; for, being enterprising and shrewd, and animated probably with the hot zeal of a new convert, he soon persuaded the merchants of Goa, nothing else we may imagine, that they might establish a profitable trade with Japan, while to the Jesuit fathers he promised a rich harvest of souls. He obviously preached to willing ears in both directions, and foremost among his listeners was the Jesuit apostle of the East, Francis Xavier, who had recently arrived.

A ship was forthwith loaded with goods and presents wherewith to commence a permanent trade. For the accomplishment of spiritual objects, Francis Xavier himself embarked with the Japanese refugee, and a number of his order as missionaries. A goodly freight—Jesuit fathers,

to win souls—merchants to make money; merchandise for the people and their carnal wants—presents to propitiate the authorities—all were duly provided; and thus auspiciously began this second chapter.

On arriving at Bungo they were received with open arms, and not the slightest opposition was made to the introduction of either trade or religion. No system of exclusion then existed; and such was the spirit of toleration, that the Government made no objection to the open preaching of Christianity. Indeed, the Portuguese were freely permitted to go where they pleased in the empire, and to travel from one end of it to the

The accompanying article is an excerpt from that book now very rare, *The Capital of the Tycoon*, by Britain's first representative to Japan, Sir Rutherford Alcock, the editor's copy being a Harper edition of 1863. The article shows how and why Japan was closed to commerce and communication with the outside world for two centuries, save for the Dutch trading post of Desima, in Nagasaki harbor, where the Dutch lead lives of prisoners and their trade steadily declined. Now, of course, as ever since the international treaties were effected, Japan once again tolerates all religions; there may be 200,000 or 300,000 disciples of the Christian faith in Japan, including eminent men and women, but new creeds affect but little the deep philosophical bent of the country. Next month we shall have Alcock's vivid description of the plight of the Dutch at Desima, and in February his account of the manner in which Japan received the Perry treaties. This pre-Meiji period is a most instructive one.—Ed.

other. 'The people freely bought the goods of the traders, and listened to the teachings of the missionaries.'

And a little later we find it said that 'if the feudal princes were ever at any time ready to quarrel with the merchant, it was because he would not come to their ports.' Passing onward a few years, we find the Christianity of the Jesuit fathers spreading rapidly and universally; princes and rulers, nobles and plebeians, women and children, of all ranks and in large numbers, embraced the faith. Churches, Hospitals, Convents, and Schools, were scattered over the country. Inter-marriages between the Portuguese and wealthy Japanese were frequent. So little had Christianity to fear from the disposition of the governing powers, or the temper of the people, that the only opposition they encountered in these early years of promise and fruitful labor came from the Bonzes or native priesthood; and they seem to have been powerless. For we read that, feeling their religion and influence discredited by the rapid adoption of a rival and hostile creed, they appealed to the emperor 'to banish the Jesuit and Romish monks'; and it is related 'that, annoyed by their importunities, he asked them how many different religions there were in Japan.' They answered 'thirty-five.' 'Well,' said the emperor, 'when thirty-five religions can be tolerated, we can easily bear with thirty-six: leave the strangers in peace.'

After forty years, the Roman Catholic faith was in such high esteem, and had such undisputed possession of the field (no Protestant element having at that time appeared on the scene), that a Japanese embassy, composed of three princes, was sent to Rome to Pope Gregory XIII., with letters and valuable presents. Their reception at Rome was not only magnificent, but their whole progress through Spain and Italy was one continuous ovation. A nation of thirty millions of civilized and intelligent people had been won from the heathen! Great indeed was the joy and triumph; and this was the culminating point of the Church's success.

In that same hour, while the artillery of St.



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Angelo, answered by the guns of the Vatican, was thundering a welcome to the Japanese ambassadors, an edict had gone forth from the King—sama, or over-king of Japan, ordering all Catholic missionaries within a month, on pain of death; and ordering all the crosses to be thrown down, and all the churches to be razed to the ground.

When the Jesuit Superior, Père Valignani, returned with the ambassadors, after an absence of eight years (so long had it taken to exchange amenities across distant seas and foreign lands in those days), he found this edict in force, and partially carried out. By the Emperor, the great protector of the Jesuits, was dead, his successor ill disposed. All their Christian communities, schools, and hospitals had been suppressed, and the missionaries dispersed, expelled, or forced into civil confinement. A few more striking examples of the instability of human affairs; and it must have been a cruel blow to Valignani, as the Superior of the Order, so long happy and successful in all his efforts.

We enter on the third and last phase of this eventful history. The first edict for the banishment of the missionaries was published in June, 1587. All that follows is but a narrative of partially interrupted persecutions, the decay of trade, increasing restrictions, and at last the expulsion of all, amid scenes of martyrdom and sweeping destruction. In the year 1635, the Portuguese were shut up in Decima, and only allowed to trade there, and in the years following their Dutch rivals, and the Jesuits, and their decisions of their Dutch rivalry.

A year or two later, the fall of the last Christian strong-hold, Simabara, battered in breach by the Dutch artillery, under Kockebeeck, marked the final catastrophe, and the end of all relations but the miserable ones allowed to the Dutch factory, which an avenging Nemesis transferred to the prison bounds of their ruined rivals in Decima. Since that date until recent times were signed to Japan, and no one dared to leave his island home, nor foreigners to land. All who had been cast on shore, or made the attempt, had either been killed or imprisoned. Great must be the power wielded by the rulers of this strange country, and the centuries, to succeed in preventing the departure of a single Japanese subject! Yet such appears to be the fact, though before this edict they were surprising sailors, and, if we may believe the records of the period, not only with the Indian archipelago, but even extended their voyages as far as South America. Thus briefly we have the whole history of European interference (for the few attempts made by the British and French to take part were feeble and interrupted to be worthy of much note), and two questions press themselves on the attention of all who read. Whence the seemingly sudden and violent change in the Japanese mind? And, was it sudden in reality, or of slow and insidious growth—which only came suddenly upon Europeans, because they blinded themselves to the signs of change and indications of danger, otherwise it might fairly be discerned, had any one looked with clear and intelligent eye?

The accounts of the period are full of details of feuds between the different monastic orders; the pride, avarice, and ambition of the priests; the overreaching and insatiable cupidity of the Portuguese and Spanish merchants, which latter charges are not even limited to the laymen. But, admitting all these causes to have been in operation, and taking the influence which belongs to them, it is impossible to doubt that other and more profound causes of distrust and dissatisfaction chiefly moved them, in laying the foundation of his usurped empire, to irreconcilable enmity directed more especially, if not altogether and exclusively, against the *Padres* of every order, and their converts. One cause of such enmity lies, indeed, on the surface.

The great success of the Jesuits and missionaries of various monastic orders had been based, in part at least, on the shifting sands of political favor and influence with the feudatory princes in their several territories; a turbulent race, as was the same class in the days of the early French and English kings; not always at peace with each other, and often in league against their Suzerain. One of the most obvious conditions

of strength to the latter was the abasement and weakening of the nobles. Taiko-sama, in order to strengthen and render hereditary his sovereign power, necessarily therefore set himself to this task, and Louis XIV., and later, Richelieu and Louis XIV., in France.

Whatever was identified with the Feudal chiefs could not fail to share the fate of an order doomed to destruction or humiliation. While the Jesuit Superior sought to be recognized as objects of his mission by favor of princes and court influence, and, for a time, reaped great fruit therefrom, these same Feudatory princes were, in the end, forced to sign advance their own interests, and uphold their cause against an ambitious and successful general, who had seized the quasi sceptre. That both the princes and their protégés, the missionaries, were to be involved in a conspiracy of the nature of things to be expected, and indeed inevitable. If one feudatory prince protected Christianity, it was equally open to his successor or rival to attack and persecute it. The spiritual guide who had put his trust in Princes and the Sword, found all the aid of man impotent to save when the hour of trial and persecution came. They had built upon an insecure foundation, and the edifice was overthrown, and by the same was their ruin effected.

But beneath all this lay other causes, wider and more penetrating, as well as more permanent in their influence. Another and far more fatal element of destruction had been slowly but surely weaving the way for this catastrophe from the beginning—undermining the very ground upon which the whole spiritual edifice was built, whether Jesuit or Augustinian, Dominican or Spanish or Portuguese, fashioned the walls.

The determining cause of the downfall and utter destruction of the Roman Church in Japan is to be sought in the pretension to a spiritual authority, which is based on the monopoly of power, since all that is political or secular must bow to God's viceregent on earth, who claims the right to bind and to loosen, to absolve subjects of their oath and fealty, and dethrone kings by his edicts of infraction to supremacy and papal infallibility—to a power as unlimited as it is irresponsible—has been woven into the very texture and fabric of the Roman Rite, and has long been considered inseparable from it.

The Japanese rulers, who during nearly fifty years successively never relaxed in their policy to extirpate out of the land all trace of the missionaries and their teaching, and were deterred by no difficulties, no sacrifice of life or commercial advantages, and never stopped until their object was finally accomplished, clearly saw that between them and such teachers there could be neither peace nor trust. They themselves were necessarily antagonistic and mutually destructive. The Siogun must veil his power to the higher pretensions of the Pope and the priests, and if from his hands, he could be dispossessed at their pleasure, or be engaged in interminable conflict, all the more dangerous that spiritual weapons could be brought to bear, as well as the arm of flesh, by his adversaries of the cowl and rosary. To such a man of no ordinary gifts apparently, who first engaged in a war to the death, and issued the edict of extermination, must indeed have been something more than dull not to have his doubts raised and his worst conclusions confirmed by the tenor of the letters to the Pope, given by the three Feudal princes to their ambassadors.

Hear how they run. Thus writes the Prince of Bungo:

"To him who ought to be adored and who holds the place of the King of Heaven, the great and very holy Pope; and, in the body of the letter, he continues in the same strain: 'Your holiness, who holds the place of God on earth.' The King of Arima addressed himself 'to the very great and holy lord whom I adore, because he holds on earth the place of God himself.'

The Prince of Omara goes, if possible, farther: 'With hands raised toward heaven, and sentiments of profound admiration, I adore the very holy Pope, who holds the place of God on earth.'

With what feelings must Taiko-sama have spelled over these acts of homage to an alien sovereign by three of the leading feudatory

princes of the empire, when the death of Nobunanza in 1582, the sovereign friend of the missionaries, threw the reins of power into his hands? There is an absurd story told of the Siogun, who first being roused by the indiscreet answer of a Spaniard, who, on being asked how his master had managed to possess himself of half the world, replied: 'He commenced by sending priests, who win over the people; and when all was done, his troops are dispatched to join the Christian, and the conquest is easy and complete.' I say it is absurd, because, in the first place, the account of the process then in vogue is much too near the truth to have been openly told by one of the chief agents; and, next, it was too palpably calculated to lead to the expulsion of the narrator and all his race. Nor was any such plain-spoken traveler and writer, who Taiko-sama must have blind not to have seen whither the Church of Rome was tending, and how irreconcilable were its pretensions and his own.

Another law than that of the Japanese empire had been introduced, and other Rulers and administrators than those nominated by either Mikado or Siogun (the titular and the effective rulers of Japan) were in full exercise of their functions. The faithful Japanese subjects, once become converts, fealty and implicit obedience to the Church's commands—an obedience which might at any time be turned against the authority and rule of the territorial Sovereign. There was nothing very far-fetched in the conclusion, or monstrous in the assumption that such was the tendency of the Church policy. That same sovereign of Spain, whose dominions, Taiko-sama heard, had been extended over half the world, and who had actually moved the Pope to issue a Bull to dethrone the Queen of England in favor of another pretender to the crown, to raise up conspirators among her subjects, and release them from all oaths or ties of allegiance.

This and no other cause, it is impossible to doubt, led to the final expulsion of every European, the extermination of every Christian convert, and the closing of every port for two centuries. The annihilation of commerce and material interests was merely a necessary consequence of the close connection that had subsisted between the professors of religion and the traders, taken in connection with their common nationality.

OH, BOLONY!

O some aspire

To homes up higher

Among the angels,

With starry crown

To sit them down

And chant evangels—

Now I would not go far

From my heaven!

But tramp a continent

Or swim a lake

For the kind of good bolony like our

butcher used to make.

For riches some

Would give a tome

'Neath desert bow

With a girl friend,

They count the end

Of gain enow—

Now I would not go far

For money's sake,

But swim the continent

Or swim a lake

For the kind of good bolony like our

butcher used to make.

Among the shops

Within the chops

They have some, yes,

But not the kind

That we need!

And yours, I guess—

I surely 'd not go far

For such a fake,

Nor tramp a continent

Nor swim

Ab, there ain't no good bolony like our

butcher used to make!