

The Voice of the Christ-Child.

BY MRS. M. C. PRATT.

It is told,—in a quiet village,

After the waning light

H. I. said it, with lingering blessing,
In the sombre wrappings of night;And children were cozily nestled
In the midst of blessing and love,
While the white wings of peace lay softly
As sheltering hands from above;When out of the peace and silence
Lo! a pitiful wail wandered by—
A child's voice startled the shadows
With a questioning, pleading cry.It pierced through the window-casing
Till each mother-heart stood still:
"What if my child were wandering
In the darkness dreary and chill!"But as each for the other waited,
To see who would answer that tone,
The voice went out in the distance,—
The echo of footsteps was gone.The story is: Into that village
The Christ-child had wandered; it said
That he found no place of shelter,
And not where to lay his head.Out from the gathered shadows,
From the streets and byways of sin,
I can hear a sad voice calling,
"Is there no one to let me in?"In my heart's deep chamber it echoes,
That lonely, pitiful moan—
As I hold my dear ones, sheltered
So safe in the love they have known.But not as some fabled legend,
With mythical meaning and lore,
With glamour of romance and rhythm,
Is this story repeated o'er;But clear as God's truth and sunlight
Is the message he sends to-day:
"Your children are safely sheltered,
And mine are wandering away."Shall we give to our own so largely,
Or hold with such jealous care,
That we have no gift for the stranger,
No room for the wanderer?O mothers, whose lips seem purer
Because of the kisses that fell
From the sweet mouths of babes that left
Such blessings you only can tell!For the sake of the Giver and Helper,
For the sake of the mothers who sleep
Where the shadows of ignorance gather
And Christ's "little ones" wander and weep,—Oh! give, without stint, without measure;
Give your prayers,—on faith's wings let them go;
Give your gold, give your costliest treasure;
Give your dear ones, if God will it so.

Japan, the Sunrise Kingdom.

THE story of Japan, from a missionary point of view, is exceedingly fascinating. The name itself suggests beauty and promise. "Zipangn," the original, means "Root of day," and recalls the appropriate and encouraging Bible text, "So shall they fear the name of the Lord from the West, and his glory from the rising of the sun."

Japanese history covers a period of more than two thousand years. Their earliest literature was written A.D. 720, and prose and poetry existed even before this date.

Christianity was first introduced by François Xavier, a Roman Catholic missionary. But Romanism, true to her traditional policy, began intriguing against the government of the country. Persecution followed—which lasted twenty years—

ending with the slaughter of many thousand converts, who preferred death to renunciation of the new faith. This closed Japan to Christian efforts for more than two hundred years.

In 1853, Commodore Perry, a descendent of the Pilgrim Fathers, sailed into Yeddo. One Sunday morning he opened his Bible, and read the One Hundredth Psalm. There is every reason to believe that earnest prayer followed for the redemption of this beautiful land from the thralldom of heathenism.

The first Protestant missionaries entered Japan in 1859. They began teaching in Government schools, and translating the Bible. In 1872, some Japanese students, who had studied in the private classes of these missionaries, joined in the English prayer-meetings at Yokohama, where parts of God's Word were read and explained. The mighty Spirit of God took hold of these students, and they became workers together with God for the salvation of Japan.

The population is variously estimated at between 30,000,000 and 38,000,000. During the past four years, many remarkable changes have taken place in Japan. They have what General Grant pronounced to be, the very best system of education he had met in his circuit round the globe. It provides for eight universities, thirty-two high-schools, two hundred and fifty-six grammar-schools, and fifty-five thousand primary-schools. Christian teachers, native and foreign, are employed in these schools, at salaries equal to those in our own country, though we understand they are not permitted to teach religion in school hours.

Tokyo has a medical college, with eight German professors, and several hundred students.

The Japanese have a regular mail system, and post-office savings-banks, and the deposits last year amounted to \$12,500,000. Before the arrival of Perry they had no papers; now they have a public press and five hundred periodicals. They have also steamboat, telegraph, and telephone—all made by natives. Universal religious toleration prevails. The ancient religions are discarded, and the government acknowledges itself without a religion. What an opportunity for Christian effort!

We gratefully record a most encouraging fact, namely, the Christian Sabbath is legally recognized as a day of rest by government offices, banks, and public-schools. This year, 1890, witnesses the establishment of the new constitution—the first native example of it in Asia.

With such a record, it is not surprising that Japan presented to the Christian Church a most promising field for evangelization, and hence almost every church in Christendom—to their honour be it said—has its missionary operations there. So far as we can read, all accounts agree in reporting success and encouragement.

Considering these facts, in conjunction with the subject as one of prayer for the month, may we not also pray that, upon these workers of all denominations, may come the spirit of unity, that to the heathen mind there may be presented a Christian church, with front unbroken by slight differences of non-essentials; a united church, strong in the essentials of New Testament teaching in which all agree. Would not this be less confusing to the heathen? Would it not economize means and workers, and greatly hasten the "coming of Christ's kingdom in the earth?"

In 1873, our Church planted their first mission in this interesting field, sending out the Revs. Drs. Cochran and McDonald, who were reinforced in 1875 by Drs. Meacham and Eby. All of these are still at work in their several departments, assisted by an efficient staff of native workers.

The Knight and the Dragon.

BY PHILIP BURROUGHS STRONG.

IN the town of Barcelona,
In that storied land of Spain,
Stands a statue, tall and stately,
Of a knight untimely slain
In the very hour he triumphed
(So the olden legends tell)
O'er a feared and famous dragon—
You shall hear now it befell.

As the monster lay before him
With its life-stream gushing out
(Poison was that tide), the warrior
Waved his sword with boastful shout;
Praised himself, forgetting wholly
God, through whom he thus had won;
Cried, "Well done, right arm, so mighty!
Sword of mine, well done! well done!"

From a bloody blade uplifted
Fell a drop of deadly gore,
In a wound found fatal lodgment,
Sank the knight to rise no more.
So the victor soon was vanquished,
Stricken by his fallen foe;
Scarcely conscious of his conquest
Ere defeated and brought low.

Ah, my brother, younger, older,
Warring with thyself and sin,
Vaunt not when, by grace enabled,
Thou some victory dost win;
Ne'er—triumphant o'er temptation—
Do we deem ourselves to be
In ourselves alone sufficient,
But we fall full speedily.

The Valley of the Nile.

BETWEEN Philæ and Cairo, in Egypt, runs the beautiful and fertile Valley of the Nile—a narrow strip of land, rarely more than ten miles wide, and sometimes much narrower. This little river-belt of rich land is sheltered from the burning winds and sands of the desert by two ramparts of mountains, or high hills. The stream is shadowed first by one, then by the other, of these protecting walls. Both chains of hills are utterly barren. Not even the friendly grass, which creeps up between pavements, and grows under all sorts of difficulties in so many countries, is to be seen on these rocky steeps. And beyond them lies the desert.

Between these yellowish-brown walls lies the green plain on each bank of the river, the flat surface varied by beautiful clumps of feathery palms and acacias, with other and smaller trees. Innumerable channels are dug across the plain. Great birds stand in the water, or float on its surface—serious-looking pelicans and cranes, beautiful white herons, and ducks; and to the banks come the poor tired camels for the drink which is to last them so many days as they cross the hot desert.

What makes this beautiful valley so green and fertile is the annual rising of the waters of the great river. This begins with wonderful regularity, about the end of June. Between the 20th and 30th of September, the river rises twenty-four feet at Cairo, and falls as much by the middle of May. In falling, it leaves behind it a coating of rich mud, very thin, but sufficient, without the use of any other fertilizer, to prepare the ground for the sowing of the seed. The sowing is done while the mud is still very wet, and no ploughing goes before it; but, after the seed is scattered, it is trodden in by pigs and goats.

The beautiful date palm-trees provide, besides their fruit, beams for building, twigs and branches for basket-weaving; leaves, which make mats, brooms, and baskets; and flints and ropes are made of the strong, cloth-like skin which wraps the young branches.

The clay from the Nile Valley is made into bricks, sometimes with a mixture of chopped straw—sometimes without; and these bricks are dried in the sun.—Selected.