

his word. Like a brave general he will take up his own position where the enemy is strongest. He is standing near the pulpit, and those about him are the principal Christians whom he has led to the scene of action. A little aloof, and mingling with the worshippers of the idol, are the three or four hundred who have accompanied him hither; most of them men, but some women and children, ready, they say, to die with him, or to die for him; eager to give glory to their own God, and to make manifest that, as for all the gods of the heathen, they are but idols, the work of men's hands.

Now there is a flourish of trumpets: one of the princes, the son of Taycosama, takes his seat under the canopy of cloth and gold; the Bonze, a venerable looking old man of seventy, in his rich robes as a doctor of his religion, ascends the pulpit: a great silence falls on the crowd: the standard, which has been hitherto only half-mast high, is run up to the top of the pole: six cannon prepared near this knoll are fired at once, and all round the crater, at the given signal, the crowd fall down and do homage to Daybut. Now you may count the Christians. Like the army of Israel in olden time, they seem indeed a little flock of kids, while the Syrians fill the country. One or two of the fainter hearts among them had proposed that,—not to give (as they said, and as weak people always will say) unnecessary offence—at the moment when the multitude fell down and worshipped Daybut, they also should kneel and adore the God of Heaven. But Father Froes was firm. 'If I stand up alone,' he said, 'among the whole assembly, I will not bow my knee, when I may be thought to bow it to an idol. On this fashion it had been easy for the three Holy Children to deliver themselves from the burning fiery furnace. And though I read of Naaman, that for a while he had leave to bow down himself in the house of Rimmon, I know of the same Naaman that, after a brief space, he disdained to use that license, and so died a martyr to the God of Israel.'

But we must listen to what the Bonze is saying. He is magnifying the power of Daybut, he is showing the mercy and bounty of that god towards his clients, more especially at the hour of their death. He goes on, almost in the words of Holy Scripture, (for the Japanese religion is perhaps the masterpiece of Satan) to show how he will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth: and then he dilates on the history of the crater below him, and the impenetrable fence with which it is walled about. 'You know,' such are his words, 'that from the beginning of time, no mortal feet have ever dared to cross this most holy place; that to the end of time none will ever be sacrilegious enough to risk the venture. You know that, according to our law, if any man will attempt it, free licence

must he have, that he must not be let nor hindered in any way; that either our god will strike him dead before he reaches the fountain of fire, or, if the fatal time of the earth shall have come, he will be the occasion of its return to chaos, and will be tormented with torments beyond all imagination, for ever and ever. Just indeed is our god, and wonderful are his works! He might have commanded us to hinder any miserable wretch from that sacrilegious attempt. But he chose rather to leave the way open, to the end that the greatness of his own power might be made manifest. You know, furthermore,—we all know,—it is to our shame and confusion that I speak, that not so many years ago, the Law of the Portuguese was first preached in this land. You know how that, instead of adoring the true and immortal gods, they worship One Whom they affirm to have been crucified hundreds of years ago. Whereupon it pleased former emperors of their great clemency to crucify many of them. But this pestilential sect still increasing, it seemed good to our great and glorious Taycosama, whom the gods long preserve! rather to turn them over to that contempt and ridicule which they merit, than to expose them either to the fire or to frozen tanks, or to wild bulls, as hath in times past been done. But observe this: of all those hundreds of Christians who profess that the power of our gods is as nothing, not one has ever dared, often as they have been challenged, to descend into his volcano. For they know that however they may ridicule our worship with their lips, they believe it in their hearts. Yes,' he continued, perceiving that Father Froes was anxious to address him, 'I know what their teacher would say: that he himself or any of the Portuguese are ready to make the attempt. But this I have told them, and I tell you, that the law laid down for our own country applies not to strangers. They have free leave to go down into the crater: if they do, their punishment is reserved for the other world. But I challenge now, as I have heretofore challenged, any Japanese who calls himself by the name of *Chrisu*, to descend into the volcano if he dare. We shall not oppose him; and if he believes that in his heart which he professes with his lips, now is the time to overthrow our superstition,—superstition forsooth!—and to prove that the power is in the hand of his God, and not of ours.'

He ended, and great terror fell on all the multitude.—Father Froes turns round and speaks to a young man that is standing close behind him. The conversation grows more and more animated. Shall I tell you what it is about?

The truth is that the Bonze had advanced nothing beyond the very fact. The Christians had been unwilling to descend into the enchanted ground. They spoke of the certainty