

THE CHURCH IN JAPAN.

In the February number of the Cosmopolitan there is an article entitled "The Early Days of Christian Missions in Japan," which is from the pen of Adachi Kinnohiki, a non-Christian Japanese. The account he gives of the splendid results of the labors of St. Francis Xavier and his successors in the work of Christianizing Japan is extremely interesting. Here is the pen picture he draws of the great Apostle of the Indies:

"In the sundown days of the Ashi Kaga shogunate, a few years past the middle of the sixteenth century, a few years before the dawn of perhaps the most remarkable period of our history, there walked the streets of Kyoto a singular and striking shadow. Slender and alien in figure, feature and raiment, his complexion seemed to have known the tropical sun, and the eyes which lighted it were bright with the luster of religious exaltation, almost fever. He was a Jesuit priest; his name was Francis Xavier; the laurels of his missionary work in India were still fresh. The Jesuit statesman-missionary had read the glowing pages of Marco Polo, who dreamed, while a guest at the court of the khan, of the lands of the gods which lay off the coast of China. And there he was, this Jesuit missionary, in the capital city of the Land of Gold paved with gems, of the Venetian's rosy pages."

The "slender and alien figure" was that of one who was destined to accomplish great things. We are told by the Japanese author of the Cosmopolitan article that "five years after Francis Xavier had walked through the silent and gray streets of Kyoto there rose round about the capital seven churches dedicated to the worship of the Christian God." A contemporary Japanese historian is quoted as comparing the progress of the Jesuit missions to the rapidity of a fire "sweeping over the ripened fields of rice with the rapidity of a hurricane."

That this description of the rapidity of the spread of Christianity was not overdrawn was shown by the number of Catholic Churches that were in Japan in 1583, fourteen years after St. Francis Xavier landed in Japan. In that year there were two hundred churches dedicated to the worship of God. We quote from the Cosmopolitan article: "In 1583 there was sent by the daimo of Kyushu an embassy to Rome. It was then that a native historian entered this simple record: 'The converts to Christianity number two million souls.'"

The seventeenth century had just entered upon its teens when a persecution broke out against the missionaries and their converts who suffered all sorts of tortures. We have a touching picture of a Japanese lady preferring death rather than trample on the cross. Here is how it is drawn by one of her countrymen in the twentieth century:

Her eyes, which faced the officer of the shogun, were frank; they seemed to look straight through the officer to something beyond. And the officer spoke to her and told her the decree of the shogun, explained to her that there were only two ways before her. If she would live, then she must step upon the crucifix with her foot and renounce this strange faith. The only other path led straight to a cross planted in a heap of pine logs, ready for the torch.

"Then she made answer with her soft voice, with her eyes dreaming into the far away:

"All the possessions of earth, the castle of my lord, this life of the humble one, the house in which the humble one is permitted to dwell and the raiment in which she is clothed, are at the command of my sovereign liege the shogun. But that which is within the humble one and which passes not away with the things of earth, belongs not to the shogun. There is only one prince to whom my soul bows; he is dearer to me than life, even much dearer to me than this child I have in my arms. Step upon the holy cross, the emblem of the saving grace which speaks of the sufferings of our Savior, through whom alone we may be saved—that is impossible."

"She was led to the cross. When her baby was torn rudely from her arms, there was only a nervous twitching of the muscles; she did not resist. Only her eyes closed, her face uplifted slowly to where she, in her inner eyes, saw her divine master. A drop or two of tears upon her pallid cheek told that she, too, was human—that was all."

This reads like a page taken from the history of the persecution of the

early Christians in the time of Nero. Unlike the Roman persecutors, the Japanese in the seventeenth century succeeded in virtually eradicating Christianity. When Catholic missionaries again landed in Japan in the nineteenth century they found here and there some descendants of the Japanese Catholics of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries who had held fast to the faith.—N. Y. Freeman's Journal.

ONE OF MEXICO'S CATHOLIC PRIESTS.

Down in Mexico, one day last month, there was a distribution of premiums at Father Hunt's Home for Working Boys. Oh, yes, gentle reader, there is a Home for Working Boys in that city which some of our brethren of the Protestant sects tell us is so benighted, so priest-ridden, so utterly God-forsaken. And it is presided over by a Catholic priest whose name in full is the Rev. Augustin M. Hunt Cortes, but who is usually called Father Hunt. In Mexico everybody—save possibly certain American missionaries who are blind and deaf to everything good in that land—knows of Father Hunt and his labor for poor working boys, newsboys, peddlers, etc. Father Hunt founded his Working Boys' Home in 1896, under the auspices of President and Mme. Diaz, who have continued his true and powerful friends, taking a great interest in this practical form of philanthropy. In this school Father Hunt trains the boys, his "future presidents," as he fondly calls them, for useful careers. He has had not only Mexican lads, but Americans, Spaniards, French and Cuban pupils, and even a young Japanese, who was brought directly from Tokio to the Home. The latter, a bright little lad from ancient Nippon, is now again in Japan and keeps up an interesting correspondence with his benefactor in Mexico.

Now, this Catholic priest who has devoted himself to this splendid charitable work is interesting in other ways. Despite his Spanish-sounding name, Father Hunt is an American, born in 1840, in New Orleans, his father being Thomas K. Hunt, a native of Ireland, and his mother Dona Isabel de Cortes of Seville, Spain. The bloods of two Catholic races the Irish and the Andalusian are mingled in his veins. Yet he was not always a Catholic. It was not until 1892 that he became a Catholic, and sometime later, a priest.

Father Hunt has had a most adventurous life both in this country and in Mexico. Always a student, he has been for years a recognized authority perhaps the highest in the world, on the language and history of the Mexican Indians, a people by whom Father Hunt so beloved, and with whom he has spent so many years that he is known as the "White Indian."

He is withal a priest—one of Mexico's Catholic clergy—one of those men so cruelly belied and blackguarded by people who call themselves Christian, but who are like the Parisee of old who was blinded by his own self-righteousness.—Sacred Heart Review.

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