

SOME DOMINICAN MARTYRS.

At a moment when the attention of the civilized world is centered on the struggle going on in the Far East, between Russia and Japan, it seems fitting to recall that the latter country was closely connected in the past with the Order of Preachers.

The Japanese mission is, at present, in the care of the priests of the "Missions étrangères," a congregation of missionaries whose seminary is in Paris, but in the seventeenth century it was a glorious and often blood-stained battle-field, where Jesuits and Augustinians, Franciscans and Dominicans, labored and died, side by side, with equal heroism.

There are, in the whole history of the Catholic Church, few pages more inspiring than those where are related the sufferings of the Japanese Christians and their pastors; and in these glorious records the children of St. Dominic are worthily represented. Seventeen religious of the Order, twelve of whom were priests and five lay-brothers; twenty-two tertiary, men and women, and sixty-four members of the Confraternity of the Rosary, were beatified by Pope Pius IX, on July 7, 1867, together with ninety-five other martyrs, priests, religious of different Orders, and laymen.

The mission of Japan was really founded by St. Francis Xavier, although, according to certain traditions, the Christian faith seems, when and by whom it is difficult to say, to have penetrated into the country before the sixteenth century. However, only vague and shadowy traces remained of these unknown pioneers of Christianity, but St. Francis Xavier's mission was extraordinarily successful. In the short space of two years and two months, he established Christian settlements in the petty kingdoms of Bungo, Coxogonia, Firando and Amanguchi; among his converts were many nobles and statesmen, besides thousands of the lower classes, and the subsequent history of the Catholic Church in Japan sufficiently proves on what solid basis was built the work that seemed to have been accomplished in an incredibly short time.

As our readers know, the Empire of Japan is made up of a large number of islands; when the missionaries first landed on its shores, it was divided into sixty-six small states, governed by rulers who bore the title of King. These local potentates possessed a certain independence but they were the vassals of an Emperor whose power was gradually increased by the absorption of many of the smaller states. His influence over his tributaries was considerable, and the Emperors, being generally inclined to suspect and persecute the Christians, the unwise sovereigns followed their lead, often against their better instincts.

The religion of the Japanese was idolatry, and their bonzes, or priests, enjoyed considerable influence. The character of the people seems to be, in many ways, attractive. Pere Charlevoix, whose "History of Christianity in Japan," is a standard work on the subject, praises the intelligence, energy and dauntless courage of the natives. They professed the utmost contempt for death and suffering; nowhere were tortures of more refined barbarity invented to force the Christians to apostasy; nowhere, also, did men, women and even little children meet death with more joyful enthusiasm.

One of the last acts of St. Francis Xavier was to send a body of Jesuit missionaries to Japan, and so rapidly did Christianity increase that, in 1578, not thirty years after the visit of St. Francis, a large church was opened at Meaco, followed in quick succession by a college, a university, a novitiate and a seminary. In 1582, the Christian princes of Japan sent an embassy to the Pope, and their envoys, two of whom were of royal birth, were received with due honor, first by Gregory XIII., then by Sixtus V.

This flourishing state of things could not last forever; it is against all the received traditions of the Catholic Church that the establishment of the true faith should take place without exciting the opposition of the powers of evil, and for the last nineteen years the blood of martyrs has been the cement that, throughout the world, makes the foundations of every new-born Church strong and secure.

The Emperor, Taico-Sama, who, by annexing a large number of the minor states, had considerably increased his power, was at heart an athe-

ist and looked upon the bonzes and their empty forms of religion with contempt. From motives of policy he strove at first to conciliate the Christians, but his toleration quickly turned into hatred whenever Christianity interfered with his despotic authority or opposed his evil passions.

Thus the rash speech of a Spanish sailor, who represented the missionaries as political emissaries sent to Japan by the sovereigns of Europe, was, in great measure, the cause of the persecution during which six Franciscans, three Japanese Jesuits, and seventeen laymen gained the martyr's crown, on February 5, 1597. These glorious confessors—among whom were tiny children whose baby voices sang the "Laudate pueri" with an enthusiasm above their years—were beatified in 1627 and canonized in 1862. A full then took place in the persecution. Taico-Sama died in 1598, leaving an infant son under the guardianship of a tributary prince, Daifusama, who, ere long, usurped the imperial dignity. The missionaries, taking advantage of the comparative peace and freedom that they then enjoyed, were indefatigable in their efforts to spread the faith; in the space of one year, 1604, 5500 natives were baptized, and there were, at that period, throughout the country 750,000 Christians.

The sons of St. Dominic had, by this time, taken their place in this noble band of workers. In 1602, five religious of the Order sailed from the Philippine Islands and landed in Japan. They were under the direction of a future martyr, Father Francis Morales, who had the title of Vicar Provincial. The King of Satsuma, in whose dominions they landed, seemed favorably impressed by their holy lives, and, although he was evidently held back by fear of displeasing the native priests, he ended by allowing them to build a chapel in the little island of Kosigi.

From thence some of the Fathers carried the Faith into the neighboring states, and in 1609, one of them—Joseph of St. Hyacinth—built in the imperial city of Meaco, a chapel dedicated to Our Lady of the Rosary; but another persecution, far more violent than the first, was close at hand. Its severity was such that the once flourishing Church of Japan was literally drowned in blood, and, to all appearances, the Christian religion that had taken so firm a hold of the people, was stamped out of the country.

In 1612, an English Protestant captain, named William Adams, who enjoyed the confidence of the Emperor Daifusama, prompted by his hatred for Catholic priests and by his national animosity towards Spain, persuaded the sovereign that the Spanish and Portuguese religious were sent to Japan to prepare the way for the fleets of their respective navies. The result of these mischievous insinuations was speedily felt; an edict was issued ordering the missionaries to be expelled and their churches destroyed; as for the native Christians, they were to be given their choice between death and apostasy. Daifusama did not long survive this measure; he died in 1615, leaving his throne and his persecuting spirit to his son Xogun. Many causes combined just then to render the position of the Japanese Christians and their teachers extremely precarious; hitherto, the commerce between Portugal and Japan had been a source of considerable profit to the latter country, and the Emperor feared that any excess of cruelty towards the priests, many of whom were Portuguese, might irritate their sovereign; but under the reign of Daifusama the merchants of England and Holland came to Japan, and by rendering the country independent of the Portuguese, in a commercial point of view, they deprived the missionaries of the moral support that had hitherto been their safeguard in a certain measure. Moreover, these English and Dutch traders were, as a rule, fanatical heretics whose influence over the Emperor was most detrimental to Catholic interests.

Many of the minor potentates were sincerely attached to the missionaries—some of them were Christians at heart—but the Emperor's example proved stronger than their convictions and, from policy or fear, they often lent their support to the persecutors of the Church.

The Japanese Christians met persecution and death with extraordinary courage. They were not merely

resigned to suffer and to die; their enthusiasm was unbounded; even little children shouted with joy when they heard the fatal sentence! Their pastors encouraged them in the path of self-sacrifice by their example even more than by their teaching, and it is touching to notice how Jesuits, Dominicans, Franciscans and Augustinians vied with one another in heroic deeds!

Among the first victims of the persecution, the Order of Preachers has a worthy representative in Blessed Alphonso Navarrette, who stands at the head of the two hundred confessors, beatified by Pius IX in 1867. He was by birth a Spaniard; in 1598, at the age of twenty-seven, he was sent to the Philippine Islands and, in 1611, at his earnest desire, he was allowed to join his brethren in Japan.

During six years he labored day and night in the service of his beloved converts; one of his favorite occupations was to rescue the deserted children, who, according to the barbarous customs of the country, were laid on the roadside by their parents when the latter were poor, or unwilling to support their offspring. Father Navarrette, the "St. Vincent de Paul of Japan," was filled with compassion for these poor little waifs and strays; he spent much time and care in seeking for them and in providing for their moral and material welfare. After baptizing them, he generally gave them in charge of some Christian family where they were kindly and religiously brought up.

Only a few hours before his martyrdom, he wrote to beg his brethren to continue the work; the last earthly thought of the servant of God was for the little creatures, so many of whom owed their lives and their salvation to his charity.

When the Emperor Xogun began to persecute the Christians, Father Navarrette expressed his wish to hasten to Omura, where unusually severe measures had been taken against the faithful. A Jesuit, Father Tavora, and a Franciscan, Father Peter of the Assumption, had just been put to death, and our hero felt an irresistible longing to fill their vacant places and to comfort, by his presence, the stricken Christians. Before yielding to this generous impulse he prayed long and earnestly to know God's will, and, at last, with his superior's permission he started for the post of danger. An Augustinian, Ferdinand of St. Joseph, and a Japanese interpreter, named Paul, accompanied him, being fully aware of the risk they ran.

The three left Nagasaki in May, 1617; at the last moment a Japanese, named Gregory, in whose house Father Navarrette was living, insisted upon being of the party; after four days' journey the missionaries arrived at Nangoia, a small port, where they were to embark for Omura. The Christians of the place surrounded the priests, both of whom wore their religious habit, and insisted on receiving the Sacraments at their hands. It was evening and the missionaries were busy employed in hearing confessions, when a party of soldiers landed and informed them that they were to be immediately arrested and conveyed by sea to Omura. The two religious cheerfully followed their captors, and their companions, Paul and Gregory, refused to be parted from their pastors. They protested that by the help they had tendered to the missionaries they had disobeyed the laws of the country, and deserved punishment. The other Christians of the place were no less eager to follow, and the soldiers had to repulse, by main force, these ardent candidates for martyrdom. Finally, the Christians, being forbidden to enter the same boat as prisoners, insisted on following them to the little island of Usuxine, where the execution was to take place, but so great was the number of boats, all bearing the principal Christians of the country, that the soldiers, unwilling to put the prisoners to death in the presence of a large crowd of sympathizers, sought a more solitary spot. Three times they removed their captives from one island to another, but their escort, far from diminishing, became more numerous. At last, Blessed Alphonso Navarrette having remonstrated with his guards upon their reluctance to execute their orders, they determined to put an end to this curious and pathetic procession: the two religious and a young Japanese Christian named Leo were told to prepare for death. Ferdinand of St. Joseph was the first to fall, then came the turn of our brave Dominican. In his hands he held his Rosary and a rough cross that one of the bystanders had made for him with two pieces of wood. Three times the sword struck him before he was beheaded, but, at last, he fell, his white robe stained

with the crimson glory of martyrdom.

It was the first of June, 1617. Curiously enough, the four martyrs of Omura, who were executed in the same district within a few weeks of each other, represented the four religious orders whose members were then evangelizing Japan: John Baptist Tavora was a Jesuit; Peter of the Assumption, a Franciscan; Ferdinand of St. Joseph, an Augustinian and Alphonso Navarrette, a Dominican.

The martyrdom of their leaders, far from discouraging the native Christians, seemed, on the contrary, to fire them with enthusiasm. A Protestant historian, Engelbert Kaempfer, states that, although in 1590, during the first persecution, 20,570 Christians suffered for the faith, yet, during the following year, when the churches were closed and persecution was raging, the Jesuits alone made 12,000 converts. The same contempt for death and fidelity to the religion they had embraced were displayed by the faithful of Japan during the second and still more barbarous persecution under the Emperor Xogun.

The Christians of Nagasaki founded among themselves an association, the object of which was to prepare for martyrdom. Its members were bound by a written promise to suffer any torture and death itself rather than abandon the Christian faith, and also procure, if possible, an honorable burial to those who were put to death for the sake of their religion. A similar association was established among the women and another among the children. The leading spirit of this new crusade was Andrew Tocuan, a noble Japanese, the son of the Governor of Nagasaki, who, with his wife, Mary, is a splendid specimen of heroic Christianity.

It was in the house of Andrew Tocuan at Nagasaki, that during five years, Father Francis Morales, Vicar Provincial of the Dominican missionaries, found an asylum. The long services, noble character, great holiness and glorious death of this illustrious son of St. Dominic give him a prominent position among his brethren.

He was born at Madrid in 1567, and in 1598 sailed for the Philippine Islands, together with a band of other missionaries. He was made Prior of the Convent of Manila, and, in 1602, to his intense joy, was appointed to accompany, as Provincial, the first Dominican missionaries who were sent to Japan. During several years he labored for Christ in the kingdom of Satsuma, where he made many converts; in 1609, he removed to Nagasaki, where a large number of his neophytes accompanied him; the presence of the Portuguese merchants who lived in the town seemed, at one time, to insure to the native Christians more freedom in the practice of their religion and, for this reason, many of them were induced to settle there. In the end, however, the persecution raged as fiercely at Nagasaki as elsewhere, and the hills that surrounded the city became a glorious arena where many martyrs gained their crown.

In 1619, when the persecution started by the Emperor Xogun was at its height, Father Alphonso de Mena, a Dominican, was arrested at Nagasaki, on the 14th of March, and only a few days afterwards it became known to the authorities that Father Morales was concealed under the roof of Andrew Tocuan.

On account of the high rank of his hosts, the Father's arrest was surrounded by much ceremony, and the elaborate politeness of his captors reads strangely enough, when we compare it to the atrocious cruelties practiced by the Japanese on their prisoners.

We are told that the soldiers who were commissioned to take the Father seemed full of regret and confusion, and begged their prisoner's forgiveness: "My friends, you are welcome," replied the religious, "you could give me no greater pleasure than to make me a prisoner for the sake of Jesus Christ." He requested leave to put on the white habit of his Order, which, from motives of prudence, he had not worn since the persecution began, and, dressed in the livery of St. Dominic, with a sweet and smiling countenance, he followed his guards. Andrew Tocuan and several neophytes were commanded to accompany their pastor. Father Morales and Father de Mena remained some days only in the prison of Nagasaki; they were subsequently transferred to another prison some miles distant, and, at the end of five months, they were removed to Omura; here, in a narrow space, closely huddled together and treated with the utmost cruelty, they found a goodly number of confessors and future martyrs. Among the Dominicans were, in addition to the two newcomers, Father Thomas of the Holy Ghost, Father Angelo Or-

succi, Father Thomas of the Rosary, a Japanese, who on approaching the prison sang the psalm "Laudate Dominum," the joyful canticle of praise being taken up by the captives within; Father John Martinez, Father Orland, Father Angelo Mangariki; two tertiary, Brothers Manccio and Paul Mangaxi. All these spent either two, three, four or even five years in confinement. With them were many tertiary and associates of the Rosary, nine Franciscans and two Jesuits, with seven novices of the Society.

One of the two Jesuit prisoners was Father Charles Spinola, of an illustrious Italian family, and as remarkable for his holiness and charity as for his unusual gifts of intellect.

The prison, where the confessors spent many weary months and even years, was truly a place of horror. Pere Charlevoix tells us that it was formed of thick wooden bars, placed close together; it had no roof, so the captives were exposed alternately to the scorching rays of the sun, and torrents of rain and whirl gusts. It was surrounded by a strong palisade guarded by soldiers, but the prisoners were seldom, if ever, permitted to leave the wooden building, where as many as thirty-three human beings were so closely packed that it was impossible for them to lie down. It is easier to imagine than to describe the filth and misery of this horrible place; its inmates were scantily fed and clothed, and many of them during the space of four years never changed their clothes and linen.

They were able, however, in an almost miraculous manner, and with the help of the Christians who visited them, to have Mass frequently, and Father Spinola writes to his brethren, that, since he is able to offer the Holy Sacrifice, his prison has become a paradise. The letters of Father Morales breathe the same spirit; "I beg one thing of God, that I may leave this prison only to shed my blood for His Name. * * * I would not change my present abode, which seems to me a magnificent palace, for the most splendid dwelling." Father de Mena dates his letter thus: "From my blessed prison, which is my paradise," and Father Angelo Orsucci writes: "All is well; I am in prison for Jesus my Love, and I hope to give my life for Him." Father Joseph of St. Hyacinth, also a Dominican, who had succeeded Father Morales as Provincial, was the last to join this heroic band: "The aspect of this prison is repulsive," he writes, "but I would not exchange it for the finest palace. I have chosen this prison for my paradise in this world, and I beg the Mother of God and the Saints to offer my thanks to the Divine Goodness for placing me here."

The prisoners had drawn out a rule of life; each one of the priests assumed in turn for a week the office of Superior, and the day was divided between prayer, meditation and spiritual conferences. But, although heavenly peace and a perfect union of mind and heart reigned among the captives, the hardships of their prolonged imprisonment proved fatal to several: A Franciscan, a Jesuit lay brother, and a Dominican, Father John Martinez, died of want and misery.

The body of the latter was burnt by the pagans, but Father Morales was able to rescue his bones and to send them to the Dominicans of Manila with the following beautiful letter: "I am sending to the Father Provincial the bones of our good companion, Father John of St. Dominic. * * * Here, we are all jealous of him for having gone before us and having already died for Jesus Christ. But we trust that, ere long, we shall have the same fate. It is said that they will not let us leave this place alive, and that they are going to kill us; we live as if the sword were hanging over our heads." The sword alluded to was about to fall, and the martyr's crown, so earnestly prayed for by the brave confessors, was to be theirs at last.

The 10th of September, 1622, is a memorable day in the history of the Christian Church in Japan; fifty-two martyrs of every rank and age, religious and laymen, women and children, laid down their lives for Christ with an enthusiasm that has seldom been equalled and never surpassed in the annals of the Church; this wholesale execution is known as the "great martyrdom." It took place on a hill outside Nagasaki, close to the spot that, twenty-five years before, had been sanctified by the sacrifice of the first martyrs of Japan.

The prisoners of Omura were informed that the Emperor had decided to put several of them to death at the same time as a certain number of Christian prisoners, who were at that time detained in the prisons of Nagasaki. The chosen few

received the news with exceeding joy, and on September 9th, they were released from their lonesome prison and taken by sea to a small port, whence they proceeded on horseback to the place of sacrifice. Over forty thousand persons, the majority of whom were Christians, waited by the roadside to see them pass. Many of these were on their knees, and, heedless of the risk they ran, they begged the blessing of the future martyrs.

On reaching the isolated mount, where, close to the sea, rose their Calvary, our confessors were told that they must wait for the arrival of their fellow-sufferers, the prisoners from Nagasaki. At the end of about an hour, the sound of singing was heard, and a solemn procession was seen winding up the hillside: at its head, carrying a banner, was a Dominican tertiary, Mary de Fingo; behind her walked a group of men and women belonging to the noblest families in Japan. The women came first; many of them were tertiary. Agnes was a martyr's widow; Catherine de Fingo was Prioress of the Confraternity of the Rosary; Tecla led by the hand her son, aged seven; Isabel Fernandez was with her little boy, Ignatius; Mary Tocuan, the former hostess of Father Morales, was carried to martyrdom in a litter. The men came next; many of them were tertiary of St. Dominic or St. Francis and associates of the Rosary; one carried his baby boy, aged two years; all wore singing the psalm, "Laudate," and the heavenly enthusiasm that shone in their earnest countenances and in their eyes raised to heaven, moved even the soldiers to tears.

Full of emotion was the meeting between the two companies of martyrs: Mary Tocuan knelt to receive the blessing of Father Morales, whom she had not seen for three years: "Where is my little Paul?" asked the venerable religious, remembering the baby whom he had baptized when he was a guest in the Tocuan's house at Nagasaki. "He is where you and I will soon be," was the mother's reply. "God took him from me and placed him in heaven."

Father Spinola was greeted by one of his penitents, Isabel Fernandez, whose husband had died for the faith, and whose baby boy, born on the feast of St. Ignatius, had been called after the founder of the Society of Jesus: "What has become of Ignatius?" inquired the religious. "Here he is, Father," replied Isabel, raising the boy in her arms. "I would not deprive him of the only happiness I was able to procure him. * * * My son," she added, turning to the child, "this is the Father who baptized thee; ask his blessing." —The Countess de Courson in Rosary Magazine.

FRANCE AND THE HOLY SEE

At the Vatican the feeling of confidence that the conflict which has arisen between France and the Holy See will have an issue favorable to the latter has considerably increased. The complete submission of the Bishops of Dijon and Laval has much reassured the Pope, not only from the point of view of his personal influence, but particularly from the point of view of the discipline and unity of the Church in France. M. Combes' last speech is interpreted at the Vatican as a proof of the difficulty in which the Combes ministry would find itself if it attempted to push matters to extremes. The Pope certainly prefers a cordial and equitable separation of Church and State in France to the tyrannical application of the Concordat. Moreover, the latter could scarcely survive the present conflict even if a new Ministry were to replace that of M. Combes.

THE IRISH LANGUAGE IN WESTMINSTER CATHEDRAL

According to a London paper, a sermon in the Irish language will be delivered at the Westminster Cathedral on St. Patrick's day. This will be in connection with a special religious celebration of the Irish National Festival on an unusual large scale, for which arrangements are already being made. Archbishop Bourne has signified his intention to preside at a grand Pontifical High Mass in the Westminster Cathedral, and the celebrant of the Mass, it is expected, will be the Right Rev. Patrick Fenton, D.D., Bishop of Armagh. So far as the rubric will permit, the hymns will be in Irish, as well as the sermon. The Irish Parliamentary Party will attend in full strength, and a number of Irish gentlemen, headed by the Hon. William Gibson, son of the Lord Chancellor of Ireland, will wear ancient Irish costume. Notable Irishmen from abroad have already signified their intention to be present.