

A MODERN MARTYR.

The Annals of the Propagation of the Faith, published at Baltimore every two months to record the work of the missionaries who have gone out to spread the faith to the uttermost ends of the earth, is a particularly inspiring chronicle.

The touching and dramatic story of the martyrdom of a young Chinese priest at Che Kiang is told in a letter from Bishop Reynand, C.M.

"For about a year Father Andre Tsu labored to rebuild the ruins in the sub-prefecture of Ning Hai, about sixty miles from Ning Po. The revolution of 1900 had left nothing standing. With indomitable energy he set to work. New centres were opened and more than 1500 catechumens knelt by the side of Christians in the newly-built chapels. Father Tsu urged me to bless and crown his work by a pastoral visit, but he himself was to consecrate his own labors by his blood.

"As the Jews rebuilt the temple in Jerusalem amid sufferings, so he was obliged to keep a constant watch upon an ever ominous horizon, foiling the plans of a prowling enemy.

"This enemy was none other than the scholar Ouang-si-ton, the principal author of our losses in 1900, who had become more audacious since he remained unpunished, though condemned. He had believed our work annihilated, and when he saw it rising, even with promise of greater prosperity, from its ruins, his hatred was enkindled afresh. Calling his accomplices together, he gathered a large number of brigands animated with the hope of booty, distributed arms and ammunition among them, and gave them flags bearing the inscription: 'Death to Christians!'

"Father Tsu was at Ning Po when Ouang-si-ton set out on his expedition. He had come to spend the 27th of September with us and take part in a festival which all pagans, Christians, and even the mandarins, were celebrating with great enthusiasm. In the midst of general rejoicing, the funeral knell was heard. Ouang-si-ton had struck his first blow and a cry of anguish had broken forth from his first victim. Three neophytes, his neighbors and own relatives, had been strangled; he could not forgive them for having introduced religion into his village and family.

"From that time, each day brought fresh tales of sadness. The Christians, tracked and hunted down, sought safety in flight. Everywhere fire followed upon pillage, and the fury of the bandits received no check.

"Our young brother priest lost his appetite and could not sleep. Night and day he seemed to hear the cries of his flock, and he was anxious to go to their help, to save them, if possible, or at least to encourage them in tribulation and console them in death.

"I advised the general and the governor of Ning Po of the situation. They promised to spare no effort in suppressing outrages and arresting the guilty. Both were sincere, but their orders were not obeyed. Colonel Tsiou, appointed to re-establish order, came to see me before taking command. He assured me that if Father Tsu incurred any danger, he himself would die in defending him.

"These words relieved my fears; moreover, the situation was not hopeless. The insurrection, it is true, was violent but only local, and incited by a few hundred bandits that fifty soldiers could easily have dispersed.

Spiritual precautions were not neglected. Prayers were offered by all, and as it was the vigil of the month of October, special petitions were addressed to Our Lady of the Rosary.

All indications were, therefore, reassuring. Father Tsu left, full of hope and happy in the thought that he was able to save his Christians. Alas! He was going to death with them. I did not know why the tears started to my eyes when I gave him my last benediction.

"Our beloved brother priest arrived in Ning Hai on October 1. What sad news reached him there! What a sad sight met his eyes! His poor Christians were fleeing without the hope of finding shelter. The bandits were in the city pillaging, burning and killing and no measures were taken to stem their murderous course.

The second of October was spent in making applications and presenting petitions to solicit the mandarin's intervention. The least manifestation of their power would have dispersed the bandits, but nothing was done.

"After consulting together, the sub-prefect and colonel said they would take the Father back to Ning Po. This proposition, they well knew, meant certain death, for all the roads were in the hands of the murderers. The perfidious offer was, therefore, refused.

"Moreover, the mandarins were generally accused of complicity. Christians that sought a refuge in their courts were brutally repulsed. The sub-prefect himself, upon three different occasions, refused to allow the missionary to enter his office.

"When all hope was lost Father Tsu applied himself to placing the sacred vessels and valuable papers in a place of safety. At the same time, he saw that the homeless Christian women were sheltered in pagan families upon which he could depend. All the personnel of the residence bade one another farewell. Father Tsu said to the last catechist, unwilling to leave:

"The general good demands that you go, otherwise we might risk dying together. Separated, one of us may escape death and be able to warn the bishop. Since the colonel is responsible for my life and has promised to protect me, it is better that I go to him."

"The catechist was taken prisoner the next day and retained as a hostage to be delivered to Ouang-si-ton, who had placed a price upon his head. Several days afterwards he was released upon the payment of \$500. A letter written by Father Tsu a few hours before his death was seized. As it contained his farewells and last messages, I am doubly sorry not to have received it.

"The priest kept one acolyte with him, a boy of fifteen years of age. Accompanied by him, he went the same evening to the colonel's headquarters in the principal pagoda a short distance from the residence, where, sick of a raging fever, he spent a night of agony in prayer.

On the morning of October 3, the brigands directed their steps toward the city. At Fong-tau they halted to burn our church. At some distance from Nang-hai, they met Col. Jsiou, who dismounted and demanded to see the leader, not for the purpose of putting a stop to their outrages, but simply to interview him.

"When he retraced his way to the city, the mob followed close after him, sure of meeting no resistance.

"The gates of the courts, so carefully closed when the Christians sought refuge there, were opened at the second appeal from the band of murderers. The guard received orders to allow them to pass.

"A few minutes afterwards our buildings, wet with coal oil, were a mass of flames. From the pagoda Father Tsu could see the fire, distinguish the banners of the brigands, and hear their savage yells. When the waving of their standards showed that the robbers were coming in their direction, Father Tsu said to his young attendant: 'Leave quickly, you are not known; you can still flee; for me it is impossible.'

"While the boy made his escape the brigands bombarded the great door of the pagoda, the soldiers looking quietly on, as they had received orders not to interfere.

"From the floor on which he had sought refuge, Father Tsu heard Ouang-si-ton demand his head. The priest had thought that the mandarins, for their own interest, would not dare give up a missionary for whose life they were responsible. This illusion was quickly dispelled.

"The bandits were already ransacking the pagoda when Father Tsu escaped by the roof and succeeded in gaining a neighboring store. Alas! his flight was discovered and cut off from all sides. Seized and violently dragged through the streets, he was soon covered with wounds; two cuts from a dagger split his skull and made a deep gash in his neck. Their victim half dead, his executioners wanted to finish their work on the spot; objections, however, were raised, and he was dragged back to the pagoda by his hair and feet, leaving a bloody track on the stones. He was about to be sacrificed before the idols when the sub-prefect made a sign to take him further on. So he was dragged to the field beyond the southern gate. There, after death had undoubtedly already come, he was decapitated. With savage brutality his executioners cut open his body in the form of a cross, because, these monsters in human form said to one another, 'he so loved the cross.'

"One bandit, more savage even than the others, tore out his heart to

devour it. The fact is proved, and this fiendish act is not uncommon in this country; brigands pretend to discover thereby the secret to greater cruelty.

"Two days afterwards, what could be collected of the scattered remains of our beloved martyr were placed in a coffin.

"Since then, justice has begun to be meted out, and the mandarins who were so cowardly as to betray their victim have been deposed and are awaiting a severe sentence in prison. Some of the executioners have been arrested and several decapitated. Ouang-si-ton is being pursued and cannot evade capture much longer."

PROGRESS IN BELGIUM

A CATHOLIC RECORD.—As regards the national credit, no better testimony could be afforded of its soundness than that which is offered in the following table. At the close of December, 1903, the Government securities of some of the principal countries of Europe were quoted as under:

Table with 2 columns: Country and Interest Rate. Includes Belgium (99.72%), France (97.42%), Dutch (91.65%), German (90.50%), Russian (82.50%), Italian (103.50%).

Thanks largely to the encouragement given by the Government, and to the facilities it has afforded for the development of commerce, the trade of the country has, in recent years, enormously increased.

In 1884 the Belgian "special" commerce with other countries—that is to say, the exportation of its own products and the importation of goods for home consumption—represented a total value of 2793 million francs, or somewhat over 100 millions sterling.

In 1902 this special commerce was estimated at upwards of 172 million sterling, an increase within eighteen years of 72 per cent.

With respect to the extent of "special" trade, Belgium occupies the fifth place amongst the great commercial countries of the world, ranking after England, Germany, the United States and France, but takes first place with reference to the relative value of this commerce, or its value per head of the population.

In 1902 the total value per head of the imports and exports of the United Kingdom was £20 18s 5d.; for Belgium the imports and exports worked out the same year to £25 per head of the population. The total amount of the year's trade—exports and imports—goods in transit included—in 1884 was somewhat over 328 millions sterling; in 1902 it was close on 469 millions. The rapid and very remarkable development that has been taking place in the commerce of Belgium is further illustrated by the returns from the various ports of the Kingdom. The growth of trade of Antwerp, the great commercial emporium, is simply phenomenal. The tonnage which entered the port in 1884 was 3,403,759; in 1902 it rose to 8,392,380, an increase of 4,988,621 tons.

The tonnage which left the port in 1884 was 3,385,031; in 1902 it amounted to 8,334,150, an increase in eighteen years of 4,949,119 tons. Many will be surprised to learn that amongst the great ports of the world Antwerp is third in importance, coming next after London and New York.

The receipts from the goods and passenger traffic over the Belgian railways which, in 1884, totalled a little over 159 million francs, rose in 1902 to nearly 242½ millions, an advance of upwards of 83 millions in a period of eighteen years. The intensity of the traffic over the Belgian system is indicated by the fact that last year as many as 975,000 trains were run over the various lines. In 1884 the net profits from the working of the Post Office were but 14 million francs; in 1902 they were close on 27½ millions, or about double the amount of eighteen years previously. The profits from the telegraph and telephone service which, in 1884, were about 2,713,000 francs, amounted in 1902 to 9,927,355 francs. From the operations of the Caisse d'Epargne, or Post Office Savings Bank, we may infer to what extent thrift is cultivated by the masses of the Belgian people, and at the same time form an idea of the degree of comfort that obtains among the population generally. The total amount of the sums deposited with the bank in the course of the year 1884 was 86,368,705 francs; in 1902 it was 340,490,263 francs, a difference in favor of the latter year of 254,121,558 francs, or nearly 25½

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millions sterling. At the close of 1888 the total balance to the credit of depositors was 141,942,464 francs at the close of 1902 it amounted to 730,563,054 francs, or more than 29½ millions sterling. The increase as compared with 1884 was 588,620,590 francs, or upwards of 23½ millions sterling. The number of separate accounts with the bank on the 31st of December, 1884, was 406,656; on the 31st of December, 1902, it was 1,973,480.

It is needless to enter into further details for the purpose of showing to what a unique economic position Belgium has attained. The facts and figures adduced, taken, it may be added, from official sources, are sufficient to prove that through the intelligence, industry and energy of her people, aided and directed by a Government, keenly solicitous for the public weal, the material prosperity of the nation has, of late years, advanced by leaps and bounds. And please remember, Belgium is a country of no greater extent than the province of Munster, with the county Galway thrown in. Its population on the 31st December, 1902, was 6,896,079; at the same date in 1884 it was 5,784,658, an increase of 1,111,421 within eighteen years. Strange to say, we hear nothing as yet of "congested districts." When we examine the statistics relating to education we find that in the elementary, secondary and higher departments a remarkable progress has been made under the Catholic Government. The number of children under instruction in the primary schools at the close of 1883 was 346,012; in 1902 it had increased to 679,661; in the schools for adults there was an attendance of 84,510 in 1883; the number in 1902 was 162,261. In the Government and commercial colleges and secondary schools there were, at the close of 1883, some 26,974 students; in 1902 the number in attendance had risen to 32,668. These figures are far from representing the total number of young people receiving a secondary training, as they do not include the pupils attending the numerous Catholic colleges and high schools, which are entirely independent of State control, and which contain a larger student population than the official institutions. At the two State Universities—Liege and Ghent—the number of students in 1883 was 2224; in 1902 the number was 2592; at the two free Universities—Louvain and Brussels—the number of students in 1901-02 was about 2850, to this figure the Catholic University of Louvain contributed 2000. Of late years a great impetus has been given to professional and technical training. At the instance of the Minister of Industry and Labor, special inquiries have been conducted into the condition of industrial and commercial education in England, Germany and the United States, and the results have been embodied in valuable reports which have been published at the public expense. Travelling scholarships have been instituted in favor of students who have passed most suc-

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cessfully the examinations of the direct agricultural instruction a sum of 217,800 francs was expended by the State in 1883; in 1902 the amount devoted to this purpose was 653,400 francs. Between the years 1884 and 1901 the Catholic Government applied to this special branch of popular education a total of more than 16 million francs. In the matter of social legislation Belgium occupies perhaps the first place in Europe, and this pre-eminence she owes to the zeal and activity of the Catholic party in Parliament and throughout the country. To that party redounds the honor as well as the praise of having initiated and carried through the Chambers, in spite of much Liberal opposition, a series of provisions in favor of the toilers which, removing many of the disabilities under which the workers lay, mitigate to a considerable extent the hardships incidental to their condition. Hardly a session has passed during the last twenty years that has not been marked by the adoption of one or other measure in the interest of the worker and the humble employee. Labor contracts, the protection of women and children in factories, regulations respecting the payments of wages, compensation for accidents, workmen's dwellings, mutual aid societies, arbitration boards, old age pensions—these and other questions have been dealt with in such a fashion that, in the result, the social condition of the humble classes has been greatly ameliorated. Whether viewed from a political economic or social point of view, the situation in Belgium is exceedingly satisfactory, and every impartial observer will not hesitate to recognize that the country owes, in large measure, her enviable position to the wise and enlightened direction of her Catholic Government.—Liverpool Catholic Times Correspondence.

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