

THE CANADIAN CHURCH MAGAZINE

AND MISSION NEWS

Published by the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Church of England in Canada.

VOL. VII.

TORONTO, DECEMBER, 1893.

No. 90.

HISTORICAL SKETCHES.

No. 90.—JAPAN, THE EMPIRE OF THE RISING SUN.*

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JAPAN is only one-tenth part of the eighteen provinces of China in size, and its population is probably not more than one-tenth the population of that vast empire. Formerly the emperor was not only chief in temporal things, but also the high priest of every form of worship; therefore any of his subjects joining another form of communion was considered guilty of personal insult to the sovereign. In the middle of the sixteenth century Francois Xavier, "The Apostle to the Indies," visited the Sunrise kingdom; soon conversions to the papal church were reported in vast numbers, among them being included many princes and nobles. In 1532 these Roman Catholics sent an embassy to Rome bearing letters and presents to the pope in token of their allegiance to the sovereign pontiff. In the two following years 12,000 more were baptized. Jesuit political intrigues, together with the lordly assumptions of the Spanish and Portuguese, soon awakened the distrust of the natives. In 1587 Taiko decreed the banishment of the missionaries. This edict was renewed by his successor in 1596, and the succeeding year twenty-three priests were put to death in one day at Nagasaki. The fires of persecution being kindled, many converts perished, while their churches and schools were laid in ruins. In 1622 a fearful massacre of native Christians took place, and in 1639 an edict was issued, for-

bidding the Japanese to quit the country, or any Christians to set foot on the islands. The exact form of that ancient edict runs thus:

"So long as the sun shall warm the earth, let no Christian be so bold as to come to Japan, and let all know that the King of Spain himself, or the Christians' God, or the great God of all, if he violate this command, shall pay for it with his head."

At the close of 1639 the Portuguese were also expelled, and their trade transferred to the Dutch, who, before long, were confined to the island of Desima. In 1852, in consequence of complaints regarding the treatment of American seamen wrecked on the Japanese coast, the United States sent an expedition to demand protection for American ships and their crews, and to secure a treaty for purposes of trade. In 1855, Commander Perry sailed one Sunday morning into the harbor of Yeddo. He spread out the Bible on the capstan of his ship, and read aloud the hundredth Psalm. His only weapon was the Bible, for he took possession of Japan in the name of the Prince of Peace, without thunder of cannon or flash of steel.

The American missionary societies of the Protestant Episcopal, Presbyterian, and Reformed Dutch churches were prepared to meet the emergency, and before the end of that year sent out seven missionaries.

For ten years there were not at any time ten missionaries in the empire. These pioneers of faith showed themselves strong and wise and bold. The government was hostile; direct mission work was impossible. Tentative efforts were made and abandoned. In the meantime the language was learned, and something was done towards overcoming prejudice.

During the first ten years only twelve persons were baptized. In 1869 many hundreds of Roman Catholic Christians were confined in prisons. In 1871 the teacher employed by a



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