

Children's Corner.

LETTER FROM JAPAN.

An incident that caused a great stir in Japan took place not long ago, and, owing to the handle made of it to raise prejudice against Christianity, it may be suitable for a letter here. A steamer named the *Normanton*, engaged in the coast trade of Japan, on its last voyage struck on a rock, and the captain, as he perceived that it would sink before many minutes could elapse, ordered the boats to be lowered, and the passengers to be collected that they might be put on board of them. But matters were not managed as they would be among a well-drilled crew; hence the result was that, while twenty-six persons were saved, other twenty-three were drowned. When news of the calamity was published in the papers, the Japanese felt suspicious, from the fact that all the Japanese on board were drowned, notwithstanding that the captain and most of the crew, Englishmen, were saved. All the Japanese were lost, and the lost by drowning were Japanese alone. The rule in a wreck is that, after the jetsam of the cargo, if safety is not secured, those on board are made to take to the boats in order, passengers first, crew second, and captain last.

The excuse that was given for the circumstances was that the passengers, when first ordered into the boats, refused to go, and continued to refuse against all entreaties to save themselves. As is usual after wrecks, a Naval Court of Inquiry was opened, with the result that the master and officers received a verdict that exonerated them. This, however, did not remove all suspicion in the eyes of the Japanese people, for the inquiry was made in a British court, and, though the justice of British courts is known in other countries, like Hindostan and Egypt, the Japanese could look at it only in the aspect that, as the inquiry was conducted by Englishmen, and was an inquiry regarding the conduct of Englishmen, the verdict was not certainly an equitable one, as against the Japanese, who are supposed to be looked down upon. The thinking part of the community here considered the affair specially unfortunate, owing to the treaties between Japan and other countries being under revision.

There were extenuating circumstances that favoured as charitable a judgment on the English-

men as possible: for instance, that the vessel was not a passenger ship, and the crew, therefore, not thoroughly drilled for emergencies; that the night was dark and the sea rough; that the languages of the saved and the lost were different; and that it was possible the majority of the Japanese were paralyzed by the suddenness of the accident, while the rest might cling to their countrymen till it was too late. Still, notwithstanding these circumstances, the British residents in Japan acknowledged the discreditable aspects of the affair. This acknowledgment was observed by some Japanese, and the subscriptions that were set agoing by the Americans and Europeans on behalf of the relatives of the deceased must have weighed with those who were sufficiently free from excitement to own the desire of people from other countries to be fair. But all did not observe this, and for two days the leading newspapers of the capital had the following advertisement: "It is proposed to erect a monument on Nozeyama, Yokohama, in memory of our twenty-five countrymen who were drowned with the *Normanton*. The sum required is to be raised among the Buddhists of Japan in commemoration of those Japanese killed by the Christians of England." On the third day, however, the space for the advertisement, owing to the censorship in Japan, was found blank.

A Japanese paper, by way of apology for the excitement caused by the tragedy, admitted that some capital was made out of it by the enemies of Christianity; but put the query whether people of Western nations were not prejudiced against religions other than their own, and were not also ready to account for Oriental shortcomings by what they call "Paganism." Americans and Europeans may rightly account for the moral shortcomings of a community by the worthlessness of their religion to strengthen them to be better than they are by nature; but they never attribute individual neglect to any religion without inquiring whether the particular religion encouraged the neglect or forbade it. As we are Christians, when thinking of a case where undue excitement has been felt over the death of twenty-three persons, we should remember how much more rational to feel still more excitement over the hundreds of Japanese that die every week without a knowledge of salvation through Jesus Christ.

THE ABBOTT AND HALLIDAY LIFE OF BEECHER.

There seems to be more brain talent connected with the book written by Lyman Abbott, D.D., and Rev. S. B. Halliday than with any other biography of the late Henry Ward Beecher; for in addition to the above-named gentlemen, about forty other eminent writers and thinkers have contributed reminiscences to the book.