

were hacked to pieces by those terrible two-handed swords; they recall the fact that death used to be the punishment for most crimes in feudal Japan; they speak with horror of the frequency and the ghastliness of the national form of suicide by cutting the belly open, the celebrated Hara-Kiri, and they mention the killing of the Chinese at the storming of Port Arthur in 1894.

These charges of barbarity which are preferred against Japan are numerous and grave, and it behoves to answer them, not in general, but in detail, dealing with each in its turn.

It is quite true that during the sixteenth century almost 300,000 native and foreign Christians were massacred in Japan, and that from that time onward the country was closed against all foreigners, excepting the Dutch, who were allowed to reside for trading purposes on a small isolated spot, the artificial island of Deshima in the harbour of Nagasaki, where they were kept as prisoners. This enormous massacre of 300,000 men seems to sully for ever the fair fame of Japan. Hence we shall investigate why these cruel persecutions were undertaken, and why the country was hermetically closed against all foreigners, and especially against all Christians.

The first Christian missionaries who landed in Japan were exceedingly well received by the Japanese, who eagerly sought to benefit from the newcomers in science, industry, and art. Besides, Christianity itself appealed to the Japanese, and among an intelligent and well-disposed population numerous converts were quickly made by the zealous missionaries. The character of the intercourse between the Japanese and the Christian missionaries is clearly expressed in a letter of St. Francis Xavier, who wrote about 1550:

I really think that among barbarian nations there can be none that has more natural goodness than Japan. The Japanese are wonderfully inclined to all that is good and honest, and have eagerness to learn.

As a matter of fact, Christians were not only well treated in Japan, but they were shown the greatest trust and were