

JAPANESE CATHOLICS.

A Protestant Clergyman tells how the Church Thrived in Spite of Persecution.

Rev. George W. Knox, of Englewood, N. J., writing in the New York Independent, says: The present Emperor of Japan came to the throne in 1867, and that year four thousand native Christians were torn from their homes and distributed as criminals throughout the empire.

Men and women were bound and passed from hand to hand across the gangplank of the boat which waited to carry them away, handied and counted and shipped like bales of merchandise.

Another woman, thrown amiss, fell into the water, and her hand waved farewell in the sign of the cross as she sank, never to rise again.

The other concerned a woman, too, a mother with her infant at her breast. The officials determined to force her to recant, and failed.

Fit representatives, these two, of the heroic remnant who defied the worst a ruthless Eastern tyranny could do, and in patience waited, teaching their children the same faith and patience, and these theirs again, until at last, after so many generations, a new era brought peace and safety.

A MIRACLE AMONG MISSIONS. The history of the Roman Catholic Church in Japan is one of the miracles of missions, a story of great success, of tragic failure and of resurrection from the dead.

Xavier landed in Japan in 1549, was welcomed, successful and laid the foundations in his brief three years. With him and after him came other Portuguese Jesuits—men of learning, breeding, devotion, adroit and fitted to win victory. The time and circumstances favored them.

Japan was in feudal anarchy, the Emperor powerless, the shogun almost as feeble, the nobles at war with one another and the shogun. Kyoto was in ruins, and there were devastation and suffering everywhere. Buddhism was at the lowest, without religious influence, sect arrayed against sect. No central government and no religious earnestness opposed the missionaries.

Commerce was their efficient ally, the Portuguese merchants refusing barter to barons who refused the missionaries and favoring those who proved compliant. And these petty princes desired the lucrative foreign trade. So the missionaries gained strong protectors, and even sincere converts among the nobles, and the converts were more zealous than their teachers.

After some years Nobunaga established something like central authority again. He hated the Buddhists, and favored the Christians for a time, was thought almost persuaded to be a Christian himself, had not the conditions, prohibiting polygamy and the like, been too severe. But Nobunaga soon went to his father (1582), and Akechi Mitsuhide, a brilliant general, continuing the work of centralization his predecessor had begun.

HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS CONVERTED. Six Franciscans and three Jesuits with them, who also scorned deliverance, were taken, condemned, led as a spectacle hundreds of miles, gaining converts en route by their patience and humility, and were executed in Nagasaki, thus obtaining the crown they coveted. That was in 1593.

Whether we take nations, communities or persons, all experience proves that the hand of misfortune—it may be the rod of correction—falls with more crushing force upon some than upon others. When this is the case, the voice of Christian charity is heard, calling out in trumpet tones upon the luckier and more favored portion of mankind to come to the rescue.

The writer then gives a graphic description of the persecution of Catholics during the succeeding centuries, and the progress of the Church, in spite of all the cruel opposition of its enemies. In conclusion he says:

Since 1873 the Roman Catholic missionaries have carried on their work throughout Japan chiefly by schools and hospitals, and in private, without attracting much attention. Their converts are from the humblest walks in life, and the Church is composed, for the most part, of the communities near Nagasaki, the descendants of the converts made 300 years ago.

So again the Roman Catholic Church prospers in Japan—not because its missions are allied with trade, or because feudal barons destroy temples and drive out Buddhist priests, but because these humble folk, without priest or book or sacrament or public assembly, endured in faith and were stronger in their ignorance and obscurity than the power and wisdom of the world.

THE POWER OF A GOOD ACTION.

The feeling of pure happiness that springs from the consciousness of having done a good act or spoken a kind word to an afflicted fellow-creature partakes in some degree of the nature of that pure joy which is felt by the elect of God.

The bare will and desire to do good pre-supposes a good heart, which is the central seat from which all beneficent promptings are supposed to flow. Hence the wide difference between good deeds that are done from motives of true charity and those of the more public character which usually proceed from interested motives, causing the benefactors to crave after worldly applause and the esteem of men.

It was somewhat of an exceptional case, in that a combination of adverse happenings had conspired to embitter the life and darken the prospects of a man whose natural temperament rather inclined him to view the world on its dark side, but who was otherwise well grounded in the truth of religion and staunch in his unbounded faith in the guidance and protection of an over-ruling Providence.

In spite, however, of his rational trust and confidence in the unseen powers, the temporary embarrassments of the moment had driven the despondent person almost to the point where hope ceases to exist and is supplanted by the dark shadows bordering upon despair. While in this unhappy frame of mind the tempted one paid a visit to a house of sickness, and having entered the sick chamber he drew near to the bed where suffering humanity was laid and began to contrast that case of real affliction which stared him in the face with his own imaginary sorrows.

The visible relief depicted in the countenance of the sick sufferer reacted upon his mind in a two-fold sense. It not only scattered his own gloomy forebodings, but it proved beyond doubt that in trying to help others we benefit ourselves. If, then, we enlarge the application of this one solitary instance to the thousands of a kindred nature that are daily occurring in every community, could we not form a fair estimate of the vast amount of good and domestic happiness that would accrue to the great human family if each Christian member thereof would only do his duty, one to another?

Whether we take nations, communities or persons, all experience proves that the hand of misfortune—it may be the rod of correction—falls with more crushing force upon some than upon others. When this is the case, the voice of Christian charity is heard, calling out in trumpet tones upon the luckier and more favored portion of mankind to come to the rescue.

And while they are keeping the sunshine out of the lives of the dependent poor by their wrongful holding of the boon of timely relief, they are depriving themselves of that sweet source of human bliss which flows from the inward knowledge of having eased the mind and heart of an oppressed and struggling fellow-mortal.

ROME AND ANGLICANISM.

A Timely Contribution on a Subject of Great Moment. — Jesse Albert Locke, Formerly an Anglican Clergyman of New York, But Now a Catholic, Points Out Errors in a Letter from a Daily Paper's Correspondent in Rome.

The New York Sun has a clever correspondent in Rome. On Sunday, last, April 28, one of his letters was published, which was in many respects admirable, but as regards some matters absolutely incorrect and misleading. He shows a very keen appreciation of the character of Leo XIII. In the following sentence he gives very succinctly the key to the marvellously successful character of the present Pontificate and the wonderful impression which Leo has made upon our own times: "Throughout his career, Leo XIII. has shown that his mind, so gentle and so subtle, has always been able to distinguish between what is eternal and what is mutable in the Church."

The Catholic Church is, however, the best exponent and dispenser of good actions. Her entire mission consists in doing good. Next, after the execution of her divine commission to save and win souls for heaven, comes her paternal care for the temporal welfare of God's poor, who are the most numerous in every land.

Through the sacred ministrations of her self-sacrificing Bishops and devoted priesthood, the spiritual needs of the abject poor are as zealously guarded as those of the highest in the land. Through her charitable institutions the pangs of temporal misfortune are mitigated as far as disposable human means can go. Through the active operation and commendable zeal of her Societies of St. Vincent de Paul and her angelic Sisterhoods, the abodes of wretchedness and poverty are constantly visited and the suffering inmates are soothed and consoled by the inspiring words of heavenly hope that lift up the heart and soul to the contemplation of the never-ending life beyond the grave.

But this writer quite misunderstands and misrepresents Cardinal Vaughan. I have had the privilege of meeting his Eminence and of conversing with him on this very matter, and I have read carefully what he has written about it. He, too, like Leo XIII., is able to distinguish between the eternal and the mutable in the Church. He certainly has no spirit of narrow conservatism.

A PROTESTANT MINISTER'S EXPERIENCE.

He joined the A. P. A., but Soon Left it for the Catholic Church.

Rev. W. G. Moren, who recently left the Lutheran for the Catholic Church, tells of an interesting experience, according to the Springfield (Mass.) Republican: He said he was educated for the ministry in Sweden and became a Methodist, though believing in many Catholic doctrines. When he came to this country he found the Methodist Church distasteful because it proclaimed a very high ideal and did not live up to it.

"My first charge," he said, "was in Texas, but the crops failed and they could pay me nothing, so I had to come East. In this city I got along very well, until a year ago, when my health broke down and they told me to take a rest and not trouble myself about the work, as they would look out for it; so I went away, and then those who did not like me broke out. They were all divided into factions, and because I would not pronounce the blessing after the services they made charges of not keeping the congregation in order. The president of the conference sent for me, but I was sick and could not attend and asked him to see me some other time, but he could not arrange it. Just before this I joined the A. P. A., because I wanted to see both sides, as I had long made up my mind that I must take my stand against the Roman Catholic Church or go with her.

"When I returned to this country from my visit abroad I determined to see if any Protestant Church could satisfy me, and went to see Bishop Lawrence of the Episcopal Church and asked him if I could become a clergyman of that Church. He told me I could if I passed an examination, but would be put on probation for a time and would have to secure a recommendation from any former parishioners. Afterward I went to Rev. B. S. Conroy of Worcester for books to read on the Roman Catholic Church, and by reading them I was convinced and was received into the Church." When asked if he intended to enter the priesthood he said: "If God wills it I will, but I can only wait until light has been given me."

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UNVARNISHED FACTS.

Rome always speaks with deliberation. The Papacy is the least changeable power in the world, changing not at all in dogma and rarely ever in temporal policy.

It appears that the disobedient nominal Catholic members of the condemned society in Indiana seek for defense in the allegation that the priests "do not heartily enforce the decree." We do not believe it. The priests of the Catholic Church and all the prelates of it are bound to enforce the decree, bound to inflict the prescribed penalty upon every man calling himself a Catholic and receiving the sacraments of the Church which obeys it.

When Rome speaks, all faithful Catholics obey. He who disobeys is not for Rome.—New York Sun.

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THE RUMORS reported in "Innominate" think that no question of dogma separates the Anglican Church from Rome. But the Archbishop of Canterbury probably voices the sentiment of the majority when he says as he did recently in a propos of Lord Halifax's address: "Any corporate union with Rome, so long as she retains her distinctive and erroneous doctrines, and advances her present unprimitive and unscriptural claims, is absolutely visionary and impossible."

nato's" letter of the practical endorsement of the validity of Anglican orders by the Pope and of his agreement to allow Anglican clergymen who become converts to be ordained sub conditione.

But with so many who honestly desire the truth and who long for the healing of Christendom's divisions engaged upon the matter, great good must surely result from a thorough and earnest discussion of the questions at issue. JESSE ALBERT LOCKE.

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