



A GROUP OF AINOS.

GIVING NAMES AMONG THE AINOS.

BY REV. J. BATCHELOR.

Last March in Japan I admitted an Aino to the visible Church of Christ by baptism. She is a girl of thirteen. Before the baptism took place I had great difficulty with regard to the choice of a suitable name for her. Such a selection is a very hard matter among the Ainos. It is true, indeed, that they only have one name each, like the ancient Greeks, but then they have so many superstitions and curious customs connected with this subject that the choosing of a fitting name for a person is quite a formidable task. The chief difficulties, then, connected with finding names for Aino children come from this fact.

No one may be called by the name of a person who has passed away. When anyone dies, his or her name must die also. Should the name of a dead person be applied to a boy or girl, it is supposed that it will grieve the soul of the departed, and be likely to call forth his or her displeasure. Some evil would be pretty certain to follow, for the spirit of the dead can, it is thought, act upon the living for good or evil. No person can, therefore, take the name of his dead parent, friend or ancestor. They always try to banish the very idea of death from their thoughts.

It will easily be seen, therefore, that there must always be a great want of Aino proper names, and that naming a person is a matter of great difficulty. Names in themselves are supposed by the Ainos to be lucky or unlucky, and to bring fortune or misfortune on a person, as the case may be. The people appear to invest them with power for good or evil, so superstitious are they. In short, the Ainos appear to live in a great whirl of superstition with regard to this as well as every other subject. Thus, for example, a child is of a weakly disposition, and is consequently always ailing; this is often thought to be because the name is an unfortunate one. It has, therefore, to be changed.

I have repeatedly been asked to name or rename persons, varying in age from four to eighteen, for this very reason. I know of one sickly child who is continually ill, and whose name has been changed by her parents and friends no less than four times, and only to-day I was asked, as a great favor, to think of a new and more fortunate name for her! This superstition is very deeply fixed in the mind of the Ainos, and it will take a long time to get rid of it, for such ideas among such a people die very hardly.

I mentioned above that a person must not be called after his or her ancestors or deceased relations. In the same way he

must not take the name of his living neighbors. Should such a thing be done it would be looked upon as a kind of theft, and treated accordingly. This fact probably arose from the idea that names bring good or evil, and a person needs all the good his name can bring, and does not care to have it divided up with another. In trying to find a name for a person I have several times been asked not to use such and such a name, because some one else at another village has one which sounds very much like it. Again, the name must have a good sound and meaning. That seems reasonable enough.

Choosing a name for the person I lately baptized, I suggested several before I could hit upon the right one. Thus, Rhoda would not do at all because the first syllable sounded too much like the Japanese word 'ro,' a prison, and is a word often used by the Ainos for 'prison,' so that Rhoda or Rota would mean, as the Ainos use it, 'to be in prison.' It was not the slightest use telling them that the Scripture word Rhoda had another meaning. A name with such a sound could not possibly do. I next mentioned Sarah as a venture. But even that would not do by any means; it sounded too much like the Aino word 'sara,' which is the word for an animal's tail. Such a name could not be thought of for a minute.

I next tried Eunice, but it was thought best not to take that name because it sounded very like 'junin,' which means 'pain,' and to 'suffer pain.' At last I tried Rebecca. Yes, that would do very well, indeed, for in Aino the word 'Reipeka,' which sounds very like Rebecca, means 'a fitting name.' Well, I certainly thought I had got over that trouble. But lo, about five minutes before the time appointed for the service, word came in that 'Reipeka' would not quite do; could I kindly change it? I asked why, and found that her mother, who had died some six years ago, was called 'Rerura,' the first syllable of which was very like 'Rei' in 'Reipeka'!

In sheer desperation I therefore coined a name on the spot. It was 'Tom-un-mat,' and that means 'the shining female.' To my surprise, all parties were highly delighted with it, and so she was named by it.—*Gospel in All Lands.*

TRY IT.

Speak a shade more kindly
Than the year before;
Pray a little oftener,
Love a little more;
Cling a little closer
To the Father's love;
Life below shall liker grow
To the life above.

THE TWO DIMES.

'To-morrow is Valentine's day, and I s'pose you little folks will be wanting to send somebody a valentine.'

Aunt Becky was fumbling in her little, old, green purse as she said this, and she fished out a dime and handed to each of the children.

'Oh, thank you!' they both exclaimed. Aunt Becky's dimes represented more real affection than some people's dollars, for she worked for every penny she had.

'Now good-by,' she said, kissing them both, and Jack and Jenny kissed back just as heartily. She had been making a week's visit there, and they had enjoyed it as they always did, for nobody else was always so ready to tell stories, mend mittens and dress dolls, as Aunt Becky.

'I'm so glad of this dime,' Jenny said on their way to school. 'I wanted to send Cousin Ada a valentine, but I spent every penny at Christmas, and haven't earned any since.'

'I'll have lots of fun out of mine, now you bet!' said Jack.

'I'm going to buy the very prettiest one I can find for ten cents,' said Jenny. 'Mrs. Brown has lots of 'em.'

She went in to Mrs. Brown's on her way home from school, but there was a crowd around the valentines just then, and while she waited, she looked in the ten-cent basket. Among its shop-worn and damaged worsted goods was a warm breakfast shawl. 'A bargain, isn't it?' said Mrs. Brown. 'It was a dollar last winter, but the mice got at it in the summer, and gnawed off the fringe, you see. The beauty is gone, but it's just as warm as ever.'

It flashed through Jenny's mind that Widow Stone needed just that shawl. Only that morning she had seen her out picking up wood with a pitiful rag of a shawl over her shoulders.

'She needs it more than Ada needs a valentine,' she said to herself, and without waiting to change her mind, she bought it and went out, not trusting herself to look at the valentines.

The next morning Widow Stone was surprised to find a bundle tied to her door-knob, marked in large letters:

Wear it, 'tis thine,
From your Valentine.

She was so pleased with the shawl that she hobbled across the road to show it to Jenny's mother.

'To think o' my havin' a valentine,' she said, 'when I'm more than seventy years old, and never had one before in all my born days!'

Jack's five valentines made him five new troubles, which he confided to Jenny next day at night.

'I sent one with 'A Greedy Pig' on it to my seat-mate, just for fun, you know, but he knew my writing, and he's mad and won't sit with me any more.'

'I sent a donkey dressed like a fop to Harry Jones, he's such a dandy, and he thrashed me for it at recess, though I can't think how he knew.'

'The Morse girls are awful mad about the peacock and parrot I sent them. They've found out somehow that I did it.'

'And I sent the teacher an old ape with glasses on. I'm awful ashamed now I've done it, for he is real good to us. I believe I'll never send any more such valentines.'

'I wouldn't,' said Jenny.—*Youth's Companion.*

VALENTINES.

'Nanny!' said he, said he,
'Danny!' said she, said she.
'Do you know that to-morrow—
Oh grief! and oh, sorrow!
St. Valentine's Day will be, will be,
St. Valentine's Day will be!'

'Sorrow?' said she, said she,
'Sorrow!' said he, said he,
'Because I can't write
A bit of a note
Your Valentine for to be, to be,
Your Valentine for to be.'

'Danny!' said she, said she,
'Nanny!' said he, said he,
'To write there's no need,
Because I can't wead!
So let's play that the Val'ntines is we, is we,
Let's play that the Val'ntines is we!'

LAURA E. RICHARDS.

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