

forte. They pride themselves in lying. There is no country in which life has been held so cheap. It has even been said that they have had but one punishment for all offences, small or great, and that one was *death*. A redeeming feature in Japanese society, however, deserves mention—the non-existence of polygamy. Woman is recognized as a companion and not treated as a mere chattel or a slave. In this respect her position is vastly superior to that of women in the East generally, and it shews itself in the superiority of character and the greater prevalence of domestic virtues. One of the first fruits of the new *regime* in Japan was the appointment of an influential embassy to visit Europe and America. When in London, the ambassadors are said to have asked Queen Victoria what was the secret of England's greatness, and to have received for reply a copy of the Bible. It was not long until a thousand of the most intelligent young men of Japan were selected and sent to England and America to receive a liberal education at the public expense. Most of these returned to spread the civilization and, in some cases, the religion which they had also acquired among their countrymen. The ancient religion of Japan is *Sintooism*, the chief diety being the Sun-Goddess, who is considered too sacred to be addressed herself in prayer and is therefore invoked by inferior dieties, of whom there are reckoned 492 gods and 2640 diedied men who have their temples, priests, and priestesses. The chief end of their religion is happiness in this world. Of the future state of rewards and punishments they seem to have no defined idea. Buddhism was introduced in A. D. 69, and is now the prevalent religion of the country. The higher classes affect *Confucianism*.

The existence of Japan was first made known to Europe by Marco Polo on his return from China in 1295, but it was not until 1542 that it was actually discovered by a shipwrecked crew. In 1549, Francis Xavier, the famous "apostle of the Indies," landed with his companions, and was the first to introduce Christianity. He met with little opposition. Indeed, when some of the heathen priests requested the Mikado to expel the foreign monks, he asked how many religious sects they already had in Japan. Thirty-five was the reply. "Well, said he, where thirty-five sects can be tolerated, we can easily bear with thirty-six." The new religion spread rapidly. In a single month Xavier baptized 10,000 persons, and in one city, 3,000. In 1587 it received its first shock, in a persecution of great severity. The Jesuits becoming more exacting and tyrannical, the Tycoon became alarmed, and issued a proclamation prohibiting his subjects under pain of death from embracing Christianity. Twenty-seven

were then executed as a warning to the rest. In 1590, no fewer than 20,370 Christians were put to death. In 1597, a third persecution followed. Forty years later, a fourth, more severe than ever, for in 1637, on one day, the 12th of April, 37,000 Christians were put to death. The Spaniards and Portuguese were finally expelled from the empire, and out of 2,000,000 converts there only remained 12,000. To the credit of the Jesuits be it added, that in three years from that time they sent out a fresh band of heroic missionaries numbering seventy-three persons. On their arrival at Nagasaki they were arrested, and all but twelve were beheaded, the rest were only spared that they might go back to those who sent them with the message, that "should the King of Portugal, nay, the very God of the Christians presume to enter Japan, they would serve him in the same manner." At that time was instituted the annual festival, only recently abolished, of "trampling upon the cross," as the most significant symbol that could be devised of their determination for ever to renounce Christ and His religion.

To the Americans belongs the credit of being the first to establish commercial relations with Japan. On the first of July, 1853, a powerful American squadron under the command of Commodore Perry entered the harbour of Yeddo, and after much difficult negotiation he succeeded in delivering to the Japanese officials a letter addressed to the Emperor by the President of the United States, demanding protection for American seamen wrecked on the coast, and, if possible, to conclude a commercial treaty. In February, 1854, he returned with a larger fleet for an answer. In March, a treaty was agreed upon, opening certain ports for commerce, and providing for the residence of consuls. Treaties with Great Britain and other nations followed soon after. One concession led to another. First, the foreigners were allowed the free exercise of their religion, and were permitted to build churches in certain places. Christian missionaries could again enter the Empire as citizens; they could study the language and thus prepare themselves for future labours. Then European ideas began to prevail and precipitated the great revolution of 1868, already referred to, by which Japan was practically opened to the world, and, in a measure, to the Gospel. It is necessary to use this qualification in speaking of the introduction of Protestant missions in Japan, for the liberty enjoyed by missionaries and foreigners generally amounts as yet only to *toleration*. They are still confined, as to their residence, to a few towns mentioned in the treaties. Special permission, which is often granted, however, must be obtained before they can go elsewhere. The old laws against Christianity have not yet been form-