

In the Land of Opportunity

The missionary party, in which were Verbeck and his wife, sailed from New York in the ship *Surprise*, at noon of Saturday, May 7, 1859. They were bound for Shanghai, depending on the wind to waft them. Rev. S. R. Brown, D. D., who won an honored name as missionary, translator, and teacher, whose Japanese pupils have nobly adorned their country's history, and Duane B. Simmons, M. D., who made an imperishable mark in the annals of medical science in Japan and in the invaluable study of Japanese private law, continued by Professor Wigmore, with their wives, were also in the party.

"How well I remember the sailing of the good ship '*Surprise*,' May, 1859, from New York harbor, with flags flying, and amid firing of cannon when the first missionaries to Japan, three men and their wives, set sail on an embassy of mercy to the far-famed Zipangu! How well I remember the youthful face and blonde hair of the tall, sedate, and thoughtful Guido F. Verbeck."

So spoke his co-laborer, Rev. James H. Ballagh, on March 12, 1898. As he said further: "Alas, that youthful form after exhausting labors, . . . is to-day to be borne by devout men to his peaceful resting-place in '*The Evergreen Mount*,' Awoyama!"

Nagasaki is in our day distant, in time, from New York, about three weeks. Then the voyage required months. In thirty-one days they crossed the equatorial line, and on June 30 were



**MESSRS. F. VERBECK, S. R. BROWN,
AND D. B. SIMMONS.**

Verbeck of Japan

as it were, of the Reformed Church mission took position in Japan.

In order that the missionaries should not all so crowd into one place as to alarm the Japanese at the invasion, Mr. Verbeck thought of staying first in Shanghai for a while through the winter to study the language, expecting to go to Nagasaki in the spring. However, on taking counsel of Dr. Williams and others, he decided to go at once.

On November 4th, leaving his wife behind and going ahead as a prospector and pioneer, he reached Nagasaki harbor on the night of November 7th. The next morning after a journey from New York of one hundred and eighty-seven days, he beheld the land of promise, Everlasting Great Japan, and touched its sacred soil with his feet.

Let us realize what the situation was, as known and unknown to the young missionary, Guido Verbeck, in the early sixties, when the Civil War was raging in the United States, and the war clouds were gathering in Japan. What was the religious and political situation?

Japan at this time had about thirty million souls within her borders. The population had stood stationary for over a century. The suppression of Christianity, the expulsion of foreigners from southern Europe, the confinement of the Dutch to Nagasaki and the limitation of all intercourse with outsiders to that port, the exclusion of all foreign ideas and influences and the inclusion of the people within an order of things expected to be permanent, was contemporaneous with the rise of the Tokugawa family, as founded by Iyéyasü, in 1604. The development and con-

hopeless exile for political offenders. In the south the Luchu or Riu Kiu Islands received an annual visit of one junk from Satsuma, to receive the marks of nominal vassalage. Formosa was the far-off land, shadowy in mythology and known in fairy tales. There centuries before, Japanese buccaneers had won fame and glory. Indeed Japanese pirates, during the three centuries before Iyéyasü, had been making themselves lively and famous from Tartary to Siam. It is no wonder that as late as 1894, a Chinese emperor should, even in an official document speak of the Wo-jin, or "dwarf pirates" of Japan that had for centuries impressed them-

A Glance at Old Japan

selves on the Chinese imagination, especially in the nursery, very much as the Normans in Europe had upon their minds of civilized people. On both continents the raids left their mark in many a blackened ruin and devastated and depopulated coast, as well as in litany, in nursery tale, and the frightening of rebel children by their maternal suzerains. Traditionally Korea belonged to Japan, for myth and legend, reinforced by invasions, notably the great one of 1592-1597, declared the peninsular kingdom to be but an appanage of Nippon. The country alleged to be of Japanese ownership was not only the land of tigers, of art, of wealth, and the fatherland of Buddhism, but also of the exploits of Kato and Konishi. Korea, in Japanese eyes, existed only by the suffrages and mercy of Japan.

Nevertheless at that one place of Nagasaki, the single window and gateway through which Japan looked upon the world, there was sufficiency of government, with constant scrutiny. The "walls had ears" and the velvet paw had claws within it. Here was the one place of foreign intercourse, trade, and traffic with Europe and China. The Dutch ships brought news, science, and apparatus, as well as material commodities from Europe, germs for the soil both earthly and spiritual. The Chinese junks made it possible for an occasional Japanese to slip away to China, or for Chinese to bring books. In the masonry of the Tycoon system these messengers of the sea were as birds that dropped seed,

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which growing up with roots, threatened to dislocate the structure. Despite all the contempt and ridicule of the *Déshima* Dutchman, powerfully exaggerated through the jealousy and covetousness of other and envious traders, these men taught the Japanese seekers after wisdom their language and science. Already in the empire, unknown to Mr. Verbeck or to other foreigners, there were hundreds of men of inquiring spirit, seeking knowledge through the Dutch language, practicing medicine according to the European principles and even seeking the light of Christianity through Dutch books, Chinese versions of the New Testament, the whole Bible, or such publications of Christian missionaries in China as were brought over from time to time by the Chinese sailors. There were also men, probably already thousands in number, politically opposed to the duarchy or division of power between Yedo and Kioto, who were bitterly hostile to the Tycoon. These were eagerly looking, awaiting the day when there should be revolution and change, through the overthrow of the Yedo government. They could not foresee just how this was to come, and in most cases the idea of each clansman was that his own clan should be paramount, even as that of the Tokugawa clan had become supreme and held power during two centuries or more. In many ways the desire for more light was showing itself and men were eager to know and possess the secrets of power held by the nations of the West.

With the Japanese servant of the United States Consul, he quickly sought out the two young American Episcopal missionaries, of about his own age, who had been in China several years, but had been transferred to Japan the previous summer. They were both bachelors—the Rev. John Liggins, English by birth but educated in an American Seminary, and the Rev. M. C. Williams, afterward the beloved bishop of Japan. They offered the newcomer, for whom they had long been waiting, shelter and hospitalities. Registering under the United States Consul's protection, though as yet Mr. Verbeck was not a naturalized American citizen, he next sought for a house. Not finding one he desired in a foreign quarter, he tried to get one among the Japanese, who, though they did not absolutely refuse to furnish shelter, did all they could to weary out the stranger by vague promises and delays, so that he had to run about from place to place like a much-befooled apprentice among journeymen old in the craft of deception. He finally rented a very good house for six months at sixteen dollars a month.

It was an experience that seemed to open the windows of heaven into their home when, three days after its father's thirtieth birthday, the first Christian baby born in Japan since "the reopening" of the country saw the light of the day amid the camphor trees and bamboo groves and blossoming plum trees of Nagasaki. They called the little stranger "Emma Japonica." The story of her life is soon told. Let us read it in the language of the father's heart. "On the 26th of January, [1860], we were rejoiced by a dear little daughter, the first Christian infant born in Japan since its reopening to the world. After one week of apparent health, and another of ailing and drooping, the Lord in His wisdom took her little soul to Himself, on the 9th inst. On the Sabbath before her death, I baptized our daughter, 'Emma Japonica,' the first Christian baptism in Japan for centuries. Our sorrow at this sudden bereavement is deep indeed! How many hopes disappointed and prospective joys turned into mourning! The harder to bear in a heathen wilderness and solitude."

Services of Christian worship begun by the Bishop of Victoria, were continued by Mr. Williams. At first the foreigners met in the Buddhist temple, the walls resounding in the solemn notes of our beloved Old Hundred. Then they were held in a large upper room above a warehouse on Déshima, "so that the first Christian service held on Déshima, since more than two centuries, are English services and held by an American." About this time Mr. Verbeck began to "load and prime" the vanguard of the innumerable army of writers who have each "perpetrated a book" upon Japan. Some of these knights of the notebook were merciless in their quizzing, as if Mr. Verbeck were an encyclopædia of knowledge concerning the Japanese and their country.

“Present Japan—this beautiful Japan came from beyond the sea. I, by saying this, have not a bit of mind to shame you, but am rather one of those who admire the wisdom of having implanted, within the short time of thirty years, all the western things, which have been the result of several hundred years' labor.

“Generally speaking, the people in those times seemed not to know anything of patriotism, so much spoken of at present. The word *chūgi* was always on the mouth of the then warriors, by which they meant fealty to their lords, self-surrender to the cause of their masters. Those samurai knew of the existence of their clan, but nothing about Japan.”

All over the land in city, town, and village, by ferry and in market, we must remember the anti-Christian edicts hung with the other ko-satsu, or little notice boards in plain view of all. We give the text of 1862:

“The Christian religion has been prohibited for many years. If any one is suspected, a report must be made at once.

“REWARDS.

“To the informer of a *bateren* (father), 500 pieces of silver.

“To the informer of an *iruman* (brother), 300 pieces of silver.

“To the informer of a Christian who once recanted, 300 pieces of silver.

“To the informer of a Christian or catechist, 300 pieces of silver.

“To the informer of a family who shelters any of the above, 300 pieces of silver.

“The above rewards will be given. If any one will inform concerning his own family, he will be rewarded with 500 pieces of silver, or according to the information he furnishes. If any one conceals an offender, and the fact is detected, then the head man of the village in which the concealer lives, and the ‘five-men-company’ to which he belongs, and his family and relatives, will all be punished together.”

The prince of Satsuma was for some reason in a very angry humor when returning from Yedo, on the 14th of September. In his train were about a hundred men, who preceded him in a single file on either side of the road. All wore swords, according to custom. Three English gentlemen and a lady were riding along the road and were attacked by the Satsuma clansmen, two of the Englishmen being severely wounded and the other cut to death. The wounds were dressed by Dr. J. C. Hepburn of the American Mission. Mr. Richardson was so badly wounded that he fell from his horse to the road. His body was afterward hacked and speared, for it was then the common custom for the two-sworded men to practice with their weapons upon dead bodies. Concerning this altercation, Mr. Verbeck wrote on September 29th:

“At first view it would seem rather strange that so many murders and attacks should be perpetrated at Yedo and Kanagawa, and not in a single instance at Nagasaki; yet I think this difference can be accounted for. The nearness of Kanagawa to Yedo, with its hosts of arrogant officials and petty nobles; its nearness to the Tokaido, the great highway of the empire, frequently thronged by travelling princes with their numerous retainers; the probable desire of the government to see all foreign trade carried on at the greatest possible distance from the two cap-

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itals, perhaps at Nagasaki rather than at any other port in the empire; the foreigners' general want of appreciation of the higher classes and nobility among Asiatics, and the consequent seeming (to the natives) or real overbearing conduct of foreigners toward natives of high rank; the probably decided antipathy of a few princes at or near Yedo against all foreign intercourse whatsoever, all these, and perhaps a few minor circumstances more, sufficiently account for the frequent collisions between foreigners and natives."

In mid-July he wrote:

"My little Bible class of two goes on encouragingly; one of the scholars translates my notes on the Scriptures into Japanese. He told me some days ago, that he thought that the exclusiveness of his country and any past misunderstandings with foreigners, were owing to a want of knowledge of the nature and tendency of the Christian religion, and that the best preventive of future troubles would be to acquaint his countrymen with these, and that therefore he would write out my explanations in the common popular style of writing."

The next letter is dated in Shanghai. It shows how he proposed to spend his precious moments even in exile from his post, in studying the Chinese characters, so necessary for the reading of ordinary Japanese books. It eventuated that Mr. Verbeck was of great benefit in getting under way facilities for printing Japanese script. In a sense, he was, with Mr. Gamble, the founder of the printing press of Japan.