

be no doubt that the Chinese struck as fiercely and as directly at Christianity, as any persecuting Roman Emperor did; a glance at the edicts issued during the last few months will prove that at once. I would especially call attention to the proclamation issued on August 7 last by Chang, Viceroy of the Hukuang provinces, and one of the most liberal-minded and pro-foreign satraps in China, 'in obedience,' as he says himself, 'to the Imperial edict of the 2nd of August received through Yuan, Governor of Shantung, per despatch dated 5th of August.' In the proclamation the Christians are practically asked to renounce their religion or endure the heaviest penalties of the law; and, apart altogether from the edicts, the conduct of the Chinese authorities in very many districts was exactly that of the old Roman prefects—'Renounce Christianity or die.' Many Chinese Christians no doubt renounced their faith, but we know for certain that many more refused to do so and died in consequence. Now I do not see how we can withhold from these men the title of martyr, which we apply to those who died under exactly similar circumstances in the early ages of the Church, and I hope and trust that the day will come when the Holy Father will canonize them as he has canonized the Japanese who died at Nagasaki in exactly the same case and under almost the same conditions some 300 years ago.

#### THE BRAVERY OF THE CONVERTS.

The sceptical may be inclined to question the truth of these stories of wholesale massacre, and, after the succession of glaring falsehoods that have emanated from the tap-rooms of Shanghai, their want of belief can be easily understood. But they must bear in mind the fact that while there was a tendency among newspaper correspondents to exaggerate the dangers and difficulties to which the *Corps Diplomatique* and other foreigners in Peking were exposed till the middle of August last no such tendency existed with regard to the native Christians; quite contrariwise. Your correspondent has carefully read much of the news that has emanated from Peking up to the moment of writing and that is his impression, an impression which is strengthened into certainty by other circumstances. That the Europeans who were shut up in Peking and their friends throughout the world should, in their common agony of apprehension, pay little or no attention to the condition of the native Christians was but natural under the circumstances, but the besieged foreigners seem to have pushed their indifference a little too far. Early in the history of the siege the missionaries shut up in the British Legation had sought permission for 3000 converts to come within the defended line. Permission was refused, and every urgent request, written and verbal, was met by 'impossible.' Whether these men and women were to be left to their fate because those responsible feared treachery or famine or to be burdened does not appear. It is not a pleasant tale to tell, though happily the converts were finally permitted to occupy a neighboring palace. This concession was made owing to the vigorous representations made on their behalf by Dr. Morrison. The famous correspondent of the *Times* has no love for missionaries, but his 'boy,' who is a Catholic, persuaded him to save his (the boy's) father and mother, and the experience had such a good effect on the Doctor and threw such a new light on the convert question that Sir Claude MacDonald was shortly after surprised to hear the journalistic missionary hater pleading for the admission of the converts who were happily, as I have said, allowed to occupy a deserted palace in the line of defence. Happily, for now it is stated that these very men who were to have been abandoned to their fate 'saved the situation.' The palace they occupied afforded a better vantage-ground against the Legation than the besiegers were able to find elsewhere, and their labor it was that built the barricades and dug the trenches.

Unfortunately, however, the Europeans seem to have labored under the delusion that the Christians could get on very well without food, for even the Japanese journalists were horrified at their appearance. 'They are most lean and wretched,' wrote one, 'and, having no possessions, have been reduced to live on weeds and grass. Some of them are living skeletons, several have already died of hunger, and it is to be feared that many of the rest will never recover from the effects of the terrible privations to which they have been subjected.'

It is unfortunate, by the way, that the Japanese war correspondents—all of whom are now Christians—are about the only Pressmen who have so far condescended to give us any particulars about these unfortunate people, who, whatever may be said against them, were at all events suffering for their faith. It may be possible indeed that the future historian of this war and of the causes that led to it will, when he comes to deal with these converts, have to refer to the despatches of the officers and newspapermen of Japan in preference to those of Europe. It is certainly to the credit of the Japanese military authorities that they protected these unfortunate sufferers on more than one occasion.

The Christians were not in all cases, however, helpless sufferers: in three or four instances they defended themselves with magnificent courage, but never unless a European Catholic missionary led them. In one case a young Lazarist whose church is situated in a village outside Peking got his flock to combine and to give such a good account of themselves, thanks to some old muskets and to the excellent military capacity of the good Father, that they were able to hold out for weeks until help arrived.

#### THE DEFENCE OF THE CATHOLIC CATHEDRAL.

But the great and classic instance of successful resistance by Chinese Christians under missionary guidance is undoubtedly the heroic defence of the Peitang or Catholic Cathedral at Peking. Full particulars of that defence have not yet come to hand, but we already know enough to feel astonished at the bravery and the stubbornness of the defenders. There were in the church Bishop Favier, six or seven priests, some 20 Sisters, and some 2000 native converts, men, women, and children, with 30 French and 10 Italian guards, only 40 rifles in all. A Japanese newspaper correspondent who was in the British Legation, and whose diary of the siege has

recently appeared in the *Tokyo Asatai*, speaks in several places of heavy firing coming from the direction of the Cathedral, which was completely cut off from the foreign quarter, being indeed in a different part of the city altogether, and separated from Legation street by the Forbidden and the Imperial cities. The firing sometimes broke out at night; it was sometimes accompanied by the tremendous explosions of mines, and on one occasion the authorities in the British Legation learned that no fewer than 1500 Boxers had simultaneously attacked the building. No attempt was made to relieve the heroic Bishop and his flock, and any such attempt would indeed have been madness, but I wonder if anyone enjoying the comparative safety of the Legation had time to think, as these ominous sounds were wafted to his ear over the battlements of the Imperial Palace, of the state of agony in which those unfortunate nuns must have been plunged, for, whatever Lady MacDonald and her friends could do, they could not hasten their death by one second, or avoid a single drop of the cup of torture, ignominy, and shame that they would surely have to drain to the bitter dregs once they fell into the hands of their fiendish enemies. On June 23 the Japanese correspondent above alluded to notes that during the night the roar of artillery from the direction of Peitang announced that the Cathedral was being vigorously attacked; on the 26th there were rejoicings in the Chinese camp, and it seemed as if the valiant defenders of the church had fallen. 'We could not ascertain what the celebration was for,' says the diarist, 'but we were deafened all day by the sound of innumerable fire crackers going off in the enemy's camp. . . . A great noise of drums, gongs, and bugles was heard in the enemy's camp at midnight. What can it mean?'

It certainly looked as though the Cathedral had fallen, and it is almost miraculous indeed that it escaped. It was defended, as I have already said, by only 40 rifles, and when one of the riflemen fell his weapon was handed to a native convert. The enemy exploded five mines altogether under the besieged, in one of which some 80 persons, principally women and children and five Italian guards, were killed. For three-quarters of an hour the Italian officer was buried in the debris thrown up by this explosion, but was finally unearthed almost unhurt. After the relief another large mine was discovered under the church itself, whose explosion would have caused a tremendous loss of life. Electric conductors were found in the mine. The Peitang beat the Legations in one thing, in that the converts succeeded in capturing one of the enemy's guns with its ammunition and in making ammunition for it, under the direction of a missionary, with more than a tincture of chemistry, when the captured supply came to an end. For two months, as I have already stated, there was no communication between Peitang and the Legations, and neither knew how the other was faring. At the end of that time the rations at the Peitang were reduced to two ounces of rice a day per head, with a little horse meat for the fighting men, and if the relief had not come when it did the majority of the 2000 converts, the priests and the Sisters must have died of starvation—if they succeeded in escaping a worse fate.

#### A FRUITFUL RETREAT.

That two months' siege will leave an indelible mark on all who took part in it, on all of the besieged at least, for it undoubtedly brought them nearer to God. The priests saw in their flock qualities hitherto unsuspected; the Chinese found the priests ready to lay down their lives for them, and not hastening like other missionaries to the shelter of their Legation; the rough sailors and officers who, some of them, despised both missionaries and converts, had had their eyes opened in such a way that they will never be shut again, and all had an opportunity for making the longest 'retreat' they have ever made in their lives, or are ever likely to make—the longest retreat and by far the most fervent and fruitful. Everybody in the church belonged to the true Faith, and consequently everyone confessed and received the Blessed Sacrament regularly, besides assisting, of course, in the devotions that were carried on in the intervals of the fighting. Bishop Favier is a singularly eloquent and persuasive preacher, but it is doubtful if he will ever again sway the hearts of a congregation and carry them completely along with him as he did during those two dreadful months with death ever at the door and daily making incursions among them. The devotional exercises were interrupted somewhat at first by the impact of bullets against the inner walls of the church, but in course of time this trifling annoyance was as much disregarded as if it had been nothing more than the pattering of rain on the window-panes. In spite of the fasting and the watching everyone was cheerful. The four walls of the church seemed to shelter a fervent community of early Christians. The nuns, who occupied, of course, a place apart from the others, were particularly noticeable for their care of the wounded, their forgetfulness of themselves, and their helpfulness to all. They can tell better than anyone else why the allies entered Peking on the eve of the Assumption.

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