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Signs of the Times

THE WAR AND FAMINE IN CHINA



WAR and famine still devastate the Flowery Kingdom, which we may soon begin to call the "Flowery Republic." The provisional republican government demands the abdication of the Manchu rulers as a first condition of peace. The armistice has been broken occasionally by minor hostilities, and the country has been harried by marauding bands of robbers and the rabble.

Missionary work is almost at a standstill, with foreigners recalled to the treaty ports, schools closed, and churches generally in charge only of native workers. The prospect is, however, that with the return of peace even larger opportunities will be given for preaching the Gospel.

Recent cable dispatches indicate that the Manchus have consented to give over the reins of government and to retire on a pension, but the edict is not yet signed. Yuan Shi Kai is mentioned as the first president of the

republic. He insists that any final decision as to the future government must be subject to the popular vote. The revolutionists demand that the capital be removed to Nanking.

The most threatening danger at present is the wide-spread famine, which is causing terrible destitution as a result of the floods last August. The great Hwai River Valley region, measuring about 100 by 300 miles, the neighborhood of Wuhu, on the Yangtse, and the province of Hunan were affected, and famine has followed the waters. Almost three million people are starving. Many are shelterless and nearly unclothed. There are very few charitable institutions, and such destitution as prevails is unheard of in more progressive countries. Many sufferers have lost heart and will not try to help themselves. Bodies of men, women and children are lying on the road, where the starving people had dropt. None cared enough to bury them. A few years ago the majority of these men were successful farmers. The

* The editors seek to preserve accuracy and to manifest the spirit of Christ in the pages of this Review, but do not acknowledge responsibility for opinions expressed, or positions taken by contributors to signed articles in these pages.—EDITORS.

a great portion of her time and money to charitable work, for the most part in connection with the Christian missions in India.

Seven sons and one daughter have blessed the union of the Raja and Rani. The Raja has provided a splendid education for all of them, sending all of them except one son living. every one of his children, including his daughter, to England for schooling. Three of the sons successfully passed the barrister-at-law examination. Two of these three, however, are employed in government service and one shortly is to begin practising as a lawyer. Another son is in the Indian medical service. The rest still are receiving education. The Raja's second son is married to an English woman. Miss Harnam Singh is a

charming young woman, still unmarried and living at home with her parents.

The career of the Raja forcefully reminds one of the prince who came to Christ to ask the way to eternal life. Christ commanded him to sell all he had and give to the poor; but the young man lacked the courage of his convictions and sought an easier way to save his soul. Raja Sir Harnam Singh took Christ literally, and set about at once to forsake the treasures of earth, and lay up for himself treasures in heaven. By so doing he has not only gained for himself the Kingdom of God, but has enthroned himself in the hearts of men as a man among men, a faithful friend, a king at heart, even if he is without an earthly throne. and a temporal Kingdom.

A SIBERIAN EXILE CONVERTED

"Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days."

BY REV. LOUIS MEYER, D.D.



GERSON BRESSIN was a member of the Jewish sect which, founded as a protest against overgrown formalism at the close of the eighteenth century, lays stress upon the more mystic and emotional side of religion. Quietly he lived with his wife and their five children in the little town of Lachowitshe, in the province of Minsk, in Russia, studying the holy books of the fathers, especially the Talmud and the Cabala, and paying little attention to outside matters. But the great persecutions of the Jews in Russia broke out in 1882, and Gerson Bressin was deeply stirred and aroused, tho he and his family did not suffer directly from

them. In scathing terms he attacked the unchristian actions of these men and women who represented to him the Christian Church, and he condemned the persecutions publicly with bitter words. His actions and speeches were observed by the Russian police, who were watching carefully all Jews for any sign of what is called rebellion against the Czar, and in the beginning of the winter of 1883 an imperial edict, signed by the chief of the cabinet of Alexander II, was read to Gerson Bressin. He and his family had been condemned to lifelong exile to Siberia, and must start at once in spite of the severity of the Russian winter.

Six weeks the exiled Jew, his wife

and their five children walked through the snow and ice, benumbed and almost frozen by the chilling wind sweeping across the steppes of Russia, which they must traverse, watched by merciless soldiers of the Czar, who were only too glad to increase the sufferings of the exiled Jews. At last Tomsk in Siberia was reached. It was to be the future home of the family, and there they settled.

The pious father looked upon the great disaster which had befallen him and his family as a just punishment of God for his negligence in observing the divine commandments and precepts and for his attempts to gain earthly treasures. He wrote a few essays in classical Hebrew, in which he clearly showed his sufferings, but also his continued faith in God's help, and he studied only the more diligently his holy books, the Talmud, which is the traditions of the Jewish fathers, and the Cabala, the mystic philosophy of pious Jews. Carefully he instructed his three sons in the secrets and mysteries of these books, and he rejoiced because the oldest of these sons, Elias (born in 1862), showed especial interest and became proficient very quickly.

Soon, however, this eldest son began to doubt the divine authority of the Talmud, upon which his father so strenuously insisted, especially since many of its sayings seemed to him frivolous and absurd, and he felt it impossible that its fables and its superstitions could be really inspired by God. This feeling increased when, in the providence of God, he turned to the Old Testament and read its books carefully and thoughtfully. Thus Elias Bressin laid aside all faith in the traditions of the fathers, the Talmud,

which practically takes the place of the Old Testament in the life of the Orthodox Jew, and an internal struggle commenced which came near causing the shipwreck of all his faith in Judaism. It did not bring him into the light, for there was no man near to say to him, "How readest thou?" He left his bed at midnight that he might pray with crying and tears for the Holy Spirit; but the peace, the internal quiet, of an elect and consecrated man of God, which the Cabala promised, Elias Bressin did not find.

Thus the year 1886 arrived. In Kishinef a Jewish lawyer, Joseph Rabinowitz, had arisen. He had found the Messiah as he was seated upon the Mount of Olives and contemplated the deplorable state of the Holy City and the dispersion of his own people. In faith he had become a preacher of righteousness unto his brethren in his home-city, and many of them surrounded him as he spoke of his faith in Jesus Christ. The news of this apostate soon spread among the Jews in Russia, and finally reached the colony of exiled Jews in Tomsk, in Siberia. Among these exiles was a learned Jew, Jacob Zebi Scheinmann, who had publicly acknowledged his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ in his home in Poland in 1871, and had so aroused the hatred and anger of his Jewish brethren that they conspired against him, and succeeded in having him exiled to Siberia three years later. Scheinmann had remained faithful to Christ all the years in Siberia, but he had not dared to testify to his faith. One day he entered the post-office at Tomsk, and saw upon a table a number of packages with printed matter, which could not be delivered to the addressees. Among

them were several which, he could see from the outside, contained writings of Rabinowitz, which had been published and sent out by the Central Organization for Israel in Leipsic. Scheinmann asked and obtained permission to take these seemingly valueless packages home, and he carried them away with great joy. A careful reading of them so increased his faith that he decided to write to their author and commence at once to testify himself for his Lord. The letter to Joseph Rabinowitz brought an encouraging answer and also a few copies of the New Testament translated into Hebrew by Franz Delitzsch. They gave Scheinmann the thought to organize a class of young men for their study, and he sent out invitations among the Jews of Tomsk. A number of young men came, and soon a regular Bible class was organized. Among its most attentive members was Elias Bressin.

After many days of earnest study of the Word of God, the Holy Spirit began to illumine the hearts of some of the members of the class. Three of them were savingly converted, among them Elias Bressin, but, for his family's sake and on account of the weakness of his faith, he never thought of being baptized. He was converted—there can be no doubt of that fact—but there was none to indoctrinate him and lead him on in his Christian life, his teacher Scheinmann seemingly believing baptism of a Hebrew Christian unnecessary.

Years went by. Elias Bressin was married to a Jewish wife, from whom he never hid his faith in Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah of his people. He was prosperous and lived in outward happiness and ease.

Then health began to weaken, and in the spring of 1910 it had become so impaired that the physicians sent him to Bad Nauheim in Germany, that there he might seek and find health. He found at last full spiritual health. In Bad Nauheim, which is attended by numerous German, Polish, and Russian Jews, the Lord so ordered the steps of Elias Bressin that, instead of renting rooms from one of the numerous Jewish families of the place, he moved into those which were kept by a truly Christian family. He was received well and gladly, and the people took great interest in the quiet Jewish man from far-away Siberia, of whose dim but real faith in the Savior they knew nothing. Acquaintance ripened into friendship, and Bressin, now for the first time face to face with true Christian discipleship, one day took courage and told the story of his life. The Christian friends were deeply stirred. Prayerfully and faithfully they dealt with the weak disciple and helped him on. The pastor of the Lutheran Church was called upon for spiritual aid, and finally a message was sent to one of the Jewish missionaries in Frankfort, which is not far from Bad Nauheim. He came gladly to take charge of the work of instructing his Jewish brother. Bressin grew in faith, and finally made application to be baptized.

On July 17, 1910, Elias Bressin was publicly baptized in the City Church of Bad Nauheim. The audience was small, but in it was the Jewish physician under whose medical care the stranger from Siberia was. He was so profoundly stirred and impressed by Bressin's faith and manifest sincerity that, when leaving the church with the missionary at the close of the cere-

mony, he said, "I wish that I had progressed so far as he," and showed signs of deep emotion.

Elias Bressin himself was full of spiritual joy and of thanksgiving that at last he had found that rest and peace in Christ after which he had been groping, like a blind man, many years. His health improved, and he returned to his home at Tomsk, de-

termined to be a witness to the Lord Jesus Christ in his home and among his people. That he has been faithful is proved by a recent letter to his Christian friends in Bad Nauheim, in which he announces that his wife also has found Christ, and expects to proceed to Bad Nauheim that she also may publicly witness to her faith in Christ.



THE FLOOD THAT CAUSES THE FAMINE IN CHINA

THE GRIEVOUS FAMINE IN CHINA



MILLIONS of people in China will be facing starvation and pestilence unless help is immediately forthcoming. The terrible prospect of the worst winter known for forty years was already before the country, when there came the news of the cruel burning of Hankow by soldiery and the looting of Tsingkiangpu and other cities. War and floods have rendered millions shelterless and hungry.

Much of this suffering can be relieved, and in the famine district much

can be done to prevent its repetition. The devastation has been wrought by the rivers breaking their dykes and overflowing the cultivated lands, producing wide-spread destruction of property and loss of life. The summer crops have been destroyed, and as the areas submerged have all been regions where agriculture is the mainstay of the people, the inhabitants have been left destitute and will die in great numbers unless they are relieved. Thousands of miles of territory have thus been inundated, taking innumerable villages and farms with them.