

AN AMERICAN MISSIONARY IN JAPAN

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BY
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CHAPTER XX.

CHRISTIANITY AND NEW JAPAN.

WHAT relation is there between Christianity and the New Japan described in the preceding chapter?

New Japan is largely a product of Christian influences.

Notice that I do not say that it is the product of Christian influences only. I cordially subscribe to the opinion advanced by Dr. W. E. Griffis in "The Mikado's Empire," that there were internal forces at work in Japan, which would have brought about a revolution in the national life, even though outside influences had not come into play. The presence of Commodore Perry's fleet in Japanese waters but quickened the action of revolutionary forces, which had long been in operation.

Notice further that in using the term "Christian influences," I mean something far wider than the direct efforts of the missionaries. Christian civilization has made

itself felt as a mighty power in Japan. Granted the existence of internal revolutionary tendencies, the indisputable facts remain that Perry's visit did precipitate this national revolution, and that the impact of Christian civilization gave form to the new civilization of Japan.

When the nation was unwillingly aroused from its slumber of two and a half centuries, whither did it go for its teachers and models? Not to China, or India, or Persia, or to any unchristian nation, but—as the result clearly shows, and as one of the two leading statesmen of that formative period once stated in my presence, — they deliberately took the civilization of Christian countries as their pattern. Their first railways, light-houses, and telegraphs were built by men from Christian England. Their soldiers were trained by Frenchmen, and their army organized like that of France. Their physicians were educated mainly by Germans. The teachers and text-books in their schools were largely from the United States, and to our Christian colleges and universities hundreds of their youth were sent for higher instruction. Their customs service, their postal, legal, educational, and political systems were obvi-

ously borrowed from Christian lands. Even their old calendar was given up, and the Gregorian calendar of Christendom adopted, and the Christian Sunday made a rest day for all officials, and for the teachers and pupils of the public schools.

It is not contended that these systems are all in complete accord with the teaching of Christ, but it is maintained that that teaching has been a formative principle to the civilization of which these systems are a part. Above all, contact with this civilization through its representatives in Japan, or by visits to foreign lands, brought the Japanese into relation with men permeated by the Christian spirit. The personal influence of Christian statesmen of America, England, or Germany over individual Japanese statesmen has been deeply felt and acknowledged. It is, for example, an open secret that when Count Ito, who afterwards framed the national constitution, visited Germany, he was remarkably affected by the evidently sincere declarations of the Emperor William and Prince Bismarck that the Christian religion is essential to the prosperity of Japan. The influence of Christian teachers and other employees of the government has been benefi-

cent in its results. Even those who have taken a position antagonistic to Christianity have not been able to disguise the fact that they were educated in schools founded by Christian self-sacrifice, and guided and ruled by Christian men ; and that they themselves were products of a culture permeated by Christian ideals. Not only the public men and institutions of Christendom, but the private home-life of Christian families also, has profoundly impressed Japanese students and others visiting the Occident. The influence of Christian books — books upon all subjects written in the Christian spirit, whether in the originals or in translations — has been incalculable. Wayland's "Moral Philosophy," Northend's "Teacher and Parent" and Dr. Wines's writings upon penology are good examples of this class, and fittingly close this imperfect list of the influences by which Christian civilization has achieved and is achieving a great victory physically, intellectually, and morally, over the non-Christian systems of Japan.

But the direct influence of Christian missions deserves a place close beside that of Christian civilization. Accounts have already been given of the influence of the

religion of Christ over individual hearts and lives, over communities, — resulting in the organization of a local church, — and of the growth of one of the larger Christian denominations. The time has now come to speak of the aggregate results of missionary effort. The latest available statistics are given in Appendix D.

These statistics, though not complete for all the missions, are sufficiently accurate to show, so far as a tabular statement can, the results and present condition of missionary effort in Japan. We have there more than five hundred foreign missionaries, and a considerably larger native force, living and preaching in five hundred different places. There are now thirty-three thousand Christians gathered into three hundred and forty-four churches, one evidence of whose faith is the gift of \$72,000 in 1891 for Christian and philanthropic purposes. More than seven thousand youth are under instruction in the various institutions of learning ; seventeen thousand pupils being enrolled in the Sunday-schools.

Surely that is no mean showing ! Surely a movement of such dimensions must have no small influence upon the life of the na-

tion ! Almost every page of this book illustrates the value of the work done. The influence of missionary physicians directly upon the tens of thousands of patients whom they have skillfully treated, indirectly upon the native medical profession, and, by their benevolent work among the poor, upon the thought of the people at large ; the advice given and plans suggested in regard to prison reform ; lectures upon political economy ; their work in various schools from the Imperial University downward, — all these indirect forms of service have scarcely been touched upon. Speaking of mission schools, Count Inouye, whose statement concerning the influence of Christian civilization is referred to on page 229, stated in the same interview that reports universally agreed in putting the morals of their students at a much higher grade than those of students in other schools. As an example of the missionary's influence as a teacher, take Rev. Dr. Verbeck, whose important work has already been referred to. His position as the organizer of the school from which the present throroughly equipped university has grown, and as adviser for many years to the educational department, was the begin-

ning of a chain of influences which sent many young men to the Christian schools of the West, introduced into Japanese schools thousands of our text-books, and secured as teachers and advisers in educational matters such men as Rev. Dr. Griffis, Captain Janes, President Clark, Dr. Vedder, Dr. Murray, and others. Dr. Verbeck's name is also on the list of the official translators of the Code Napoleon, — now, with some modifications, the law of the Empire.

But what shall we say of the influence of this considerable body of Japanese Christians?

As already intimated, it is a large estimate which puts the present number of Christians in Japan at forty thousand, or one in one thousand of its forty millions of people. This fact shows among other things that the thorough evangelization of the nation is still a great way off. Taken in connection with another fact, it has special significance. When the first Imperial Parliament opened in 1890, every one was surprised to find that, besides several Christian members of the House of Nobles, of the three hundred members in the House of Commons, twelve were members of Protestant Christian churches,

and the surprise increased when of the three nominations for speaker, made by the house upon its organization, the Emperor chose Nobuyuki Nakashima, a member of a Christian church, to fill that office. The third officer of the House is also a Christian. That is, of the whole population, only one in one thousand are Christians, while in the House of Commons, twelve representatives, including the first and third officers, or one in twenty-five, are members of Protestant churches. It has been said publicly and repeatedly that evangelical missions in Japan reach only the lowest and most ignorant classes, and that there is no trace of their influence upon the thought and life of the nation. Those who make or publish this statement may very properly now rise and explain how it can be reconciled with the above-mentioned facts.

What is the reason of this immense disproportion? Doubtless one explanation is in the fact that Christianity has appealed to and been received by the more intelligent classes. For example, it is well known that the proportion of students who are Christians is comparatively very great. But this does not explain how so large a proportion of

Christians came to be voted for. Really the explanation is very easy.

A few years ago the central government, doubtless with the wise purpose of educating its people in legislative processes, instituted legislative assemblies in the different prefectures into which the country has been divided since 1871. These assemblies possessed very limited powers at first, the limitations being gradually removed as they gained the wisdom of experience. To these local assemblies a few Christians were chosen, and it was found that, just as it was in the formative period of our own free and representative government, the best preparation for the legislator's duties had been the preaching of the ministers of the gospel. The little churches of Japan had been schools for training statesmen. To speak of external things first, the deliberations and decisions of individual churches, and of conferences and presbyteries, were a most valuable training in public speaking and in parliamentary methods, and made the Christians familiar in a most practical way with representative institutions, and government by majority as an integral part of them. But more than this had happened. In so far as their minds

were filled with the spirit of Christ they had come to look upon all men as their brothers and equals, and to feel under a constant constraint to labor with unselfish devotion to make men better and happier. In other words, Christianity had given them principles and, to a certain extent, methods of action. This gave them immense advantage as legislators over many of their colleagues who had neither the Christians' moral and intellectual training, nor the same courage of their convictions. The result was, that the Christians almost invariably came into prominence as disinterested and capable legislators. The measures for the public weal advocated and often carried to a successful issue by these men led to their appointment to important positions in these local assemblies, and indirectly to their increase in numbers. Thus in Gumma prefecture, where Christian principles had been most ably and fearlessly advocated and carried into practice, there were in its assembly, a year or two ago, nine Protestant Christians, including the chairman and vice-chairman, out of a total membership of sixty.

When, therefore, the time came to choose members of the Imperial Diet, what could

have been more natural than that the men who had distinguished themselves for legislative honesty and ability in the prefectural assemblies should be asked to go up higher? This is what actually did take place, and is the *rationale* of the presence of so many Protestant Christians in the first parliament of Japan.

To go back to the prefectural assemblies: it is worthy of note that in seventeen of the forty-five prefectures, Christians are found as members, their total number being more than thirty. The influence of these men has been, as a rule, on the side of honesty of administration and economy in expenditures; it has been felt in favor of temperance, and especially in the suppression of social vice. By Christian influence inside and outside of the assemblies, votes abolishing licensed vice have been reached in the seven prefectures of Kochi, Tochigi, Miyagi, Kanagawa, Kagoshima, and Fukushima. In others, the movement has come but little short of success. A friend of the writer, a member of the Kyōto Assembly, for carrying such a measure on to success, was violently attacked by a company of men at the instigation of the keepers of such houses,

and escaped only through the great exertions of his friends. The Kyōto government regarded the danger to his person so great that he was placed under the protection of two policemen, who, dressed in citizen's clothes, were with him day and night for weeks. In another prefecture, in their inability to secure the immediate passage of more stringent measures, high board fences were placed before every disreputable house to prevent indecent exposure.

And so it is in many relations of life. In temperance meetings, in educational meetings, in meetings for all purposes of benevolence or reform, it is the Christians who have principles to stand upon, who have a programme to follow. If they remain true to their Master's teachings they will increasingly sway men's consciences, and so, sooner or later, become the spiritual leaders and rulers of the empire.