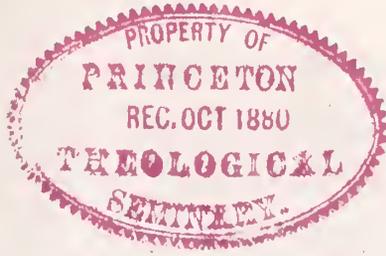


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TEN YEARS IN JAPAN.

A Paper read at the Annual Meeting of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, held at Syracuse, N. Y., October 8, 1879.

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It is now ten years since, at the Annual Meeting at Pittsburg, the American Board decided to begin a Mission in Japan. The first missionary left the meeting to take the next steamer from San Francisco. The son of David Greene and the grandson of Jeremiah Evarts, he bore with him the hopes and sympathies of thousands of Christian hearts.

A brief review of the enterprise then undertaken may not be inappropriate to this occasion.

THE PREPARATION.

The way had been prepared. American enterprise had crossed the Rocky Mountains and descended the Pacific slope. A railway spanned the continent. Steamers went out from the Golden Gate and, on their way to China, skirted along a group of islands of wondrous beauty, teeming with an intelligent population, for two centuries and a half shut out from the civilized world. Japanese seamen, wrecked or drifting helplessly on the broad ocean, had been returned to their native shores.¹ Searching questions had been put to the Dutch traders by treaty stipulation penned up on a little island in the harbor of Nagasaki. Some little conception of the outside world, and of a civilization superior to their own, had thus been gradually finding its way into the more thoughtful minds.

Japanese experience of western civilization had not been a happy one. The Portuguese and Spaniards of three centuries ago were not the best representatives of modern Christendom. The selfish and purely commercial policy of the Dutch had not awakened any special desire for a more intimate acquaintance with Protestant nations. On the other hand it was deemed almost an offense to the best interests of mankind that a people so numerous, so advanced in civilization and the arts, lying across the track of an opening commerce between the youngest and the oldest nation on the globe, should be so exclusive.

At this juncture, fifteen years in advance of the first missionary of this Board, the gentle persuasion of an American fleet, in no narrow or unkind spirit, but in the large interest of the human race, prevailed to open the long sealed gates. One young man, in after days to be known as the Secretary of Naval affairs in the Japanese Government, looking on and noting the calm dignity and quiet, courteous persistence of the American, whom no warnings could turn back, was satisfied of the superior character of the stranger. Here were men who could tame a volcano, condense its power in their ships, and control it at will.² The reverberations of the evening gun, a sixty-four pounder, as they rolled along the

¹ It was on such an errand of mercy that the first American vessel, the "Manhattan," of Sag Harbor, Merchant Cooper, captain, entered the Bay of Yedo in 1846. See the narrative published in the *Albany Evening Journal*, June 24, 1876.

² Griffis' *Mikado's Empire*, pp. 303, 347.

shore and far away into the interior, told of new agencies henceforth in the history of Japan. The silence of centuries was broken. The future Secretary of the Navy was a representative man. Old Japan recognized the coming of a new era. It was the turning point in the destinies of thirty-three millions of the human race.

OLD JAPAN.

The Japanese unites in his character the Turanian and the Malay—the elements blending before the time of authentic history. His language, in its grammatical peculiarities, has affinities with both, while it is saturated with Chinese, much as our composite Anglo-Saxon is saturated with words of Latin derivation. Its structure is so difficult as to have led a Spanish grammarian of the last century to excuse himself from attempting to explain it, on the ground that it was an artifice of the evil one to add to the labor of missionaries. Some Protestants have admired the sagacity of the Franciscan.

Despite some little infiltration of European ideas through the Dutch, the civilization of Japan, twenty-five years ago, was such as was possible through the religion of Buddha and the doctrines of Confucius. Shintooism, originally the worship of the powers of nature, then a kind of hero-worship, and at last a deification of the reigning family, was maintained as a convenient state religion. Buddhism, while faithful to the Nirvana as the ideal of life and the end of all intellectual and moral striving,—the peaceful calm in which all human passions are extinct,—had shown its usual power of assimilation in adapting itself to a new people, but had lost much of its former hold on the popular mind. As a system of morality the doctrines of Confucius compelled the intellectual respect of scholars, but with the exception of the home life, and the relations of parents and children, had little influence on the moral character of the people.

The Christianity of Xavier and his colleagues, though professed at one time by hundreds of thousands in all ranks of society, and having its churches by the hundred, scattered at important centers through the empire, had left almost no impression on the national life and character. Not a trace was visible in the manners or the literature of the people. The nearest parallel is to be found in the extirpation of Protestantism from Bohemia by the Romanists a century later. The truth is, the Romanism of three centuries ago, enforced by the civil arm and the terrors of the inquisition, was not much improvement on the Buddhism it supplanted. Its ceremonial differed but little; its morality was no better; civilization had gained nothing by the change, and when intrigues and dissensions among the foreign teachers had destroyed most of their influence, and when attempts made to overthrow the existing government had excited the indignation of the rulers, Romanism was to all appearance blotted from the soil. The one redeeming fact amid the darkness and gloom which rested down upon the first efforts to Christianize Japan was the heroism and devotion of the thousands who perished rather than deny the Christian name, and the persistence of the few who, in secret places, in spite of the most vigilant espionage, kept the fire burning till better days.

On the suppression of the Catholic missions, Buddhism had revived and Shintooism continued to be cherished by the family of the Mikado. Chinese ideas engrafted on the old stock again found expression in the literature of the higher classes, and in all forms of social life; but many of the more thoughtful minds at length became weary of them. The time had come for new influences from abroad, and the American fleet in the Bay of Yedo was the occasion of their introduction. The first fifteen years was a period of transition, of divided government, of internal confusion, of conflict among the feudal chiefs, but ended at last in the restoration of the Mikado to the ancient rights and privileges of his house, and the establishment of a stable government, on the overthrow of the Shogun-

nate, that for nearly seven centuries had held the military and entire temporal power of the empire. By July, 1869, opposition to the new order of things had ceased, and three months after, more wisely than we knew, we sent our first missionary to Japan.

In the meanwhile efforts had been made to introduce the gospel. Missionaries of the American Episcopal, Presbyterian, and Reformed Boards had entered the country as early as 1859. As no opportunity presented itself for proper missionary work, in consequence of the popular prejudice and the severe restrictions of the government, the Episcopalians withdrew for a time. The Presbyterians who remained were soon able to make themselves useful as teachers in government schools and in private classes, and ere long gained the confidence and esteem of the people for themselves and the faith they professed. Though the government would allow of no religious instruction in the schools, the Chinese version of the Scriptures was read and explained in private; and Dr. Hepburn, of the Presbyterian Board, prepared a Dictionary of the Japanese language of inestimable value to subsequent missionaries. Dr. Brown, of the Reformed Church, is specially remembered for the great service he rendered to the cause of education.

In 1866 one man upon his death-bed gave evidence of a Christian hope. The next year one or two other men of high position appear to have embraced the gospel, but no public profession was possible. In 1867 restrictions on foreign travel were removed, and many Japanese visited other countries to become acquainted with their institutions, and to learn that Christianity was not opposed to the best interests of their native land; but no one circumstance did so much to awaken interest among the Christians of the United States in the evangelization of Japan as the coming of Mr. Neesima to this country in 1864. His first interest in the truth, his leaving Japan, at the peril of his life, in quest of further knowledge of God, his reception here and subsequent education by a merchant and his family in Boston, his simplicity of faith, his earnest plea that missionaries might be sent to tell his countrymen of the Saviour he had found, were all felt to be ordered by the Head of the Church, and induced a wide-spread feeling that the time had come for enlarged effort.

THE NEW ERA.

The new era dates from 1869. The government and the Japanese people were now eager to secure the advantages of Western civilization, and only too ready to accept everything, good or bad, without discrimination, that hailed from Western nations. It was not Christianity that was wanted, however, but its incidental results. At first the attempt was made to revive Shintoism, of which the Mikado was the head, and to suppress all other forms of religion, but the time had passed for the revival of the old system. The Mikado had too much good sense to regard himself as of Divine origin, and to accept the worship of his people, and came forth from the seclusion observed by his ancestors to be a man among men. The government had very grave and difficult problems to solve. It has solved them to the admiration of the world, with a wise statesmanship that has carefully studied the necessities of the situation, adopting no formal rules or methods to be observed at all hazards, but wisely modifying its plans and methods to suit the changing situation and the necessities of the people. It is but proper to add that some of the statesmen now and for years past connected with the government were pupils of the earlier missionaries, and those who had studied for a time in this country. Within three years the persecution to which the Buddhists and the Romanists who came out from their hiding places were exposed was stayed; all connection of the state with any form of religion whatever ceased; the sign-boards denouncing Christianity were removed, and toleration of all religious opinions

was practically granted, though not formally proclaimed as the law of the land. The last seven years, therefore, mark the period of religious liberty and of comparatively unrestricted efforts for the evangelization of the empire. Though the residence of missionaries as foreigners is still confined to treaty limits, they are allowed special permits to travel through the country, and to reside for a limited time at points in the interior; and native preachers can now go anywhere proclaiming the message of salvation.

The first church, of eleven members, was organized in March, 1872, by a missionary of the Reformed Church at Yokohama. It was born of prayer, and in connection with the observance of the week of prayer the previous January. Missionaries and English speaking residents united in the services of this week, which were continued, week by week, till the end of February. The Acts of the Apostles was read in course, and translated into Japanese for the benefit of a few students who attended, partly from curiosity, and partly, we may believe, from true interest. In a few days two of these students were on their knees, entreating God, with tears streaming down their faces, that he would give his spirit to Japan as to the early church in the days of the Apostles. English and American captains of men-of-war, who witnessed the scene, said, "The prayers of these Japanese take the heart out of us." The missionary in charge felt like fainting away. Such was the first Protestant Japanese prayer-meeting, and the first evangelical church of Christ in Japan was born there.

From this time the progress of missionary work has been rapid. The missionary force was largely increased, one society after another entering the field, till at the present time ten American and six British societies are represented by over sixty ordained missionaries and their wives, by about forty unmarried ladies, and by ten physicians and other laymen, making an aggregate of over one hundred and sixty men and women, wholly devoted to evangelical work.

As other societies had located their missionaries largely at Yedo, now known as Tokio, on the north, and at Nagasaki on the south, the central portion of the country was chosen as the field to be occupied by the American Board, and its first missionary, Mr. Greene, was stationed at Kobe; the second, Mr. O. H. Gullick, a little more than a year after at Osaka; the third, Mr. Davis, joined Mr. Neesima, on his return from the United States, in the occupation of Kioto, a city long the residence of the Mikado; and the fourth, Dr. Berry, after valuable services at other points, has just opened a new station at Okayama, on the inland sea. The places thus occupied are within supporting distance of each other, and have easy access to from ten to fifteen millions of people.

The limits of this paper forbid entering into details and recalling scenes and incidents familiar to the readers of the *Missionary Herald* and *Life and Light*. Yet we can hardly forbear just an allusion to the following: the removal of Mr. Greene to Yokohama to join with others in the translation of the New Testament into Japanese, a work now happily completed; the unexpected and eloquent appeal of Mr. Neesima to the Board at Rutland for a Christian College in Japan, and the response of individuals then and there which resulted in the "Kioto Training School" with its hundred students; the awakened interest in female education that led an ex-Daimio to give \$500 toward the erection of buildings for the Kobe Home; the church in Sanda, born of a Christian mother's words of love and sympathy to a Japanese sister in the hour of bereavement and sorrow, and tenderly nurtured in subsequent years by Miss Dudley; Mr. Atkinson's tours in Shikoku, and the crowds of three hundred, five hundred, and seven hundred pressing around him to hear of the Jesus religion; the establishment of the first Christian newspaper in Japan by Mr. O. H. Gullick, bringing to the enterprise the successful experience gained in another field; the contributions already made to a

Christian literature still but inadequately meeting the urgent demand of those awakened to a sense of spiritual need; the organization of a Home Missionary Society to have the more immediate care of the native agency in pushing forward the work of evangelization; the enthusiasm and self-denial of many native Christians to make known the gospel to others, and to support their own schools and churches; and, if possible more remarkable still, the manner in which laymen from this country have been used to further the work of the gospel, — Captain Janes in the south, President Clark in the north, as though the Master would call in other agencies to supplement the work of his church and beckon it forward to new and grander effort. In view of facts like these, is it strange that some of the Japanese young men should find the scenes of the early church repeated in their history and talk of a new edition of the Acts of the Apostles?

The missionary force of the Board in Japan is now made up of fourteen ordained missionaries, of whom two are physicians, three laymen, two of them physicians, and one secretary and treasurer of the mission, and twenty-six women, of whom thirteen are unmarried. To these should be added Mr. Neesima, Corresponding Member, and his most estimable wife, making an aggregate of forty-eight. As seventeen of these have joined the mission within the last two years, they are hardly to be counted as yet in its actual working force, though already making themselves useful in many ways.¹

The medical work has been an important agency in winning confidence and opening the way for the gospel, Dr. Berry, who arrived in Japan in the spring of 1872, before the year closed was in charge of a government hospital, and had a class of twenty medical students. A year later, he had a class of fifty, another hospital under his care fifty miles away, and six dispensaries, within twenty miles of Kobe. A lesson sheet, prepared daily, was sent to one hundred and twenty-six physicians, who could not leave their practice to attend his lectures. A report which he prepared on prison discipline, including his commendation in it of Christianity as a reformatory agency, was gratefully accepted by the government, published at its expense, and sent to all the prisons in the country. A most cordial welcome awaited him and Dr. Taylor at Kioto, Okayama, and other places. The gospel was not neglected in these visits, but was everywhere urged on the people, as the only saving power, so faithfully, that an officer of the government of Okayama wrote, "Give us the gospel first and the hospital afterwards, for we cannot afford to wait for the gospel." The welcome thus promised, after four years' delay, has just been renewed. Okayama now has both the gospel and the hospital. Dr. Taylor has recently seen two churches organized in cities that first became interested in the truth through his medical services. Dr. Adams, at Osaka, has been equally successful in opening the way for the gospel in that city and in its neighborhood. Christianity, through what it does for the relief of human suffering, has thus vindicated its true character, and won men to the consideration of its claims.

Work for women was begun as soon as the way was opened. Misses Talcott and Dudley, representing two branches of the Woman's Board, arrived at Kobe in March, and Miss Gouldy at Osaka, in October, 1873. Three years later we find Miss Starkweather, of the Woman's Board of the Pacific, in Kioto, and now Miss Wilson is at the new station of Okayama. Ten others have been added in successive years. Boarding schools for girls have been established with great success at Kobe, Osaka, Kioto, attended the past year by over one hundred girls; but direct work for women in their homes has been so attractive and so much blessed that it is not easy to retain teachers in the school room. Several churches

¹ Five others have been connected with the mission for short periods, — Mr. and Mrs. Doane, formerly of the Micronesian mission, Mr. and Mrs. Dexter and Miss Wheeler. The latter was married to Mr. Goodrich, and left for the North China mission. The health of the other ladies made it necessary for them and their husbands to give up missionary work.

have been organized largely as the fruit of the labors of the missionary ladies. Eleven of the first sixteen members of the church in Hiogo were women.

The first evangelical sermon in the Japanese language was preached by a missionary of this Board at Kobe, seven years ago, to a native audience consisting of one person, besides the domestics in the missionary's family; and the first native pastor was ordained in January, 1877, over a church in Osaka. There are now fourteen churches connected with this Board alone, with a membership of between four and five hundred, while the entire number of evangelical churches connected with different missionary bodies is not less than fifty, and more than a hundred native preachers are proclaiming salvation by Christ to their countrymen.

In view of such result, unparalleled in the history of modern missions, we might well exclaim, "What hath God wrought!" But it becomes us to rejoice with trembling. The victory is not yet won. The curiosity which brought crowds to listen for the first time to the gospel message, has in large measure passed away. Christianity has lost somewhat of the presumption in its favor, as the religion of a higher civilization, in consequence of the many who are found possessed of the civilization, while indifferent or opposed to the gospel. The Japanese realize that knowledge is power, and it is power they want. An American vessel fires a salute from a fifteen-inch gun in the harbor of Nagasaki. The concussion starts the thatch from the roofs of Japanese houses. Two young men of high family connection at once resolve on securing for Japan power like that. At the peril of their lives they leave their native land, in due time appear in the office of a missionary secretary in New York city, and ask to be taught how to make "big ships and big guns." It was the beginning of a movement that was to place not far from five hundred choice young men in our schools and colleges, and send as many more to Europe in quest of those material forces that should enable Japan to compete with the advanced civilization of the world. The great embassy of 1872 followed in their train. The welcome afforded foreigners during the last ten years, in consequence of the painful experience with Romanism, has been not for the sake of the Christianity which has quickened the life and developed the energies of the Western nations, but for the "big ships and the big guns"—for the material wealth and power that are its incidental results. In this spirit the Daimios surrendered their hereditary rights and privileges, to enable their country, as they declared, "to take its place side by side with other countries of the world." To this end was the emancipation of a servile class, and the establishment of an elaborate system of education, comprising universities, colleges, normal schools for both sexes, schools in the arts, and common schools reaching to the remotest hamlet; the introduction of railways, telegraph lines, a postal service, and a steam marine; and lastly the recognition of the Christian calendar and the Christian Sabbath as a legal holiday. It is our privilege to feel that this country, by its government officials, by the representatives of its religious and educational institutions, as well as by its private citizens, has been helpful to Japan in the remarkable development of its national life and prosperity; and nothing could better prove a generous appreciation of the services rendered than the reception just given to our late chief magistrate. Having no political aims, but only the good of Japan, American missionaries have enjoyed in large measure the confidence and esteem of its government.

What a claim has such a people on the Christian church for guidance in the path of true progress? What a claim on American Christians above all? What a claim on the best talent and the highest culture of the church to improve the great opportunity?

Thus far, unlike missionary experience in other countries, the gospel has reached

mainly the higher and more intelligent classes. Hence the fact that in no other country is there so intense a moral conflict going on as in Japan. It is not a struggle with the coarser forms of heathenism, with the ignorance and the superstitions of a degraded people, as in Africa, or even among the masses of India or China, but it is the conflict of a pure and an intelligent Christian faith, on the one hand, with the tenets and ceremonial observances and ecclesiasticism of the Greek and Roman churches, and on the other with the skepticism and infidelity and materialistic drift of the so-called advanced thought of our time, and with an intelligent Buddhism, that artfully seeks to place itself in harmony with Western science. The Greek church, at last advices, had six foreign representatives, and by the free use of funds is able to send its agents far and wide through the country. The Holy Synod of Russia has granted 50,000 rubles (\$37,500) to meet the expenses of the present year, and, acting under instructions from the Czar, is preparing to send out a large party of missionaries, on a man-of-war specially detailed for the purpose.¹ Rome, far from being discouraged by her signal failure in former years, has already in the field three bishops, more than thirty priests, and a large number of nuns. The contest with Buddhism, if possible, is sharper still. The sect known as Shinshiu, reënforced by the aid of foreign scholars opposed to Christianity, is making a vigorous stand for a faith that has enlisted so many millions of the human race. It has sent its priests to Christian lands to gather up whatever may be of service in resisting the doctrines of the Cross, and it has just erected a college building in Kioto, in which Western science is to be taught. It boldly publishes, in the English tongue, its doctrines and its creed, and challenges the confidence of the world. It is even rumored that it proposes sending missionaries to this country and to Great Britain, where it may find adherents in circles that profess to have outgrown the Christian faith of their fathers. Perhaps it may find enough to do for the present, to secure as its allies the foreigners who from Christian lands dishonor the Christian name, and are now, as elsewhere, a great, not to say the greatest, hindrance to the progress of the gospel.

The American Board was none too early in entering upon work in Japan. Its force of missionaries is none too large to meet the pressing necessities of the time. Rather is it far below the demand and the opportunity, if Japan is soon to be won to the Christian faith.

RESULTS.

Less than ten converts ten years ago; no church organized; no native agency; no schools for the training of such an agency; no missionary devoted to preaching; only the scantiest Christian literature, and that derived from China; placards everywhere denouncing the very name of Christian, till the utterance of the word blanched the face and sent a thrill of horror through the listener, — to-day more than two thousand five hundred professed believers in Christ; a recognized evangelical community three times larger; a fine body of earnest and faithful native preachers; Christian schools for the preparation of a native ministry; a Christian literature, including more than 100,000 copies of portions of the New Testament; editions of the *Life of Christ* and other works, reckoned by thousands and finding a ready sale; a Christian newspaper that circulates in all parts of the empire; and, illustrating in their lives the faith that breathes through all, more than a hundred and sixty devoted men and women from Christian lands — these are facts to quicken the faith and to encourage the most vigorous exertion till the field be won. And yet our oldest missionary, with abundant opportunity of careful observation, remarks that “the change in the moral aspect of the country is in no wise measured by the number of Christians who have been gathered into the churches, but the influence of Christian thought and sentiment is manifest in every direction.”

¹ *Mission Life*, p. 424, 1879.

Still we must not forget, that considered simply as a system of opinions and practices, Christianity is at a great disadvantage with other systems of religion which appeal to the lower elements of our nature, and are less exacting in their requirements. But happily Christianity is not a mere system of doctrines or a formulary of conduct; but a life,—a life inspired in and through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the facts and revelations of the gospel, a life from above. It is through this divine energy,—*conditioned, indeed, on our faithfulness and consecration to Christ, whether as missionaries abroad, or as fellow laborers at home,*—that this life is given, and that Christianity is to prevail in Japan or elsewhere; and it is only as this fact is recognized, and *united effort is made,* that we look for the triumph of the gospel in the Land of the Rising Sun. “Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.”

The Special Committee of the Board on this paper, Rev. President J. H. Seelye, chairman, reported:—

The Committee feel that the facts herein presented must thrill with joy and thankfulness every lover of Christ who learns them. They are certainly among the most remarkable evidences of the progress of the kingdom of our Lord, which this age, so fruitful in results of this sort, has furnished. We would not urge them, however, as any new encouragement to missions, nor as presenting any further claims than we had before for entire consecration to the great work which Christ has given his disciples to do. Our encouragement in the work of missions draws its all-sufficient inspiration from God's promise, and our consecration to the work has its unfailing strength and life in his command. He has promised that all the ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto the Lord, and all the kindred of the nations shall worship before him; and he has commanded his disciples to go into all the world and preach his gospel unto every creature.

We would not urge, therefore, these great occurrences as matters for hope or trust, as though anything which occurs could add to the hope we have from God's predictions, or to the faith which rests on his Word. But they do offer motives for devout and humble thanksgiving, and furnish answers which can silence all the cavils against missions of the unbelieving world. To us they come at the present time with special force, as indications of a special work which God is calling us to do. Japan is not only open to the gospel as never before, but never before has the gospel wrought such great and speedy changes as during these last seven years in Japan. The history which the Foreign Secretary has briefly sketched is not only the most remarkable chapter in the history of modern missions, but there is nothing in the history of the world to compare with it. We talk about the early triumphs of Christianity, but the early records of the church, bright as they may be, pall in the light of what is taking place before our own eyes at the present time. The number of converts in Madagascar alone, during a period of thirty-five years of missionary labor, probably exceeds, it has been said, the number of converts in the Roman Empire for the first three centuries of the Christian era. But Madagascar offers nothing to compare with Japan.

Japan is a great Empire,—in actual fact, we might perhaps say, notwithstanding the presence of China, the *oldest* Empire on the globe. China has changed her reigning dynasty repeatedly during these last twenty-five hundred years, through all which the family of the Mikado, now upon the throne, presents an unbroken line. We are very apt to talk about the Japanese as a fickle people, ready for changes, but where else can you find a people who have maintained any order of things unbroken so long? They are not people to be called suddenly or easily changeable, after one knows their history. To what can we ascribe these great changes then, which are taking place in that great Empire, but to His hand, who is great in power, and who is thus making the nations prove—

“The glories of his righteousness
And wonders of his love.”

This Board must not be lukewarm in continuing, as it has not been backward in entering upon, a field which God has so conspicuously opened. Japan is ready for the gospel; the gospel is readily changing it; let us be ready to press forward where God is thus leading us. We should not be content with our present work there, richly as this has been blessed.