

Our Contributors.

THE BIBLE IN JAPAN.

BY LOUIS SEYMOUR HOUGHTON.

Japan, without being Christian, yet shows much in its spirit and manners that seems akin to Christian virtues and graces. Its readiness to adopt "Western" learning, customs, methods, makes it all the more important that the religion of the West should be exhibited in Japan at its best, and as missionaries are still very few in comparison with the numbers who, as travelers, merchants, sailors and in other capacities represent to the people of Japan the customs and culture of the West, it is a happy thing that the Bible, that fountain head of western civilization, is making its way into the country by the hands of Japan's own children. The Bible societies, which as the London Times lately said are the "living link between all the missionary societies in the world," their "chief partner and ally," have not only their English-speaking agents in Japan, but also their groups of native colporters. These, living among the people, speaking their language not only but thinking their thoughts and living their lives, can carry the Bible into homes almost inaccessible to the western worker, however devoted. Therefore, it is not surprising to learn that more than 200,000 copies of the Bible, the New Testament and small Scripture portions were sold or given away last year in Japan.

It not infrequently happens that when a colporter offers the book at the homes of illiterate persons they will say "We cannot read, but we will buy the book, for our children will read it to us." Among persons of some education, the English Bible or Testament often finds a sale, very possibly as an aid to the acquisition of the language. The religious festivals, such as the great annual Tenjin festival in Kyoto, afford an excellent harvest to the colporter who can mingle freely with those of his own speech. At the last festival of the god Fudo at Narita over 1,000 Gospels were sold in a week.

An interesting story is told by the principal of the girls' school in Tokyo, the Joshi-gatuin, of a man in her employ who had bought a Bible of a colporter on a train. Struck by the simplicity and earnestness of this man's prayers, and his reverence for the Bible, Miss Millikin asked him one day how he first came to know about Christianity. He replied that, while making a trip to Tokyo, somebody was selling Bibles on the train, and he purchased a copy without realizing what it was, and straightway became absorbed in its contents. One day while he was eagerly studying it he suddenly thought that he must be reading a Christian book. He put it out of sight and did not look at it again for a year and a half. But the things he had read kept recurring to him, until at last he was unable to resist the impulse to read and see whether he had remembered correctly. Again he found an irresistible fascination for him, but he poured over it only in secret, for the people of the district where he was

then a small farmer had an unreasoning dislike for Christianity and regarded it as some contagious disease.

What most impressed him in his reading was the striking contrast with his former ideas of life. He had been struggling to accumulate wealth, and he wanted to be well thought of. But the Sermon on the Mount applied "blessed" to a totally different spirit. He had always thought it manly to remember and avenge a wrong. Christ taught forgiveness until seventy times seven.

At length he came to believe in Christ as the Light of the world. When he professed himself a Christian his family and friends set him down as mad; but since then his father has been baptized and his wife is eagerly studying the book so long hid away from her, and it is his hope before long to return to his district to do the work of an evangelist.

The spread of the Gospel in Japan will not only affect its own people, but the surrounding nations as well. The influence of Japan as a world-power is steadily growing. Students are going thither from the Philippine Islands, Siam and India, and it is fast becoming a cosmopolitan field, for Christian effort. The result of the present war may not now be forecast, but it is safe to say that whatever its outcome, China and Korea will increasingly feel the influence of Japan. The Japanese people are capable of the highest civilization—in a sense they are already a highly civilized people. Next in importance to the world of the redemption of France from that atheism into which the reaction from Rome threatens to plunge it, must be ranked infiltration of the principles and the spirit of the Bible throughout the civilization of Japan.

ANTIQUITY OF THE PLAGUE.

This is one of the oldest diseases known to man. The Old Testament contains an account of at least one extensive and fatal epidemic of a disease which appears to have been bubonic plague, and which was seemingly spread by infected mice. After the epidemics of the Middle Ages, ending with the great plague in London in 1665, the disease was seldom heard of in Europe, and, indeed, it was believed by many to have died out; but for centuries it held its own in Central Asia, and from there was carried, in 1894, to Hong Kong. Thence it spread to India, where its ravages were at one time so fearful as to excite the horror of the civilized world.

Since that time the disease has frequently threatened to invade the cities of Europe and America, but, although there have been localized epidemics of sufficient severity to cause apprehension, as on the west coast of Mexico some months ago, the plague has never really gained a foothold among civilized people.

When the disease was first studied by modern scientific methods, it was believed that only rats and other rodents shared with man the undesirable distinction of a susceptibility to plague, and

it was thought that wholesale destruction of the rats would put an end to the disease. Undoubtedly they are the most commonly infected of all animals, and the most likely to carry the germs from one part of the world to another, but recent investigation in Hong Kong has shown that chickens, horses, dogs, cats, and nearly all animals living in contact with man are equally susceptible to the disease.

Mission Notes and News

—The statement is made that within the five years of the Protestant missionary occupation of the Philippines the visible results of evangelical work are more marked than those in other fields after fifty or even seventy years of occupation.

—The first Christian newspaper in the Tibetan language has been lately started. It is edited by the Moravian missionary Francke, and appears monthly. It is printed at the mission press in Tibetan script, the same characters that are used in both Buddhist and Christian religious books, and also by the Lamas. It will be helpful to the spreading of the true light.

—A South American Missionary Congress was lately held in London. English Protestants have six societies at work in South America, chiefly in Brazil. Many were surprised at this meeting to learn that a Protestant mission was planted in Brazil by John Calvin, but it was soon stamped out by the authorities. In Argentina, Protestant missions supplement the defective public schools by their own.

—The Wesleyan Missions in the Transvaal and Swaziland District, South Africa, report a wonderful growth during the past year; an increase of 3,228 full members and 2,662 on trial, making the number 12,546 full members and 6,187 on trial. Nearly every circuit reports fresh openings for successful work and there are urgent demands for more missionaries and more means to support native workers.

—In the American Board Zulu Mission in South Africa eighteen of the 23 churches are entirely self-supporting and the other five are provided for from the home missionary fund gathered by the native Christians. These churches have a membership of 4,298. Of the 67 day schools in the mission, 18 are self-supporting and the others are supported by private funds or government grants. The total contributions from native sources to the work of the mission during last year were \$7,964, while the total appropriations from the American Board for the same purpose amounted to only \$4,300.

—Dr. W. H. Leslie of the Baptist Mission in the Congo region of Africa, reports encouraging things. He says that thousands of Christians are learning to read the Word of God for themselves and thousand of others have become very proficient in Bible study. In many sections polygamy and slavery are passing away. Women are being raised to their proper level as the companions and helpmates of the men. Many of the children in the schools are giving evidence of real change of heart. About two thousand pupils in forty village schools are being taught by consecrated spiritual natives.

TRUE TO CONVICTIONS.—Mr. G. W. Newcomb, merchant at Hopewell Hill, Albert County, deserves honorable mention. He was agent of the Canadian Express Company. He gave up the agency because he would not have anything to do with the handling of liquors or receiving pay for them. A temperance man, he was true to his convictions. All honor to him.

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