

CHRISTIAN UNION IN JAPAN.

AMID the many encouraging successes of the Gospel in heathen lands within the past few years, the progress of Christ's cause in Japan is not the least remarkable. So steady has been the advance of Christianity in that country that prominent men in the Government, though without personal sympathy with the movement, have expressed themselves as decidedly favourable to the spread of the Gospel among the people. The various leading denominations have taken part in the work, and their labours have been specially blessed. Large and flourishing native churches have sprung up everywhere, and are enjoying a degree of prosperity that may be described as unexampled.

Next to the marvellous success of the Gospel in Japan is the remarkable desire for a united Church on the part of the Japanese Christians. The growth of this desire is, to a large extent, spontaneous. It is true that the missionary brethren in that land are largely in accord with the native longing for visible and corporate union among the churches in Japan, but they have not so much been the originators of the movement as they have been anxious to see it accomplished, and, strange to say, from their ranks have also come several of the principal objectors to the union proposals. The various Presbyterian missions in Japan, including American and Scotch branches, have all acted harmoniously, and have endeavoured to reach a satisfactory understanding with their brethren of other denominations. The Congregationalists have also had important and successful missions in Japan. Many of them have been very favourable to the formation of a united Church, and so it was fondly hoped that the Church of Christ in Japan in its united capacity would have been realized at the beginning of the present year. Rather animated controversy, however, has, up to the present, prevented this desired consummation.

The difficulty seems to be principally between the Presbyterian and Congregational branches of the Church. It would be difficult rightly to apportion the blame for what is believed to be only a temporary failure. Some zealous Presbyterians think that the Congregational brethren are too exacting both in the matter of doctrine and polity, and some ardent Congregationalists opine that to comply with the conditions demanded by Presbyterians would simply end in absorption, and that all that is distinctively Congregational would entirely disappear. So the matter remains at present, but the union movement having already made such progress, it is not likely that present want of agreement will long stand in the way of its ultimate success.

The Rev. Dr. Henry M. Scudder, so widely and so favourably known, who recently resigned the pastorate of an influential Congregational Church in Chicago that he might labour in Japan, has written a most interesting letter in favour of Union which appears in the last issue of the *New York Evangelist*. He shows that the feeling in favour of Union is a Japanese movement, and is one of great strength. "Nearly all the prominent pastors and the leaders of public opinion among the Japanese Christians are identified with this effort." He is of opinion that the complaints of Presbyterian and Congregationalist objectors neutralize each other, and that both have made generous concessions, a procedure which he describes as just, right, fair, and noble. Dr. Scudder, like many other excellent American ministers, has had personally no very decided ecclesiastical preferences if one is to judge from his ministerial career. He was educated in the Reformed (Dutch) Church, and has ministered to congregations of that denomination as well as in the Presbyterian Church in the United States, and also in the Congregational Church. He spent twenty years in Mission service in India, at one time under the direction of the Reformed Church, and at another in connection with the Congregationalists. His experience and modes of thinking, therefore, would naturally lead him to attach less importance to denominational distinctions than if he had been strongly attached to one particular church. At the same time it would be unjust to deny that the absence of marked attachment to any one denomination places him in a favourable position for giving an unbiassed and impartial opinion as to what in his judgment would be the best method of securing unity of action in the Christian life of Japan. There the converts are unfamiliar with the minor shades of difference that have divided the churches in other lands. They are beginning their church life unhampered by the traditions of other times and other lands, with the light of past experience to guide them. They are not called upon to repeat the mistakes of the past. The obstacles that impede the progress of Christian Unity in the older Churches do not lie in their path. They have the opportunity of beginning on a higher plane and they seem desirous

of securing the widest practicable embodiment of Christian Unity possible to them.

For the present at least it is not likely that the Churches organized by Episcopalians and Baptists are ready to make the concessions that alone could secure a union of all the Christian Churches in Japan. Even in respect to these denominations Dr. Scudder is sanguine that the people themselves may at no distant date repudiate the opposition of their leaders and desire to be included in the one fold which it is anticipated will ere long embrace the Christians of Japan.

Dr. Scudder, who has gone to Japan at his own charges and in preference to becoming the pastor of an influential Church in New York to which he was called, is earnest in his advocacy of Christian Union, because it would be so much more helpful to the cause of Christianity in Japan than would be the case were denominational rivalries and jealousies introduced there. He also sees that the realization of such a consummation would afford a powerful example to other lands, and that the Church in Japan would not only be a blessing to the people there, but a blessing to the world at large.

ARE PEW RENTS SCRIPTURAL?

(ONE of the latest contributions to the discussion of the Free Seats & Rented Pews in Church is from the pen of the Rev. Dr. Arthur Pierson, of Philadelphia. It is marked by his characteristic clearness of thinking and expression. There is no attempt to get out of a difficulty by skilfully balancing opposing ideas and taking refuge in the fact that much can be said on both sides. He is clearly of opinion that the pew-rent system is a complete departure from the methods of primitive Christianity. He says at the outset:

1. All places of worship were free to all worshippers without regard to money or price.
2. The service of worship was simply and voluntarily conducted, involving no hired assistance.
3. The ministry and their co-labourers made the Gospel of Christ without charge, having no stated salary.
4. All that was needful for their support and benevolent ends was the voluntary offering of the Lord's people.
5. There is no hint of dependence for pecuniary aid upon any who were not professed followers of the Lord.

He then proceeds to show that the methods of the early church for the maintenance of public worship were of the most inexpensive kind, and that what was actually required for these purposes, and for the help of the necessitous was readily obtained by the free will offerings of the Christian people. He finds no trace of any appeal to others than Christians for support. "If," he says, "any portion of these gifts came from the ungodly, it is not a matter of record, and, if so, it was voluntary, and not secured by direct assessment or even appeal. The divine order was that men should give first themselves unto the Lord, and then, as His stewards, their substance." All the accessories of modern Church service are innovations; choirs, hired singers, musical instruments, etc., were unknown in the early centuries of the Church's history.

In contrast with the simple and inexpensive plan pursued in primitive days there is no denying that in cities and large towns the churches are very expensive institutions. For the most part the preachers in these are well remunerated and the appointments considered essential to a progressive modern church, are made on a scale of considerable liberality. All this involves a large outlay which must be met on business principles, and with the regularity and promptness that business principles require. To depend on a complete and practical application of the voluntary principle would lead to painful embarrassments. The method of raising a sufficient revenue by means of rented pews commends itself to the practical understanding as the simplest and the easiest. Hence it has acquired a place in church management from which it cannot easily be dislodged. In certain Churches in the United States they have adopted a plan that fortunately has not been tried in Canada and which if suggested, would be vigorously condemned. There is no annual auction of the pews in any Canadian Church.

Dr. Pierson admits that the pew-rent system has in many respects wrought satisfactorily, and that troubles originating in it have not been very serious. He is also willing to concede that since details as to the management of congregational affairs are not laid down in the New Testament there is room for good men adopting the system as a permissible expedient. He nevertheless advocates return to a more scriptural simplicity in the mode of maintaining Christian ordinances and the advancement of the Gospel. "When we have a scriptural outline," he says, "it is always safe to follow it." The conclusions at which Dr. Pierson arrives are that the exist-

ing system tends towards the cultivation of a wrong spirit in the pew-holder, in that it introduces in the place of God's worship the notion of human proprietorship or property and thereby tends to foster a species of social caste; it leads to a self-righteous spirit; the purchase of such property rights in the place of worship implies naturally, legally and logically, a right of control; human proprietorship often begets exclusiveness; and the last reason he gives at present is that however genial and cordial the pew-holder may be, the stranger will not feel free in a house where pews are rented. The doctor promises to pursue the subject, and it is evident that he is bent on the abolition of rented pews.

Books and Magazines.

THE ENGLISH ILLUSTRATED MAGAZINE. (New York: Macmillan & Co.) The March number is strong in descriptive papers and serial fiction. "Leeds" and "Kensington Palace," come in for descriptive and artistic treatment, and F. Marion Crawford Stanley J. Weyman, and Katherine S. Macquoid are the novelists. The last named begins "Success a Story in Six Parts."

THE METHODIST MAGAZINE. (Toronto: William Briggs.) The March number of this Canadian monthly has many attractive features. The principal papers, several of them finely illustrated, are: "Through Normandy," "Vagabond Vignettes," "The Moral Freedom of Man," by Goldwin Smith, "Recollections of British Methodism in Toronto," by Senator Macdonald, and the "Tractarian Movement" by Dr. Sutherland. The other contents are fully up to the high standard that this magazine has attained.

THE HOMILETIC REVIEW. (New York: Funk & Wagnalls; Toronto: William Briggs.) A glance at the contents of the review section will show that the present is a valuable issue of this excellent monthly. Professor Murray, of Princeton, has a paper on "Richard Baxter," Professor Pick one on "The Rites, Ceremonies and Customs of the Jews." Other subjects in this section are: "The Riches of Cowper," "Body and Mind in Christian Life: No. 1, Hygiene in the Bible," "Apologetics in the Pulpit," "The Mission of Music," "A Cluster of Curiosities." The other sections are no less attractive and useful.

THE TREASURY FOR PASTOR AND PEOPLE. (New York: E. B. Treat.) A portrait of Rev. Albert J. Lyman, of the South Congregational Church, Brooklyn, is the frontispiece, and his sermon on "The Redemptive Element in Christianity" is the initial article. A sermon on "The Great Question," by Dr. Moses D. Hoge of Richmond, Va., is worthy of the man. "A Talk to Business Men," by Dr. J. R. Paxton, should be read by all, and the "Exegetical Comment on The Edenic Apocalypse," by Prof. Terry, is a scholarly production of great interest. "The Leading Thoughts of Sermons," by Revs. J. Edward, C. H. Spurgeon, G. Smith, C. S. H. Dunn, H. Bird and Dr. Hendrick are each and all very suggestive. The other contents of the number are varied, valuable and useful.

THE POLITICAL SCIENCE QUARTERLY for March, opens with a striking article by H. L. Osgood, upon "Scientific Anarchism," reviewing the theories of Proudhon and showing the aims of American Anarchists. Prof. Gustav Cohn, of Gottingen, taking the progressive income taxes of Switzerland as his text, indicates the merits and the dangers of this democratic scheme of taxation. Mr. Arnold Forster, (son of the late Irish Secretary) presents forcibly the Unionist view of the Irish question. A conservative Frenchman, M. Gauvain, explains the causes of the present crisis in France and the significance of "Boulangism." Mr. Bernheim sketches the history of the ballot in New York, and argues for the Australian system. Prof. Woodrow Wilson analyzes and criticizes Bryce's *American Commonwealth*.

THE NONSUCH PROFESSOR, in His Meridian Splendour: or the Singular Actions of Sanctified Christians. By the Rev. William Secker. With an introduction by Rev. T. L. Cuyler, D.D. (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers; Toronto: D. T. McAlinsh.)—This book, originally published in the early years of the century, is by a man of much originality, the Rev. William Secker, minister of All-Hallows Church, London Wall. Its thinking is sound and incisive and its value is great. Its reproduction in these days will be most serviceable to pure and undefiled religion. Dr. Cuyler begins his introduction by saying: "This is a wonderful book. At whatever page you open it, your eye lights upon pithy aphorisms that combine the sententiousness of Benjamin Franklin with the sweet holy savour of Samuel Rutherford. It contains hundreds of bright seed thoughts."