

THE NATIVE MINISTRY IN JAPAN.

WHILE the general object of all mission work in heathen lands is the evangelization of the people, in this there are different methods and steps. Among the Japanese, Chinese, several East Indian races, and a very few negro ones, we find an intellectual development and a degree of faith which have justified the creation of a native ministry, the first step looking toward the carrying on of the work of evangelization by an independent national church. The importance of this can scarcely be overestimated. Not only is it the best and indeed only means of disarming the national, or anti-foreign prejudice, but also in the matter of economy, the Japanese in his own land can live more cheaply than the stranger from over the seas. The superior knowledge of the language, history, customs and ways of thought of the people, which a native ministry must possess, will not perhaps appear as of so much account, and yet, especially the last three, they are among the greatest needs a foreign missionary should bear in mind when he is preparing his out-fit. Ignorance of these will hinder him at every turn, make him ridiculous where he should be influential and undermine all his labors. So, in Japan, all communions have striven, each according to its own ideal, to create an efficient body of native ministers or assistants. In this, some of our religious systems were put on trial, but it would seem, that at first, at least, few of those most interested were aware of the fact. The Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Methodists acquired what appeared to be three fine bodies of educated native Japanese ministers. But many of them have been found wanting. Through the founding of the Doshisha College in Kyoto by Mr. Niijima, backed as he was, not only by his patron Mr. Hardy, the Boston ship-owner, but also by a host of wealthy Americans, Congregationalists occupied for a time a very prominent place in the Japanese Christian world. When the writer went to Japan in 1890 the Congregationalists reported forty-nine independent self-supporting congregations, besides a much larger number which were partially self-supporting. The better class of Japanese Christians, that is those who were educated and occupied prominent positions in the social, political, official, or mercantile world, almost invariably were Congregationalists. They also possessed the most educated, eloquent and popular native ministers. But, with the possible exception of Mr. Kozaki, the former president of the Doshisha College, every prominent native minister of the Congregational body has fallen away. And even Mr. Kozaki has no regular charge, but is a kind of free

lance, giving on Sunday, usually in the Tokyo Y.M.C.A. hall lectures or sermons on Christianity, or what he deems to be Christianity. Most of the others have become enamoured of Unitarianism or what they themselves term "a more distinctive Japanese type of Christianity." To use the words of a missionary well-known in the east, "Much of Japanese Christianity seems to have dwindled down into a sort of Unitario-Confucianism." These ideas or doctrines, however, do not seem to have kept their hearts warm in the work. One is now a broker on the rice-exchange, another edits a secular paper, a third keeps a clock-store, and so on. It would have been bad enough had they or their congregations or even their own communion only suffered. But as the most prominent, influential and eloquent men in the native Christian world fell away, the shock to the whole Japanese Christianity was very great. And other bodies have experienced the same trouble with their native pastors, though not so universally as did the Congregationalists. Some resigned because they could make more money as school-teachers or in business, while in others want of faith, or moral stamina was the cause. Now in all this we must not be too ready, as many have been, to lay the blame on the Japanese alone, and say it is merely another exhibition of the fickleness of the Japanese mind. Most of these men had been taught that each congregation was absolutely independent, a church by itself, with no responsibility to any outside authority. Moreover, in matters of faith, a great deal of laxity was allowed. Even in America, where what is sometimes called "Orthodox Christianity" is popular, where all are the children of many generations of Christian ancestors, and where certain bounds in theology, it is thought, must not be crossed, some congregational and other ministers have come out with rather peculiar teachings. But these Japanese had no Christian ancestry or environment; there was no Christian public sentiment to keep them within limits. On the other hand, the commonly received doctrines of Christianity were unpopular, and the corresponding temptation to change them great. And it cannot be doubted that when these native ministers began to exercise the independence which their foreign teachers had told them they possessed, and put forth a new creed, at least once a year, they were much surprised at the indignation and opposition aroused in these same foreign teachers. Their heresy would seem to be partly owing to the form of government of their religious body and partly to the teaching (or want of teaching) which they had received. If it is due to fickleness why have we not had even a symptom of the same thing among the native priests and deacons of the Nippon Sei