

S.P.G. MISSION IN BANSHEE, JAPAN.*

IT has been said by one of the missionaries who has had wide experience in Japan that often the person through whom a particular mission was started is himself left out of the benefit of the religion which he once admired or believed for a time. Often, a seeker after God requests the missionary to come to his neighborhood, and yet, while many around learn to rejoice in the message of salvation, he who first brought the good tidings within their reach still remains afar from the kingdom of God. So, in a measure, has it been in Banshee. On Easter Day, in 1881, H—K— was baptized by the name of Elijah, in Kobe, and during that year, having occasion to go back to his birthplace, Mikusa, in Banshee, he volunteered to speak and to teach, as God should give him power and opportunity about the Saviour. In answer to an invitation of his, I went out with him to Yashiro, a central hamlet of Banshee, near his village, on July 23rd, 1881, and, on the next day, lectured in the school-room there on "True Civilization." There was a good attendance and, as usual, some stayed behind to introduce themselves and ask questions. I stayed in the neighborhood for two or three days longer, preaching at Mikusa, where, again, very interesting questions were propounded, and on the 25th I met a man named Kobayashi Kanjuro, aged 70, of whom a particular account must be given; for though H—K— afterwards fell away and can now hardly be called a Christian at all, yet this old man has become the father and fosterer of Christianity throughout the neighborhood. I give, then, a short account of his spiritual life as we have often heard it from himself: Many years ago, he read in a book or magazine of the conversion of Madagascar to Christianity, and of the great blessings which arose through its influence; and from that day forward he longed that the good news should be preached in Japan. He would ask any travelling bookseller for books on Christianity, until, at last, he obtained one. As to what this was, I am not at all clear, but fancy it may have been Benuo, an attack on our sacred religion. But in order to tell the ignorant that Christianity was wrong, it had first to tell them what it was; and so this old man read it only for facts, and when I first saw him he could speak about Daniel and Joseph, and of the miracles of Christ.

Indeed, if I remember right, he introduced himself with words to this effect: "I have been waiting for Christianity a long time, and am now an old man; will you not baptize me?" Some time after he had purchased the book he heard of missionaries in Yokohama, some 500 miles away; then of their coming to

Kobe, some thirty miles off; then, at last, of a colporteur selling Bibles at Yashiro, three miles away. But, although he went the next day, the man had passed on, having left no books, nor sold any. Kobayashi was much disappointed. Weeks and months passed, till at length he heard of the Christian lecture in Yashiro schoolroom, and, having come the next day to Yashiro, he waited till he saw me, and told me how long he had been waiting for the tidings of the true God. As he so evidently wished from his heart to learn, I admitted him at once as catechumen on his engaging to worship none but the true God, and to turn from all kinds of sin; and, as H—K— was staying on, I asked him to teach and prepare him for baptism. In March, 1882, he was baptized by the name of Nikadeuro. During his time of preparation he had gone up and down among his neighbors, calling on them to join him on his entrance on a new life; but it was not until October, 1884, that any others came forward to be baptized. I should mention, in passing, that through H—K—'s exertions in his own village of Mikusa a boy had been given up by his father to be trained as a Christian, and both father and son were baptized at Kobe on Easter Day, 1884. The son, however, died suddenly in the school; and the father was so much broken down by his loss that he seems to have lost his faith and hope entirely. Those who sought baptism in 1884 were a dyer and his wife, living in Kobayashi's village of Nakagosé, though not natives of it, and they heard of Christ through the old man himself, and through occasional visits of a catechist. The wife could not read at all, but the catechist was surprised at her accurate knowledge of the Old Testament. She told him that her son used to read her "line upon line" every day when he came home from school, and she had the stories read over and over again until she knew them by heart. She chose the name of Hannah when she was baptized; her son was called Samuel. She has now devoted him to the service of the Church at his own earnest request, and he is being educated at our mission school. Mrs. Kuishi has now learned to read nicely, and I trust the family are following their God and Saviour. In 1885 old Mr. Kobayashi was rejoiced by his aged sister and her two sons being baptized. She was sixty-five years old then, and was keeping her son's house, and now, nine years later, she is active and brightly doing household duties there.

The old man wished very much that fifteen persons should be baptized around his bed before he died; and in 1886, when I went home, they had a group of eight Christians photographed for me to show in England. He is a bit of an artist himself, and has often given me pictures of flowers, birds, or fruit, as a kind of thank offering for our kindness in coming to see him.

* Kindly copied by Miss Jennie C. Smith from a MSS. of the Rev. Mr. Foss, for the benefit of the members of the Woman's Auxiliary.