

church of native believers had been organized in Yokohama, and a committee had been formed to translate the New Testament. Now the whole Bible in their own tongue is in the hands of the people, more than 25,000 persons are enrolled as members of Christian churches, the Christian Sabbath is a day of rest, and on the very morning of Mr. Mori's assassination the emperor proclaimed a constitution for the nation guaranteeing to all subjects of the empire *liberty of speech and freedom of religious belief.*

In some countries the printed Bible goes in advance of all missionary effort, and converts are found who have been enlightened by simply reading the Scriptures, in others the oral proclamation precedes, and converts gladly turn to the written volume for help to understand the way of salvation. In Japan, relatively few cases are reported of men who have become acquainted with the truth independently of oral instruction, and the circulation of the Scriptures has been chiefly subsequent to or in immediate connection with preaching. Terms which are perfectly familiar to our ears have a strange and unmeaning sound to an Oriental who has never heard the name of Jesus Christ, and sometimes the obscurity of thought or expression repels the reader. It was so undoubtedly in China in the early attempts for its evangelization; and in the first edition of his "Middle Kingdom," Dr. Williams remarked that notwithstanding the large circulation of Scriptures, "so far as known, hardly an instance had occurred of a Chinese coming to a missionary to have any passage explained, or any person converted who attributed his interest in religion to the unassisted reading of books;" but that testimony was given more than forty years ago, and the sentence disappears in the revised edition of 1883, which recognizes the immense influence exerted in China by the printing-press.

As one illustration of the power of the Bible in Japan, we may cite the "Scripture Union," an organization consisting of 12,300 members, whose fifth annual report was presented last December. The object of this organization is to stimulate and encourage its members, and to increase an interest in the study of the Bible. It publishes a monthly magazine, with a circulation of 2,500 copies, awards prizes for the best essays on subjects relating to the Bible, encourages the formation of classes for the study of Greek and Hebrew, supplies lists of Scripture Union readings for each day of the year, and maintains a travelling secretary, Mr. Iwase, whose visits are said to have done much good, "both in exciting an interest in the Bible among unbelievers, and in encouraging Christians to a deeper and regular reading of God's holy word." Upwards of a thousand persons attended the last annual meeting. There seem to be several hundred branches in different parts of the empire, and probably it is to one of these that Mrs. Ellen M. Carey refers to in the following description which we copy from "Life and Light":

"You will find it pleasant to look in at some of the many Bible readings. The clogs at the door will show you how many people are present, and the woman of the house will smilingly bid you enter. We will remove our shoes, step up on the clean, white mats, and sit down with the others upon the floor. Do you notice the neat bundles tied up so carefully in a crape or delaine handkerchief, and which each woman has! You will find within well-worn Bibles and hymn-books. The puzzling, difficult passages that the women have come across in their daily readings are marked with bits of pink paper, and after the Bible study is over for the day these passages will doubtless be discussed."

Such things as these illustrate the hold which the Scriptures have upon the mind of the people in Japan. The 530,000 copies which the American Bible Society has distributed there have not been circulated in vain, and we cannot doubt that the fruit will be more and more apparent every year.

THE Bible is always a new book to those well acquainted with it.—R. Chapman.