

## Messenger and Visitor

Published in the interests of the Baptist denomination of the Maritime Provinces by

The Maritime Baptist Publishing Co., Ltd.

TERMS: \$1.50 per annum in advance.

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85 Germain Street, St. John, N. B.

Address all communications and make all payments to the MESSENGER AND VISITOR.  
For further information see page nine.

Printed by Paterson & Co., 107 Germain Street, St. John, N. B.

### Christianity in Japan.

The alliance recently announced between Great Britain and Japan naturally at this time attracts special attention to the "Sunrise Kingdom." Few countries have had a history more interesting and remarkable, and from a Christian point of view the more recent history of Japan is particularly significant, while its present is full of hopeful interest. For however wonderful is the awakening of national life, which the last half century has witnessed in Japan, with the adoption of the methods and the appropriation of the results of modern civilization, still more significant for the most profound and vital interests of the nation is the opening of doors long shut and barred against the gospel of Christ, and the work which, during the past thirty years, has been accomplished by the Christian missionaries in Japan.

After the fierce outbreak against the Roman Catholic missionaries, which culminated, about the year 1637, in the virtual extermination of those who professed the Christian faith in Japan, there was a period of some two centuries during which Christianity was practically extinct in the country, and notice boards stood beside the highways, and in other public places, prohibiting Christianity in such terms as follows:

"So long as the sun shall warm the earth let no Christian be so bold as to come to Japan, and let all know that, be he the King of Spain himself, or the Christian's God or the Great God of all, if he violate this commandment he shall pay for it with his head." It was not until the year 1872 that the interdiction against Christianity was finally removed, although for some time previously it had fallen into practical abeyance and mission stations had been established in the country by a number of Societies. That year, however, marked the beginning of a new and remarkable development of missionary enterprise. It was in 1872 that the first Protestant Missionary Conference was held in Japan, and the delegates in attendance numbered less than twenty. Eleven years later another Conference was held, when the delegates numbered 106. There were then in the country 145 Protestant missionaries and the Japanese converts connected with Protestant missions had grown to the number of five thousand. The next decade was one of rapid development in missionary work, and in 1892 the number of Japanese Christians was given as 40,000. This, in a nation of 40,000,000 souls, would be one in a thousand of the population. But there is good evidence that Christianity had become influential in Japan far beyond the numerical proportion of its adherents. That it had taken a strong hold upon the educated classes was demonstrated when the first Imperial Parliament of Japan was opened in 1890 and it was found that, besides several Christian members in the House of Nobles, twelve of the three hundred members of the Commons or popular branch of the Legislature were Christians. The influential character of Christianity in the nation received further demonstration in the fact that from three men nominated for the position of Speaker, the Emperor selected one who was a member of a Christian church.

A Conference of Missionaries in Japan was held in Tokyo in October, 1900, and the report of it, which was published only a few months ago, affords much valuable information as to the progress made during the last ten years of the century and the present situation in respect to the work of Christian missions in Japan. The Conference did not embrace all Protestant Missionary Societies in the country, and we are

unable to say just what and how many Societies were represented in it, but it included 400 missionaries laboring in Japan, besides some 50 others who were mostly refugees from China, and three-fourths of the whole number were Americans. A historical paper by Dr. Greene, published in connection with the report, shows that between 1884 and 1898 the population of Japan had increased by about six and three quarter millions, the population at the latter date being in round numbers 43,750,000. In that year more than four millions of children were attending the Primary Schools. It was also stated that there were 150 daily newspapers and 745 periodicals in the country, and that Japanese editors are familiar with the writings of some of the great masters of English and also with some of the leading English magazines and newspapers. The forward movement of Christianity for the last ten years of the century had perhaps not been quite proportionate to its advance in the preceding decade. There had been something of a conservative reaction, due to various causes. But the statistics show that the work has not been checked. The enrolled Christians in Japan, according to the latest figures, numbered—Protestants 41,808, Greek Church, 25,231, Roman Catholics, 53,924. This is estimated to imply a Christian population in Japan of not more than a quarter of a million—a mere drop in the bucket indeed as compared with the total of nearly, if not quite forty-four millions. But this numerically insignificant element of the population has furnished one Cabinet Minister, two Justices of the Supreme Court, two Speakers of the Lower House and two or three Vice-Ministers of State, besides several heads of bureaus and Judges of Courts of Appeal. The indirect influence of Christianity on the nation is especially seen in the army in which 150 of the officers are Christians and many also in the Navy. The late Rear-Admiral Serata is said to have been a most ardent Christian and prominent in the activities of the church. There can be no doubt that by its influence upon the educated and ruling classes of the country Christianity has had much to do in securing for Japan that position of dignity and influence which she enjoys to-day among the nations. But the profoundest need of Japan, in reference to its material and political, as well as to its spiritual interests, is the evangelization of the great masses of its population. Then the permanency and strength of its government shall depend not on any alliance with other powerful nation, but upon its government being broad-based upon the will of an intelligent and really Christian people and its policies inspired by Christian principles. If Japan do not become Christian, it would seem inevitable that she become infidel, and in that case the last state is likely to be worse than the first.

### Question.

MR. EDITOR.

DEAR SIR:—Will you be so kind as to tell me, what class of persons who usually attend prayer-meetings, had better not speak in said meetings, after all had been invited to do so, on the ground of privilege or duty. Where shall we draw the line, or who has the right to draw it, is it wise for a minister of the gospel to make such a statement in public on the Lord's day?

CONSISTENCY.

"Speaking in prayer-meeting" is rightly regarded as the privilege or duty, or both, of those who are living in fellowship with their Lord and their brethren. If any are not so living there are plainly imperative duties which should take precedence of their taking part in the public exercises of the church, unless their doing so be for the purpose of a sincere confession of their wrong-doing and as sincere profession of amendment, in which case certainly no one should presume, or wish, to hinder them. It is quite true, we fear, that in many instances the lives of church members are so inconsistent with a Christian profession that speaking in meeting, except in the manner just indicated, is far from being their first duty. This is a matter in which every person with a healthy conscience can best draw the line for himself. There may however be cases in which it is the duty of the church to exercise discipline in reference to those whose failure to make life and profession harmonize is bringing reproach upon the cause of Christ.—Ed. MESSENGER AND VISITOR.

### Editorial Notes.

—"The Autobiography of Gypsy Smith" is announced by the Revells for immediate publication in this country. There is an introduction by Dr. Alexander MacLaren, which in itself is an excellent guarantee of the value of the book. The first large English edition was exhausted before publication. In answer to the question, Who is Gypsy Smith? we are told that he is the son of gypsies, born in a gypsy tent, brought up under gypsy limitations and degradations, who turns out to be the foremost and most successful lay evangelist of England—some say of the English-speaking peoples. Smith has little or no school education, but he has an amazing power of reaching men's hearts. He is not a sensationalist but he is himself the evangelistic sensation in England, crowding the largest houses wherever he speaks. The autobiography of this extraordinary character could not be too romantic, picturesque and even pathetic. As a witness to the transforming power of Jesus Christ it cannot be exceeded in interest and importance.

—Mr. John R. Mott has lately returned from an extended visit to the mission fields of India, China and Japan. From previous knowledge of the missionaries and their work, Mr. Mott possessed special qualifications, as well as excellent opportunities, for the study of the general missionary situation in the East. It is his opinion that while the work of missionaries is far from being accomplished, Christianity is so surely planted in Japan, China, Ceylon, India and some other nations of Asia, that, were the missionaries obliged to withdraw, it would live on and spread as a self-propagating force. In each country, he says, the native church has leaders who possess the spirit of independence, consecration and real leadership. Moreover, apart from those who are occupying positions of leadership, there are many native Christians who impressed him as comparing favorably with Christians of the West in respect to their grasp of the essential doctrines of the faith, depth of spiritual insight, exemplification of the spirit of Christ, unselfish devotion and burning zeal. The fact that in each country the number of self-supporting churches is steadily increasing is further proof that Christianity is anchored in the different communities.

—There appears to be a growing feeling among a certain class of Unitarians that the traditional teaching and preaching of Unitarianism has lacked much of expressing the full content of Christianity and of meeting the profoundest religious needs of mankind. A contributor to *The Register*, of Boston, the leading Unitarian newspaper of America, urges the need of the preaching of repentance. This, he shows, was the dominant note in the preaching of John the Baptist and of Jesus, and asks how it can be explained "that in the rare and varied literature of which the Unitarian body is so justly proud, repentance has so small a place." In fifteen volumes, containing three hundred and thirty-two sermons by thirteen authors, all of them among the foremost leaders and preachers of the Unitarian denomination during the last half century, this writer says, "I find nowhere a single topical treatment of repentance." And he adds: "The exact manner and verbal message of either the Baptist or Jesus are unimportant; but if repentance is a natural and salutary experience for the self-accused and sin-laden of our race, if it is a part of the regenerative process that is mightily at work in making for universal man a new earth and a new heaven wherein dwelleth righteousness, the Christian ministry and all allied forces can ill afford to minimize its necessity or utility."

—In a recent issue of *The Religious Intelligencer* Rev. David Long, pastor of the Victoria Street Free Baptist church, St. John, expressed regret that in his own denomination no young men are at present offering themselves for Foreign Mission work, and suggested that, under the circumstances, it would be well for Free Baptists to unite with the Baptists who had men ready to go but lacked the means necessary to send them. To these remarks, as our readers will have seen, Dr. Manning, Secretary of our Foreign Mission Board, referred in the MESSENGER AND VISITOR of February 26th, warmly seconding Mr. Long's suggestion and inviting the Free Baptist brethren to join hands with us in sending to India a brother who, having about completed his studies, is ready to go next autumn. *The Intelligencer*, editorially comments favorably on these suggestions, saying:

"We are glad to print Dr. Manning's remarks on the situation, and his appeal for co-operation. Aside from the foreign mission situation dealt with by brethren Long and Manning we believe that the time must come when the Baptists, of all names, in these Provinces should be one people. Of course, no one desires it except as it is made clear to be the way of the Lord's will. But for indications of his will we should all watch, and be ready to obey."

We hope that the day for the grand reunion of Baptists in these Provinces may not be too far off. Some of our readers will remember that at our Convention last August a resolution was adopted inviting the co-operation of our Free Baptist brethren in Foreign Missions and educational work. United effort along these lines might easily ripen into closer fellowship and organic union.