

THE CHRISTIAN CONTRIBUTION TO JAPANESE EDUCATION.

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HAS Japanese civilization been influenced by Christian missions? Baron Kikuchi, president of Kiyoto University and formerly Minister of Education in Japan, was asked this question by the audience in Carnegie Hall, New York, at the close of his interesting and learned lecture on "The Intellectual and Moral Development of New Japan" for the Civic Forum, February, 1, 1910. His reply was a prompt and decided negative, but he afterwards added the qualification, "Of course they have given inspiration to young Japanese students, through the characters of such men as Drs. Hebron and Harris, Fulbeck, Brown, etc."

Evidently Baron Kikuchi believes that the only good influence exerted by Christian missionaries upon the spiritual world of Japan, is the inspiration afforded by the subtle force of personal character of some of the representative missionaries from America to Japan.

I wish to reply to this international question in a somewhat more affirmative way. I am not a convert to Christianity nor am I any too favorable to Christians; yet I have no prejudice against the Christian movement in Japan.

Often valuable results come from the third of Hegel's three methods of investigation, thesis, antithesis and synthesis, and it is this procedure which I shall follow in contrasting Baron Kikuchi's antithetical point of view with some historical events in Japan, the consideration of which is important for the solution of this very natural question from Christians in the United States.

The Japanese people were under the charm of Buddhism for more than ten centuries. Three centuries ago Tokugawa Shogun, the Governor of Japan, realizing the undesirable influence exerted on the Japanese people by the Jesuit missionaries who had been

brought by the Dutch and Portuguese to Japan in 1548, issued an order prohibiting the practice of Christianity.

Notwithstanding this edict, enthusiastic Japanese Christians did not change their belief back to Buddhism, but carried their pictures and images of Christ to the Japanese temple, and prayed to Christ there. The Government, ignorant of this fact and supposing the people were praying to a Japanese God, concluded that a wonderful change had taken place in the belief of these Christian converts. This fact proves how deeply religious the Japanese are as a nation, in spite of the opinion of American critics who say that they are irreligious. Statistics report thirty thousand Japanese Christians.

Forty years ago there were hardly any schools for girls in Japan. This was the natural result of the national conviction which could not recognize the necessity and value of the education of girls. Perhaps our Japanese proverb shows the situation. "The woman seems wise, yet she has failed to sell a cow at a higher price." It is necessary to have intelligence and fine diplomacy for success in commerce, and woman was thought to possess neither. Hence commerce was a wise man's business.

Christian missionaries saw the difficulty. They discovered the national neglect of the education of Japanese women, and started at once to establish a school for girls. By their efforts several schools were opened in different parts of Japan, and the Japanese girls who have been educated in these Christian schools have proved to our people the good results of the education of woman.

Finally the Japanese Government recognized the great importance of educating the girls and in 1890 the number of public high schools for girls was increased to seven! The government reports for 1903 stated that the number of schools for girls had increased to 155 and the total number of their students was 35,546 under the direction of 1094 women teachers. It should never be forgotten that by word and deed, by work and inspiration the Christian missionary gave a strong impetus to Japan in causing our people to recognize the vital necessity of the education of women.

Quite a number of Japanese women are physicians, some have become journalists, and many are trained musicians and artists. Some Japanese girls too are entering the business world as clerks. These facts could not even have been dreamed of in the visions of a poet twenty years ago, and prove how rapidly our Japanese people adopt, assimilate and actualize a good idea.

The good results of the education of Japanese girls by the

enthusiastic efforts of Christian missionaries made two great steps in the progress of Japan, (1) an unchangeable belief in the desirability and necessity of the education of women, and (2) woman's position in Japanese society has been improved, because the Japanese girls who received an education showed that there was an undreamed-of capacity for companionship and efficiency in Japanese women, and therefore we Japanese should fully appreciate the debt our civilization owes to Christian missionaries in the education of our girls. This great contribution should be written in full in the history of the New Japanese civilization.