

## CHAPTER V.

### THE "KUMAMOTO BAND."

IN the previous chapter I have spoken of the fact that the teaching of English was, in the early days, a key to the hearts of young Japanese which was constantly used by the missionaries. Other Christian teachers, not under missionary appointment, used the same key with great faithfulness and a good measure of success. This was especially true of Captain L. L. Janes, of Kumamoto, in the south; and of President Clark, of the Massachusetts Agricultural College, who was for a time at the head of the Japanese Agricultural College at Sapporo, in the extreme north. As an illustration of the good work done by these teachers under more or less favorable circumstances, I give below a translation (made by a Japanese) of an account of the work of the gentleman first named, prepared by one of his pupils, afterward the Rev. P. Kanamori: —

“In 1871 Captain L. L. Janes came to Kumamoto upon the invitation of the *dai-*

*myō* of Higo, and established a school where foreign knowledge was to be taught. The *daimyō* was decided in his desire for a military officer, because he feared that, if he employed an ordinary scholar, the youths of the province would 'fall into literary weakness,' and so the bold spirit of the province would be lost. So he employed this learned and valorous officer in order to introduce the sciences of the West, and at the same time stimulate the military spirit of his young men. Captain Janes having been employed with this end in view, his circumstances were very different from those of the missionaries. At that time Japan was still unenlightened, particularly in the vicinity of Kumamoto. The number of men who were yet opposed to Christianity was very great, so that even the lives of Captain and Mrs. Janes were by no means free from danger. The pupils were largely sons of the rough and turbulent men of the place, and it may be readily seen that to teach Christianity to them was a very delicate and difficult task. No pupil could understand English, and Captain Janes did not understand the Japanese language, so that the difficulty of communication was extreme.

“For the first two or three years Captain Janes said little or nothing about Christianity, but gave his whole strength to teaching English and the sciences; but he was so kind and fatherly in his treatment of his pupils that they came to forget that he was a foreigner, and they gladly listened to whatever he said to them.

“As he was a fervent Christian, his desire to preach to the pupils must have been intense, but under the circumstances he wisely contented himself with first seeking to win his pupils' hearts as the best possible preparation for the future sowing of the gospel seed. After he had been there about three years he one day said to us: ‘I shall teach the Bible on Sunday; any one who wishes may come to my house.’ We still hated Christianity as though it were a snake, and did not like even to see the Bible, but we so respected him that we concluded to go to the meeting. One of us went to the teacher of Chinese and asked his consent. He replied that we might go to learn about Christianity, not to believe it, but to study its strong and weak points in order to oppose it. And so, of the few who went, some went simply out of curiosity, others for amusement,

others still that they might oppose, — none with a desire to hear. The portions of the New Testament that we read had no flavor for us, and the time seemed spent in vain. But our teacher was kind and assiduous in his teaching, and fervent in his prayers for us. During his prayer, which seemed tedious to us, we sometimes opened our eyes and looked upon his face with its closed and tearful eyes, and then we laughed, saying that 'Americans weep.' At this time he simply taught the Bible, and never exhorted us to become Christians; and when two of us thought to impose upon him by pretending that we wished to become preachers, he met them sternly, saying, 'You are not yet worthy to be preachers; go on with your Bible study.' A year later, in 1875, a few were really touched by the gospel, and this was followed by a division of the students into two parties, the one favorable to Christianity, the other seeking to oppose it by reviving the study of 'The Great Learning' and 'The Doctrine of the Mean,' as taught by the Chinese sages. In August of the same year, Captain Janes added preaching to his biblical instruction. His sermons were long, sometimes three hours long, but

as we had become interested in Christianity they were never tiresome to us. All who attended these meetings were studying the Confucian morality at the house of the Chinese teacher every Sunday afternoon, and so, for quite a while, we were studying Christianity with Captain Janes in the mornings, and Confucianism with the Chinese teacher in the afternoons. For about six months we were thus divided in our admiration for Christianity and Confucianism, but by the end of the year, all except one or two were united in their belief in Christianity.

“By Captain Janes’s advice, some of us spent the New Year’s vacation in the study of the Gospel of John, and in prayer to God for his blessing upon ourselves and our classmates. When the new term opened, these Christian students had a faith which burned like fire, so that they could not but preach to their fellow-students, and try to lead them to the gate of salvation. The whole school was like a boiling caldron; the studies were neglected; and groups of five, or six, or seven men began to study the Bible in the recitation-rooms, the dining-room, or in their private rooms. These stu-

dents had but little knowledge of the Bible or theology, but they were impelled to preach, even though some of them were not more than twelve years old. The recitations were suspended, and Captain Janes gave himself to the work of preaching the gospel to the students. We had not even heard of the word 'revival,' and knew nothing of the special workings of the Holy Spirit. We wondered why our spirits burned like a fire, and why we preached the gospel like madmen. One of us said, 'May not this be the work of the Holy Spirit mentioned in the Bible?' And others answered, 'Yes, it may be.' Our preaching was not confined to the school, but found its way to the servants of the teachers, our kindred in our homes, old men and women in the streets, and so on.

"Now I must speak of one who was secretly praying in her closet, who received an open reward from her heavenly Father. This was Mrs. Janes. She had no acquaintance with the students, but for many months her mind had been filled with intense desire for the salvation of the students, and she prayed day and night for the Holy Spirit to come upon them. This was a great hidden cause

of the revival. This revival continued for about a month, and those who confessed faith in Christ numbered over forty, and more than forty others were studying the Bible. On the last Sunday in January, a beautiful spring-like day, the Christian students went out to a hill, *Hana-oka-yama*, — southwest of Kumamoto, — a hill since made famous as the spot where Saigo Takamori placed his cannon to bombard Kumamoto. They went singing hymns as they climbed the hill, and, taking their seats in a circle on its summit, they made a solemn covenant together that, as they had been thus blessed by God in advance of all their countrymen, they would labor to enlighten the darkness of the empire by preaching the gospel even at the sacrifice of their lives. ‘They prayed kneeling, and wrote an oath-paper on which they signed and sealed their names.’

“The fact that this covenant had been made became known, and all those connected with the school cried out in dismay: ‘Alas! the students have become Christian priests. Captain Janes has made Christians of them. If this be not stopped, our hopes for the school will be gone.’ At this time

the life of Captain Janes was in great danger, and the Christian students were persecuted in a thousand ways, for Christianity was looked upon as a kind of witchcraft. One mother said to her son: 'If you don't abandon Christianity I must kill myself in order to wipe out the stain which you have cast upon your ancestors.' A father said: 'If you don't give up your faith I will kill you immediately.' One student was confined in his room for one hundred days, and was finally driven from home. There was not one who was not more or less persecuted. On this account the number fell off to less than thirty. But the true believers, although the oldest was under twenty years, were immovable in their faith, and ready even to sacrifice their lives. During all the time they were encouraged and comforted by Captain Janes, and enabled to stand up against the persecutions, which continued for about six months; so that the believers not only gained the victory, but were made all the stronger by their persecutions. By the following autumn, Captain Janes left Kumamoto, and the Christians went to the Dōshisha school in Kyōto, to prepare themselves more fully for the preaching of the gospel."