

## MISSION FIELD.

## Letter from Japan.

4 SHIRA KARE CHO, NAGOYA, JAPAN.

DEAR FELLOW-WORKERS.—You will, perhaps, be interested to know something of missionary work in the interior of Japan, in which I was recently privileged to take a very small part, in company with one of the C. M. S. missionaries. Although not directly our mission, I feel sure that friends at home will be glad to hear anything of the work, in connection with that society, in which we are all so interested. I was glad of this opportunity, whereby I might gain experience that will be of use in future work, I hope, or help me to understand the language better.

On the morning of April 10th,—the week before Easter, we left for our little trip: a very fitting season of our church year, to go and tell out among the heathen the story of a crucified Saviour. As our destination was in rather an out-of-the-way place, we could only travel, by train, part of the way; but on account of the war the trains were very irregular, so we decided to go the whole way by jinriksha, a distance of nearly fifteen miles. We were drawn by our human horses, keeping up a brisk little trot all the time, stopping only twice; it is wonderful how far they can go, and apparently not feel tired. But for a strong wind blowing, and rather cold, we might have enjoyed our drive very much; however, one could not help admiring the beautiful scenery, that everywhere met the eye.

Our way led through many a pretty spot; numbers of rice fields, which are now prolific with wheat and rape, the latter being in full bloom, making the country look beautiful indeed. For miles we journeyed along high embankments, sometimes by a river bank, or, more often, through the numerous rice districts which are always in the undulating plains. Some fine old pine trees looked stately and grand, while the cherry and peach trees, were, perhaps, most to be admired, with their pretty delicate blossoms, so soft and white.

The mountains, which one never could weary of, are ever in sight, and form a noble back-ground, growing more and more picturesque. Silently majestic, indeed; truly emblematic of God our Father's unchanging care.

On we journeyed through this beautiful land, interspersed with many a thickly populated village and hamlet.

Arriving at our destination at about 3 p.m., we were glad to partake of the hospitalities of a Japanese hotel, which was to be our headquarters. But I must tell you something of hotel life in Japan; like a good many other things, it is not without its amusing side. Of course, as many of you know, in every case, on entering any house in Japan, one's shoes must come off, which is not such a drawback in the summer, but in the winter is very cold. We were then shown to our room, which proved to be dining room and sleeping room combined, almost entirely bare of furniture, as the Japanese do not believe in having much furniture in their rooms, and they have, therefore, a very comfortable appearance. Imagine a small room, in the centre of which is a Hibachi or Brazier—two small mats to kneel on, for chairs are never used—a tiny table, about a foot from the ground, in one corner, and an arrangement for hanging our clothes on in the other.

As soon as we arrived, Japanese tea and little cakes were brought, but we preferred making our own tea, so boiled the water over the Brazier, and enjoyed a cup of good English tea. As we were both rather tired, and having a meeting that evening, we concluded that a rest would be advisable, so arranging our pillows and wraps on the floor (for the beds are not brought in until the evening), we did so and felt somewhat refreshed.

At five o'clock each guest is invited to take a bath, and as only one supply of water is allowed for each, it is preferable to be first. A curious looking place the bath-room is, with a little stove under a deep wooden tub.

We partook of an early tea, which consisted of rice, fish and very strange looking mixtures, which we did not appreciate, and the usual tea. In truly Japanese fashion, kneeling on the floor before a tray-like table, a few inches from the ground, and using chopsticks with comparative ease, we did ample justice to our meal, finishing up with some foreign food we had taken with us, and as there is so little substance in Japanese fare, we were glad of something more substantial.

After we returned from the evening meeting, of which I will tell you presently, we found our room transformed into a bedroom; thickly wadded comforters (called in Japanese *futons*) composed our beds, and small hard pillows which we dispensed with. However, being very tired, we were glad to rest anywhere, and as Mr. Stewart said we should do, slept as soundly as on the "best spring bed in Canada."

The next morning we were awakened by the opening of numerous sliding doors and shutters, that are in every Japanese house, and were informed that water was ready for us to perform our ablutionary exercises, in the garden. We were much amused at this, as you may imagine—fortunately, it was not very cold. During this process our bed-room was converted into its former state, and the morning meal brought in, varying but little from that of the previous night, the maid of all work staying the while, to assist us to rise from a small wooden tub, out of which each guest is supplied, another curious custom of this strange land.

Now that I have told you something of our surroundings, and tried to give you some idea of hotel customs, I shall go on to speak more particularly of the work, which was most encouraging.

The meeting referred to was well attended; first a children's meeting was held, when my friend spoke, and also the Bible woman who lives in that place. I wish you could have seen the many bright little faces gathered together that evening, all listening so attentively to the story of Jesus and His love; and so eagerly they asked

for tracts at the close of the meeting, which were freely distributed. The little ones dismissed, a woman's meeting was held, at which I was enabled to speak a little, through a young girl who acted as interpreter. Most earnestly do we pray the Holy Spirit to bless our weak words.

On Thursday morning, after reading and prayer together, we went out to visit in the village, and were cordially received by most of the people who looked in wonder upon us. In some places we were followed by a number of children and men—for a foreigner is seldom seen there—so we were curiosities. We made it well-known that a meeting would be held for girls in the afternoon. Our efforts were blessed, for we had as many as twelve bright young girls, between the ages of thirteen to sixteen. We first taught them knitting, etc., and also some hymns. Then the Bible woman spoke to them of the true God, for it was the first time most of them had heard anything about Christianity. That evening we walked two miles to a neighboring village, where the Gospel was preached to some thirty women and children. How intently they listened, and now reluctantly they left when the meeting was over. May the good news we had for them, bring to them rest and peace. How one longs for these poor toiling women to trust in something better than dark idolatry. Manual labor is as much the woman's portion, in country districts especially, as the men's; so they are a weary looking race, and very ignorant.

The next day, being Good Friday, it was arranged to have a service with the Catechists and a few Christians who were there. So at half-past nine eight of us gathered in the preaching house, and joined in our beautiful Litany and part of the Morning Service, which, even in Japan, has a sweetness all its own, as also our dear old familiar hymns. A short address was given by one of the Catechists. At the close of this service we were requested to sing some English hymns, which we did; one—"The Sands of Time are Sinking," especially bringing to my remembrance that wonderful missionary convention, when so many of us joined in singing that beautiful hymn. In the afternoon we went with the Catechists and Bible woman, to a village opposite, which lay quite in the valley, on the other side of the river; and, as we afterwards discovered, where no missionary had ever been. At first sight nothing but hills were seen; but after crossing fields, and nearing the top of a slight incline, we beheld a long straggling village, just below a long range of mountains. Beautiful, indeed, the surrounding country looked; but, so saddening to know, the people were ignorant of the true God. One poor old woman, bent almost double with age, when asked if she had heard of our God, said, "No, Buddha is the only God I know." How my heart went out to that poor creature, so worn and feeble, tottering on the verge of the grave and yet so dark. No one had ever told her of the love of Jesus. There was something very pathetic in the bent figure and kindly face;—and there are many such, even in civilized Japan. We went down into the village, and standing on the corner of one of the thoroughfares, began to sing some hymns. It did not take long for an audience to come,—men, women and children; and most of them, we noticed, had beads on their hands, evidently coming from, or going to some heathen worship. So weary and sad some of the women appeared, weighed down with their heavy burdens, which seemed too much for them, knowing nothing of One who came to bear all burdens. What a message was ours for all such! They too listened quietly for some time, and gazed wonderingly at us. We did the same thing at the next corner. May the seed sown in those dark hearts spring forth and grow! How earnestly ought we to pray that the Holy Spirit may reveal to them their need of Jesus as Saviour, realizing as we do, more and more, "It is the Spirit that quickeneth." We afterwards discovered that, quite near where we were standing was a Buddhist preaching house, which accounted for the beads. Surely we felt our very steps were directed there. It was, indeed, a very happy Good Friday—so privileged to do this work for our dear Master. That same evening we visited another village, two miles distant, and were enabled to see a family who have been much opposed to Christianity, but are now becoming more interested and received us kindly.

We returned home the next day, travelling the first part of the way by boat, and the rest by train. Our boat was a curious looking arrangement—rather primitive, but comfortable enough. The crew consisted of one man, who sailed and rowed by turns. On both sides of the river the scenery was beautiful; green fields without number, hazy looking mountains in the distance, while above us were the ever changing clouds. Truly we could say, in the words of the Psalmist, "All Thy works shall praise Thee, O Lord."

But the beauty is marred, by the presence of so many false gods, and other evidences of heathenism. We then realize the great darkness of the people, on whom all the wonderful works of God are, in one sense, lost. One experiences something of the feeling of St. Paul, when he saw the city of Athens wholly given to idolatry—"his spirit was stirred within him." Our hearts would rise in prayer to God for mercy on them, that they may be brought out of their ignorance and darkness into His marvellous light. But "how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" Yes, "and how shall they preach, except they be sent?" May we not more earnestly pray the "Lord of the harvest" to thrust out more laborers into the foreign mission field. It is a great privilege being Christ's bond-slave in a foreign land. True, there are disappointments and discouragements, but His grace is "sufficient."

Of work among the women here, I can tell you but very little. Not having had anyone for this work, it is, practically, untouched as yet. I trust the day is not far distant when we shall see many of our women here brought to the feet of Jesus, owning Him as King. We need, at once a good Bible woman, who can give all her time to this work; and, also, another lady missionary. There is plenty of room for many more, but one cannot do much by herself,—so who will come now, and thus make way for others to follow? I remember hearing, at a missionary meeting in Toronto, these words—"When the Lord returns He will not ask us how we felt concerning missionary work, but what we did."

Yours in the Master's service,

EDITH M. TRENT.