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JAPAN. THE HOKKAIDO — FORMERLY YESO.

The Rev. Robert Davidson writes: Last summer I visited the Hokkaido, which includes the large island formerly called Yeso, and the outlying small islands. Some facts about this part of Japan, and about Christian work there, may be of interest. Its extent is about 36,882 English square miles, that is, a quarter of the rest of Japan. In former times the chief industries were fishing and gathering seaweed; agriculture was neglected. Towards the close of the year 1869 the Japanese Government formed the Colonization Department, the duties of which were to develop agriculture in the Hokkaido and to procure settlers there from other parts of Japan. Poor retainers of feudal lords, farmers, and artisans were brought over. The head office of the Colonization Department was established in Sapporo, the town in which I took up my residence for a few weeks. The Vice-Governor, Mr. Kurodo, the same gentleman who is at present Prime Minister of Japan, was sent abroad to study agricultural methods. He engaged a foreign adviser and other foreigners, and purchased agricultural machinery, live stock, plants and seeds. Foreigners were engaged for the schools, mills, farms, and for the sea-vessels owned by the Department. Finally, some of the undertakings were transferred to the Hokkaido Government, and others were sold to private companies or individuals.

Emigrants were forwarded to occupy the islands hitherto settled by the aborigines, who are called Ainus. These Ainus form the hunting and fishing population. In former times they bartered with the Japanese; they brought skins, and also hired themselves out as fishermen. But, finally, they were reduced to straits, and the Japanese Government found it necessary to help them. Schools were opened to teach them the Japanese language, and attempts were made to instruct them in farming. At present there are about 14,000 Ainus. The Japanese emigrants, who received passage money, land, and other help, increased the population by more than 177,000 persons in seventeen years, and at the end of the year 1886 the population was 225,958 persons. Medical treatment was given gratis, and full taxes were not at first exacted. Rewards were given for the destruction of bears and wolves, and within two years 2000 bears and 300 wolves were killed. 280 miles of road have been made, and a railway has been built from the sea-coast to the inland capital. Sericulture was undertaken, and a large amount of cocoons are now produced. A sugar factory has been built, and beetroot is grown to supply the factory. Establishments have been started for breeding such domestic animals as horses, cattle, and pigs, and fair success has been obtained; but sheep-rearing has been a failure. Two erections have been made to prepare hemp for the market; coal mines have also been opened; and attention is given to the development of fishing. Very little rice is grown in the islands; but as the emigrants prefer rice, they live on what is imported.

A fine agricultural college has been opened in Sapporo, the capital. The Faculty consists of both foreign and Japanese teachers. Lectures are given on soils, plants, crop rotation, crops of temperate climates, selection of seeds, plant diseases, animals of the farm, dairy-farming, bee-farming, forestry, methods of preventing the ravages of injurious insects. Instruction is also given in such practical work as driving, ploughing, cultivating, harvesting, and draining. Students make experiments on such subjects as—Plant food requirements of the college farm; comparison of yield under foreign drill system and yield under Japanese drill system.

Christian work in Sapporo was started in the same year in which the college was opened, that is, fourteen years ago. Prof. Clark, an American, was one of the teachers in the college, and he gave instruction in Christian truth in his own house. At that time a paper was sent round among the students, in which they were urged to avoid believing in Christianity. The nearness of the Hokkaido to Russian territory made it very natural that this paper should be sent round among them. Professor Clark was then asked to teach moral science, and after he insisted on the necessity of teaching the principles of the Bible, Mr. Kurodo yielded, and allowed the principles contained in the Scriptures to be taught, but the Bible was not used as a text-book. After this permission, however, many Bibles arrived in the college, and Professor Clark began to teach out of the Bible every Sabbath day within the college walls. Every morning, too, the college was opened with prayer. This continued for eight months, when all the class, fourteen persons, professed themselves to be Christians; though, through the backsliding of some, the number was reduced to ten. These formed themselves into a society named "Believers in Jesus." Through the labours of these ten many of next year's students became converts to Christianity.

The commencement of Christian work was made in this way, and the converts remained unconnected with any missionary society. The exercises at their religious meetings were at first the reading of the Scriptures, accompanied by