

Editorial and Contributed.

NOTES FROM JAPAN.

BY THE GENERAL SECRETARY.

ON Friday, July 5th, in company with Bros. Saunby and Hiraiwa, I took the 6.30 a.m. train on the way to Kofu. As yet this line extends only about thirty miles, but will soon be completed all the way. On reaching the terminal station we took a *basha*, and had as fellow-passengers the matron of the Azabu Girls' School, and one of the pupils who was returning home. For the information of the uninitiated, I may explain that a *basha* is a very primitive four-wheeled vehicle, with no springs, but the body is swung on leathern straps. As a travelling conveyance for those who desire comfort, it cannot be highly commended, but as an instrument of torture it is a tolerable success. If the old proverb, "the least said the soonest mended," holds true, then the wisest thing is to say nothing at all about a *basha*, for it requires mending very often. One of these vehicles will accommodate six persons, without luggage, fairly well, but Japanese ideas of economy will crowd in ten—if you will let them.

Early in the day rain began to fall, and continued all that day and night, and most of the next day. This, with prevailing mists afterwards, obscured our view of what occasional glimpses showed to be very beautiful mountain scenery. In some of the towns which we passed through, vice makes but little attempt at concealment—houses of prostitution obtruding themselves on the principal streets. When we entered the Yamana-shi ken, we found a decided change for the better, so far, at least, as outward appearances are concerned. At Uenobara, where we had to exchange *bashas*, persistent attempts were made to compel us to pay exorbitant rates. After considerable delay, and the loss of valuable time, a start was made, but two miles out the horses balked, and after long delay, the driver declared he could not make them proceed, and we must return. I was convinced the whole thing was a trick; however back we returned in the midst of the rain, and then the horses went all right, while we walked. We had to put up for the night at the hotel from which we had started, a not very inviting place; but if the accommodation was poor, fleas were plentiful, and the bill next morning was high enough to compensate for other deficiencies. We had another difficulty with the landlord about the price of a *basha*, and had to send for a policeman before we got the matter settled. At last we started,

but the rains had made bad roads, and progress was slow. At the end of the next stage we found a decided improvement—roads better, people courteous and no attempts at extortion.

A most interesting part of the journey was that over the Sasago Toge Pass. At Kuronoda the *bashas* had to be abandoned, owing to the steepness of the way, and the choice was between packhorse, kago, or walking. Inquiry revealed the fact that no packhorses were to be had, and in an evil hour I consented to try a kago. This conveyance consists of a bamboo pole from which depends two end pieces, in a sloping position, attached to a bottom piece, on which a cushion is placed. There is also a top piece to keep off the rain. You seat yourself on the cushion, lean back against the end piece, and bestow your limbs where you can. But, like the prophet's bed, a kago is "shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it," "and it shall be a vexation only to understand the report." Moreover, the roof part was too low to permit me to sit upright, and my position was like that of a double-bladed jack-knife when half open. When all is ready, a couple of coolies put their shoulders under the ends of the bamboo pole, lift it up, and away we go. I sat it out for nearly half a mile, and then explained to the brethren that I wasn't hungry for any more kago, and would prefer to take the rest of the meal on foot. The walk I enjoyed very much, for though the whole distance was over five miles, and the ascent in places very steep, the road was fairly good and the scenery grand. The exercise in a close, warm atmosphere induced free perspiration, but as we reached a higher altitude the atmosphere rapidly cooled, and near the top of the pass we found ourselves enveloped in a mist as cold as a "January fog." In clear weather the view from the summit of this pass must be magnificent. Descending the pass, we again took a *basha*, and as the principal part of the route was now on a down grade, we made good time. Here, as well as on some other parts of the journey, the road, as it skirts mountain sides and descends by a succession of loops into the valleys below, presented a piece of engineering skill that would do credit to the most highly civilized nation on the globe.

On reaching Kofu, we were met by Mr. Yamanaka, and some others. Quite a party had gone out some distance early in the afternoon to meet us by the way, but as we were late they had returned. Reaching Kofu at a little before eight o'clock, we found very comfortable quarters at a native restaurant, kept in foreign style. Tired as we were, we had time only to snatch a hasty cup of tea, and then hurried to a large