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Koich Ichu San.

One of the Missionaries of the British Columbia Leagues, and lately stationed at Victoria.

Far and wide, though all unknowing,
Pants for thee each mortal breast;
Human tears for thee are flowing,
Human hearts in thee would rest.

If we could divest ourselves of the prejudices engendered by social and race differences and turn our hearts to the needs, morally and spiritually, of the "stranger within our gates," our interest and sympathy would be intensely aroused by the work of social and moral regeneration which is going on in our midst among the Japanese. The Japanese population of the province is variously estimated as between 5,000 and 10,000. This is largely to be found in the coast cities and at the salmon fishing and coal mining centres, where the people are employed as household servants on the one hand, or engaged as fishermen and miners on the other.

For little more than a generation, has Japan been open to the influence of Christian missions, but in that time the seed has been sown far and wide, and is now bearing a gracious harvest. The native Christians are remarkable for their zeal and devotion in the cause of the blessed Master. Most enthusiastically loyal to their own country, they are equally loyal to the Christ, and uniting these together, their highest ambition seems to be the evangelization of their own people and the salvation of Japan.

It is not at all strange therefore that the first organized effort on behalf of the Japanese in British Columbia should have come from the Japanese themselves. Early in the present decade the work took the form of a Japanese Christian Endeavor, organized and conducted and manned by native missionaries. In the year 1892 Masutaro Okamoto San, who may be fitly called "The apostle to the Japanese of British Columbia," was sent by the society at Seattle to minister to the hundreds of Japanese who at that time gathered to the fisheries of the Steena River. For a year or more he labored diligently and fervently, travelling from point to point, teaching and exhorting his fellow countrymen to "flee for refuge to the hope set before us in the gospel." So arduous were his labors and

so severe the privations he endured that his bodily strength failed, and he became a prey to the dread ravages of consumption. In this condition he went to Vancouver to prosecute his work there. Though urged to rest, he refused and was found in labors abundant, in city and district, preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ. It was due to his energy that the Japanese hospital was established at Steveston, and that missions were planted at Union, Victoria and elsewhere. Concerning the mission at Steveston, one of his fellow-workers said: "So many missionaries started to do work at Stev-



MR. ICHU.

eston and failed, that he thought he must show God's love first, and so arranged for the building of the hospital."

In all his labor he was careful that he "might not be chargeable to any," and diligently found employment in wash-house and cookhouse, as his necessities demanded.

In the fall of 1895 he was advised to go back to Japan. This he at first objected to do, continuing his preaching until, exhausted with coughing, he was forced to desist. In December he made ready to leave, and to show the nature of his self-sacrifice, he had nothing to take back with him save one coat.

Bidding farewell on the steamer's deck to his children in the gospel, he quoted the words of St. Paul to the Galatians, 2nd chap., 20th verse: "I am crucified with Christ nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." His last

words were, "Always in every difficulty look to the Cross." Early in the following year his immortal spirit left the frail body and went home to God.

Such zeal and devotion could not but inspire others, and particularly those who were associated with him, with a determination to emulate his example, and in 1896 Rev. Goro Kaburagi, B.S., a graduate of Northwestern University, Illinois, came to take up the work which Okamoto San laid down. It was then that the Methodist Church became directly identified with the work, and at the following Conference Bro. Kaburagi was received into our Church and appointed Superintendent of the Japanese work in the province. It is not, however, of him that we desire to write at present, reserving his eventful life and experience for a future number of the Recorder; it is of one of those upon whom the mantle of Okamoto fell when he was translated.

Koich-Ichu San was born at Dishi, near to Kanazawa, Japan, about the year 1875, and came to this province in 1892. His parents were devout Buddhists, and he was brought up in that faith. But for three years prior to his coming to British Columbia he lived in a Christian home in Kobe, and doubtless received impressions which afterwards deepened and led to his conversion in a foreign land. He was baptised in September, 1892, by Rev. Nami Tamura, and under the leadership and tuition of Mr. Okamoto was led to consecrate himself to the work of the evangelization of his people. January 5th, 1895, he gave up his business and entered into mission work, not assuredly, for what he could gain, for true disciple of Okamoto that he is he has persistently refused to accept anything for his services. At the summer fishing season he has been one of the volunteer nurses at the hospital, and so faithful and untiring have been his efforts that, at times, only under compulsion from the doctor did he seek rest. Since Mr. Saijo left he has been in charge at Victoria, and to all overtures of the nature of a salary his sole reply has been, "No! If I take money Japanese boys say I work for money, and I want to lead them to the Lord Jesus Christ." You ask how he supports himself? By working with his hands, cooking, washing, etc., in connection with the Japanese boarding house. A few days ago we had good-bye to Bro. Ichu, as he took steamer for Japan, there to take a course in our Methodist College at Tokio. Our prayers follow him, that he may find favor in the sight of his people, and be enabled to lead them to Christ, and that he may be more fully fitted to carry on his life work.

Humble, modest, gentle, loving, devoted little Ichu; how our hearts go out to him. May he live long to win many of his countrymen for Christ.

W. H. B.