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Northern Messenger

VOLUME XXXIII., No. 48.

MONTREAL, DECEMBER 2, 1898.

20 Cts. Per An. Post-Paid

Mr. Taneaki Hara, of Tokio.

(The Christian.)

Japan and its affairs engage a wide-spread interest at the present time. Politicians are observing the establishment on an ever-growing scale of Western institutions in 'the Great Britain of the East,' and Christians are noting the rise and progress, in pleasing numbers, of religious and philanthropic organizations. While disposed to wait with patience for some of the many blessed developments of Christian civilization, we are not surprised to hear occasionally of works giving promise of a speedy fulfilment of great ideals.

A few years ago we told the story of Mr. Juju Ishii, 'the George Muller of Japan.' Now it is our pleasure to introduce to notice another remarkable philanthropist, Mr. Taneaki Hara, of Tokio, 'the John Howard

robbery he had committed. In Mr. Hara's words:—

'One evening, walking along Ginza-street, greatly troubled in his conscience, the man happened to join a crowd of people to whom someone was preaching. I happened to be the preacher, and the words of the gospel of Christ fell deeply into his heart, and he was anxious to know if Jesus Christ would save him. A few moments after this he was arrested and put in prison. With tears of joy and gratitude I began to explain to him more fully the story of the gospel, and in a short time he was soundly converted. After this I was called the 'Jesus preacher' of the prison.'

That was the beginning of a new career with Mr. Hara. The officials allowed him to talk to the prisoners every night, and as he got into close quarters with the men he

ments as many as seven thousand men have been employed cutting-down forests, making roads, and cultivating the land. Hither, on his mission of mercy, Mr. Hara went, after some years of labor in the prisons of the south. He went at the request of the government, who appointed him Christian pastor for the prisons of the Hakkaido; and till about a year ago he toiled with extraordinary success among the inmates of these retreats.

Upon the death of the Empress Dowager last year, an Imperial decree was issued, ordering the release of several hundreds of these poor fellows. The joy of liberty was but short-lived, for, being outcasts, despised and forsaken, the ex-convicts were without means of support. Mr. Hara was residing at Tokio at the time; returning to the capital, the men promptly found him out, and sought his help and sympathy. Putting aside his own work, under a conviction that God was calling him to a new line of service, Mr. Hara looked around for a place of shelter and means of livelihood for the released prisoners. First, he took some into his own household, and then he welcomed eighty to a hundred in an old daimio residence, a portion of which was placed at his disposal by the authorities of the Methodist Episcopal Church. At length the men got into settled employment, and in many cases enabled to get the victory over the drink snare. Christian teaching accompanied other influences; in fact, inspired such influences, and in due course some were baptized. More than that, their changed lives preached eloquently to relatives and friends, who in numerous cases were converted and joined the Christian Church. In the course of the first half of last year Mr. Hara helped 262 prisoners, and when he had drafted his proteges into institutions, or placed them among friends in country districts, he kept them under supervision, writing them letters and sending them books. These men call Mr. Hara their father, and love him dearly. In the words of Mr. Wadman:—



MR. AND MRS. TANEAKI HARA, OF TOKIO.

of Japan.' Coming of a good family, Mr. Hara was engaged as a mine-owner before his conversion, in 1874, through reading the New Testament. At his baptism he was asked by the missionary, 'Would you remain firm in your allegiance to Christ, even if the government should arrest you and cut off your head?' Mr. Hara replied, 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.' Shortly after this he gave up his mining business in order to engage in work of a definitely Christian character, and opened a store for the sale of bibles and religious books. This undertaking was instrumental in the wide dissemination of Christian literature. In other ways, however, God was going to use his servant, and it was through a singular incident that the sphere of future service was seen and entered.

In 1883 several members of the Japanese Parliament were arrested for having offended the government. Believing firmly in freedom of speech, Mr. Hara published a pamphlet sympathizing with the offending Liberals. For this he was sent to prison for three months.

There he met a man who recognized him as a 'Jesus teacher.' The man informed him that he was suffering punishment for a

found that none of them were originally bad characters, but that they had fallen into their miserable condition through manifold temptations. Pitying them with all his heart, Mr. Hara lost no opportunity of teaching them the way of life; and when the time came for his own release he had a new sense of duty, regarding which he waited upon God for help and guidance. After earnest prayer, he was impressed with the personal application to himself of the words spoken to the Apostle Paul: 'Thou shalt be a witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard,' (Acts xxii., 15). Without delay, and notwithstanding opposition on the part of friends, Mr. Hara, resolved to renounce all worldly ambitions, and give his life to Christian work in the interest of prisoners.

These particulars of Mr. Hara's career are taken from an article in the February issue of 'The Japan Evangelist,' written by the Rev. J. W. Wadman, of the Methodist Publishing House, Tokio. Still following that account we are reminded of the practice of the government during recent years of sending long-sentenced convicts to the Hokkaido, in the hope that their labor would prepare the way for colonists in the northern island of the empire. In five large prison settle-

'This great work has been accomplished as a work of faith. Mr. and Mrs. Hara have made great sacrifices, and their friends, including missionaries and Japanese Christians, have co-operated with them in forwarding this noble enterprise. To quote his own words:—"I firmly believe from my own experience that criminals can be reformed. The salvation of Jesus can save them entirely from their sin. The Holy Spirit can melt down their hearts, no matter how hard. By feeding and clothing them I wish to win their love, and then it is easy for me to lead them to Christ. Preaching is very necessary, but it is not all. We must visit the poor and outcast; we must go to the prisons, and lead bad men to true repentance, so as to start them on a new life. This is a great work, and it brings joy to many sad-hearted parents, brothers, and sisters. Prison reform is a great blessing to Japan. Our success brings glory to Christianity.'

The Government of Japan recognizes Mr. Hara's important work, and renders him help in finding suitable employment for ex-convicts, as well as searching for their relatives and friends. A recent undertaking of the philanthropist has been the translation into Japanese of the remarkable English