

A LETTER FROM JAPAN.



HE Rev. J. G. Waller, Canadian Missionary in Japan, writes to us as follows:—

It is just nine months ago to-day (August 24th) since I landed with my wife in Yokohama, and I give a short summary of the work done in this time—writing now that it may arrive in Canada in time for the Autumn meeting of the Board of Missions.

On the day of our arrival we proceeded direct to Tokyo, where, the Bishop being absent in the south, we remained the guests of Archdeacon Shaw for upwards of a month. Then for two and a half months we lived in a small house in Hikawa Cho, Akasaka Tokyo. During this time I was partly busied in the search for the most suitable field, and in company with Archdeacon Shaw, made several journeys in different directions, the expenses of which were defrayed from the fund supplied the English mission for this purpose—this was at the kind intercession of the Bishop and Archdeacon. The field eventually selected was in the north of the main island, and the centre at Fukushima, the capital of the “Ken” or Province of the same name.

The next difficulty was to procure a residence passport. For this I engaged a young man in Tokyo, a Christian having the confidence of all his brethren in St. Andrew's church, to go to Fukushima and attempt to find someone whose antipathy to foreigners had been reduced to such a point that he would be willing to lend his name in the application for a passport, and also to rent a house in his name. This he finally accomplished on March 5th, after remaining there for nearly five weeks. In return for the favor of the name, I agreed to teach in a night school, one hour each day, free of charge. In the meantime, in Tokyo, I was learning the language, teaching in mission schools—by interpretation of course—and purchasing the various articles required in the outfit of a mission house.

After several vexatious delays, we left Tokyo on the morning of March 17th, taking with us our house-servant, and an interpreter, who also acted as my Japanese teacher.

The chief reason for the selection of the north of Japan, was that it is less supplied with missionaries than other parts. After careful enquiry from the members of other missions, and after searching the religious directory of Japan—published in connection with the foreign directory at Yokohama—and, noting the changes that I have heard of during the year, I can find only sixteen foreign missionaries, stationed north of Tokyo, in a population of about 13,000,000, and of these sixteen, three are women, teaching in a woman's school at Sendai. There

are, however, a number of catechists employed at different points, and a few native ministers. The population being less dense, the cost of living higher, the country more rugged, and the climate far more inclement than in the south, may have tended to the great majority having selected the south as the preferable field.

Another point in favor of the north is that Buddhism has far less influence here than in its stronghold in the south, and Shintoism offers less opposition to the message of the Gospel.

After coming to Fukushima very many came to call on me, not only of those who had not before seen a foreigner, but more especially those who were desirous of seeing how a foreigner furnished his house, or of picking up a few words of English—the full extent of this latter class, however, I only discovered later, to my cost. Those who came were told of Christ, and the most regular were organized into classes, to meet six times a week, twenty-two of whom were admitted as catechumens. But as time went on, and I became better acquainted with the history of the place and people, I found a number of Christians here, and also learned that the number of apostates, or virtual apostates outnumbered the faithful. I found also that most of my catechumens, although studying the Bible, taking notes on Christian evidences, hearing the story of man's redemption, were at heart impelled only by the overpowering passion to learn English and that if it would insure their continued intercourse with me, they would not hesitate to receive baptism. This made me unusually careful in administering baptism—not until after severe tests. As a result, instead of the number I had hoped for, on July 19th, I baptised only two—both young men.

When I came to Fukushima I found a few Christians here in charge of a Congregational catechist. About the time of my coming they received notice from the managers of the Congregational body, at Kobe, that a catechist could no longer be supported here, but the Fukushima Christians being very desirous of retaining the catechist, and he as fond of them, he concluded to stay at all hazards. As, however, they were unable to support him, they applied for admission to the Methodists at Sendai. While negotiations were being carried on, I, thinking that if all the Christians in Fukushima were united it would more strengthen our cause here, told them so, and after receiving instruction concerning the church, they unanimously agreed to join us, and were prepared for confirmation, to the number of seventeen. This, however, has been delayed owing to the Bishop's continued illness this summer—and since joining, three of them, being in the Provincial Government service here, have been removed to other points. I, on my part, undertook to provide the catechist's salary, the congregation paying for the lighting, heating, and rent