

REMINISCENCES OF EARLY JAPANESE STUDENTS AT HOPE COLLEGE

Intelligence *Sept. 12, 1935*
By Mrs. J. A. Otte

(Mrs. Otte is a daughter of Dr. Philip Phelps, President of Hope College from 1865 to 1878.)

Several Japanese princes had been awakened in more ways than one by Commodore Perry's persistent, but tactful, rapping on the massive closed doors of Japan in 1853. They not only awoke, but in a marvelously short time arose and clothed themselves for action. Education became their slogan, and, he it noted, education for their youth. (How long did it take us so-called progressives in America to grasp the significance and far-reaching results of such vision developed into action?)

Forthwith these mighty, influential leaders seized upon their most promising young men and women and sent them to the best schools and universities of Europe, but the majority to America and at government expense. In less than ten years after this, and only two or three years after the Western Institution in Holland, Michigan, had become a full fledged college (Hope College), Dr. P. Phelps, the president, went to New York City on one of his usual college business trips. His headquarters were Synod's Rooms then on Vesey Street, and one day the secretaries there told him that a Mr. Sugiwara, a Japanese student from New Brunswick, and several others, had brought a Japanese student to them only a few hours before. The story was that they all did not know what to do with him. He had been in the country only six weeks. They had happened upon him and he was without friends or means. Immediately my father said, "Leave the matter to me." He went to the hotel where they were staying and found that the government had ordered this young Japanese back to Japan. My father made a quiet trip to Washington, and interviewed the Japanese Legation there—the first Embassy to be sent from Japan to the United States. He succeeded in persuading those high Japanese officials that he was able and willing to assume the entire responsibility for this youth. A letter soon followed to my mother and filled my child-heart with the deepest awe and curiosity which was only strengthened when finally he arrived and took his first meals with us in the College Halls.

A large framed picture of the Embassy was given to my father and this, together with the strange but interesting long silk garment and the three swords (indicative of high social standing) all belonging to this rescued young student, are among the prized possessions of our family.

Ryozo Tsugawa—for such is our young man's name—soon exchanged these for our American costume and began the study of our language with rare earnestness. Dr. Phelps had sent forth an appeal to our western people, reminding them of their missionary prayers, and that this promising youth needed financial support as well as prayer. To their credit, be it recorded, they responded generously, and a happy year for all parties passed. Then came the news from Japan that Mr. Tsugawa's father was seriously ill and he was obliged to return to Japan.

About six months after this, occurred the great Chicago Fire, and at exactly the same hour, three o'clock, Monday morning October 8, '71, the then small village of Holland, Michigan, was also entirely burned up with the single exception of the College Campus and a few adjacent buildings. Picture the scene of desolation and ruin! Only a short time after came a letter from Mr. Tsugawa stating that his father had died and had bequeathed him his portion of his estate, which he had invested in costly Japanese things and he asked my father to provide a suitable building in which he could deposit and sell to the inhabitants of Holland his Japanese treasures.

No time for remonstrance.

Soon he and his stock arrived—in a shabby little room on Main Street, and, "amid the ashes of a ruined city", they did not have a very comfortable or prosperous time.

Besides having to beg for the financial support of the College, and the destitute people of Holland, the additional burden was laid upon my father to seek out in the East wealthy friends who might buy these goods. The largest and most beautiful crystals and elegant robes, formerly belonging to the recently exiled Tycoon royal family, were included in this collection. Some of the "wealthy" friends responded, but many of the things could not be sold.

Tsugawa survived, however, and kept up his studies at Hope, graduating from the Preparatory Department in '74. His brother Nanomi, had accompanied him to this country, but did not stay very long. He went back to Japan and became a silk merchant. Then Tsugawa decided that he also must leave for his native country. He returned and engaged in the mining business until his death a few years ago. During his stay in Holland he had been baptized and received into the church.

The spring of '71 brought Messrs. Ohgimi and Kimura to Holland. They, too, were at first under government support, but wishing to receive a Christian education, they concluded to remain longer in this country, and again Hollanders came to their help and friends both West and East put them through the eight years of the Preparatory and College Courses. They both graduated in 1879. They were both baptized and joined Hope Church during their stay at Hope College. Hope Church having been destroyed by the Fire, the church services were held for a while in the first College chapel, which was a large room on the first floor of Van Vleck Hall. In the fall of '79 these young men entered the Seminary at New Brunswick and were ordained to the ministry in '82.

For many years in Japan they rendered faithful service among their own people. Rev. Kumage Kimura served as a minister of the Church of Christ in Japan, and became principal of the Meiji Girls' High School. Rev. Motoichiro Ohgimi taught in Union Seminary and Meiji Gakuin, Tokyo, was the principal of our Steele Academy at Nagasaki for five years, and later taught in the Methodist Protestant Theological Seminary at Nagoya. He was sent as a delegate to an educational conference in Formosa and did a good work among many of the churches there. He was a very good scholar—only last year he sent as an Alumnus Contribution to the Theological Seminary at New Brunswick a copy of his recently published book, "Grammar of New Testament Greek translated into Japanese."

It remains now to mention Tametsune Matsuda, who came to this country with Mr. Tsugawa upon the latter's return in '71. As Matsuda had but little cash, Tsugawa hired him out to a farmer living near Holland, but there he was treated very cruelly. My father, hearing of this, rescued him and brought him to Hope College, again appealing to the Hollanders for support. Nobly they carried him through the eight years of the Preparatory and College life, and he graduated in '83 in the same class with Dr. A. Oltmans, now our veteran missionary in Japan. He had made profession of his faith and had been baptized while in College. In Japan for some years he was a teacher in a large High School in Tokyo. It is hard to have to close his history with the fact that he—the only one of all who were at Hope College—returned to heathen standards and religion, but this was brought to my attention a few years ago, and, I fear, is only too authentic.

Bunzo Hashiguchi now appears upon the scene—the latest arrival of those early Japanese students. He graduated from the Preparatory Department of Hope College in '79. As there was no Agricultural Course in that western college, he went to the Massachusetts Agricultural College at

Amherst. Returning to Japan, we next find him as a very prominent man—Governor of Taipei, one of the important provinces in Formosa.

Ezesaki—there my memory fails me—only the name abides in my memory. Having reinforced my youthful recollections by researches into my autograph album, my diaries and scrap books of my own and those of my father for the history of these preceding students, I find no mention of him. I am sure he was at Hope, but only for a short time.

I can recall many interesting incidents of these foreign young men so providentially brought to sojourn among the pioneers of the Holland immigration, but further space and time forbid.

(Note by S. W. Ryder. Mrs. Otte showed me a most interesting photograph taken in Japan when news of the death of her father, Dr. Phelps, reached there. A framed picture of Dr. Phelps was set upon a small table, and around this table were gathered five of the Japanese students who had attended Hope College: the two Tsugawa brothers, Kimura, Ohgimi and Matsuda.)

Dr. S. W. Ryder (a man from Japan) asked me to write this article.

About 1870

Receipts & disbursements from Oct. 1869 to Sept. 21, 1870 in behalf of Riozo Tsugawa See Dr. Phelps' Collection of valuable papers, No. 1 Page 22 1/2 Case I. 24 1/2

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A veil must be drawn over the sacred meeting in the home itself. Rest had come a last, and for a short time at least, the heartache ceased.

The three months at home were busy ones. In many ways they were pleasant, too. Nothing caused more joy than the visit to Holland, Mich. In a few short years this place had changed so much that it was scarcely recognizable. The old fathers, who for their faith had been compelled to leave the mother country, had in many cases died without seeing that their prayers for the salvation of their children were answered. Many of these children were not only careless in their religious duties, but evil in their ways as well. And now, at last, the prayers had been visibly answered. I did not meet one of these old acquaintances, who for years seemed to care little or not at all for Christ, who had not now given himself to Christ. Some stopped me on the street to tell me of all Christ had done for them. Where once licensed liquor selling places had disgraced the community, now not one such a place existed. All this was not due to a sudden spasmodic revival, but rather to a steady definite growth in the number of those who had consecrated themselves to Christ's services.

The visit to the church in Iella, too, was one of the great pleasures of the summer. This church has undertaken my support. That dignified and sanctified Dutch community is an honor to the Fatherland which sent them out, and a blessing to the land they have adopted as their own. Their wealth is great enough to make it possible for them to support at least four foreign missionaries, and as many more working in the home field. Some of their numbers are doing all that can be expected, God bless them. But there are very many who do but little, and do not understand their privileges. God help them. I wish the scope of this letter would allow me to express the full extent of my gratitude to those who pray for us, and try to work for God through us. To our hosts, too, we would like to show our gratitude in some way. But as we cannot do all we would, we can only pray that God may bless them, and make it possible for me to honor them through success in the service of the Master.

At last the first of October came, and with it—separation. I will not, and cannot write about this. God will help.

The journey back to Amoy was made less miserable through meeting with many kind Christians, who soon became friends. Among these were thirty-two missionaries, all going to the borders of Tibet, and sent out by one board, the Methodist Missionary Association of Canada. Among them was an accountant, a builder, a printer, doctors, teachers, nurses and ministers. Other Christians, too, made many of the days happy ones. There was an English admiral, his wife and two daughters, all earnest Christians. There was also that wonderful man of power, Bishop Brent of Manila. It was interesting to meet the man who originated the idea of holding a conference of nations to discuss what could be done to curtail the growing evil of opium smoking. Christian officers, too, made the good ship "Empress of Japan" seem more like home than any ship I have ever been on. I have never spent such happy Sabbaths on any steamer as on this. In the morning we had a fine service under the leadership of the Captain, and Bishop Brent. In the afternoon a conference of the Missionaries, or a lecture by one of them was given. In the evening a song service, under the guidance of Admiral Boardman's daughters, gave a homelike tone to our pleasures.

A little before midnight, October thirtieth, Amoy was reached. All was bustle there on account of the visit of the "American Peace Fleet." In the hospitals all was well. Dr. Blauvelt, Miss Kranberg, and Dr. Ng Taipit had each

done his or her share toward keeping up the work. The Lord bless them for their fidelity.

It may be of interest to some to know that it took just fifty-two days, actual travel, to go around the world. If I had taken faster steamers, I could have done it in three days less.

J. A. OTTE.

The Death of Dr. John A. Otte



THE Board of Foreign Missions received by cablegram on the 15th of April the sad news of the sudden death in Amoy of Dr. John A. Otte. The news is necessarily very meager, but it is understood that the cause of death was the dread Eastern disease of the plague, which, in its ravages in Asia, has thus far not affected Europeans or Americans except in rare instances, where attendance by physicians and nurses upon those afflicted by the disease, has sometimes resulted fatally among them.

The news of the sudden death of this beloved and faithful physician has filled many hearts with sorrow. Dr. Otte's long and splendid services in behalf of the Chinese people and his very vigorous prosecution of the medical work of our Board in that country have secured for him a wide circle of friends in Holland as well as in America. But at this time the thoughts of all will go to the afflicted home in the West, where Mrs. Otte and the children have lived for a number of years separated from the beloved husband and father that he might continue his beneficent work among the people of China. The tenderest sympathy of a wide circle will go to that bereaved home in this hour of sadness and loneliness.

Dr. Otte was born in the Netherlands in 1861. He came to this country with his parents when quite young and made his home in Michigan. He graduated from Hope College in 1883 and from the medical department of the University of Michigan in 1886. In the following year he married Miss Phelps, a daughter of Dr. Philip Phelps, formerly president of Hope College. In the same year, 1887, he sailed for China with Mrs. Otte. They remained in the Netherlands for several weeks on their outward journey and there and then laid the foundations for the deep and continuing interest among the people of his fatherland, which has meant so much to him and to his work in Amoy during these intervening years.

This interest in Holland was so fostered that, a few years ago, a fund was raised for the erection, equipment and maintenance of the Wilhelmina Hospital, being a woman's department of Hope Hospital. His work in connection with these hospitals; the large good that he did in the Amoy district in ministering to the bodies of the suffering and in making the way for the entrance of the Gospel; his training of his students, who, with their dispensaries in the surrounding villages, are continually widening the sphere of his influence and good works; his own successful efforts to maintain the hospital from receipts secured from the Chinese in connection with his work—all these varied forms of his activity in the mission field are well known and have made his name one that has been honored in our Church.

While Dr. Otte did not undergo a course of theological training his missionary work was of such a character that the Classis of Michigan ordained him to the ministry in 1896.

At no one time in his missionary career has he been more active or happier in his work than in recent years. He had been looking forward with deep joy to the time when Mrs. Otte could join him again in his work in China, when the children, for whose education they remained separated so long, could be left by their mother.

The Church honors Dr. and Mrs. Otte for their service and their sacrifice in the cause of the spread of the kingdom of Christ in China.

W. I. C.

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