A PICTURESQUE JAPANESE FINISHING SCHOOL, WHERE GIRLS ARE TAUGHT TO BE CHARming WOMEN AND GOOD HOUSEKEEPERS: BY ELOISE ROORbach

WHEREVER one goes in Japan, long processions of gaily dressed schoolchildren will be encountered on their way to visit some holy temple, military shrine or beautiful spot of Nature. The Japanese ardently believe in education by travel; in sending children to look upon a beautiful avenue of blossoming cherry trees, wistaria arbor or a picture in a gallery, in imparting knowledge of physical geography by a personal inspection of bays, rivers, islands, mountain peaks, and of botany by visit to field and grove.

A gayer sight cannot be imagined than a procession of little girls on a pilgrimage to some historic spot through the driving rain; multi-colored kimonos, tied up around their waists to keep them clean, revealing the scarlet or white petticoat, and bare feet beneath them dexterously clinging to the storm-high geta; across their shoulders, shawl-wise, a square of yellow oiled silk, under one arm a bundle of books or luncheon wrapped in rainbow-bright handkerchiefs, and over all the huge lavender, green or sky blue paper umbrella! A procession of flowers would make no livelier bit of color.

Storm, heat or cold have no power to damp the arvor of traveling schoolchildren or dim the brightness of their smiles. The boys make not so gay an appearance, but there is not a slothful one among them all. Books dangle from every flowing sleeve or project beyond the pockets of up-to-date school uniforms. Boys are up at five in the morning [making water-color drawings, fingers blue with cold, practicing fencing or memorizing some lesson for the day in a monotonous sing-song chant.

I have seen the grocer's boy studying his lesson as he trotted sturdily
between the shafts of his delivery cart, seen the deck boy of a
tiny freight steamer surreptitiously memorizing one more word of
“that difficult English,” one boy tutoring another as they jogged
to school under a single umbrella; the rich man’s son absorbed in
Russian or French literature while being rushed along the streets in
his kuruma. Eyes become half-blinded by much poring over cheaply
printed pages, bodies become weakened by insufficient food and
dwarfed by lack of exercise; but an education they will have, and
they somehow manage to get it. Their zeal for knowledge is un-
paralleled, greatly to be respected. They are dexterous and pains-
taking, their industry world-renowned, their yearning for culture unbounded.

Nothing gives the visiting stranger a greater idea of the mental and moral trend of this ambitious nation than a study of its student life. The moving impulse of the youth of the old regime seemed to be that of becoming an efficient instrument for the glory of the nation. The urge of the present-day youth is toward personal improvement, raising the standard of the individual, thus giving him an honored position among the intellectual powers of the world. Personal ambition, so marked in this generation, is sending the nation ahead with phenomenal swiftness. Energetic pursuit of knowledge, indomitable perservance and overwhelming ambition is certainly enough to carry the Japanese to any height.

A visit to one of the girls’ schools in Kioto brought out many interesting points of difference in methods of instruction and discipline between our ideals of a girls’ finishing course and theirs. In this school, named Doshisha, “a company with one wish,” about two hundred and fifty girls are learning to be practical housekeepers, to preside gracefully over their future homes, to dance, to converse well on all the questions of the day, to express themselves clearly through well-phrased sentences, besides taking the cultural course of arts, sciences and literature. I was shown through dormitories, nun-like in simplicity, bedding spread for airing, windows wide open, for modern hygiene as taught in the West has been rapidly adopted
JAPAN'S "NEW WOMAN" IN THE MAKING

throughout Japan. Exercises in deep breathing and physical culture are valued there as fully as with us. These girls learn how to prepare both Japanese and European meals, to serve them with nice balance of nutriment and due regard to food values as well as aesthetic service. They go to market with the teachers, learn to buy economically, to select wholesome fresh food; they watch the markets, varying the meals and serving them appetizingly cooked.

Spending and accounting for money is considered a part of the girls’ education, so the Doshisha girls go shopping, choose their own materials, test the silk or cloth to see whether it is all wool or not, determine if it is properly dyed, too thin or too heavy, suitable or unsuitable. Then, of course, they cut and make...
the things they need to wear. This school which is but an illustration of the usual course pursued in the Japanese girls’ education, receives girls of all ranks. The aristocrat’s daughter leaves her silk kimono at home and wears but the simplest cotton ones at school. There is no uniform but simple, sensible dressing is encouraged. Modesty, consideration of another's feeling are considered among the sweetest and most winning of a woman’s qualities. Girls are self-governing and help with the housework. The poorer girls band together, buy and cook their own food and do all their own work.

The difference of cost in a girl’s education in Japan and America is noteworthy. A girl can attend this school, one of the very best in Japan, for the sum of sixty dollars a year. Music is extra—one dollar and fifty cents a term, including one lesson a week, three terms in the year. The average cost of meals is twenty-two sen, or eleven cents. Their clothing costs but a trifle and text books are extremely cheap. Compare these figures with ours. Two thousand dollars in Japan constitutes an endowment, the interest of which will keep one girl one year, will therefore educate many girls. In America such a sum is not a permanent fund, it is but little more than one year’s expenses!

The finishing course of the Japanese girls includes proficiency in that aesthetic social institution known as the Tea Ceremony. The polite receiving of guests, the courteous ministering to their comfort, a pleasant skill in entertaining are important things for a Japanese girl to know. In the public school building of every little hamlet is
the “manners” room, if not a room at least a corner or a special hour, for children must be taught along with the three R’s how to bow, say polite things, hold a cup daintily, be seated and arise gracefully. The Tea Ceremony is their last word of social refinement. Behind each detail of the guest’s arrival, the tea making and drinking, the silent admiration of the beautiful cups, jars and ladles is a complicated knowledge of history, folklore and subtle delicacies. The Tea Ceremony is a survival of an Art Cult, a feast of reason and of high conversation. Okakura in his fascinating Book of Tea says: “The kettle sings well, for pieces of iron are so arranged in the bottom as to produce a peculiar melody in which one may hear the echoes of a cataract muffled by clouds, of the distant seas breaking along the rocks, a rain storm sweeping through the bamboo forest or the soughing of pines on some far away hill.”

English is included in every school course of importance nowadays. If it is not in the regular course of the smaller public schools it is nearly always taken as an extra, for both boys and girls are eager to have access to the world knowledge that they can get through English books. The girls, whose lives are more restricted than the boys, pore long hours behind the closed paper shoji of their homes over the books that take them far away to the wonderful wide realms of a new and marvelous world. The women of Japan are side by side with the men in appreciation of beauty and clever use of their fingers and in all sorts of practical knowledge.

The courtesy of young students to English foreigners is always commented upon with appreciation by travelers. If a stranger stands on a street corner obviously undecided which way to go, or pauses before a stand trying to remember whether the price, go sen, of some article means five or ten cents, or gazes anxiously at the puzzling, enigma-looking names upon the street cars, some youth is sure to step forward from the crowd of passersby and, with a smile, a Japanese bow and an English-y doffed hat, offer help in most charmingly original, bookish English. They are always at hand eager to aid, for their number is legion.