

LETTER FROM MISS BLAKENEY IN JAPAN

Interesting Letter From Former Teacher In Dallas and Gastonia Schools — Chatty Comment on Japanese Life and Customs.

The following interesting letter has been received by the Business Women's Bible Class of the First Presbyterian church from Miss Bessie Blakeney, formerly a member of the class. Miss Blakeney left Gastonia in December for Vancouver, B. C., whence she sailed for Japan as a missionary from the Southern Presbyterian church.

Miss Blakeney is a niece of Dr. Alex Martin, pastor of the Presbyterian church in Rock Hill. An aunt of hers, Miss Edmondia Martin is a missionary to Brazil.

Miss Blakeney was for some time a teacher in the Dallas high school and taught in the Gastonia schools last fall. The letter:

Nagoya, Japan,
Sunday 4th.

Dear Everybody:—

Well, I got an awfully botched up letter to you all off on a fast steamer, so I hope you will hear in about fifteen days.

I told you in that letter that we had a very nice voyage — nice, though, in that the weather was bad, and the boat very, very rough. I was not at all seasick, and enjoyed every minute of it. The only accident I met with was getting slammed up against an iron bridge when the ship gave an unexpected lurch. That cut my eyebrow and lip, and it bled all over my beloved Colobenz boudoir cap, otherwise I didn't mind much, though they teased me a lot about my black eye and lip, as it happened the morning after Christmas and a good many of the passengers had gotten rather gay Christmas night.

We had a fancy dress ball New Year's eve, and you would have been surprised to see what ingenious costumes they contrived. Mr. Mac was Charlie Chaplin, the best one I ever saw. Mr. Wayland was a waiter, and did his part beautifully. Mr. Dawson was an Italian organ grinder, he looks like an Italian anyhow, and Mr. Douglas, the star performer, was a monkey. He was the funniest thing I ever saw, and Mr. Dawson made him hop and dance till he was nearly dead, but he won first prize to our great delight and amusement. Mrs. Mac was my "Ma", and I was a spoiled baby, a role as you know I am peculiarly gifted in playing. The children were delighted with us and quite indignant because we didn't get first prize but Miss McClung as Father Time got that, and she was splendid.

I told you in the other letter that Miss Hansell met me and that she wanted me to go on to Tokyo that night on the electric car, but as it was New Year the custom house was closed and I couldn't get my baggage.

Miss Hansell dined with us on the ship (my, but we had good things to eat on the voyage and I didn't miss a meal or lose a meal the entire time.) After dinner we all went up town, took her to the station, then got richishas and rode around a while. They are delightfully comfortable, but you feel like a dog having the little men trot you around. They are as strong as little mu. You should see their LEGS.

Then I went back and packed my steamer trunk, and the next morning got everything off and through the customs. They were very nice, just opened one trunk and poked around in it a little.

Miss Hansell and I went on to Tokyo, Oh, I did hate to tell those others goodbye. They have been so sweet to me and I like them all so much.

Tokyo, as I told you before, is only a thirty minute ride from Yokohama. The cars were packed and jammed. New Year is their great day you know. To my surprise the Japanese men got up every time and gave us a seat. They have two long seats facing each other on all cars, street cars and trains. Finally we reached that section of Tokyo where I am to be this winter and we got another richishas and went on to the Christian Compound. The house is a great big, high ceiled place, very nicely furnished, and tolerably well heated. Miss Parker and Miss Palmer live there. They are both from Columbia, Missouri and are mighty nice, Miss Parker has been out for years and speaks Japanese like a native, while Miss Palmer is still at language school. They give their missionaries two years, and I will only have part of one, but they say I can use the language school method and go right on by myself. I hope so!

We were invited out to dinner at the Watson's (from Ky.) the next house on the Compound that night. I was right tired, but changed my dress and we all went. They had about fifteen guests, and served the dinner on little individual Japanese tea tables, beautifully carved wood and lacquer affairs. They come in "nests" of three, one slips under the other when not in use.

Mrs. Watson has lovely china and silver, so have the folks here and Mrs. Parker. We had chicken and dressing and gravy, scalloped potatoes, sauted beets, macaroni cooked with tomatoes, buttered bread, fruit salad with mayonnaise, and tangerines and cocoanut and cocoanut cake for desert, and tea, of course.

They have delicious oranges and persimmons and things like that here.

We got up at six the next morning, took an early train and got here (Nagoya) at four. It is an eight hour ride, but traveling is very cheap here. All missionaries go second class, too. Only the extremely wealthy ride first, and second is very nice.

We had Japanese lunch on the train. Sarah bought these little wooden boxes. One had sweetened rice with grated fish over it. Another little one, like a match box, was filled with curious little pickled vegetables that tasted like kraut. Each box had chop sticks put up in sanitary paper, and we had to eat with them. I couldn't use mine very well, and I didn't like the sweet rice and fish so awfully

much. But I ate about half, and all my pickle and then we had bottles of hot sweet milk, and a little net bag of tangerines. The latter are delicious and quite cheap.

We saw Fuji all the way. You never get far from it in this section. It's gorgeous, sublime, beautiful, wonderful. I tell you Fuji's "got me" already.

Mr. Smythe met us at the station here and brought us to the school on the street car again. One doesn't feel much like a missionary riding on street cars. There goes one now.

This house is precious. Very much like Uncle Alex and Aunt Dora's. That's why I like it so. Of course it is much smaller and not nearly so well built, nor so substantial, but the general effect on the inside is much the same. The walls and wood work are the same color, and there are many glass doors and windows, and the sun "the stove of Japan" streams in, in the same beautiful way. Instead of doors down stairs we have sliding screens, I guess you call them. They have two cute little servants, Kora San and Tora San their names sound alike to me, but of course that's not just what they are. They are about Eudora's size, though they are eighteen or nineteen I think. They are about Eudora's size, though they are eighteen or nineteen I think. They are about Eudora's size, though they are eighteen or nineteen I think. They are about Eudora's size, though they are eighteen or nineteen I think.

I forgot to tell you that when I got here yesterday Mrs. Smythe was having tea for Miss Ambler and me, and I had to jump into a dress and run down there with them.

Miss Ambler is an Episcopal Missionary from Kyoto, who is visiting Miss Kirtland. This is still the New Year holiday, you know.

Miss Kirtland could easily pass for Mildred McCubbin's twin sister, and you know we are not unlike, so Mr. Smythe says the Japanese will never be able to tell us apart. I suppose that's natural, for they all look alike to me, and I guess two foreigners who are so near the same size with the same coloring, etc., would look alike to them.

They had no English service this morning so they made me rest, which I was very thankful to do, and after dinner, we are going to a joint Japanese prayer meeting, and tonight they are going to have the girls over here for prayer meeting.

Monday we are going to Toyohashi to spend the day with Mrs. Cumming, and then I'll go on back to Tokyo, where I begin work in the school Wednesday.

I may wait and add the experience of the rest of the trip to this, for it won't go off for some time anyhow. So, move anon.

Sunday P. M.

The Japanese Union prayer meeting was ages long, one reason I thought so perhaps, was that I couldn't understand the word of it except the Amen's. I like Macbeth I responded to these most heartily.

The first hymn they sang was "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name," and I sang the English words softly, and felt that I was joining in. But during the singing of the second hymn it flashed across my mind that C. E. was meeting at home just at this hour (disregarding the difference of time), and the picture of that came before me so vividly that it almost knocked me down.

We came home by the "Monument" one of the sights of Nagoya, which was erected to the soldiers killed in the Russian War.

I wish you all could see the interesting things here. It was both fortunate and unfortunate to land on New Year's. Fortunate, because we have gotten to see all the curious decorations and the shops were all closed, so I couldn't spend what little money I had left. Unfortunate, because no one wants to work during the holidays and when they do they charge about double. So of course we go stuck, for everything and prices are high here. While our missionaries have so many conveniences that those in other fields have't they have to count every cent to make expenses meet. For instance they were counting up the other day how much a little oil stove used to heat one of the bed rooms night and morning cost per day, and if it cost over a certain sum they would have to discontinue it. And they know it takes three buckets of coal to keep the grate going at the proper temperature on a day when the sun isn't shining, and only two when it is.

The Japanese houses look just like I imagined they did, but oh, the queer little alleys they call streets. A big man could stretch out his arms and touch the houses on each side. Of course they aren't paved so you can imagine how muddy they get.

I can't realize I am living in the fourth largest city in the world, but I do know I could get lost here in about five minutes and wander for a quarter of a century through these curious little winding paths they call streets before I ever got back to the Compound. Of course the main streets are wide and the shops the most fascinating things I have ever seen.

We walk right down the middle of the streets here, and are in constant danger, not of being run over by the street cars, or even the richishas or horses, but by the bicycles. Every boy in Japan has two I think and it looks too queer to see that Oriental figure dashing through the streets on the latest model bicycle.

Their horses have awfully queer "figgers" out here, and quite vicious tempers they say; but no wonder the way they are treated. They have all been gayly decorated too for New Year's and I know they'll miss their blankets when the holiday is over.

Their dogs look as if they might be descendants of a very ordinary breed brought over by Commodore Perry, which have been deteriorating with every succeeding generation, and they have quite a pronounced Japanese accent. I don't like them much.

The kites are the most interesting animals I've seen. This is the kite season you know, and they surely have some gorgeous specimens.

Monday, January 5th.

We got up early this morning and took

the train to Toyohashi. The Japanese were having some sort of festival at a nearby shrine, and I have never seen such crowds. Circus day at home was nothing in comparison. The rush was so great that when I got into the crowd they just picked me up and shoved me on the train. We were able to get seats, although we were traveling third class. It is a two hours ride from Nagoya to Toyohashi, and the country between is beautiful. One never gets very far from the mountains or the sea in Japan.

I was especially interested in the farming. I wish you all could see the rice fields. They look like a crazy quilt. They have little terraces between the different fields, and they walk on top of the little terraces. Every arable inch of Japan is under cultivation and every field is just like a garden. Mr. Smythe says it is rather hard to explain or use the parable of the sower, because they have no "stony places" or "thorns by the wayside."

Now at this time of year they are bedding up the rice fields and planting wheat. They have to bed it up because the rice fields are so low the wheat would be drowned.

The mulberry fields surprised me too. I imagined great groves of huge mulberry trees, such as we have at home, but not so — I had noticed field after field of little sprouts, some tied together, more like raspberries than any thing I can compare them with. It seems that they cut them down, sprout and all, and take them to the honorable silk worms, who are calmly reposing on the layers of cotton, and feed them in bed, as it were.

They raise all sorts of vegetables and these look mighty nice in the fruit stalls, all washed clean and neatly arranged. I don't think we'll ever suffer for food, but prices are very high. For instance: Butter is about 75c a pound, eggs 60c a dozen, sugar 20c a pound and coal is about \$19.00 a ton; beef 65c a pound, etc. Of course these prices vary as they do at home. Rice has greatly increased in price. Probably because they are raising less rice and more mulberries.

Traveling has been cheap, but the rates are going to be raised the first of February. But that won't dismay us. We'll travel third class instead of second, and it will still be cheaper. Mrs. Cumming says she has been out here twenty-eight years and has ridden first class twice in that time. It is amusing to watch the Japanese on the trains. They love to travel in great style and make as much of a show as possible. If the trains are very crowded as they have been since I came they lay aside all that "Gastop and Alfonse-ness" and push and shove and fight and scratch for the best places. They have been invariably polite to us, however, and I am most favorably impressed with them.

There are several things that I think will endear them to me. They have a remarkable love and appreciation for the beautiful. They seem so fond of the little children, and are so kind to them. (Oh these dear, adorable, little black headed, almond eyed, cream-colored children). I wish you could see them. They are wearing their gayest, finest kimonos now during the holiday season, but they insist on wearing ridiculous little foreign aprons and hideous little soup-plate felt hats.

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