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OF

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# THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

OF

# JAPAN

BY

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## P R E F A C E.

THE materials for the following Report, part of which was composed in attitudes of varying discomfort on the floor of Japanese inns, and the rest during intervals snatched from College or University work at Bombay, have been gathered from three sources : official reports and publications, standard works on Japan, and personal enquiries during a furlough of some months spent in that country in 1904.

Official publications of one kind or another are numerous, but with few exceptions are in Japanese. Under these circumstances a series of pamphlets entitled *Education in Japan, 1904*, and published by the Educational Department for the Exhibition at St. Louis, proved invaluable, as furnishing a number of details, regulations, and time-tables, otherwise only obtainable by laborious processes of translation or interpretation. They do not, however, distinguish between those regulations which are really enforced, those which in practice are not enforced, and those which have only just been enacted. Almost every regulation contains a provision that "under special circumstances" something else may be done, and special circumstances seem as common in Japan as extenuating ones in France. Changes, again, are incessant, not only rules but also functionaries being created or abolished with startling rapidity, so that any account runs the risk of being out of date even before it sees the light.

Next in value are the annual reports of the Minister for Education, an abridged version of which is published in English, the latest available being the report for 1902-3. Unfortunately no copy prior to 1892 could be found, so that it was impossible to study in any detail the history of the first twenty years of modern education in Japan ; and the later reports tend to become increasingly dry and statistical, with less and less explanation of any changes observed or introduced. The Imperial Univer-

sities of Tokyo and Kyoto, and a very few other institutions, also publish English versions of their calendars, or at any rate circulars of information. Almost every school, indeed, of any size issues some sort of calendar, containing its history, regulations, time-tables, the careers of its graduates, plans of its buildings, etc.; and probably every prefectural office has an annual volume dealing with the state of education in the prefecture. But all this mass of information is concealed under the Chinese character. Lastly, some further facts, chiefly statistical have been derived from *Japan in the Beginning of the 20th Century*, published in 1904 by the Department of Agriculture and Commerce, and from an official *Résumé Statistique de l'Empire du Japon*.

Coming now to the enormous array of books on Japan by private authors, it is singular how little information is to be obtained from them on matters educational, compared, for instance, with the amount of space devoted to the subject of *geisha*. Much, however, may be learned from Prof. Chamberlain's *Things Japanese*, from the writings of the late Mr. Lafcadio Hearn, from *The Mikado's Empire* and *Verbeck of Japan* by the Rev. Dr. Griffis, and from the Rev. S. L. Gulick's *Evolution of the Japanese*. Other books from which information has been occasionally drawn are mentioned in the body of the Report. Of the numerous foreign teachers who have served in Japan few seem to have placed any of their experiences on record. Dr. Griffis has described the appearance of the so-called University of Tokyo in its earliest days, as also that of the provincial school which he himself joined; and Mr. Hearn has a couple of interesting papers on school life at Matsue and Kumamoto, besides many scattered references to educational matters. He may not always be a safe guide, but his papers have been drawn upon freely because they were the only notes of the kind across which I came. Time did not permit me to search the files of the *Japan Mail*, or do more than glance at some volumes of the Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan.

In the course of my personal enquiries I travelled over a good deal of Japan, visited nearly 150 institutions of different kinds and grades, and conversed on educational topics with about 250 persons of varying degree, from cabin-boys to statesmen. The same difficulty encounters one almost everywhere. When rules and syllabuses, time-tables and text-books, teaching and examining, inspecting and reporting, all are in Japanese, it is a little difficult for the ignorant outsider to discover what is really going on. It is true that in most of the higher institutions there are persons who speak English well, but elsewhere those who understand that language may be absent for the day, or engaged in class, or may not care to commit themselves to a conversation in it, or, finally, they may not exist at all. One is driven, therefore, to the services of an interpreter, and a qualified interpreter was not at my disposal. The professional guide, who is a necessary evil in Japan, also acts as interpreter; but he is not an educated man, probably does not know very much about his own language, and certainly knows only a little English. Conversation under such circumstances reduces itself to the simplest questions and answers. A few translations were made for me by University students, but were sometimes only slightly more intelligible than the Japanese text, in spite of the assurances of one of these young men that he had worked at his task "most concentrationally."

My instructions having been to study the educational system of Japan with special reference to its bearing on the problems of Indian education, it has been judged convenient to follow in the main the arrangement of the Indian Quinquennial Reports on Education. I have, however, ventured to treat of the foundation before the superstructure, of primary education before collegiate. It is true that the other method might seem peculiarly appropriate in the case of a country where the first part of a house that is built is the roof; nevertheless, considering that primary education is now diffused throughout the whole nation, and absorbs the larger part of the total sum expended on public instruction, it seemed more logical as well as more convenient

to work from below upwards. The Japanese statistics are taken mainly from the Minister's report for 1902-3; the Indian figures are taken from the Fourth Quinquennial Review and refer to 1901-2. For Japanese technical terms the equivalents which have official sanction have been used. Thus, *Fu* and *Ken* are translated by "prefecture," and *Gun* by "rural district". The official at the head of a prefecture is the "local governor". The chief authority of a school or college is the "director," and the term "college" is reserved for the colleges of the Imperial Universities. A hostel attached to a school is called a "dormitory"; and the term "graduation" is applied in Japan, as in America, to the completion of any regular course of instruction, so that there are graduates of primary schools as well as of universities, graduates in wood-carving or acupuncture as much as in law or medicine. Japanese currency has been converted into sterling at the rate of 10 yen to the pound.

Lastly, I have to thank the Educational Department of Tokyo for information, and for a letter of introduction to all the schools of Japan; and a multitude of ladies and gentlemen, Japanese or foreign, for devoting much time and trouble to showing me round their institutions and answering my questions. To correct misconceptions which exist, I may perhaps add that it was no part of my task to make recommendations, or even primarily to criticise, but simply to report.

W. H. SHARP.

BOMBAY, *June* 1905.

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