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By S. HATTA

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THE question of whether Japan shall adopt the European method of writing and printing instead of the Chinese method now long in use is a matter of increasing importance. Japan also uses in writing a style of language different from that used in ordinary conversation. I am one of those who advocate that Japan should make her written language the same as the spoken language and that she should use Roman letters and script in her writing and printing. It seems to me that the progress of Europe and America is due in great measure to the use of a common alphabet; and I was still more convinced of this during my recent visit to that part of the world. The Russians and the Germans are the only Europeans that still stick out for alphabets differing from the other nations of the West ; and the result does not seem to commend itself to any thinking person.

As to language generally, it may be said that in Europe and America there is little difference between the style of language used in speaking and that employed in composition and literature ; nor is there very much difference between the language used by the different classes in society or between the language of men and women. There are some important differences, of course, but nothing to what they are in this country.

Japan's greatest handicap is in the matter of written characters. While the western child has to learn only 26 letters in order to write all the sounds of his language and read any of its books, the Japanese child has to memorize several thousand characters, or ideographs, which is an enormous tax on memory for the first ten or fifteen years of school life. This is one reason why the western child of the same age is much more advanced in general knowledge than the Japanese child. While the European and American school boy is acquiring knowledge the Japanese boy is busy acquiring a stock of ideographs sufficient to let him into the secrets of books containing the knowledge he desires. I was deeply impressed not only with the number and quality of the text books used in American schools but with the number of supplementary books read by the pupils. Thus at an early age the American schoolboy has open to him much greater sources of knowledge than is available for the Japanese boy of the same age.

One of the most noteworthy features of occidental education is the extent of the pupils undergoing secondary education ; and the knowledge of such pupils is remarkably high. The onus of Japanese education is too much on the past ; our educationists have too little regard for the present and less idea of the future. Ours cannot be considered a proper system of education for a progressive nation. The children of Europe and America are brought up to be in touch with live subjects and to be familiar with practical affairs ; while Japan keeps herself isolated from these advantages of the West by confining the minds of her rising generation within the iron clad limits of the Chinese ideographs. Thus our virgin strength is spent on memorizing the pictures of ideas instead of the ideas themselves, until we are machines rather than living, intelligent agents.

It is scarcely necessary to enter into an argument as to the advantage of Roman letters over Chinese ideographs, and the greater utility of the western alphabet as compared with the Japanese syllabary known as *kana*. This utility is seen not only in the diffusion of knowledge and civilization at an earlier age than in Japan but in the great convenience enjoyed in the despatch of telegrams, the *Romaji* being much more quick and accurate than our system, to say nothing of being able to use a typewriter in writing. In newspaper work and the general process of diffusing knowledge the adoption of *Romaji* would be a great advantage. Our press could then use the linotype machine, and our news agencies could send messages by telegraph as the western people do. No wonder that our adhering still to the present obsolete system of writing seems to western nations simply absurd, and enough to keep us in isolation as a people.

Even before my visit to Europe I was convinced of the inutility of taking up the minds and time of our children with learning Chinese classics; but since my return home I am doubly convinced of the unwisdom of this course. What does a child undergoing secondary education want with Chinese composition! A knowledge of Chinese may be necessary for the children in order to acquire national morality, but for this purpose the same information could be given through Japanese means. These Chinese lessons are an insufferable burden on the minds of our Middle School students.

The advocates of national adoption of *Romaji* writing have long been engaged in familiarizing the public mind with the advantages that would thus accrue to the nation by following the example of western nations in this way; but the officials are slow to take the hint, lest the nation be led away from its old landmarks and have no way of shielding its morality from the attacks of alien minds. Most of our great scholars and philologists desire the adoption of western style of writing in Japan, and the press is full of articles in support of such a course. The only opposition to it is based on national prestige, as already suggested. Language is regarded by our old fashioned officials a sacred deposit entrusted to the nation ; and they think that any serious or radical change in regard to it would be tempering with the moral and social foundation of the nation. And this in face of the conditions prevailing in Korea and China due largely to eccentricity of writing and education. In this way the intellectual progress of Japan is suffering an enormous hindrance.

The coordination and unification of the written and spoken languages in Japan has been advocated by scholars and public men for a long time; and in some measure an approach has been made to it, as most people now use the same language when they write a letter as when they are speaking face to face, with the exception of official letters and correspondence. Formerly an official letter could not be written with any instrument save the native writing brush and india ink; but now they may be written with European pen and ink. In fact they must be if they are to be copied. As for myself I always use the spoken language in correspondence as far as possible, and did so even when writing my reports for the educational authorities. I believe that when Japan comes to adopt the use of Roman letters it will be a great day for the nation and mark a new era in the development of our civilization and our increase of friendship and understanding with western nations.

The question also has an important bearing on compulsory education. At present the years for compulsory education in Japan are six, while in Germany, France and the United States they are eight. To think that Japan, with the unsurpassable handicap of her ideographs, expects to get as much out of six years of compulsory education as western nations do in eight with the advantage of their superior

system of writing, is simply astonishing! Our statesmen affirm that extension of the years for compulsory education is prevented by financial reasons; but if *Romaji* were adopted the present need for extension would not be so pressing. If the change were once decided upon it could be as expeditiously carried out as the decision to establish two new army divisions, and at much less expense. No one has any doubt as to which would ultimately benefit the nation more.

In Japan the legal age for marriage is 15 for the woman and 17 for the man, which hinders education; but if the years for compulsory education were extended what a difference it would make in the intellectual as well as moral acquirements of the rising generation ! It would indeed be well if our term for compulsory education could be lengthened to nine years instead of six ; and then two years of the term could be devoted to industrial education so as to prepare the pupil for earning a livelihood.

Complaint is made that in Japan there is a large number of school graduates without occupation, and that over-education lifts the population above the common tasks devolving on it ; and on account of this state, officials argue that facilities for higher education need not be enlarged. With this idea I do not at all agree. Facilities for higher education cannot be too abundantly multiplied ; for the more educated persons a nation has the more prosperous it will be in every way. If an educated man cannot find work there is surely something the matter with him ; and for this the nation is not responsible, unless indeed it has wrongly educated him. There is no doubt that the idle educated man of the middle classes in Japan is a much more difficult individual to deal with than the idle educated man of the upper or lower classes. The upper classes always have something open to them, and the lower classes are so eager to work that they soon find openings; but the middle class man of fantastic or ridiculous notions finds it very difficult to place himself according to his own notion of his desserts. One of the most hopeful signs in Japanese society is the increasing willingness of the upper classes to enter upon active and useful careers ; but that the whole nation may be filled with a proper spirit of industry and achievement is too much to expect without the reforms I have suggested in our present educational system.