

**ZOOLOGY IN THE
UNIVERSITY OF
TOKIO, PP. 2-43**

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Zoology in the University of Tokio, pp. 2-43 by C. O. Whitman

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With compl. of author.*

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YOKOHAMA:

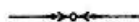
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1881.

ZOOLOGY

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Less than ten years have sufficed to build up in Japan an educational institution that may fairly be called an embryo university. Japanese scholars point with pride to the rapid development of Tokio Daigaku as an evidence of the healthful change that has just dawned in this empire; and Western nations have looked on with admiration and surprise at the rapidity and character of the achievement. It is the avowed purpose of the heads of this institution and the Educational Department, to expand and so improve the courses of instruction that "the standard of scholarship attained in it may equal that of the universities of Western countries." This is certainly a landable aspiration, and one that foreign as well as native scholars would rejoice to see realized. But whoever thinks that it will be accomplished in five years, or in ten, or in any period of time less than half a century, builds his expectation on conceit, ignorance, or both. The difficulties are many and great, and to surmount them will be a task scarcely less arduous than to carry Fuji to the sea.

Foreign toad-eaters—who do figuratively what some of the Japanese do literally—have shown great zeal in their endeavor to blind the Japanese to the difficulties which they have to encounter, and to convince them and the rest of the world that their intellectual superiority has already placed them near the goal of their ambition. It is the conviction of the writer, which he shares with many others, that Japan has suffered far more from the fulsome adulation of professed friends than from the criticism of enemies. It tickles the vanity of a people to be told that they can accomplish in a day what has cost centuries of hard labor in other countries; but let us hope that the Japanese will not lay that flattering unction to their souls.

In one respect Japan has a peculiar advantage; she is in a position to profit, if she will, by the experience of the West. But the idea that the cream of Western civilization can be swallowed at one gulp, and assimilated without digestion, is as absurd as it is pernicious. No spasmodic efforts will ever place Japan on the educational plane of Europe or America; and even a distant approximation to such a condition will require many years of persistent exertion. So perfectly evident is all this that the mere statement of it almost seems like an insult to the common sense of the reader who is familiar with the latest phases of the educational movement in Japan. My only apology for it is the fact that the whole course of events now taking place here, gives most indubitable evidence of a wide-spread hallucination in regard to the most essential elements of the problem. The time is perhaps not far off when the educational interests of this country will fall more into the hands of those who have had the advantages of an education abroad. Before that happens, there will be little room to expect that either the nature and

magnitude of the problem, or the difficulties in the way of its solution, will be correctly estimated and successfully encountered. Meanwhile the friends of Tokio University have to fear that retrogressive measures may be set on foot which will cripple it, at least temporarily, and, possibly, render nugatory much that has been successfully begun.

The writer is in fullest sympathy with the earnest desire of Japanese scholars to see their university rise to the position of an influential center of learning; for he fully believes that the future welfare of Japan will depend very largely on the advantages she will be able to offer her people in the way of education. He is even sanguine enough to believe that this aspiration, under tolerably favorable conditions, would not be beyond the possibility, nor even the probability, of realization. But it is not easy to shut ones eyes to the difficulties of the situation; nor is it the part of wisdom, or of friendly interest, to ignore them because we deplore their existence.

The present financial condition of the country, desperate as it is, is by no means the only source of danger to the University. With the abolition of the feudal system, Japan passed into a transitional period characterized by instability. The love of change and the fickleness now displayed in such striking contrast with the conservative course of her past history, are perhaps more largely the fault of the times than of the Japanese people. In this very fickleness lies at once a hope and a danger; a hope that aimless change may be converted into steady progress, a danger that change will be mistaken for progress.

Among the most serious impediments to progress may be mentioned the baneful influence of caste, which

has survived the overthrow of the feudal system, and still has vitality enough to work immense mischief. That this great enemy of all reform should be allowed to establish herself at the intellectual fountain of Japan, where she can pollute the very source of the chief currents of progress, is perhaps no more than might have been anticipated. But there is some room to hope that Merit will gradually win her way, and ultimately assert her rightful authority in defiance of all the shallow pretences of fictitious Rank. Meanwhile the young men of this University may have to witness many disgraceful exhibitions of the tyrannical temper of Caste, obstinately refusing to recognize anything but her own stamp. She may carry her unlawful pretensions to the extremity of attempting to force her stamp even upon the scientific productions of the University. The moment she does this she trespasses beyond the limits of forbearance, and deserves a drubbing rebuke for the insolence. Any attempt to appropriate the property of the scientific world by disfiguring it with the stamp of rank, or by withholding the right of publishing, should be branded as a piece of high-handed robbery, which can never be forgiven or forgotten. It will not perhaps be indulging too far in general remarks, to allude to one more impediment, scarcely less abnoxious than the one just mentioned. This is the ponderous system of official machinery, which has grown to such unwieldy dimensions, that it interferes in a most serious manner with the dispatch of business. It is like an enormous parasite, which weakens the vital pulses, but spares the life of its host in order to prolong its own unprofitable existence. What a happy prospect for this University, could it look forward to a day of deliverance from this incubus which now paralyzes its energies !

It would perhaps be too great a digression to extend further, remarks of the above general character; but it will probably be admitted that those thus far made are not entirely foreign to the more special considerations which are to follow, concerning the course of study in Biology.

The chief aim of the author is to present some of the claims of Zoölogy to a more liberal treatment than it has been receiving from the educational authorities. The time has now come when this can be done without raising the offensive suspicion that he is advocating a cause with the hope of profiting in its success.

There is one danger, however, that, in his desire to set forth facts in their true light, and to avoid even the remotest approach to that path of encomium which has become such a well-beaten track in Japan, and which has acquired a stench quite as offensive as that which pollutes the air of this city, some remarks may take such a pointed turn as to awaken an unjust suspicion, that they were prompted more by a desire to expose, than to mend weaknesses. To any who may find their susceptibilities too thin-skinned to bear wholesome criticism with equanimity, we would recommend a single consideration; namely, that exposure is a first and an indispensable step to mending, and therefore a thing to be desired. Should any one be able to say of this article, that it has succeeded in calling attention to a single weakness not hitherto sufficiently noticed, even though it should not have the additional merit of pointing out any method of removal, the author would have no cause to complain that he had written in vain.

The history of Zoölogy in Japan can not be said to have made more than a respectable beginning. In every branch of Biology, as indeed in other sciences,