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PATRIOTIC SELF-SACRIFICE IN JAPAN

(By Mrs. Hugh Fraser in "Times")

It was early, and the winter sun struck low through the pine branches that hung on either side of the deep lane. A little rime lay on the brown road, and everywhere was the crisp sense of new venturesome life that seems to be let loose on the world on a bright benignant Christmas morning. (The snow came a week later, and plenty of it!) I was going along in a dreamy way, thinking of the little church I had just left, the church out in the greennesses of Azabu, crowded with worshippers—devout Japanese men, women with white veils over their heads, kneeling on the mats in the shadow, tiny children rolling about in dazzling raiment, crowing and chuckling joyfully at the lights and music; the four-year-old fairy who always takes up the collection, and who causes me so many distractions by her amazingly brilliant costume and by the satisfied bow she makes to St. Joseph when she has finally climbed to the steps of his altar, and—with a very long reach—managed to lay the red silk alms bag on the top of it. To-day she could hardly approach for the masses of flowers and berries with which the faithful had decorated every corner of the little chapel. Dominating the many colored scene had stood our dear old missionary Father, the white and gold Christmas vestments hanging very loose on his bent and emaciated figure, but the light of charity shining clear in his kind eyes.

Then, the lane turned, and I saw another picture, almost more beautiful, and since I knew what it meant, full of pathetic import. A great dark gate, heavily cross-beamed above, stood open from the shadowy lane into some great man's garden all flooded with the early sunshine. Just within, the low rays making a halo round her slight, swaying figure, stood a girl of sixteen or seventeen, dancing backward and forward in the cloud of her long, floating hair, hair of that silky black which can gleam bronze in the sun and sweep inky in the shade. Her face, a delicate, pale little face, with big dark eyes and smiling lips was turned toward me, and her slender arms shone white as the long sleeves fell back and she lifted her tresses and flung them out on the breeze in her slow dance. All her soft draperies were swirling together, and the long locks, as they slipped from her fingers, floated down to her knees. A lovely, dancing, shadowy thing with the yellow sunbeams of Christmas morning for a background and a setting—yes, but the nymph was only the gardener's daughter, drying her hair and taking sun and breeze to help, because the tiny periodical payment to the beloved and necessary hair-dressing woman has for many a month past, been handed over to "Emperor" to "help the war."

Of all her earthly possessions a Japanese woman most values her hair. It is her crown, her veil, the mark of her womanhood, that which tells her and others what she is. The country title for the house mistress is "O Kami San," "she of the honorable hair," and next to the binding of the obi which is the mark of modesty, nothing is of such importance as the care of the hair, few sacrifices so great as the relinquishment of the proper dressing thereof. As for dressing her hair herself, no Japanese woman can do that, and all except the most miserably poor have been in the habit of paying 30 sen (15 cents) a month to the hairdresser to take care of it for them. Since the beginning of the war this sum has been almost universally laid aside to hand over to the war fund, and, coming regularly from millions of women, has amounted to a very respectable whole. The result has been a curious change in the appearance of these sturdy little patriots. When I was in Japan before, I hardly ever saw a woman with her hair down; now there are hundreds in the streets, their silky locks being metely turned back from the forehead with a comb and hanging down a beautiful mantle far below their waists.

The methodical self-sacrifice prac-

tised by all classes during the war has caused the amount furnished by private subscriptions to attain an enormous figure. The multi-millionaires, Iwasaki the Mitsui family, and other great financiers and manufacturers have given nobly out of their vast revenues. The banking corporations have done the same. The great nobles have done as much in their way, but at the magnitude of their contributions, bought with the sacrifice of inestimable heirlooms, the world can only guess. The stone-walled, iron-shuttered storehouses, built well away from the palatial home, so as to avoid the risk of fire, yet near enough to be under the watchful eyes of master and steward, and stout retainers—these have given up the hoarded beauties and riches of centuries. What it must have cost the silent pride of the grim Japanese grandee to have the unique kake-mono unrolled for the dealer's inspection to look over for the last time the incredibly exquisite gold articles of some 15th century Princess's dressing table, the storied blade won by a warrior ancestor from a conquered enemy—what shades must have hovered round, what pictures must have passed before the eyes of the descendant who drew these treasures from their hiding places and gave them over to the modern plebeian dealer—to sell—for Japan! If the price of the gift be what it costs the giver, the Japanese nobles have passed all computation in the offerings they have made for the war.

It is but another manifestation of the stupendous pride of patriotism which can be trusted always to make the Japanese victorious against aggression on their country's integrity. In writing of "individual effort to support the war," it seems as if there had been here one individual—Japan, straining every sense of insight to perceive, of strength to obtain, of intelligence to utilize the last ounce of value for its own personal rescue; Even the soldiers did not satisfy themselves with fighting for their country; they, too, have given what they could to the war fund. It has never been the principle of Japan to offer high pay to the officers of the army and navy; the men who serve in that capacity are taught to consider frugality as one of the first military virtues, and they accept small emoluments which just cover their expenses. Far from complaining of this, those who are risking their lives every day in active service actually economized off their pay to send something back to the war fund. A private, mortally wounded on the field, said, with his last breath to the comrade who bent over him: "I have 27 sen tied up in a rag in my wallet—send it to the war fund."

It must be remembered that, at any rate until the war with China, this public giving for the country was not known in Japan. People had given generously for special objects, generally local and religious ones, but the country had not been awakened to a unity of necessity, a unity of purpose, till consciousness sprang to action at the clashing of swords. It would take volumes to describe what the women alone have done in these last two years; yet the beginning of their operations this time was a diffident suggestion from one beautifully dressed creature to the effect that, perhaps, while the war lasted, they could manage to do with one—she hardly liked to say two—new "ecri" less each year—and give the money for the public need. The "ecri" is the little inner fold of fine painted crape, which is used as a finish, just showing between the neck and the collar of the kimono. It costs from one to two yen, and the Japanese lady replaces it nearly as often as we replace our gloves. Really it seemed such a small thing to give—such an inconvenience to forego renewing it at the usual moment that it was difficult to take the proposition seriously.

But that thin wedge of practical sense once driven home, the ladies began to understand the value of small things done steadily. The results of their two years' work have been amazing. Hospitals, volunteer nurses' corps, industrial institutions, orphanages—in that service the women of Japan have given the best of themselves, their physical strength, their intelligence, the endurance which comes of centuries of hard

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moral discipline. "The plainest part of the work brought the hardest strain. I do not know how we bore it," said one lady to me, speaking with strange and humble wonder of what had been accomplished. "The hours were terrible from 8 in the morning till 6 or 7 at night. This was for the making of field dressings—the most important work of all. They had to be mathematically correct in size and form, and perfectly antiseptic. The surgeons in command terrified us at the start. 'You hold a man's life in your hand for each dressing you put up,' they told us; 'these bandages and medicaments will be applied to raw wounds in all the dirt and grime of battle. There is no such thing as aseptic surgery on the field—the atmosphere will be poison in itself. Therefore, before entering the room where you are to work, you will remove every article of clothing in which you arrive, disinfect your bodies, and put on the garments kept here for the purpose. You must cover your hair with a cotton cap; you must rinse mouth and nostrils with carbolic fluid. You must not speak in the room, and if you wish to cough or blow your nose, or even clear your throat, you will get up and go outside. You will obey these regulations minutely, remembering that the observing of them will probably save their neglect undoubtedly sacrifice—a soldier's life.'" Day after day and month after month the ladies' led by the Princesses (who worked as hard as any of them), carried out their orders.

Thus worked the great ladies, but side by side with their efforts stand those of the lonely poor, the schoolboys who tramped into the suburbs to sell newspapers, day after day, when school hours were over, in order to collect something for the war fund; the little fellows who peddled oranges at the stations. "You can only earn a few sen, my boy," said a passer-by to one of these enthusiasts, "what good will that do, do you think?" "Powder is cheap and a little goes a long way," replied the youngster with flashing eyes.

No one will ever know the whole tale of private endeavor, private sacrifice, which has gone to make up the great result. Poor old women who had lost an only son in the field brought their tiny savings. "Let it go to the boy's comrades," they said; "it will help them to fight a little longer." The fishwives and shell gatherers at Enoshima collected great bundles of the seaweed which the Japanese make into succulent soup and brought it to the district commissariat office "for the soldiers." Tobacconists, great and small, sent large periodical provisions of cigarettes; the biscuit-makers—their trade is one of the most flourishing in Japan—contributed tons of their wares; the blanket weavers did the same; those who could not give in money gave in kind, generously, to their own deprivation. The little girls made thousands of white caps with red crosses, a familiar sight now, as the invalids are moved, a hundred at a time (each in his separate jinrikisha, with the coolie extra well dressed to do the heroes honor.) from one depot or hospital to another

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A small French-Italian coasting steamer was proceeding on its way. The passengers were of various nationalities, English, American, French, Italians and one large German. Most of the male passengers were gathered in the smoking room, when the steward appeared at the door, and with a bow, announced "Dinner, it is serve!" The English and American contingent arose and started toward the dining saloon. The steward seeing that his announcement had not been understood by all continued: "Messieurs, c'est servi!" and as a portion of the passengers still remained seated: "Il pranzo e servito!" The French and Italians followed the English and Americans, leaving the large German in solitary state. "Gott in Himmel!" he muttered, hungrily. "Is it dot no German mans gets something to eat on dis boat, hein?" —Harper's Weekly.

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Dr. G. A. DUBUC, M.D.,
Dr. A. J. SLATER, M.D.

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