

CHILDREN IN JAPAN.

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Take forty of your little boxes and think them altogether to be the size of this country, then in one of them you have Japan. Yet in this one box you have one-half as many people as there are in these forty altogether.

Three hundred years ago no people sailed on the sea between that country and this, and they thought it impious to do so. The Japanese thought that the sea is filled with sticky liquid which wound round the vessels that tried to go out into this sea, and thus got lost. Before the missionaries came to that land the people never thought of foreign countries. How surprised they were when they first saw big and strange ships near their shore.

They had no steamships then, and thought that those foreign vessels were moved by spirits, for they could not make out how they could sail against the wind. All this astonishment and heat cooled off very soon, and now you see young men attempting to leave their country to study in foreign lands. There are schools and academies in that land, for some rather bold people who went early to foreign lands, saw the schools there, came back, and spoke of them to the people in Japan.

The private schools have the old way of instruction. They teach Confucius, Mencius, and many other Chinese books. Boys attend these schools as early as five o'clock in the morning. You see each one of them carry a square cloth, with some calico printing on it. These they use to carry the books in, to keep the dirt off. The floor of these schools is covered with thick mats, about four inches. The boys bend their knees and sit before their desks, between whose flat legs the folded knees are thrust in. These desks are only about a foot high.

The teacher is usually old, and he reads aloud to some four or five of the class, in a prolonged murmuring, who bend their heads low down on the books, afraid to look up lest the stare of *sensei*, or master

flashes on them. You should think it very tiresome to fold up the legs so long, but the boys are patient enough to endure it. Yes, some fellows are so cunning as to stretch out their legs across their neighbor's back to avoid the master's seeing them. Now the reading of the teacher is over, the boys bow low down in token of respect and thanks.

There is another thing the boys carry in their hands. Take a square as large as a boy's hat, sixteen years old, divide one-third of it [from the other part and you have a common Japanese lunch-box. These varnished boxes the boys get filled early in the morning. A mother watches a maid do it, and is careful to reject anything that the child does not like. The lunch is ready, the mother puts the *haka-ma* on her child, telling him not to soil it, and away the boy goes to his school.

In the country the streets are narrow and a horse-wagon in a street will leave no place for men to walk. There are vehicles drawn by men, in which people go about from one part of the city to another. It is really a large kind of painted box with very light wheels. It only costs an average of five cents for a mile travel in this cart. These cabmen stand in groups in almost every corner of the streets. Will it rain or storm, the boy calls to these fellows, skips in the cart and he is brought back to his home. These men know the names of streets so well. Remember the cart is called *jinrikisha*.

They have no knives and forks in this country. Nothing of this kind. They use chop-sticks—two round sticks managed with right-hand fingers, with which they pick up the pieces of meat and vegetables. They have no need of cutting the food; it is cut in small pieces before you see it brought up to the table. Just try if you can pick up some pieces with two sticks in one hand. The children are taught how to handle them. They don't eat on a big table, for they have small tables, a foot tall and a foot wide, one for each, on which the bowls and plates are set.

Many of the people thank their chop-