

The Founding of The Doshisha and Doshisha University (An excerpt)

Over twenty years ago, the feudal government, distressed by pressure from abroad and unrest at home, was in its last days. At this time, with a burning desire to go abroad to pursue my studies, I left my clan and made my way to Hakodate. In defiance of the law forbidding our countrymen to leave Japan, I got myself taken secretly aboard an American sailing vessel. This was on the night of June 14, 1864. On the ship I was assigned to the hard tasks of an ordinary seaman, but after about a year I reached Boston. There I was befriended by a generous citizen, with whose aid I entered Amherst College and later Andover Theological Seminary. These studies occupied some ten years.

During this time I made careful observations of American institutions, also I sought out many leading citizens and listened to their arguments. Thus I learned that American civilization was not the result of chance nor a sudden growth; it was rather due to the education which had developed the country as a whole. Believing thus that education was the chief factor in building up a nation, I decided to devote my whole life to furthering this great enterprise.

So in the seventh year of Meiji (1874), ready to undertake my cherished plan, I returned to Japan, my country which had haunted my dreams for more than ten years.

Then, I opened an English School in Kyoto in the eighth year of Meiji (Nov. 29, 1875). This was the beginning of the present day Doshisha.

Thus Doshisha came into being; but its purpose was not merely to teach English. Rather it was to foster moral character, noble conduct and a lofty spirit; to send out not only talented men of science but men of a sensitive conscience as well. Now this sort of education is not to be achieved by a one-sided emphasis on the intellect, nor is its basis to be found in Confucianism, which today has lost its power to influence men's minds. Instead, it must be founded on faith in God, love of Truth and kindness; in a word, on Christian principles.

There is no doubt that the government university has special advantages, but we believe that a university conducted by the people themselves would exert a very great influence on the nation. To be sure, a private university can not compare with

a government institution in the matter of endowment and equipment; its superiority lies rather in fostering a spirit of independence in the students and in training the people in self-government.

The purpose of education is not merely to make a show of one's abilities, it is rather to provide a well rounded development of all one's faculties. No matter how advanced a student may be in the arts and sciences, if his character shows weakness of purpose and lack of decision, he is not the man who can contribute to our country's welfare. If our principles of education miss their aim by casting young men in a narrow mold and fostering one-sided personality, such education can only be called a national calamity.

A nation is upheld in prosperity not by the work of a few great men, but depends for this on men of wisdom and character who might be called the conscience of the nation. It is my desire and purpose to provide such men for the nation. As the proverb has it : "Plant corn for one year; Plant trees for ten years; Plant men for a Century." So our plan for establishing a university is a work to provide for a century of growth.

So this is my cherished plan for a university. When I consider my strength I find it greatly lacking. I am like a man who undertakes to grind an axe and can only make a needle. So my strength is small and my learning little. Yet I prate loudly of using my all to serve my country. But I cannot keep silent. My hopes, cherished for twenty years, the need of my country to-day, the support of my good friends, all can on me to undertake this great task. Therefore, forgetting my weakness, with a thought only for the need of the times, I shall devote my whole life to this great enterprise, I pray for God's blessing and for the support of my fellow countrymen so that at last I may realize this my purpose.

Founder of Doshisha University,
Joseph Hardy Neesima
November, 1888