

JAPANESE WOMEN WONDERFUL IN WAR

PROUD OF THE LOSS OF A SON
OR HUSBAND IN THE SER-
VICE OF THE MIKADO.
ARE NOW EAGER TO
SERVE AS NURSES.

No nation has a better right to be proud of what its women have done in war time than Japan. Even the mothers and wives of ancient Sparta have been rivaled in deeds of patriotism and self-sacrifice by the women of Japan, says the New York Sun.

In the feudal times, which came to an end in Japan only 30 years ago, all gentlewomen were trained in the use of the sword and lance. The women of the samurai class received a regular military education and if the castle of a daimio was besieged they were capable of assisting in the defense if necessary.

A noted instance of the martial prowess of the Japanese women occurred during the siege of the castle of Wakamatsu in 1869, where the Shogun made his final stand against the forces of the Mikado. Nearly one thousand women and girls belonging to the families of samurai attached to the Shogun fought behind the barricades and on the castle walls. Many of them were killed in battle, while not a few of them committed suicide rather than undergo the humiliation of defeat.

Yet the Amazonian qualities of the women of old Japan did not detract from their womanliness. They were tender mothers and loving wives. The nursing of the wounded and sick was part of the education of every samurai woman.

With the passing away of the age of chivalry in Japan, upon the downfall of the Shogunate, the Japanese woman was called upon to face new conditions, and now she met these conditions as shown in the history of the Chinese war in 1895.

It is a matter of record that some 10,000 Japanese women volunteered to go to the front as nurses in the field hospitals at the outbreak of the Chinese war, and advices from Japan state that the number of women volunteering to go to the front as nurses to-day is greater than in 1895. But the women who stay at home are not lacking in patriotic devotion.

There is an anecdote concerning the mother of the heroic Commander Sakamoto, who was killed on the bridge of his ship, the Akagi, at the battle of Yalu, which shows how the spirit of patriotism flames in the hearts of Japanese women.

An official of the navy department called on the family of the naval officer to convey, as delicately as possible, the news of his death. Having communicated his tidings to a member of the family, he was about to depart, when the shoji slid open softly and the aged mother of the dead commander staggered into the room.

She had been an accidental eavesdropper and had heard all. Trembling with emotion she bowed to the visiting officer and said:

"Tell the emperor I rejoice that a son of mine has been able to be of some service to him."

Some Japanese women refused to weep over their dead, because it was considered disloyal to the Mikado to weep for those who had the honor to die fighting for him. When a wife or a mother heard that a husband or a son had been killed in battle, the first expression uttered was an acknowledgement of the honor conferred upon her by the gods in being bereaved for the cause of the emperor.

To the Western mind such patriotism appears to be fantastic and hard to understand. In the light of Japanese history it does not seem so strange.

The spirit of patriotism in the Japanese women of the present generation is the outgrowth of ages of feudalism. The loyalty and devotion which the women of past generations gave to their feudal family head are in the present generation given to the Mikado.

In time of war the Empress of Japan sets an example for all the women of the country by her activity in behalf of all those who are suffering or in distress. She may be seen frequently visiting the great military hospitals, accompanied by a party of court women and noblemen's wives.

Following the example of the Empress, all the great women of Tokyo society do what they can to relieve the distress and suffering that inevitably follows war. There is no class of women that does not contribute something to this cause; even those of the geishas, and the unmyriad creatures in the Yoshiwara share.

Not only the women of the class who show passionate devotion to war time. All classes are represented in the army, and the government give proof

that she is quite as devoted to the Mikado as the samurai woman.

A story is told of an old peasant woman who sent her only son to fight for the Emperor in the Chinese war. By depriving herself of everything but the barest necessities of life, and toiling early and late in the fields, she had been able to give her son a superior education, and she had the satisfaction of seeing him fairly started on a business career, which promised to be successful, when the call to arms sounded.

The little peasant mother made her son give up his business and enter the ranks of the army. The boy did as his mother wished, and his regiment was one of the first to set foot on Chinese soil.

Every morning just before daybreak the little peasant woman rose and, after making a careful toilet, as an orthodox Buddhist she went to Ojin, the god of war. She did not pray for her son to come home safe and sound, but she prayed that he might prove worthy of the honor of wearing the Mikado's uniform.

One day, when the old woman was returning to her home from the temple, she met a messenger who told her that her son had been killed in the attack on Port Arthur. The mother's eyes grew dim with tears, and she swayed unsteadily for a moment. Then she turned and started to go back to the temple.

"Where are you going?" cried the messenger. "Don't you understand what I say? Your son has been killed."

"Yes, I understand," said the old woman, calmly, "and I am going to thank Ojin for the honor he has conferred upon me."

The Japanese woman who above all others distinguished herself in war time was the Empress Jingū Kōgō, who led a Japanese army in person to Korea in 200 A. D. and conquered that country. She was equally renowned for her beauty, her piety, her energy and her martial valor.

She assumed the supreme power on the death of her husband, the Mikado Chuinai, in 200 A. D. and immediately demonstrated her military genius by suppressing a formidable rebellion. A few years later she invaded Korea and quickly subjugated that country.

She dressed in male attire and fought at the head of her soldiers.

After her return from Korea she gave birth to a son, who became the Mikado Ojin and like his mother a great warrior. Jingū Kōgō is worshipped as the goddess of war in Japan to-day, and her son Ojin as the god of war.

The history of the feudal warfare in Japan is replete with instances of the heroism of the women. It often happened that the wife of a daimio was called upon to defend the castle from attack during the absence of her husband. She was well qualified for the task both by training and experience.

Considering what Japan has been in the past, it does not seem strange that the Japanese women of to-day should possess a keen martial spirit and intense patriotism.

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