

her companion, who are touring all Japan now, in behalf of the blind of which Japan has so many. There was no refusal and the Seishin was glad to give in its small measure what it has received always in such large measure. So it was agreed."

As part of the preparation for her stay at the convent, the authorities came to view the parlor and bedroom where Helen Keller and Polly Thomson were to stay. Not leaving anything to chance, "They came to see her room, where she would take her meals, where she would rest between times, etc. etc. Not sighting an old-time sofa among our movables, they telephoned back upon their return to their office that they would purchase and send us one, as it seemed to be missing."

At last, on May 21st, Helen Keller and Polly Thomson arrived. "The morning . . . was one of needed but disappointing April showers, though it was mid-May. . . , there was not a stir among the whole assembly as all stood at pleased attention waiting for the great lady of whom they had heard so much, whose story is a chapter in almost every girls English reader used in Japan. Smiling and bowing to left and to right, as she passed along their ranks, Miss Keller was all animation as she greeted her young friends, Miss Thomson evidently giving her a picture of the scene concealed from her sightless eyes by writing with her fingers into the palm of Miss Keller's hand."

Though the women only stayed with the sisters overnight, they were not idle. The Annalist reported that soon after their arrival, they left for an afternoon lecture, returned for a quick meal, then left again for an evening talk. The next morning, they toured the local area before departing for their next destination.

And while much has been written about Keller, the Annalist remarked that, "It would be unfair to omit a word of Miss Thomson, her companion, who devotes herself to Miss Keller as a good mother does to a child unable to do for itself. Her whole attention at all times was for Miss Keller. Though naturally all conversation was directed to her, as Miss Keller was unable to take part, Miss Thomson kept her continually informed either by writing with her fingers in the palm of Miss Keller's hand, or by allowing the latter to keep her hand upon her lips, throat and nose, a process by which Miss Keller could make herself understand perfectly what was being said. Thus she took a share in the conversation of the moment, and was able to slip in a remark now and again, which though we had first found a little difficulty in understanding, Miss Thomson could distinguish perfectly."

Upon leaving the Annalist concluded that, "Miss Keller won all hearts and if we judge from hearsay and add what we have seen for ourselves, there is scarce a child of an age to appreciate her who has not taken Miss Keller as the heroine of the times, and has enthroned her somewhere in her little Japanese home."



Helen Keller and
Polly Thomson
[to the far right]
in Okayama auditorium

Image from the
American Federation
for the Blind

Sources consulted for this article

- ◆ Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur Japan Mission Papers, 2013.60. New England Archives of EW Province.
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