

[Roll 275, document 34]

[pp. 1-2]

34

Sapporo, Japan, April 6th,¹ 1904.

Dear Mr[. S]peer: --

At last I have entered "The Northern Gate" and am beginning to feel that it is home for a season. Owing to war times transportation of troops occupies most of the railroads so the journey up was rather long but at all uncomfortable. I reached Tokyo in time to attend Miss Alexander's funeral. It was a hard time for all the friends in Tokyo and the school must feel the loss severely. The girls of the Joshi Gakuin took the lesson beautifully and were most loving in their tributes. Having spent some happy hours with Miss Alexander last summer I, too, feel that a lovely friend has gone. Miss Milliken and Miss Wyckoff doubtless feel the added burden in the work very greatly though now the personal loss is uppermost in their minds. How I longed to stay and help them a while but Miss Smith was ill and the call to hasten to Sapporo was even louder.

Commencement preparations were the first duty presented upon my arrival here and drilling songs, organ and English was a happy way of getting acquainted with the new friends. From the first I have been impressed by the well-planned school building. The most is made of the space and all is comfortable without waste. It all shows the very careful plans and thought for detail of Miss Smith with her years of experience, I am sure. The little home for the ladies will be quite ideal when we can have it for ourselves. Of course, at present with a family with a baby we are crowded but are hoping that Mr. and Mrs. Johnson will have their home soon.

Easter Sabbath was made very happy for Miss Smith by six of the school girls becoming members of the church. There is a good spirit among the girls and they respond very readily to the little that even a

stranger can do for their helping. There were seventeen in the graduating class, five in English and Japanese and the rest in Japanese only. The Governor was present at the commencement exercises and several others high in civil and school circles. Comparing this school with others seen on the way to Sapporo from Osaka, I feel that this is as flourishing as any and perhaps a bit more important in the community. Some Japanese men of important position rode some distance with me in the train from Muroran to Sapporo and they, not knowing that I was coming to this school, spoke very highly of its influence and importance in Sapporo and the Hokkaido. Afterward one man asked where I was going and upon my telling him "To the Hokusei Jo Gakko" he said he was disappointed for he had hoped that I was to go to "The Smith Jo Gakko" to help for that was an important school and really needed another foreign teacher, and could not I change and go there yet. "The Smith Jo Gakko is one of the leading schools in this island and is doing good work for our people", he said. When he found out that it was the same school he seemed rejoiced that Miss Smith was to have help. There seem to be many people who still call this "Smith Girls [' S]chool" because Miss Smith has been here so long and has worked so faithfully for both school and church.

Snow is nearly gone and the change from the chilly dampness of Osaka to the clear cold of Sapporo is very grateful [*sic*] indeed.

The new term begins next week and we are getting plans ready for a very full term. So many are applying that we expect the school to be full. I believe there over [*sic*] a hundred thirty enrolled now with more coming each day. I am to have the music, some English and, at last a Bible class for which there has never been the opportunity before for me. Then there will be some time for language study which is best of all. That desire to be able to talk when denied proves almost too great a burden, but I understand why it had to be and now fully appreciate the opportunity to study.

Miss Smith is much better and hopes to escape her usual attack of rheumatism this year. We sincerely hope that she may continue getting

better for no one can do her work with these people who have known her so long.

Very sincerely,

Isabelle Mae Ward.

¹The date is obscured in the original, with only *Apri- ---th, 1904* visible. However, the calendar for this set of microfilm documents lists this letter as dated April 6, 1904.