

- In 1968, Japan will celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Meiji Restoration. The following are some of the prize-winning compositions submitted by boys and girls of primary and junior high schools — the driving force of the Japan of the 21st century.

## "JAPAN OF THE 21ST CENTURY"

### Let Us Be Tender

"Japan of the 21st century," — these are words full of hope and promise and I have given much thought to them. I am now a 12-year-old, sixth-grader. Thirty-four years from now I will be 46. I wonder if I shall be living then? But statistics tell me, "Don't worry. Even now the average life expectancy of Japanese is 67."

But that is only the beginning of the 21st century. It's the start of another 100 years. It is really like having a dream to predict what will happen in that period. It is said that the year 1968 marks the 100th anniversary of the beginning of the Meiji Era. When I read books, watch television or see movies, I learn that there were no airplanes and no automobiles in the early days of that period, much less tele-

vision, radio or movies. There was not even the electric light.

But today, there are many airplanes in the sky and automobiles fill the roads. We are living in a world where almost everything is electrified. Judging from the way things are now, man will make great progress in the coming thirty-four years.

Ground traffic will be replaced largely by aircraft. There will be handy one-man helicopters, giant airplanes with a speed of 3,000 kilometers per hour, rocket aircraft with seating capacities for 300 to 400. The existing spacecraft and artificial satellites will have been improved so much that people will be able to travel to the Moon or explore Mars.

What I am most interested in is daily life. My home will be facing south, so there will be plenty of sunshine.

It will be built of a steel frame, instead of wood. On the roof there will be helicopter, and in the garage, a modern automobile. A robot will take care of everything, from cooking to washing and cleaning. Meals will be high-calory, and delicious, too. People will spend their free time enjoying literature, fine arts, music, television, sports, traveling, and so forth.

I think that education will become more important along with man's cultural progress and high school education will become compulsory. And when learning has advanced, everybody will be wise, and there will be no bad men, and everybody will be able to lead a pleasant life.

By that time I will be over 49. And soon I will have my grandsons, and I will be an old woman in retirement. But, at that time, old people will be taken good care of because effective moral education will have made the young more respectful of the aged. Last year, 'Respect for the Aged Day,' a national holiday, was created much to the joy of old men and

women. I, too, will be old soon. It pleases me to see others happy.

In the 21st Century, living in Japan and other countries will be like a dream. But even when we are living in comfort and plenty, I think we should not forget to be kind and tender-hearted.

When education becomes advanced and cultural progress is made, industry is promoted and the country becomes wealthy. And our life, too, will become rich. If education is advanced and life prosperous, there will be fewer crimes. And there will be little need for policemen and other law-enforcement officers who will have very little to do.

In a family, after the father leaves for work, the mother will do all kinds of household chores by using a robot or electrical appliances. The children will go to school. The old people will spend the rest of their lives doing whatever they like. On Sundays or holidays the family will go on a trip and have lots of fun. It's like a dream, but a dream based on the cultural developments of the present age.

Science does everything for man. It will produce many things man cannot. But I don't think that this alone can make man really happy. We must have a tender and a beautiful heart even when we are living in an age of the machine which can do everything. Only then I believe can we live a truly human life. — *Nobue Shimizu, 12 years old, primary school.*

### **Our Village**

One fine day during May, I looked down on our village from the top of Mt. Shiritaka. Houses were seen scattered among the rice fields of sparkling green. Rice planting in the Kaga Plain was over. The land facing the Japan Sea, extending 12 kilometers east to west, dotted with fifteen woods, large and small — this is our village.

It's like ships on a green sea. It's like a fleet of ships — flat ones, round ones, square ones. Our village is made up of these beautiful woods. Issa, the famous "haiku" poet, once composed a "haiku" which went as follows: "Our hamlet appears/ Warped on matter

how much/ Haze may cover it." But I would say: "Our hamlet appears/ Like a ship no matter how much/ Haze may cover it." And this is a merchant ship. I like to hear a steam whistle of a ship sailing out of a port. It is the sound of peace.

This ship is like a forest park. My imagination expands across the sky, like a rainbow. It soars higher and higher until it reaches a brilliant world of the 21st century. The new century is here. Our village is spreading before me.

There, in the brilliant sunlight, scattered among the rice fields, I see our homes. Shaped like domes, they have nothing but windows outside. Rooms are air-conditioned, and temperature, humidity and ventilation are all automatically controlled. Atomic power is used, so that winter is not much of a hardship even in this northern region. Snow can be removed and crops in the fields kept warm easily. Flowers bloom all the year round. I turn my eyes to our village, a forest park. There, trees are well taken care of, tennis and volley-

ball courts are available, too. But the shrines and temples are just as they were before. The cemeteries are always tidy and clean.

I have now become completely a boy living in the 21st century. The park is our ground for recreation. It is open to all, city dwellers and foreigners. Many rainbow trout and carp are swimming in the ponds of the park, into which flows the water of the Tedori River. There are extensive pastures and farms, and milch cows are grazing. The shallow soil, peculiar to the alluvial fan, has been improved as deep soil. Even the smallest unit of a rice field is three hectares. The number of households is now one-tenth of that in the middle of the 20th century. This is a nationwide trend. Almost every village is a forest park with its own distinctive character. How did such a rapid change come about in only one century?

Kawakita-mura, our village, has 800 hectares of land under cultivation. Kusabuka, the hamlet in which I was born, alone has 150 hectares. Human labor equivalent to

0.8 man was once required; now only 0.05 man is necessary. No wonder the number of households has decreased to one-tenth.

Atomic power is being used for peaceful purposes in every industry. Development projects are making rapid progress not only in Japan but in all parts of the world. Demand for industrial products is increasing steadily, and production keeps rising. Economic conditions are improving fast, and many people, particularly of the farming villages, have found better jobs elsewhere — with the promise of unlimited happiness. Many people migrated to attractive foreign lands — with joy and courage, equipped with excellent skills and potentialities. They did so in a very natural way, without compulsion. Then, what about us — the 10 per cent left behind here in Japan? Failures in life? No! The others left here, and we stayed, both as a matter of course.

In fact, people are grateful to us. We must develop our land, handed down to us by our ancestors, to

meet the needs of the new century. It is our mission to rebuild it into a community as good as the living environment. of those nine-tenths of the people who left our village.

Let us take Kusabuka, our hamlet, as an example, to see how it has changed. There used to be 100 families, but now in this forest park, large cedars, old pine trees, and garden rocks are the only reminders of the homes which once stood there.

In front of the temple is a large ball park. In the compounds of the shrine now stand a music hall, a sacred Shinto festoon still hangs on the trunk of a large zelkova just as it did in the old days. At the western end of the village, where my home once stood, there is a large pond for rainbow trout. There are many promenades, and it is very quiet there. Outside the park, farmland spreads far and wide. There are excellent roads, too. No electric poles are seen. There is plenty of water in the canals. Orchards, botanical gardens, dairies and factories for the processing

of agricultural produce are also to be seen. The atmosphere in the town, where people go shopping occasionally, is lively but restful. The pine trees in the wind-break forests and the cedars in the hills of Mt. Shiritaka have grown big and tall.

We would be happy to hear from our friends in the cities and abroad, thanking us for the job well done in rebuilding our village. All working people here are making the best use of their time and living a comfortable life. We are now friends with all peoples of the world. Birds and animals, worms, grass and trees, the sun — all bless us now.

Parks built in old villages, scattered against the background of beautiful scenery — this is Japan. This is the land we have built. Industrial nuisances, the plague of agricultural chemicals, traffic accidents, old people's diseases are now things of the past. Traveling is safe, cheap and easy; so, many people use these parks every day.

Last night, there was a song contest in the park. A friend of mine, who returned

to Africa after taking part in the contest, has written me. In Africa, he grows and processes peanuts, my favorite food. His letter was mailed through a space station. The letter said: "You have preserved this beauty of our native place, this tenderness of people, the honor of we Japanese. You have turned our village into a community full of vigor. This forest park has been our ideal. It's a social meeting place for all peoples of the world. It's the 'merchant ship of the heart,' as you say. I'll write you again

from the Moon. Ichiro, at the space station." I am a little embarrassed by his praise.

Oh, the sun is now setting — over the beach of Ko-maiko. The Japan Sea sparkles white like a mirror. The shadow of our village is now a deep purple. It's becoming dark. The chilly wind atop the mountain blows against my cheeks. My back feels chilly. It's cold. It seems I have been returned to the 20th century. — *Yasuo Kawahara, 12 years old, male*