



Winburn Thomas in a Fellowship House group. His license to practice law in Oklahoma is hanging on the wall above. The picture on the right shows the Law Building of the Kyoto Imperial University, which is close to Friendship House

## A Sooner Lawyer Turns Missionary

**W**HILE Chinese and Japanese armies have clashed in bitter conflict time and again during recent years, an Oklahoma lawyer who turned missionary has been in close contact with the common people of Japan and China and has come to the conclusion that there is no real enmity between the two peoples except that which is inspired by propaganda.

Winburn T. Thomas, '29, who left the practice of law at Tulsa in order to become a religious worker and ended up at Fellowship House, 6 of 1 Asukai Cho, Tanaka, Kyoto, Japan, is leading a life devoid of what many Americans consider necessities, but his letters show that he is having a satisfying adventure in Christian leadership.

He has been particularly struck by the willingness of Chinese and Japanese young people who come to Friendship House to agree that the fighting of the last few years has been due largely to fascist and militaristic attitudes of certain leading officials. The common people of Japan have little knowledge of what is going on in China, and the thoughtful Chinese realize that the common people of Japan are not to blame for the armed conflict, Mr. Thomas says.

In one friendly discussion at Friendship House, a Chinese student burst out in an appeal to the Japanese students: "Militarists and imperialists are your and our enemies regardless of their nationality. Japanese or Chinese, their aim is the same—the subjugation of us all for their own profit. Away with war and exploitation. Give your all in efforts to establish peace and equal justice. Buttress your religion by a study of elementary economics."

Mr. Thomas adds that "While evidence concerning the present drift toward fascism in Japan is conflicting, things are not so

bad as American newspapers describe them." (This was written before the recent Shanghai war).

"The army, despite its enormous strength has shown itself somewhat amenable to the public will. Criticisms which a few weeks ago would have been considered insults are now unchallenged. One of the speakers in the lower house of the Diet recently said that the army has shown itself so irritable, the word 'army' has become a nickname for anything contrary. Wives who lose their temper easily or are always opposed to household proposals are referred to by the epithet 'army.' Receiving criticism is an art which has not been very thoroughly cultivated in Japan."

The Thomases' mornings, afternoons and evenings are filled with individual conferences, group meetings, teaching, study, writing, and on rare occasions a little recreation such as seeing a moving picture.

"Recently on our one free evening during the week, the doorbell rang at 9:30. It was a student of the Imperial University. He had no business, he only wished to talk. Half an hour later another student from the Government Junior College arrived and gave the same excuse for calling at such a late hour. At 10:30, still another youngster, a weaver who works at his home, called to talk. Our conversation continued until nearly midnight. While much of it was about religion, with special reference to the point of view of Christ, the evening resembled more an American 'bull session' than a religious discussion. The young men had two kinds of problems: they wished companionship on a level of understanding, and they wished to air their mental problems.

"It is quite apparent that this is one of the valuable services a missionary can render youth. They have their problems no

less than do college students in the west. Yet the whole of Japanese tradition is against their consulting friends or pastors. They sense in foreigners a common spirit, and have little difficulty in divulging their difficulties. Often we can do little besides listen sympathetically and say, 'Go and sin no more,' but that within itself seems adequate."

When Mr. Thomas graduated from O. U. in the summer of 1929, he entered his father's law office in Tulsa, but a few months at that work convinced him that corporation practice, divorce suits and other work of an attorney were not to his liking.

Having served as a pastor of a church while in school, he decided to enter Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Chicago. During his four years there he served as pastor of the Community church at Palos Park, a wealthy Chicago suburb, where the membership doubled during his pastorate. He received the B. D. and M. A. degrees there.

Mr. Thomas was sent to Kyoto, Japan, in the autumn of 1934 to do work with students of non-Christian universities after a year in the Language School in Tokyo.

He met and married Fuji-ko Yamanaka, American-born girl of Japanese parents who was active in international and social education in Japan. She was born in San Francisco. During girlhood she attended public school with her Anglo Saxon friends and in the afternoon after school was out she attended Japanese school where she learned to read, write and speak Japanese.

Kyoto is the tourist center of Japan, and many Oklahomans visiting the Orient have stopped to see Mr. and Mrs. Thomas.

"We are glad to meet them, and if possible to help them see Japan in a better fashion than they could see it by themselves," Mr. Thomas writes.