



## XII

NEW Japan has produced, rather than created, a grand miscellany of things, some desirable, others less so. In the latter category may be classed the Americanesque architecture that has converted old Yedo into a third-class concrete provincial town, and the foreign-style food which, fried in decomposing fat, convinces the Japanese experimentalist that he is at last eating the real thing—for the fouler it tastes, the more genuinely foreign he finds it, the more confidently does he souse it in the imitation Worcester sauce which, as the label informs one, is 'Recipe of Noble Countryman'. To these must be added minor annoyances like Ford cars, champagne cider prepared from by-products obtained in the distillation of coal-tar, overheated sleeping-cars, septic telephones, sham Crown Derby ware, which the up-to-date family adopts instead of the far more satisfactory blue and white native china, and secret remedies in which Mercury may be taken to excess. But in the former one may place, as a rare and special luxury granted to only a few modern houses, a drainage system modelled on the English pattern; and that mild and mellow form of liberalism which, though rapidly fading from Europe like a faint but respectable sunset, appears to be ascending in this country towards the meridian.

Dr. Harada represented, more perfectly perhaps than any other Japanese publicist, the conciliatory spirit of the doctrine. He believed in the League of Nations, the reduction of armaments, the English language and jury

system, in universal and feminine suffrage, and in self-determination. Strongly impressed during his European travels by the average good looks and physique of Western peoples, he harboured certain ideas on the improvement of the race. Rice, he considered, highly polished and absorbed into the system by a vacuum process which, noisy in its operation, rendered nugatory the functions of the teeth, was favourable to beri-beri, stomachic catarrh and those malformations of the jaw and poverty of nose that won for his nationals the epithet they most abhorred; while the practice of squatting for hours on a straw mat shortened and ankylosed the legs, and so produced a stunted race of almost repellent proportions. To remedy these defects he advocated a generous diet and European furniture and, as proof of the efficacy of his treatment, would exhibit a numerous, pretty and long-limbed progeny. But perhaps the most remarkable trait of this unusual character was his honesty, which, even more than the perpetual morning coat and striped trousers, had come to be regarded as an organic part of the man. Some were persuaded that it was an elaborate disguise, behind which he conducted a series of machinations so obscure that neither method nor result had as yet been satisfactorily elucidated. There is in particular a sort of European that clings stubbornly to the dogma that moral probity is discredited in all lands East of Suez, and that, as one proceeds further away, so does it come to be considered more and more an unfortunate weakness or a vice, which should be conquered by a stern mental effort. 'All Orientals', they declare with an expansive gesture, forgetting the advertisements and politics of their own land, 'are liars'. They evidently derive no small comfort from the repetition of this falsehood, and from the copious proof which they will adduce in support of it.

Mr. and Mrs. Smith-Ditchling included this among the articles of their faith. 'No Japanese', they would murmur to one another, 'can resist an intrigue'. 'Some Europeans', the syllogism would continue, 'manage to succeed in Japan by adopting these reprehensible tactics; therefore all Europeans who want to succeed must, in sheer self-defence, adopt them'. So, unfamiliar with the rules of formal logic, unable to distinguish Bocardo from Fresison, they would argue; and if the principle was unsound, the practice had hitherto been fruitful.

It had chanced that O-Natsu-san, Professor McGonigle's maidservant, a minx and baggage of the first water, had, after a serious difference of opinion with her master over the weekly bills, developed one of those dying relatives in the wilds of Nagano Prefecture without whom no domestic is properly equipped for leave-taking. Her eleemosynary pilgrimage took her, however, no further than the shop of a certain Totsuka laundryman, from whom she received news of every vacancy in the foreign quarter where wages were good, household accounts lax and the commissions offered by tradesmen especially attractive. Ensign Pullborough, who inhabited this region, had paid without turning a hair a coal-bill (for July) of a hundred and eighty yen with coal at thirty yen the ton—and all his cooking was done on a gas-stove. 'Danna-sama', his cook would beam, 'ver kine man. My love heem', and then shuffle off to a cubby-hole under the back-stairs where he would drink himself blind on the proceeds, while his little boy, piously wielding a fan, kept away the flies from his face.

O-Natsu-san learnt with regret that none of the more luscious jobs were open, but that the Ditchlings, though poor, could offer employment with several very distinct advantages over McGonigle's; they spent an abnormal proportion of their income in entertaining, they found

irksome the minute examination of accounts, and their knowledge of Japanese was rudimentary. O-Natsu-san, on the other hand, knew a good deal more English than she found it expedient to admit; she had amassed a really striking vocabulary under several masters. Something, then, might be made out of the Ditchling house as a *pis-aller*, a temporary asylum which she could leave at any time when a chance of preying on some flat in the diplomatic corps presented itself.

Dressed in soberly-striped kimono, and preened to such a degree of neatness with the aid of camellia oil that imparts to the hair a glossy order and a rancid smell, that innocence seemed to vie with respectability, she permitted herself to be led by the laundryman, who charged a pretty stiff fee for doing so, before the two foolish foreign devils. Bowing to the ground, she narrated how she had been flung into the street by a callous and brutal master, how her resources, the hard-won gleanings of a long and devoted service, were now exhausted, and how she was a friendless orphan threatened with starvation because she had trusted too much in the good faith of an alien. The Ditchlings were all sympathy, and took the line that it was a shame for a poor defenceless girl to be bundled out into the street like that; and, though she affirmed strongly her readiness to work for them without payment other than a small daily allowance of rice and pickled radish, the Ditchlings of course wouldn't hear of it. She would be well paid and might regard herself more as a companion than a cook. After an ecstasy over Clarence Eugene, she went to collect her luggage and to draw a sum from her flourishing savings-bank account, which she paid the laundryman as a priority charge in respect of notice of some more productive vacancy.

After a few days in her new place she gathered that her

estimate of the Ditchlings' characters needed some revision. Really, they were not such utter fools as she had first decided, and had obviously given credence to the yarn of her ejection from McGonigle's from inclination rather than conviction. And what was more, they were clearly ready to accept any further details she liked to fabricate about the McGonigle ménage ; so she went to work accordingly. She told them, as long as she could restrain her tears, of the persistent attempts he had made to undermine her virtue, with bribes and threats, both of which she had steadfastly ignored.

'I always thought he looked like a satyr', Mrs. Ditchling said to her husband, 'and now it's pretty obvious that he is one'.

But a few days later O-Natsu-san made an even more harrowing confession ; there had come a time when neither moral nor physical strength could prevail against the onslaughts of the unscrupulous McGonigle, who, having subdued her by force, then calmly ejected her as soon as it seemed likely that 'the signs of guilt would become all too evident'. Here was a real 'scoop', of which Miss Walker must be immediately informed. From such promising material she could be relied on to compose a scandal of the first magnitude, something fruity to refresh the jaded palate ; and there was no doubt that O-Natsu-san, if properly encouraged, would supply details whose luridness might be worthy of the most alarmist captions ; something that would make the Sunday papers look silly. O-Natsu-san proved agreeable and a session was held *in camera*, Miss Walker being present. So well guarded was the conclave, that Clarence Eugene, by dint of the most patient eaves-dropping, succeeded in catching merely a few interjections of a religious and therefore useless nature, though in a general way he guessed that there was

something amiss with the new cook. Although of tender age, he took the liveliest interest in all that concerned female servants, of whose affairs he had witnessed much that the adult foreigner has little opportunity of noticing. His nurse, ready at all times to humour his caprices, had invented for him several curious pastimes, many of which would, no doubt, surprise if not alarm the average home-bred child. It was this, perhaps, that rendered him unduly speculative about the mysterious discussions that were going on in the dining-room.

O-Natsu-san was to find that the palm follows the martyrdom. 'A good action', said the sententious Miss Walker, 'brings its own reward'. It did; she was now able to buy a particular 'obi' of a Japanese-Futurist floral design that she had been fancying for some time. Decked out in this and a thick layer of Mrs. Ditchling's face powder, she was voted quite a flash piece of goods at the local cinema, where she sobbed desolately over an interminable native film of double suicide, with posturing sham Daimyos who exuded, hand on sword-hilt, the glutinous kind of sentimentality which is dear to the Japanese heart. Going from strength to strength, she developed a curious taste in the soapy chocolate creams manufactured by Morinaga, the Tamachi Candy King; this was a step towards modern civilisation and away from the green buns stuffed with sickly sweet bean jam, the brown stickiness which almost invariably adorns the cheeks of village children. If things went on like this she would be able to buy a set of foreign clothes of 'yofuku', and show off her bandy legs in artificial silk stockings. After having tasted Akadama 'Portowine' and 'jerry', she was anxious to become a modernist; besides, as Miss Walker learnt with delight, she was a Christian, having got one or two useful things out of the

missionaries, including a good recipe for waffles and the rite of Confirmation. She still had a greasy testimonial from the Rev. Hophni. P. Stultz, who was a good judge of converts of this kind—quite a connoisseur, in fact.

‘She has all the makings of a really earnest Christian’, was Miss Walker’s verdict, ‘and if she has gone wrong—and I’m afraid she has—she’s been frightened into it. Anyhow, the fact that emerges is that this McGonigle, or whatever he calls himself, is quite unfit to be in charge of impressionable young men. I have always been against bachelors, and now here’s an instance. A man who lives to honour a good woman is the only trustworthy kind of man’. She leered at Mr. Ditchling. ‘Mmmm! a terrible business, but good may come of it, good may come of it. Make the most of your opportunities, my dears. You may be chosen instruments of good. As it happens, the hotel manager assures me that Dr. Harada will be spending the week-end here. We shall contrive a meeting, I can promise you, dear people. Dr. Harada’s a man of the highest principles, though uuuuuuh! I’m sorry he’s not a Christian. He told me he’d never read St. Augustine’s *City of Beautiful Night*, or was it Temple Thompson’s *City of Dreadful Nonsense*? It doesn’t really matter. Trust in the Lord, that’s the goods every time’.

Miss Walker envisaged the possibilities of war, and made the necessary disposals. First of all, Moses must make himself useful. He had often met Dr. Harada at the Oriental Society’s meetings, and was no doubt sufficiently thick with him to invite him to a meal, or meet him at the station. He must be bolted at once from his philological hole in Totsuka and made to play his part. Secondly, she meanwhile would be strengthening her hand with those tea-table bulletins that she, better

than anyone, could issue with convincing technique. Within three days or so all Osakai would be in possession of McGonigle's sordid history, and public opinion would have gathered considerable force by the time Dr. Harada arrived.

Mrs. Ditchling, who loved her husband, worked for his advancement. Having discovered that the French contingent was represented in Osakai that summer by no one more literary than M. Fabre, to whom woman was an all-sufficing library, she found little difficulty in persuading Mr. Kobayashi, ever enthusiastic in the pursuit of some new thing, that her husband was more than any other, competent to deliver a lecture before the Osakai Summer School for primary school teachers on 'Objective tendencies in the Modern French Novel as exemplified in the works of Morand and Dekobra'. It mattered little to her and to Mr. Kobayashi that most of the teachers were ignorant of French—indeed, that was all to the good, since Mr. Ditchling's own proficiency in the language would bear no examination—or that they had never read and would not read the works of these authors. Apart from a particular and private reason for choosing so recondite a subject, it should be tried as a new stunt, liable to tickle the vanity of the semi-high-brow audience, and impart to them that vague cultural warmth which persons of their type, or of the type of most of them, would feel when catching the names of writers whom they knew, hazily, to be in the front of the movement, or long abstract words like 'extraversion', which never failed to uplift. The Normal College Auditorium would twinkle with the constellation of hundreds of pairs of spectacles, some worn for myopia and astigmatism, others for effect. Shock heads would nod appreciatively at some allusion, some felicitously subtle analysis, which the lecturer partly, the audience



totally, misunderstood. (And here Mrs. Ditchling's private reason must be divulged ; the lecture should, in effect, be the verbatim delivery of an article in the *Criticaster*, an excellent English quarterly to which none of the Japanese had access.) It should take place on Sunday afternoon. Dr. Harada must be induced to look in and witness the carefully staged triumph ; Mr. McGonigle meanwhile would be sleeping off the potations of the previous night. What a contrast for the edification of the President of Taishō. He couldn't fail to be impressed.

Moses Walker, who loved peace, had found long ago that the best way of obtaining it was to obey his sister without question. Having received warning of the moves that were expected of him in this game, he meekly unearthed himself, and at four o'clock on the appointed day might have been seen crawling up and down the torrid platform of Osakai station, while the occupants of the car containing Dr. Harada were still snoring at full length on the seat, displaying a strange assortment of male 'lingerie' and, at their open mouths, of devices in gold amalgam that reflected the highest credit on the inventiveness of native dentists.

As the train whistled into its last tunnel, the passengers awoke ; boots and braces were adjusted, ties and collars fastened and, after a final volley of hawking and spitting, the carriage-full was ready to greet its friends. The train drew up grindingly amidst yells of 'Bento ! sando-ichi ! Beeru ! Gyu-nyu ! Scotcho-iski !' as the green-hatted station vendors surged on to the platform. The station-master stepped proudly from his retreat to a position over the white line boundary beyond which passengers were forbidden to go until the train had stopped ; and the porters hastily concealed themselves.

Dr. Harada had learnt, perhaps in puritan England, to despise the relaxation of one's clothes on a journey ; unruffled, cool and smiling, his tail-coat giving him the appearance of a beetle behind, his face that of a benevolent owl in front, he descended to the platform and warmly shook Mr. Moses Walker's hand.

