



## XV

A TYPHOON had been spinning gaily up the coast of China, looking in at Hongkong in order to drive one or two big steamers ashore, interfering with an anti-foreign strike on the mainland, by killing impartially two German managers and fifty disaffected factory hands; engulfing half a dozen junks, getting the President Quincy, bound for Shanghai, into difficulties, and then retiring to die noisily in the Japan sea, while its offspring, a vigorous young secondary depression, spoilt all the bathing on the Pacific coast, and deluged the whole of the Japanese islands with torrents of rain. Shudders of watery tempest swept through the emerald rice-swamps, gladdening the frogs into song; on every corrugated iron or flat zinc roof—both now characteristic of the landscapes in this country—the dark heavens, here dun and there the colour of old aluminium, performed almost unbearable roulades. The peasant in his conical straw hat and prickly giant grass raincoat that gave him the air of a vegetable porcupine, trudged stolidly by his ox-waggon, but his heart rejoiced inwardly at the benefit the sky was conferring on the pumpkins, melons, egg-plants, 'satsuma' potatoes and buckwheat, that he and all his family had sedulously nourished, wooden ladle in hand, with the crude night-soil from its special well whose quaint little thatched roof attracts the unsuspecting foreigner to a too intimate inspection.

The little men and women of Osakai seemed to have grown during the night, so elevated were they upon the

extra high *geta*, or wooden clogs, upon which they trotted safely through the liquid mire of the main street beneath large oil-paper umbrellas, yellow, black and deep blue. The ditches and runnels ceased to reek of the corrupted bath-water which, black and stagnant, had bred millions of mosquitoes during the last month; and foamed and bubbled with opaque beer-coloured road water. The tiny flower plots outside the shops were beaten down and daubed with brown splashes; the powdered trollop of a waitress at the famous eel restaurant parted the blue, lettered curtain at the door as a motor-bus went roaring and squirting past. It amused her to see how it leapt frantically from one deep puddle to another, with a prodigious aspersion of thick water. An exceedingly old woman, close-cropped like a boy, was sitting on the raised matted 'dais' of the shop that faced the restaurant. She was a leathery old crone who sold paper and fans and took the liveliest interest in the doings of young people. When disposing of the scented tissue paper that takes to some extent the place of napkins, towels and handkerchiefs, she was liable to let off some jest that would set a plump, almond-eyed customer giggling, or shock a well brought-up couple newly imported from the purity of their American 'home-town'. Just now she was taking a few whiffs of rank tobacco, fine as hair, from her little brass-tipped pipe, and crouching near the hibachi, a large blue and white china brazier, ornamented with flying cranes, to keep the damp from her old bones as she enjoyed the various music of the rain. She knew all about the goings on of the sly little waitress, as the latter was perfectly aware. Across the crystal parallels of the downpour they exchanged glances of understanding. Mr. Fujii, a superior clerk of the bank of Karafuto, had been about the place yesterday, and it was said that he was going to

get married to a richish family, who would adopt him. This would probably mean that his abnormal appetite for grilled eels and rice would cease as suddenly as it had begun. But the girl was not seriously troubled about it; there were others—and life in the summer season was full of possibilities. There was even the foreign young man who made eyes at her every day as he passed to the billiard saloon at the corner—a green wooden box inscribed with the word 'Biriard'. Among go-ahead Japanese girls it was considered rather smart to be 'on' with a foreigner; at least, in her stratum of society. Apart from their madness and characteristic odour—both minor disadvantages—they possessed the cardinal virtues of great stature, vigour and (as a rule) a long purse. She was a cheerful wench, much given to screaming laughter; and neither the prospect of an enforced change of admirer nor of continued melancholy rain depressed her.

But the monotonous falling of water assailed with dismal cadence the ears of Alba Sheepshanks. The excitement of the last few days had been too much for her; Venus and Bacchus had conspired to make her feel unusually seedy that morning. She listened with disgust to the plapping of the drops on the broad leaves of a Pawlownia that in late spring could thrust its corymbs of purple bells almost into the bedroom window. She attempted vainly to locate the discomfort in some particular part of her body; but it was a suffering all the less bearable because it seemed to be everywhere and nowhere—an abstraction of pain mocking her attempt at definition. She wondered if she was going to be seriously ill, so that her plans for assignation with her new lover should be stultified; superstitiously she entertained for a few seconds the idea of a divine censor. Was she to be punished? She began to count the knots

in the wooden ceiling ; if it was an odd number, yes ; if even, no. . Thirty-six ; and one dark spot in an ill-lighted corner that was doubtful. No, what nonsense ! it was the damp that had brought out muscular rheumatism all over her ; the best cure for that was a hair of the dog. If that didn't do any good she had better go to Totsuka to consult Stromdahl and Müller, who would physic her and set her right. It was imperative that she should be fit ; who, racked with these twinges, could savour the kissés and transports that were soon to be hers ? James, no doubt, was already fuming at the delay ; he was one of those repressed, dangerous men, she thought, who, if kept waiting too long, might be driven to all sorts of desperate things. But a little procrastination would bring him well to the mark.

She could hear plainly through paper doors and cane and plaster walls her husband's voice enunciating the words, ' Walpole doesn't mention him in his *Anecdotes of Painting*, but Johnson's and Chalmers' footnotes. . . . '

That crass Yankee was with him, no doubt, gaping at him as though he were a necromancer. How anyone could be imposed upon by Tristram—girls especially ! She could tell them a few things about him.

The rain continued to splash greasily as the clouds dropped fatness. The angels, she had been told in childhood, having their bath. A sudarium, indeed ! She turned sulkily on the long wicker chair to a pile of books lent her by Miss Bugbird. Who in the name of goodness could read this stuff ? *The Trap*, by Dorothy Richardson, page one nine seven—she opened at random as though to take ' sortes Virgilianas ' :

' . . . all specialists are on monorails.

' *Monomaniacs, eh ? Now tell me who is the lassie in the white smock ?*

'That's a djibbêh and her name is Norah Beaworthy. Keep your pun. . . .'

What utter rubbish! Nobody talked like that in real life, thank heaven; and if they did they were too idiotic to bother about. What else? You pays your money and you takes your choice. *Mrs. Dalloway*, by Virginia Woolf; you got nowhere in that and couldn't understand a quarter. *Ding Dong Bell*, De la Mare; stupid title, stupid book. No, thank you. Why on earth couldn't English people write something like *Aphrodite* or *Madame Bovary* or *Le Lys Rouge*? Flaubert and Anatole France were real men. . . .

. . . Tristram certainly wasn't. In her heart she was profoundly sceptical, despite the facts, about the terracotta paint business. On the other hand she found it convenient to accept as an excuse, which should be a kind of 'not-bremse' to be twitched in an emergency; the garden scene with Lulu made appearances more opportunely black.

But if she was going to spoil it all by being ill. . . .

She determined to accompany Tristram next day to Totsuka, where he had amongst other things to negotiate the sale of a rare biblical picture by John Martin to a Shinto connoisseur; 'Nebuchadnezzar Grazing', most thunderously treated. She would make those Boche doctors overhaul her thoroughly. To clinch the bargain she shouted for the serving-maid and demanded the materials for a 'John Collins', the parrot, who had the words now by heart, joining cynically in the request.

Mr. Podler, who, tossing on his lonely mattress, had listened through most of the night to the querulous mosquitos expostulating strongly at the net, and to the whimper of rain-bearing winds, stared gloomily out at the torrent that washed the soil off his flower-beds, his mind heavy with misgiving. Suppose something went

wrong after all ; with her poses and self-hypnotism, Alba was capable of letting him down every time. Besides, she was so shockingly careless ; only the other day, before Tristram and one or two others, she had shrieked, ' Come along, James dar——' but had fortunately dropped the final syllable at the sight of his lowering face.

At the same time he must take possession of her ; an empty life of aching loneliness was now unthinkable, and he must obtain at any cost the consolation of love, ' unsweetened ', unromantic, strong and satisfying, the gift of the fierce Earth-spirit. He had now reached a point at which it was incumbent upon him to take the risks at which he had long been hesitating. He was Alba's destiny, for better or worse, and it was no use shilly-shallying. The clock would strike and Faustus must be damn'd—nor for him either could there be a Pythagoras' metempsychosis—even now he devoutly wished it could be—not into some brutish beast, but a cold and indestructible Memnon, singing reverberantly to the wild desert dawn.

High in the drenched air a kite hung, peering earthward for a rubbish heap of promising foulness. Fortunate bird ! unimpeded in his bold spirals or paraboloids. Oh, if one could but overturn this crabbed chess, or give oneself somehow room for gracious movement, whether in ascent or descent ! It was cant, this talk about being the creator of circumstances ; no man, if truth were known, had even secured half of that which he coveted ; every man who appeared to be successful was really consoling himself with a poor substitute. . . . Nature won the game every time, and it was no good trying to force things ; one might as well try to stop the rain, which no doubt in some hidden manner was contributing to the sum total of

influences that were his fate. Even water compelled man.

By two in the afternoon a patch of blue sky the size of the proverbial sailor's trousers appeared to the West where Fuji, who can dispel storms as well as brew them, slept in her vatic mantle. By tea-time the cicada sang to the inclining sun from every jewelled tree-trunk.

Sir Birinus would have fine weather for his dinner-party; before the diplomat's sinister gaze Nature, ignominious, withdrew her leaden rearguards. Luck or Cunning? Was there, in spite of Podler's doubt, a rain-compeller left outside anthropology?

Sir Birinus was to entertain Dr. Harada, for whom he had planned an exclusively male dinner; but the sudden appearance of Mrs. Harada from the neighbouring village of Imamuragasaki, where with part of her family she was visiting relatives, necessitated the admission of the female element that he so disliked. However, he was quick at turning adverse circumstances to good account. There remained a residue of women to whom he owed hospitality, grudging in spirit but generous in substance, and here was a chance to wipe off the distasteful debt.

For example; his vigilance relaxed by a holiday atmosphere, he had, at a gathering at the Bavarian Ambassador's, permitted himself to be caught nodding by the Smith-Ditchlings, to be rushed with an introduction, and invited to a bridge dinner, which he of course refused. But his scrupulous Civil Service conscience demanded a readjustment of the disturbed equilibrium. A dinner at Osakai was a very different thing from one of those official and awe-inspiring sessions at Totsuka, beside which the High Table of the most be-parsoned college at Camford would appear rowdy. At Osakai one fed informally, vacationally; it was the very thing.

Moreover, he learnt that the Ditchlings had been seen quite recently in conversation with Dr. Harada ; it was well that the parties meeting should not be all total strangers. He would work off at the same time the insupportable Miss Walker. Mrs. Miles, of whose appearance and social gifts he coldly approved, though he believed her to be superficial in everything but folly, would be useful as temporary hostess for the ladies ; and Malvina Bugbird, who had called on him twice with the Mileses, but without material result, could serve her turn in diluting the usual superfluity of men. A preposterous child ; whose air of omniscience had little more valid backing than the rather cheap experience of having read bits of Freud, Havelock Ellis and Joyce. Mrs. Sheepshanks must of course be excluded ; her persistent noisiness at table during the last six months had more than sufficed to banish her from every function connected, however remotely, with the Atlantean Embassy. Mr. McGonigle, as a trusted member of the Taisho faculty, must, of course, be present ; while Podler, in the rôle of a kind of social subaltern, would trot round and make himself generally affable. On the face of it, the arrangement left little to be desired, but most lamentably Sir Birinus had been left in ignorance of one vital factor—the animosity felt by Miss Walker and the Ditchlings for Professor McGonigle ; nor had the rumours of McGonigle's alleged questionable conduct as yet reached, as was evident, his ears. Or was it that the diabolical man, having by means known solely to himself, got wind of the whole plot, had maliciously invited conspirators, tools and victim to an ironic feast ? He was quite capable of such an action, his ideas of pleasure being tinged, as was the whole of his mind, with a grim sense of humour that very few other people appreciated.



The Counsellor's summer villa was a happy compromise between the ugly and the comfortable. There were the usual Japanese touches at variance with European furnishings. The floors, as near to parquet as the bewildered native carpenter could be induced to go, obviated the tedious removal of one's shoes ; a verandah, wider and deeper than was customary, supported those large leather armchairs that immediately suggest a cigar. The walls and doors were discreetly substantial, so that a conversation in the next room could not be heard ; Sir Birinus had seen to that. Grass mats, of the kind called ' Art ' in Britain, soothed one's feet in dining-room and passages, but the rugs in the drawing-room were the ghastliest Axminster Bokhara. There were fireplaces, tiled round with bile green repetitions of Saggitaria leaves ; since the earthquake such comforts had become exceptional. A few Chinese temple tables, with Brumagen brass ash-trays upon them, reminiscent of a commercial hotel, some splendid Buddhist candle-sticks and one or two valuable screens on whose gilt background pines, arrow-flights of ducks, or dull, blood-red maples sprawled in gesticulating angles, lightened the rather official flavour of the whole suite ; while the presence of several Medici prints upon the walls finally exculpated Sir Birinus of any suspicion of entertaining artistic designs. Unity and Aesthetic Fitness fled, appalled, from these chambers.

Mr. Podler, as his rickshaw flitted through the gloaming, trusted that the intense boredom that awaited him might in a small measure be assuaged by the excellence of the wines. He wished to meet nobody, but to brood and fret in secret until Alba had granted him a summons. The prospect of an evening with the necessarily discarded Lulu, with Malvina, now that the idea of an intellectual woman had grown positively nauseous, with

two bogies of ancient standing, Mrs. Ditchling and Miss Walker, was truly arid, unless it were watered with such vintages, justly celebrated, as the Counsellor, if he chose, might produce.

The Ditchlings and Miss Walker knew that ' dear Dr. Harada ' was to be present. Here was a splendid opportunity for the storming, so to speak, of a second line of trenches. Miss Walker had already gained the first by introducing Dr. Harada to the Ditchlings, and furnishing him with deplorable details of McGonigle's domestic life. The President of Taisho, although he had not attended the lecture on Morand and Dekobra, had been presented by Miss Walker with a copy of the *Argus* containing her two marvellous but enthusiastic columns on it. Now was the time to improve any advantage won, and to feel the way towards the Chair of English.

Arriving economically in the same motor, the three allies found Mr. Podler on the doorstep instructing his mushroom-hatted rickshaw man to return at a stated hour. They did not, on the whole, approve of Podler, who had been associating too much for their taste with that Dionysiac set that ranged from Mr. Miles to Mr. Takamatsu.

The Ditchlings entered the drawing-room side by side, but their confidence, just correctly shaded with obsequiousness, faded to a ghostly tincture of dismay, nor could Mrs. Ditchling refrain from a convulsive clutch at her husband's arm when they saw, grouped near the mantel-piece, Sir Birinus, McGonigle and Dr. Harada engaged in evidently friendly conversation. Thinking over this crisis later, Mrs. Ditchling was able to assure herself that her involuntary gesture had passed unnoticed ; she plausibly attributed Sir Birinus' cordiality to the fact that no rumour of the scandal had as yet penetrated to him, while Dr., Harada's was merely an

habitual disguise. Neither she nor Ditchling could note the deportment of Miss Walker, who lagged a few paces behind, but the aura of her suffering enveloped them, as one might say, from the rear. Yet the shock of this unforeseen collision was but transient; steadfast determination to reach the prescribed objective nerved them to cross the room with very passable coolness, to where the Counsellor stood ready to snap his greetings at them like an old Thames pike on a frosty morning.

When Mrs. Harada rose from the deep armchair which had largely concealed her, a more pleasurable shock thrilled them. She was quite the sensation of the evening. She belonged to that unaccountable subspecies of Japanese beauty that possesses large, liquid, Indian or North African eyes and a straight nose with a high bridge; one could imagine her beguiling the hours of some Rajah or Satrap rather than of a Daimyo. Her teeth were dazzling and regular, her abundance of blue-black hair, truly hyacinthine, clustering round her perfect little head instead of being piled in greasy lumps and loops, tied with pink string, in the traditional mode. She affected a dress and obi (a broad sash with a huge, moth-like bow behind), rather more floreate than was considered altogether correct for the ordinary run of respectable matrons over thirty; blue, white and gold balanced themselves about her small but unusually well-proportioned form. She was not, like so many Japanese women, too long in the body and too short in the leg. One would scarcely have believed that she, with her air of twenty-five or so, could have borne four boys, the eldest of whom was fourteen, to say nothing of a brace of girls. She had travelled in Europe with Dr. Harada during his inspection of Western customs and methods, and spoke English fluently, though with a childish

intonation that was not the least of her charms. Her manners were those of one to whom all the complexities of British etiquette were perfectly natural ; she picked up the right fork without looking for it. But a Japanese lady will take to such things far more readily than the man ; perhaps because she is better used to ideas of discipline. A notable example of her adaptability was the fact that she could prattle merrily away while eating, and did not allow herself to lapse into a rather porcine silence over the various courses. Dr. Harada was pretty good at the game, but a large trout, smothered in a yellow piquant sauce containing clams, oysters, shrimps, truffles and chips of pickled cucumber, rendered him speechless for ten minutes. The delicate carillons of her laughter encouraged Mr. McGonigle on her left to prodigies of waggishness, and Mr. Podler on her right to forget his pains for a time.

Poor Malvina Bugbird on McGonigle's left found herself insulated between two magnetic fields, since, on *her* left Mr. Ditchling was bent consciously and eagerly away to catch any pearls that Sir Birinus and Dr. Harada at the end of the table might cast before him. She was reduced to smiling in a wretched but knowing manner first this way and then that, as though she were taking a lively part in the conversation of both groups ; or shooting her upper half forward in a sudden convulsion, as if on the point of projecting a spirited remark. It pained her deeply that more notice was not taken of her. Mrs. Harada was by no means one of those Japanese to whom it is only safe to talk about the great earthquake or the beauties of Nara so as to avoid stumbling against some taboo ; nor did she lapse into the common error of blaming her country too severely as a convention of politeness and a means of impressing the foreigner with her broad-mindedness.

The real reason, she explained to Podler, why the Americans excluded the Japanese was that they regarded them as a race as dangerous, or at least, undesirable savages. 'It is true that many of our people are rather savage; but with America it is a pot and a kettle; the Americans have many savages, too, and very dangerous. They have their gunmen and their train bandits and their Methodists; all very undesirable, very dangerous'.

'I quite agree'.

'Very good, Mistress Harada', from McGonigle.

'But two things are irreconcilable in our nation, yes, and we shall never be great nation till they reconcile; the new and the old Meiji culture and Shogun culture. America all new, she has no "Shogun", I think'.

'Not since Bryan died', said McGonigle.

'Shurdurp, McGonigle', Podler growled in a low voice. As if in apology for talking across Mrs. Harada, he took up her point. 'On the whole, I think it's a disadvantage; progress ought to grow out of tradition. When Japan's solved the problem of linking her Westernised progress to her native tradition, a new spirit'll begin to grow; something really modern *and* Japanese, just in that way. And then things'll start humming'.

'But first, yes, she must understand her Westernised progress; she has learnt many things she not understands'.

'Ah, there you have it. She must either "Japanise" her modernism more thoroughly, or else understand all the associations that are linked, in the Occident, to certain objects. But what on earth is the use of Christmas in Japan? And yet last winter at the Kurokiya Store they had a shopman dressed up as Father Christmas and distributing leaflets. There's still too much of the unperceptive half-imitation that makes your countrymen

wear their shirt-tails outside their trousers, if you'll forgive me. . . .'

Again the fascinating glockenspiel of laughter.

'Oh yes', chimed in McGonigle, 'it's just the same with words. You should just see the things my students dish up just because they won't take ten minutes to study the problem of usage ; it's a perfect howl, I can tell you. One favourite phrase they use in their essays is "bloody relation". The first time I came across it, "Shakespeare has no bloody relation with Schiller", I just hooted ; it seemed so offhand and slangy a way of dismissing the question. But of course it's pidgin for "blood-relation", which again is pidgin for "near relation", or something of that kind. I gave them half an hour's discourse on foul language—something like Graves' *Lars Porsenna, or the Future of Swearing* ; and it shook 'em badly, Mistress Harada, give you me word it did'.

Mrs. Harada had stayed long enough in England, the home of strong language which has no equivalent in the Japanese vocabulary, to appreciate this anecdote. But Mrs. Ditchling, with a righteous expression, glanced, first coldly at McGonigle and then sidelong at Sir Birinus to see if he heard, disapproved and, most important of all, noted her disapprobation. He was, however, far too engrossed in receiving from Dr. Harada the adumbration of an unusually 'fruity' political scandal connected with bribery about the ground lease for the licensed brothels at Aomori, which concerned the Minister of Sericulture ; at present, indeed, a mere adumbration, but copious details would be inserted as soon as the ladies were marshalled to the drawing-room by Mrs. Miles, who looked as though she would dearly have liked to know the particulars here and now.

Mr. Ditchling, in the hope that someone would notice the contrast between his correct 'tone' and

McGonigle's license, talked frigidly and loudly to Mr. and Miss Walker, the other side of the table, on the good taste shown by the Atlantean Office of Works in erecting the Embassy in the Corinthian ferro-concrete style, and on the prospective visit and anti-ritualism of the Bishop of New Guinea. Sir Birinus, though too absorbed to pay much attention to him, couldn't help being distracted for a moment by his thin shriek of, ' . . . the Bishop might do well to give us an address on loose talk . . . ' and feeling a passing resentment that someone should shout across him so rudely, and that at his own table, made a half-conscious reminder to himself to look up when the recital was over, and ascertain who it was that disturbed his attention with such impertinence ; it was the kind of thing he never forgave. But Mr. Ditchling who, though he could carry his wine after a fashion, had to jettison his perspicacity to do it, bawled serenely on, under the impression that he was doing very well indeed.

If the sherry was smooth and clinging, the Liebfraumilch bland and aromatic, the champagne was tapped from the very wave out of which Aphrodite leapt ; it was small wonder, therefore, that when the ladies were clear out of the room, the conversation should at once increase in liveliness and freedom. Even the Counsellor seemed disposed to unbend a fraction.

The details of the political scandal, which left nothing to be desired, led the way to a more general discussion on man, woman and the universe. The second of these topics gave rise to some controversy.

' Woman ' , declared Dr. Harada, bursting with every kind of emancipation and uplift, ' is potentially wiser than man ; she is destined to rule the world a thousand years hence. But in Japan she is still enslaved. The Yukaku and the Geisha-house must be abolished before

she can play the part in regenerating backward morals of our country. We are still ruled by Barbarism of lustful males. We have much to civilise ; even though we now have bicycle, chamber-pot, harmonium, our morals remain mediaeval. Why? The women are subjected’.

‘I down’t agree with you, Harada’, replied Sir Birinus in his mincing and faintly venomous accent. ‘If wumman had needed or desired the emancipation you suggest as her right she would have obtained it by this time unless she is—as may very well be—a *definitione*, an idiot. In any case, she has no mind, but merely an undisciplined complex of philogenetic emotions’.

‘What do you think woman needs, Sir Birinus?’ inquired Mr. Podler, hoping to draw his senior.

‘Ow well, if you ask me, Mr. Podlar, I should say the *seraglio* and the barch rod’. He gave a malevolent little giggle.

‘Oh, Sir Birinus, I see you are a very severe man’, cried the President gallantly. ‘They need Appreciation ; some bodily App-reciation, some intellectual. When we were young we thought it was all bodily App-reciation. But, Japanese young man was a very bad young man’. He smiled and at the same time looked roguishly sad. ‘Someone tell me Mr. McGonigle is fond of the Japanese ladies, what in your country you call “a bit of dartee dawg”, but we are much worse. I, when a young man, was much worse. You say “sexual relation but equality”; we say “sexual relation, but honourable Male grants as privilege to inferior worm of females”. If woman is already emancipated, then perhaps when you hit her when she is naughty she will hit you too. The Anglo-Saxon race was always honourable to the women. Before Norman Conquest she had much freedom in the law ; you worship female principle practically. Once in



Japan it was so ; at the time of your late Roman Empire.  
But now. . . .’

‘Who’s been calling me a dirty dog, I should like to know’, bellowed the indignant McGonigle. ‘It’s a myth ; a blinking sun-myth. I’m as virginal as. . . .’

‘O please, that is nothing ; we in Japan do not find virginal or not virginal so important. It is not prime eth-cal question like the subjection of women. Now the feminine suffrage, if granted, would save. . . .’ he droned on.

At first Mr. Ditchling did not realise what was being said, and what it meant for him. Then alarm and mortification seized him ; it became evident, in one clap of blasting revelation, that the carefully prepared offensive of slander was permanently ‘hung-up’, simply because the grounds of accusation which they had selected were, as he now realised, of no great interest to Dr. Harada. No, it was not ‘prime eth-cal question’, and had been barely mentioned as a joking aside in the enlightened President’s survey of the present state of woman. Dr. Harada, it grieved him to recognise, was neither a prude nor an encourager of backbiting ; it was quite on the cards that he knew perfectly well the specific object of the move, and that his bland dismissal of the subject as a jest was his own way of signalling that there was ‘nothing doing’.

‘Mr. McGonigle is a machine for imparting information about sound changes in the unaccented vowels of primitive Indo-Germanic, or some problematical language which nobody ever spowk, to a lot of young men who down’t understand a ward he says, but are either intending to write erotic novels in Japanese, or teach Middle School children to read the Adventures of Sharlock Holmes. As such he cannot be expected to have any ethical side. In any case, the discussion of

the subject of virginity, whether as applied to Mr. McGonigle or to univarsality, is scarcely one for the youthful ears of such as Mr. Ditchling or Mr. Miles'.

Heavens! Old S.W. was perpetrating a joke, or at least the nearest thing to it of which he was capable; he was mellowing, the old sport! A buzz of hilarious and good-humouredly sarcastic appreciation greeted his attempt.

'Don't mind me', said Miles, as he lifted his eye to a bumper of garnet-brilliant port. 'I'm perfectly comfortable, thanks'.

But Mr. Ditchling was anything but comfortable. He wondered why the Counsellor had mentioned him in connection with the remarks about McGonigle. On the face of it, certainly, the poor joke was about his being a 'young person' unfit to listen to dubious conversation was stingless enough. But if he knew something about the campaign, it became at once a most perturbing allusion. Well, that was one of the chances of war: the real blow was that his trump had failed to take the first trick, and that the rest of his hand was sadly inferior. Could anything be made of McGonigle's intemperance? That would have been possible, had it been of the notoriously public and irregular type of Alba's. But McGonigle was prudent; he took care to carouse only in the exclusive company of such male convives as Kurrie-Lewer or Takamatsu, and had never been known to get out of control in the presence of a lady. Besides, everyone knew that he pretended to be more drunk than he was. His head, well seasoned in the brumous North, rose triumphantly over the many-coloured ocean of Sir Birinus' hospitality, and he now looked about him with an air of alert suspicion that Ditchling, who felt a bit swimmy in the head himself, scarcely relished.

The next point: could he persuade Dr. Harada that

his scholarship was the real thing, and McGonigle's a sham? Japan, though no longer the complete paradise of the white impostor, still offered fair opportunities of progress through bluff and brass. But Dr. Harada didn't seem to be quite such a mug as he had been at first. If he had refused to swallow the most succulent of the baits, how would he treat the others? It was true that 'Captain' Moss had been ejected from Taisho, but that did not by any means prove that McGonigle would be similarly dealt with. Harada seemed to be on confidently good terms with him, and to know more about foreigners than he showed.

This last supposition was quite correct: Dr. Harada could boast of many years' experience in adjusting differences between jarring sects, of which there were three at Taisho; those who welcomed foreigners, those who pretended to do so, hating them in reality and extracting from them at the same time as much gratis information as possible; and those who openly opposed them. The last of the three parties was at least ingenuous and honourable, expressing their rather blatant patriotism in nothing much more harmful than a strict adherence to Japanese garments, and the sonorous methods of eating rice, clearing the throat, spitting and picking the teeth, both elbows on the table, after meals at the Professors' Mess.

And Dr. Harada was terribly incorruptible, regarding intrigue as subversive of the true spirit of progress as preached by Lowes Dickenson, Edward Carpenter, Bertrand Russell, and M. Salomon Reinach, whose masterly *Orpheus* he had construed with loving care. Ditchling and the other conspirators, self-deluded through their trust in the formula about the passion of the Japanese for plotting, had utterly failed to perceive his real character. Just because he looked innocent, they

had jumped to the conclusion that he was a 'child-like and bland' type of intriguer like the Orientals in books.

In the drawing-room Miss Walker, speaking low enough to seem confidential, yet actually to be overheard, observed to Lulu Miles, 'I was surprised to see that Mr. McGonigle—Mmmmm!—here to-night after the disgraceful' revelations that have been made about him. Can dear Sir Birinus . . .'

'I should think he can'. Lulu cut her short rudely. 'Really, I don't see why he should worry about all the silly gossip people start who've nothing better to do, I'm sure. Anyhow, whatever McGonigle does is nobody's business except his own. For all I care he can keep a harem; it won't make any difference to me'.

Mrs. Harada giggled deliciously; she liked pretty women in general, and just now in particular, Lulu Miles, she decided, after two hours acquaintance.

· ' . . . Japanese, I fear, not so civilised . . .'

' "I've a bull-terrier lady-dahg", says old Schiebermann. "Bitch, I suppose you mean"?' I said. . . .'

'Ow, I don't know about that, Harada; if the English invented the lowcomowtive, the Japanese know how to educate their children without flugging them; not that I parsonally think it's the best method. . . .'

The gentlemen irrupted.

As the car slithered and skidded homeward through the mud, its occupants, the Mileses, chattered idly.

'Well, what do you think of our ambitious friends, the Ditchlings?'

'Fairly poisonous. By the way, I've an idea they're the people who are out for the McGonigle's blood. I noticed they had a shock when they saw him and Dr. Harada talking together; and then that Fifi was trying to tell me an improper story about him'.

‘ Disgusting old hag ; well, I noticed something too, now you’re talking about it. When Harada was ragging McGonigle about being a “ dartee dawg ”—he’d evidently heard some version of the tale—Ditchling looked pretty sick ’.

‘ Oh, I’m so glad . . . I say, do you know I believe Mrs. Harada, pretty kid, has got a crush on me ; it’s a perfect scream, my dear ’.

Mr. Miles’s answer was a loud guffaw.

Podler cared for none of these things ; his agitation, exacerbated by a final whisky and soda, drove him at a late hour to wander by the sea-shore, there to speculate on Alba’s next move. But the loneliness he sought was disturbed by some mysterious happenings that puzzled him at first. Little by little he was able to discern in the moonlight figures fitting to and fro ; pale limbs gleamed silverly, a noise of splashing and cries of enthusiasm, some uttered with a strong American accent, attracted him. Becoming accustomed to the subdued light, he noticed a lithe, girlish form curvetting and leaping like a young porpoise on the foamy margent of the Pacific. Before her, arms outstretched, crowned with a wreath, presumably of seaweed, knelt a tubby person who bellowed melodiously, ‘ Aw Boy ! Some Triton ’ ! Undine Voadlo was, beyond doubt, holding one of her celebrated bathing and calisthenic parties, to which the latest and not the least recruit was Priapus L. Fargo.