

CHAPTER XX

THE BIRTH OF THE ENGLISH NICHU-NICHU

Two-thirds of Tokyo City and the entire city of Yokohama were utterly destroyed by the quake and fire on September 1, 1923. The fire was not extinguished until September 8 when it had burned all the districts accessible. Due to the stoppage of the supply of city water on account of the damage to the water works system, the fire could not be suppressed until it stopped spreading of itself. The endless lines of refugees to the outskirts of the cities resembled the scenes in the great fire of Smyrna in which refugees made a long line to the sea. The uptown of Tokyo and suburbs was suddenly crowded with refugees but could not house so many homeless persons. So, the population of Tokyo decreased by one million in the few days after the disaster when the railway system was partially restored.

All newspaper offices in Tokyo, except the Tokyo Nichi-Nichi, the Hochi and the Miyako Shimbun, were burned in the fire which followed the earthquake. It was solely by the efforts of its staff that the Tokyo Nichi-Nichi's five storied building was saved from the fire which threatened to devour the building after burning its next door neighbour, the official residence of the chief of the Metropolitan Police. The Hochi, which stands in front of the Nichi-Nichi Building, and other buildings in that part of the Marunouchi block were thus saved. Blessed by fortune, these three papers, although suffering much from the disaster, were restarted after being suspended for two or three days. Despite a

general fear to the contrary, the other papers which had their offices burned followed in one or two weeks. The reconstruction of the City of Tokyo was quick and by the end of the month the people had temporary houses erected on their former sites. Much must be said of the efforts of newspapers in helping citizens in the quick reconstruction of the city. They opened contribution lists in other cities of the empire for the aid of the quake sufferers. Thanks to newspaper reports, many missing children returned to their parents. Papers did their best to quench the alarming rumour of Koreans' plots.

In the turmoil which followed the earthquake and fire, martial law was proclaimed and the whole city was under it. People were requested not to go out after sunset. Many Koreans were killed in Tokyo and elsewhere for their rumoured plots. Sakaye Osugi and a number of radicals were killed by gendarmic soldiers. These incidents shocked the whole nation. The press was the first to rise up and demand that authorities begin investigations into these matters. As the result of Court investigations, Captain Amakasu of the Tokyo gendarmic corps was arrested and sentenced to ten years' imprisonment for the murder of Osugi. However, the captain and other citizens who were indicted for the murder of radicals or Koreans were undoubtedly the victims of the alarming rumour rampant among the populace while they, without exception, were excited and rather

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psychologically abnormal from their excessive fears.

Since the Washington Conference, the Japanese newspapers have come to realize their important position in view of international friendship. The comity of nations, in their view, is to be maintained by the organs of the people rather than by the diplomatic gestures of Governments. In reality, they have continued their efforts to improve the relations between Japan and other countries. Taking this into his consideration, Hikoichi Motoyama, President of the Osaka Mainichi, and the Tokyo Nichi-Nichi, issued the Osaka Mainichi English Edition in April 1922 in celebration of the visit of the Prince of Wales to Japan, and a year later issued the Tokyo Nichi-Nichi English Edition. These were the realization of his desire to make the Osaka Mainichi and the Tokyo Nichi-Nichi internationally famous and to improve Japan's foreign relations through such organs in the event of the occurrence of international trouble.

The issue of an English language paper by a leading Japanese paper had never been attempted in this country. The plan was generally welcomed as enterprising, also for the interests of the Japanese, because so far all English language papers were owned by other nations or were subsidized by the Japanese Government. In the latter case, the opinions expressed by such papers were always regarded as semi-official views. The publication of an independent organ, 'owned, controlled and edited by Japanese', had long been desired by the Japanese people and this desire was fulfilled by the appearance of the English editions of the Mainichi and the Nichi-Nichi.

The raison d'être of the Mainichi and the Nichi-Nichi English Editions came to be tested in the Spring of 1924 when the Japanese exclusion immigration bill was passed by the U. S. Senate in April of that year. The Tokyo Nichi-Nichi English Edition, like its sister paper in Osaka, did its best to correct the views of American congressmen regarding the problem, in the name of justice and humanity. The English Nichi-Nichi fought bravely with all its pages. It created columns for the discussion of the problem, to which it invited its readers, Japanese and others, to write on the issue. The paper sent its thousands of copies to leading papers in the United States on board fast steamers. It held a public meeting in Tokyo on April 26, at which Mr. M. Zumoto, editor of the Herald of Asia, Mr. Yoshio Nitobe, member of the Japan-America Society, Mr. Juji Kawai and Mr. Yaichiro Isobe spoke on the Japan-America relations and expressed their regret on the issue.

How leading Japanese newspapers now realize their position in the world is seen from the fact that the Asahi and the Osaka Mainichi sent long telegrams to the London Times and to the United Press respectively at the time of the great quake and fire in September, 1923, reporting the terrible facts of the disaster. These advices were printed in the first page of English and American papers. Sympathy from foreign nations poured into Japan in the shape of monetary gifts and materials. The sympathy shown by the American people was great and it was fully appreciated by the whole nation.

The anti-Japanese measure in the American Congress, more extreme than any other bills ever presented or enacted, was quite

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surprising to the Japanese after the friendship and good will shown them by Americans since the Washington conference.

In view of the serious menace of the anti-Japanese immigration legislation passed by the U. S. Congress, to the traditional friendly relationship existing between this country and America, the Tokyo Nichi-Nichi and the Osaka Mainichi, representing the readers of the respective papers, cabled the undermentioned message to the New York Times, the New York World, the New York Herald-Tribune, the New York Evening Post, the New York Journal of Commerce, the Philadelphia Public Ledger, the Washington Post, other leading representative American newspapers and the United Press, asking them to give publicity to the message:

"The Osaka Mainichi and the Tokyo Nichi-Nichi consider that the passage of the anti-Japanese immigration bill in the American Congress will vitally affect the existing friendly relations between America and Japan.

"Our papers have already aroused public attention in editorials expressing our sincere desire for a friendly solution of the question by appealing to the traditional American spirit of justice. We are fully aware of American popular sentiment and the legal rights of Congress regarding immigration. It is not our intention to interfere with an American domestic question. We only request that, in order to solve the issue fairly and amicably, a measure be adopted that will not offend the honour and dignity of the Japanese nation. Our appeal to the sense of justice of the

American nation is solely prompted by this desire.

"Our two papers are most grateful to the representative organs of American public opinion which have been fighting for the traditional American spirit. We cordially ask them to keep up the good fight with us for the cause of justice and peace."

Despite the general attitude of newspapers in America, such as the New York Times, the World and the New York Herald-Tribune, which was against the Japanese exclusion bill, President Coolidge signed the bill on May 26. The time has come when the courage and wisdom of the Japanese are to be tested.

The position of the English Editions of the Osaka Mainichi and the Tokyo Nichi-Nichi has been established after the existence of two years and one year respectively. Mingled with a family of English language papers in Japan, the Japan Chronicle in Kobe, the Japan Advertiser and the Japan Times in Tokyo, and the Nagasaki Press in Nagasaki, our two English editions hold an unique position as they are under the sole management of an independent Japanese paper. The Japan Advertiser is owned by Mr. B. W. Fleisher. It was established in 1892 by Mr. Arthur May Knapp a Unitarian missionary. The name of Captain Brinkley, who was the editor and proprietor of the Japan Mail, must be mentioned. The paper was incorporated with the Japan Times about ten years ago and ceased to exist, to the regret of the English reading public. Captain Brinkley was a friend of Japan and died in Japan.