

## CHAPTER XXVI

### THE TOKYO PRESS

There are at least a dozen leading newspapers in Tokyo, namely the Tokyo Asahi, the Jiji Shimpō, the Hochi Shimbun, the Kokumin, the Chugai Shogyō, the Yorozu, the Yomiuri, the Miyako, the Chuwa, the Yamato, and the Maiyu. Of these, the first five are generally referred to as the "big five", and the Asahi and the Nichi-Nichi hold the highest position mainly because they are backed by greater capital.

The papers possessing big financial backing have naturally an advantage over the other sheets in various points. However, on the whole, there is small difference in the selection of news between bigger and smaller papers, on account of the progress of news agencies and the establishment of newspaper clubs in different Government or public departments. At present the smaller papers have handicaps only in foreign intelligence, while such papers as the Asahi, the Jiji and the Nichi-Nichi have their own special correspondents at London, New York, Paris and Berlin, as well as various points in China and elsewhere.

The papers which are financially rich can have on their editorial staff able men than those on minor papers, technically speaking, but the real fact does not necessarily prove this. Every year, many bright and promising college graduates fresh from school miss the chance to join the staff of the bigger papers and cannot but be content with their jobs on smaller papers. Even experienced able journalists are often found on the staff of the smaller press, only because there is a very rare chance

for them to join big papers as editors on invitation.

Very seldom are influential editorials seen in any paper in Tokyo, most leading articles lacking definite conclusion and driving force. This, chiefly, is due to the complications of the questions of the day, which make editorial writers hesitate to draw a clear conclusion from them, but partly to over-cautiousness of editors. From the fact that papers are gaining in influence and power, this attitude of editors is necessary for fear of blind agitation among the readers. Besides, editors now-a-days are too much of the expert type and lack the enthusiasm shown by bygone journalists.

The chief characteristic of the present day press is that all papers, without exception, seek straight and solid news and spend all their energy in reporting. Some papers even consider that editorials are a mere decoration inherited from the fathers of the press.

There was a time when the press was considered a sort of organ to educate the mass of people, but now it is not a just conception of the press to speak of it as if its main functions were to educate. I agree with Mr. R. A. Scott James, the author of *The Influence of the Press*, published by S. W. Partridge & Co., London, in saying, "A newspaper may educate, but the more obviously it sets out to do so, the less is it likely to succeed. It is a general experience that the journal which sets out to propagate views rather than news is read mainly by the people who already hold those views." This must be another reason why the

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Japanese press at the present day cannot be a stranger to the current tendency of journalism.

(Regarding political and social news, the Asahi and the Nichi-Nichi lead others. The Jiji and the Chugai Shogyo have fine financial and economic columns. The latter is the only commercial paper in Tokyo. It is the Journal of Commerce of Japan. The first two papers are independent. The Jiji has industrialists' support. The Chugai Shogyo represents the interests of the Mitsui firm. It can be said that the Mitsui owns the paper. All the important telegrams sent by the Mitsui's branches throughout the world are printed in the columns of the Chugai Shogyo. As these telegrams, of course mostly commercial, are flashed at urgent rates, they are one of the features of the journal. The Jiji is the largest in size with 12 pages, while the Nichi-Nichi, the Asahi, the Chugai Shogyo and almost all other papers consist of eight pages. Long serial articles on international affairs are often printed in the Asahi and the Jiji, while the Tokyo Nichi-Nichi devotes more room to news than to such articles. The Asahi and the Nichi-Nichi are rivals and the Jiji and the Chugai Shogyo as well. They are so as their characters resemble one another. The Asahi and the Nichi-Nichi are in deadly competition for quick reporting. The Asahi is superior in its staff, the Nichi-Nichi in its organization. The former has many admirers for its leading actors, the latter for its stage directors. Therefore, the Asahi is inclined to clashes between staff members and has had several reforms and revolutions during the past twelve years. After Sanzán Ikebe,

the editor-in-chief of the Tokyo Asahi, was obliged to resign, Chujiro Matsuyama became chief editor. The latter was expelled from the Asahi when the paper needed a reform of its editorial opinion, as it had drifted to the Left too much. Masazumi Ando, the next director, resigned his post in 1923 due to, possibly, a reported clash with the new managing director of the Asahi Company, Dr. Kc. Shimamura, who is a fresh man in journalism. The Nichi-Nichi has had no such remarkable changes during these years. Its changes, if there have been any, were normal and even commonplace. This unified organization of the Nichi-Nichi proves the strength of the paper whenever a big incident occurs. It is unified as well as the Army, under Mr. Moto-suke Kido the chief editor and Mr. Norinobu Matsu-uchi, the general manager of the editorial department.

The Tokyo Asahi teems with able journalists and it is its pride to have them on its staff. Taketora Ogata and Bunshiro Suzuki who had been in England returned home after working as correspondents in Washington during the Arms Parley and are now political editor and make-up editor respectively. Joji Harada, who is called a genius journalist with the keenest sensibility to social happenings, is city editor. He has recently returned from a trip over the world. Zenmaru Toki is a poet and editor of the literary page. He is an earnest advocate for the use of Roman letters instead of Japanese letters or Chinese characters. Kotaro Sugimura, a veteran journalist, is a well known essayist. His writing is full of cynicism, and witty sarcasm. Among similar writers in this country he is the Chesterton of the Far East. Masao Kanda is an expert

on Chinese relations, having stayed in Peking more than ten years.

Mr. Masanori Ito, director and associate editor of the Jiji, was famous at Washington during the Conference for the Limitation of Armaments, as his scoop struck all correspondents there aghast. An urgent telegram sent by him to Japan reporting the formation of the Four Power treaty which was published in Tokyo was recabled to London by a Reuter's correspondent and was flashed from London to New York office of the New York Times and to its Washington bureau. When this was published in the New York Times, none of the correspondents there, except Mr. Masanori Ito himself, believed in the report. He knew that the said treaty was arranged between the representatives of the four Powers as to the guarantee of peace in the Pacific, forty-eight hours before any other correspondents first learned of it. Regarding the source of the information, various rumours were current. Admiral Baron Kato, the chief delegate to the conference, was very much concerned about it and consequently Prince Tokugawa, one of the delegates, returned to Japan in the middle of the conference as since the conference entered the stage of technical problems of Naval fortification and the methods of scrapping warships and so on and the questions were most secretly discussed by Naval experts alone and were to be decided between the Government and the late admiral, the creator of the modern fleet of Japan, on whose responsibility these questions rested. Prince Tokugawa did his best for the improvement of the relationship among the representatives of the various nations party to the conference, with his charming personality and proficiency in the English language, while the late admiral was handicapped in sociability. It was

the prince's mission in returning home before the other delegates to explain to the nation why Japan agreed to the Naval ratio assigned to her on the guarantee of peace in the Pacific. The Prince told me in Washington that he was really the chief mover of the formation of the four Power treaty, which had its origin in an interview between himself and Mr. Balfour, the British chief delegate.

If Mr. Ito writes his memoirs later as Mr. Henri Stephan de Blowitz, he might well say, "The publication in the Jiji (instead of The Times) of the Four Power Treaty (instead of the Treaty of Berlin) at the very hour that it was being signed in Washington (not in Berlin) was, according to universal opinion, the greatest feat on record...It was a feat in which neither talent nor science stood for anything. In Washington (as in Berlin if it were Mr. de Blowitz) the news of the publication of the treaty caused a great sensation. Many persons immediately set to work to discover from whom I obtained the treaty."

It must be mentioned here that the Jiji was at that time the organ of the Seiyukai which was in power under Premier Hara, its president, and the paper surprised the public at the outset by reporting the appointment of Prince Tokugawa as one of the delegates to the Washington Conference, which was considered most improbable, while all of the papers in Japan remained uninformed.

The Hochi is a Kenseikai paper and Mr. Chuji Machida, a leader of the party, is President, although its business policy is decided by Mr. Zenpachi Miki, a wizard in the press world. Dr. Selko Ohta, the son-in-law of Mr. Miki, is vice-President and he himself is the real boss with the influence of his

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father-in-law behind him. The paper is well controlled by such geniuses and is superior in its business policy. It utilizes its fine hall to the utmost and gives a musical concert or a Japanese dancing party almost every night. It was in this hall that Blasco Ibanez, the Spanish writer, delivered a speech when he visited Tokyo, that Mr. Cyrus E. Woods, the U. S. Ambassador, addressed the Japanese with his farewell speech prior to his departure for home and that Flight-Officer MacLaren, the British round-the-world flyer, told the adventures of his London-to-Tokyo flight. No other paper has such a partisan spirit as this journal. It considers that anything done by the Kenseikai Party is always right. Formerly Mr. Katsundo Minoura, veteran Kenseikai leader, was its president.

The Miyako has recently been greatly improved. It is trying to be a commercial paper, pertaining its traditional characteristic of being a household paper downtown. It has long been favoured by downtown girls. The music and theatres have been its speciality. The paper has Kaizan Nakasato, a popular novelist whose stories have many readers. His novels have no value in the strict sense of literature, but are undoubtedly interesting with wonderful plots. They are often staged in the theatres and have unusual success. He takes his plots from old samurai stories and makes them as complicated as possible. Seiseiyen Ihara on the staff of the paper is a well known drama critic of the old style. He never says anything against any actor.

The Yomiuri still retains the character of its literary pages. However, since the change of editors of this page, the pride of the paper in its literary columns is now lost. The best part of the paper at present is its columns for ladies.

The "society" columns of the Kokumin have some originality and have their own readers. The paper makes wonderful scoops sometimes. It was by the Kokumin that the mysterious news as to the sales of arms to General ChangtsoLin, war lord in Manchuria, by a Japanese officer of the Siberian expedition was first disclosed. The serial article, named "History of the Japanese Nation", written by I-ichiro Tokutomi, the editor and proprietor, is a splendid work and he was given an Imperial Academy prize for it. It has already been published in several volumes. Mr. Tokutomi is known as a great writer and is a member of the House of Peers.

The Yorozu lost its proprietor and editor Shuroku Kuroiwa by his death several years ago, but the paper still keeps its vitality under new management. The paper started as a typical yellow paper by the late Mr. Kuroiwa in 1892. The injury done by him to newspapers in general in the lowering of journalistic tastes and standard was great. However, since the death of Mr. Kuroiwa, the paper has begun to walk on the same road of journalism under Teikichi Shiba, one of the finest editors of the metropolis.

The Chuwo and the Yamato are no more than the Mail and the Globe in New York. The position of the Sun, the Evening World or the Evening Post is held by other papers. As evening papers, these two are oldest, but they are financially too feeble to

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compete with the evening editions of the Asahi, the Nichi-Nichi and the Jiji. The Chuwo and the Yamato have morning editions but they are now better known as evening papers in spite of their origin.

The only labour paper in Japan is the Tokyo Maiyu. However it is not outcast as is the Call in New York. It is read by intellectual citizens as by the labouring class. The paper is most free in adopting an up-to-date American makeup.