

CHAPTER III

FOREIGNERS AND THE PRESS

Early in 1867, the year before the Meiji Restoration, foreigners began to see that intercourse between themselves and the Japanese was so far improved, that it was possible to enlarge it to a greater extent than had ever been done before. In these circumstances, it had been more than once proposed by gentlemen competent to carry the plan through, to establish a newspaper in the Japanese language, which would give the news of foreign countries by each mail. It was thought that it would gradually and imperceptibly cultivate the Japanese people into familiarity with foreigners and their doings; and "be a good means towards removing the barriers, which ignorance", says Mr. John R. Black in his work *Young Japan: Yokohama and Yedo*, "more than anything else, opposed to them."

Their plan materialised at last and the Rev. Mr. Buckworth Bailey, the English Consular chaplain and a graduate from Cambridge University, brought out a paper entitled the *Bankoku Shimbunshi* (All Countries Newspaper). It was a neat production, printed from wooden blocks on Japanese paper at first and later on foreign print paper. In the prospectus, Mr. Bailey stated that the object was to give the current news of the day, both at home and abroad, and keep the readers well-informed on subjects that would prove useful, interesting and instructive. He then proceeded to give the heads of intelligence from England, France, Amer-

ica, and various other countries, as well as a resume of events that had been passing in Japan.

However, the paper ceased publication in June, 1868, due to financial difficulties, after an irregular and fitful existence. It was said that in the beginning copies were disposed of to the extent of about two thousand. The discontinuance of the paper was wondered at by some at the time, as they thought that if so many copies were sold, the paper must have earned a handsome profit. From this, it is easily imagined that despite the real sufferings of the people, how low was the cost of living in those days.

During the years 1868 and 1869, a second attempt was made by a foreigner to establish a newspaper in the Japanese language. This time it was in the city of Osaka and its parent was Mr. John Hartley. The paper was edited by him with the assistance of a young Japanese samurai of the Choshu clan. It was published irregularly as Mr. Bailey's paper was. The paper was named *Kakkoku Shimbunshi* (All Countries News), with exactly the same meaning as its predecessor. However, it was thought by some competent judges at that time that this paper was superior to the other. The paper was also short-lived mainly because the mercantile business in which Mr. Hartley was engaged made it impossible for him to devote so much time and attention to the paper and his Japanese assistant was not able to carry it on without him.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF JAPANESE JOURNALISM

While the papers issued by the Imperialists were acclaiming the Imperial Restoration as the first means to revive the old spirit of Japan which was undaunted and courageous, and greatly needed in building up the New Japan, the papers brought out in Yedo (Old Tokyo) and Yokohama sided with the Tokugawas. The retainers of the Tokugawas issued papers on their part in an attempt to have the tables turned by appealing to the people through the channels of the press. The Chugai Shimbun came first in February, 1868. It was followed by the Nichi-Nichi Shimbun which was brought out the next month. In April a dozen periodicals were issued including the Koko Shimbun, the Yenkin Shimbun, the Naigai Shimbun, the Moshio-gusa, and the Koshi Zappo. The Kojo Nisshi, the Shisei Nisshi, and a few other journals followed. Never in the history of journalism in any land were so many papers issued at once. All these papers issued in Tokyo and Yokohama prominently displayed the news of victories of the eastern army or anti-Imperialists.

In the year 1868 the Meiji Restoration was effected and "everything new", "the vandalism of anything old", "all for change", or "new civilisation" were the slogans of those reformers who had brought about the new reign of Emperor Meiji. The Tokugawa Shogunate which for three hundred years had enjoyed the mandatory power entrusted to them by the Emperors had collapsed and the Emperor's reign was resumed. The appearance of so many newspapers in Japan in April of the same year is significant as it heralded the approaching tide of western civilisation which was

dashing against the shores of Japan in order that she might awaken from her long slumbers. The Tokugawa Government had long suffered from the invasion of the influence of western civilisation, as Japan's isolation was its outstanding policy. The Tokugawa Government had some fear of the western Powers, as it knew what were their real desires in asking for trade relations. The examples in modern history of the eastern world, of what westerners did under the name of international friendship or intercourse show that it was they that profited and not the other party. This was what the Shogunate leaders were afraid of and what caused it to stick to its old policy. However, the tide of the western current was too strong to be resisted by the Shogunate alone.

The Tokugawa Government at last yielded to the demand of the western Powers and opened Japan's doors to international trade. This aroused the opposition of the Reformers. Although they knew from their sufficient knowledge of the world that there was no other way but to open the doors, they took advantage of the situation, and tried their best to crush the Tokugawa's power. It was their real object to bring the Tokugawa era to an end, and establishing the Emperor's rule, to effect political and social changes. Thus the Meiji Restoration came on the programme, and was achieved successfully without the shedding of any blood. The rule of the emperor was restored. The Tokugawas returned to the Emperor the political mandatory power which they had enjoyed for three hundred years.

If anybody thinks that the Japanese people were totally ignorant of western sciences until 1868, it

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shows his own ignorance. Young Japanese, though not many, had already been taught about geography, astronomy, history, physics, natural science, mathematics, English grammar and so on. Cultured by western sciences, young Japanese naturally wanted a change of government and change of everything. Their westernisation in Ideas was consummated in the publication of so many newspapers in 1868. It goes without saying that political reasons were the direct stimuli for them to issue papers.