

CHAPTER VI

THE JAPANESE RENAISSANCE

The Meiji Restoration was the beginning of the Japanese renaissance. All new learning made its way into this country. The press acted as the introducer of western sciences. The newspapers in those days used to print stories embracing all the sciences. The Chugai Shimbun in its issue of May 4, 1868, had an article written by Kohei Kanda, the father of the late Baron Naibu Kanda, on the system of law courts in western countries, in which he reiterated the importance of the establishment of such law courts in Japan.

"In western countries", he wrote in the article, "there is the penal code by which one's crime is judged. Judges are selected from those who studied law at colleges and passed special Government examinations. There are also attorneys for the accused. Witnesses are heard at court. Tortures were abolished a hundred years ago. The accused can bring his case to the higher courts, if he considers the decision by the first court is wrong. If he wants to appeal against the decision given by the second court, he will go further to the Supreme Court. The prisoners in jail are given manual work for pastime and labour. Remuneration is given them for their work and the money thus earned is handed to them when they are set free. Sentences to them are generally not heavy. Even the abolition of capital punishment is being advocated by scholars. Now the Japanese Government is ready to carry out all reforms. This pleases me a great deal. It must be desired that the best systems in the world will be

introduced into this country on this occasion. I sincerely hope that the establishment of law courts will be made first of all."

Such books as "Eleven Treaty Powers," by Yukichi Fukuzawa, "A Companion to Army Officers", translated by Ichiro Watanabe. "A Handbook of Science," "An Introduction to the Western Learning", and "Artillery", by Shunsan Yanagawa, "English Grammar" by Tomonshin Abe, "French Grammar" by Mitsugu Ezawa, which were published in those days, served as channels for western learning to flow into this country. The foreign influence on Japanese culture resembled the Italian influence upon the English nation at the time of the Renaissance. In the beginning of the Meiji era, Japanese people were busy learning everything from Europe. Papers reported the engagement of French officers as instructors in the Japanese Army, and of foreigners in the foreign section of the Government, also in the business of the import of machinery and drugs. Papers had stories on popular science also. The conditions of Europe formed interesting subjects for papers.

The news that Lord Sanjo, Lord Nakamikado and Lord Awaji-no-kami sent their eldest sons to England for study gives us the impression that Europe was then looked upon by Japanese as the source of new learning. Papers had an item of the christening of a warship. It proves the rise of national aspirations for defence. Besides these news reports, special articles were printed. By these

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articles the people were taught many things, namely that there were three kinds of thermometres, that suger could be obtained not only from beets but also from maple, that certain kind of oranges were very sweet, and what a sewing machine was like, etc., etc.

One of the characteristics of papers in those days was the conciseness of news. This was the natural result of the fact that papers were small in size, but it was necessary at the same time to make the news as short as possible, chopping off all confusing elements in stories, especially in foreign telegrams, so that the stories might be clearer and more intelligible to the readers. Besides, the style itself was easy and plain. Everyday language was preferred by newspaper writers despite the fact that Chinese literature was popular, the educated people liked to write with Chinese expressions even in personal letters and newspapermen were mostly scholars of Chinese classics. This was because the readers of papers were, needless to say, inferior in education to those of to-day. Therefore, even such easy words as used in papers in those days were considered to be difficult. It is interesting to note that the Naigai Shimpo issued a supplement to the newspaper of a glossary picked up from the preceding numbers.

The following extracts will give you an idea of the supplement. It must be mentioned, however, that the supplement was rather a pronouncing dictionary with explanations of difficult terms. The words in italics are mine and are given for the benefit of foreign readers:

指揮 (shiki) *Sashizu, command, leadership, direction.*

陣營 (jinya) *Soldiers' camp.*
 兵器類 (heiki-rui) *Buki-rui, arms of war.*
 亞米利加 (america)
 勅使 (choku-shi) *Mikado no otsukai, Emperor's messenger.*
 交際 (kosai) *Majiwari, social intercourse.*
 皇帝陛下 (kotei heika) *Mikado, Emperor.*
 英吉利 (igirisu)
 風說 (fusetsu) *Torizata, rumour.*
 轉任 (ten-nin) *Yaku-gaye, transference to another post.*
 免許 (menkyo) *Yurushi, permission.*
 王政一新 (osei isshin) *New reign.*
 莫大 (bakudai) *Taiso, huge.*
 戰爭 (senso) *Tataikai, war, battle.*
 朝廷 (chotei) *Mikado no tokoro, Imperial Court.*

The Chugai Shimbun in its third number issued on March 2, 1864, said:

"There are complaints that the Chugai Shimbun is somewhat difficult to read. So we are ready to write more easily from the next number."

This shows how low in their culture were the readers of papers in those days and is good enough to explain the *raison d'être* of the Hiragana Yei-shimbun (Illustrated News, Written with Japanese Syllabic Letters) which first appeared in 1873.

The papers of 1868 are generally called the Keio papers, because the Keio period continued until September of that year, when the new Meiji era was ushered in. So it may be said that the first period of journalism in Japan was in the Keio period and the real stage of development of papers came in when all changes were settled.

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The regulations relating to newspapers were issued by the Meiji Government in 1869. They were substantially as follows:

"Every newspaper shall have its own title.

"Every newspaper shall obtain the Government's permission for publication and a sample copy shall be sent to the authorities the day of publication.

"Every paper shall print the address of the publishing offices, the date, the editor's or publisher's name and the number of each issue.

"The editor of a paper shall make explanations as to the news included when required by the authorities.

"Reports will cover disasters, accidents, prices, trade, politics, Army and Navy news, weddings, deaths, art and music, dinners, fashion, food, Government bulletins, foreign books, foreign correspondence and other items which are not detrimental to the social order. Indiscreet comments shall not be made on Administration and military affairs.

"Letters, correspondence and contributions in general shall bear the writer's name, the exception being poems by unknown persons.

"Libels are strictly forbidden.

"The propaganda of religion through the press shall be prohibited."