

CHAPTER VII

FOREIGN PAPERS

The first Japanese papers were full of the news translated from foreign papers arriving in Yokohama but at a later period, they came to have news translated from the English language papers of Yokohama. Foreigners in Yokohama had thought that they ought to have their own papers in English which was then a common language among them, and would thus learn of the wants in Europe and America, also of the news in Japan.

In 1867, the year before the Imperial Restoration, the Japan Gazette was established and appeared on Saturday, October 12, as an evening paper. At first it was feared that if a daily was published it would suffer from a scarcity of news and it might be very difficult to fill its columns day by day, but the editor declared that if sufficient news could not be obtained interesting extracts from foreign papers would take its place. So far the two local papers had been published weekly, with occasional news paragraphs.

The success of the Gazette was immediate and as a result it caused the oldest paper, the Japan Herald, to drop its weekly shape altogether and to come out as an evening paper as a rival to the Gazette. But both had liberal support from the public.

It was six years before or in 1861 that the Japan Herald was first published in Yokohama. The time was when all Japan was thrown into extreme unrest before her ports were opened to foreign intercourse. Opinions were divided

for and against the opening of ports. Foreign residents were of course clamouring for the opening of Japan, and were extremely averse to its postponement. The earliest number of the Herald, therefore, were teeming with news notes on the subject. From them it is proved that the foreign ministers held out against the opening of Yedo until the last moment and not until December 29, 1861, did they notify their respective countrymen of their having given their consent to it. The Herald reported that the powers had consented to the postponement of the opening of Osaka, Hyogo, Yedo and Niigata for five years.

Papers said that trade progressed slowly but steadily. In 1861, about 100 vessels were chartered, and one half of them was British. The total trade was about one million sterling, of which the imports were valued at \$300,000. The bulk of the export trade in 1860 had been "edibles for the Chinese market"; but in 1861 the most important staples, tea and silk had come forward in large volume.

It is beyond doubt that editorial comment or correspondence in the columns of these foreign papers served as stimuli for the Japanese Government with regard to various improvements of Japan.

A correspondent of the Japan Herald said:—

"The old concession abounds with wooden buildings, at present there is no power to compel the construction of fire-proof structures.

FOREIGN PAPERS

There is no organization for the purpose of preventing the spread of fire; none for the supply of water; none for the destruction or removal of nuisances, and no power to pass ordinances for sanitary purposes. In fact, we have a town, streets, houses, and a goodly number of inhabitants, under no control, no government, no restraints, and without the power of doing good. Such an anomaly cannot be found in any other place settled by Europeans and Americans."

This was the kind of complaint entertained by most foreigners and they even wished for a municipal government in which they could participate. However, the scheme failed and no improvement was seen in making houses fire-proof. It is a pity that half a century after this correspondence was written even Tokyo was not fire-proof and was easily destroyed by the quake fire in the Autumn of 1923.

How the Government was listening to what foreigners said, even when it was not willing to do so is seen from a statement by the late Mr. J. R. Black, who was the editor of the Japan Herald, in his book "Young Japan". In it he wrote:

"One of the first incidents that awakened me to the recognition of it, was a visit I had, in my capacity as editor of the Japan Herald; which showed me that a comprehension of the power of the Press was actually extending to the officials of the Government.

"The gentleman who called upon me was then very young. He was passing through one of the schools for foreign languages; and was also undergoing military drill with his companions, under foreign instruction.

"With the utmost modesty he begged my pardon if he was taking an unjustifiable liberty, and hoped I would not betray to any one his having come to me. He then told me that he had received instructions from the officials (of his clan as I understood) to see me, and to mention that the Envoys who had been incarcerated in Yedo during the month of August in the preceding year, for the non-success in their mission to France, were still in confinement; and further to ask me to mention it in the newspaper with a recommendation that they should be released.

"I said I would certainly comply with the request, and assured him also that his visit should be a secret; and that he need be under no apprehension on that account.

"Accordingly I made it the subject of a leading article on the following Saturday, (June 24th 1865), and had no expectation of hearing anything more about it. If I remember rightly, there were only about half a dozen copies of the paper at that time subscribed for by Japanese.

"I cannot recollect how long it may have been after the article appeared, when I received another visit from the same young gentleman, for the purpose of thanking me, and telling me that the appeal in the foreign newspaper, had been successful.

"Surely no better evidence of the change that was at hand, could be given than this:—that the influence of the fourth estate was acknowledged.

"The gentleman who thus called upon me in 1865, is now a very influential man in the estimation both of foreigners and of his own countrymen. He is one of the most able, consistent and earnest friends of solid progress—not of mere

THE DEVELOPMENT OF JAPANESE JOURNALISM

change's sake—among the Japanese; and is intimately connected with some of the most marked and useful efforts for effecting good feeling and pleasant and profitable intercourse between Japan and foreigners."—(Young Japan, published in 1833).

In September 1865, the Japan Times started. It had the same name as the Japan Times established in 1897 by Mr. Motosada Zumoto, now proprietor and editor of the Herald of Asia, but there was no connection between the two.

The first Japan Times was represented as being under no special editor, but under a kind of editorial board of gentlemen, who decided its editorial policy and other matters. Its proprietor and certainly its real editor was Mr. Charles Rickerby.

Mr. Rickerby had been the manager of the First Bank established in Yokohama. Retiring from this position, he purchased a print-

ing plant and a daily paper—the Commercial News, which had been running under the proprietorship of Mr. F. Da Roza, a Portuguese subject, for some two years. Mr. Rickerby thus brought out his paper under the new title mentioned above. As a Yokohama resident, Mr. Rickerby worked hard for the port's improvement and became the prime mover for the establishment of a Chamber of Commerce. It is said that the first meetings to discuss such matters were held at his house. The Chamber was established on November 8, 1865, at a meeting, those present enrolling themselves as the original members.

The Hiogo and Osaka Herald made its first appearance, as a weekly paper, owned and at first edited by Mr. A. T. Watking, on January 4, 1868, according to J. R. Black. There was also a paper in Kobe named the Hyogo News, established in the same year. This was later incorporated with the Japan Chronicle.