Those FIRST DAYS IN JAPAN

1924
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FOR a long time we've been hearing noises—funny noises, wedged in between our dreams. But suddenly it comes to us that these noises aren't out on the street, at home; or even out on the deck, where they've been for almost two sun-drenched, wave-pounding weeks. They're on the dock! . . . We're there! . . . *Yokohama!*

We slip our shutter an inch to the right, and sure enough, the first thing our eye sees is a little man with a straw hat like an old-fashioned chopping bowl, and a short square-cut blue cotton coat, faded to a heavenly color with a border stencilled in white, and the widest smile we ever saw outside of a Japanese photograph—a little gnome of a man with sandals on. And behind him stands a pretty lady with a marvellous coiffure and a dark silk coat-thing over her flowery kimono that shows at the edges. And behind her stands an old lady with a million wrinkles disputing the groundwork of her smile. She's holding what must be a baby, though it looks like a glorified oversize doll in a red and blue and green and yellow dress you could put in your handbag—and you would, if the baby didn't need it—and they're all looking up at the deck.

Not at you, though. The object of their united affection has just returned from America where he's been

Now this is Young Tokyo going to school. His bag is Occidental and so is his cap, but the pattern on his sleeves is as Japanese as his eyes—and you should hear him clatter on those shoes!

G.T. Centre
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American porters wear hotel names on their caps. But the Japanese coolie has his place of business emblazoned on his back so picturesquely that you're almost willing to take over his job—if you could have his coat with it.

going to college. Here, however, is his real life. He has servants, a mother, a wife and a child. And the very first minute it's possible, he's going to cross the gangplank, and no man in all Japan who can pick up the traditional hundred and fifty dried peas a minute with his chopsticks will be more Japanese than he.

It doesn't take you long to get dressed. You can see a whole row of voluble tempters squatting at the back of the dock, each with his little store laid out for you to buy from—embroideries, and pearls, and mysterious little inlaid wooden boxes, and fans, and lacquer, and silver trifles. Of course they aren't so very good. Of course you can get much better things up in town where you're going. Probably you could buy out the whole row for a tenth of what a high-souled connoisseur would pay for a single Hiroshige print. But it's Japan's first ten-cent store, with a quaint little charm all its own, the more so for the vivid bargaining necessary to get anything at half what is asked for it, as the asker fully expects you to do in the end.

There's a rikisha man waiting for you—indeed, only your firm belief that you aren't triplets prevents your being driven three ways at once, for all the rikisha men seem to have been born for no other smiling purpose than to implore you to mount into their high, rubber-tired, white-cushioned pull-carts, and come see what is left of the old and the plans for the magnificent new Yokohama.

But you aren't in such a hurry. Even the people on the boat who are going right on tonight, to Shanghai, or Hong Kong, will be able to see a flash of Japan—a whole packed dayful. . . . But you're to stay at the temporary Tent Hotel, situated just across the street from the spot where once stood the famous old Grand Hotel. So you can take Japan quietly—looking at it from the seat of your own hired-by-the-day rikisha; from the little narrow-gauge trains that puff their way cross-country; from behind one of those hairpin-turning hair-raising never-had-an-accident Japanese chauffeurs; from the middle of a cryptomeria grove above a temple; from a seat on the floor in a Japanese restaurant; from the back of a Japanese horse who is quite unlike all other horses; perhaps, even, from a native-inn Japanese bathtub which is more still unlike all other bathtubs not found in native inns.

The beginning of the new Yokohama, however, coming from the dock, doesn't look in the least like the old city that loomed there a few months ago in commercial arrogance. As yet, it is much like a mushroom city of our western plains, having sprung up as if by magic out of a memorable past. No cataclysm, however annihilating, can subordinate the Oriental will. Soon a modern metropolis of even greater pretensions—a tribute to the Great Power whose commerce stretches across the world—will reign there. You will see it in the making, laid out,

The little peasant boy carries home the fire wood, and look at the size of the logs! But his Japanese mother can cook a whole delicious meal on a handful of twigs in a stove of saucepan size!

Little Cuteness poses for her picture under the tent of her father's net which she mends expertly on the white beach where she can see the square-sailed junks go by. Her giddy skirts are tucked up for toil, but the act discloses others even giddier still.

not at all like a picture postcard covered with cherry blossoms, but on the American plan. If you wanted to live in the East as a goldfish lives in his bowl (only your bowl would be a bit of the Occident), you could manage it quite easily. And lots of people do. But the wiser ones use the bowl as a place to come back to,—and then start out again.

Japan is so little that you could go all over it in a fairly short stay. Yet Japan is so queer and lovely and different that you could spend most of your time in and around Yokohama and never get bored. . . . This, for example, is the new Benton-dori where the curios and silk stores were. They have been rebuilt in all their former glamour, and each little shop is so perfect, each little proprietor so persuasive, each little bit of gold lacquer so just what you've dreamed about that you want to hug the whole thing—and carry it away. And here's a little shop where they sell pictures—some of them almost priceless—and you could put the place in your pocket. And here's another where you can buy kimonos that would get you into the Follies all by themselves. And here's another where you're really afraid they've made some terrible mistake in the price they're quoting for embroidered lingerie, and your only fear is that they'll find it out too soon—or you'll wake up.

But the shops you buy from aren't the only interesting shops. It's fun to wander through the streets where tourists aren't expected and watch Madame Butterfly get new shoes, with her old ones sitting primly outside and her ownself sitting quaintly on the matting while the obsequious shopman also sits and shows her what's new for wet days, and the shopman's hardly-real little daughter peers round the panel of the door that hides the rest of the house, much as a brilliant flower-fairy might look around the bole of a tree.

It's fun to buy cakes at a cakeshop, too, when you don't yet know the word for cake, or how much your little paper bill will buy, and all you can do is to point at the thing that takes your fancy, and smile at the shoplady, and hold up your money . . . . and eat your cakes.

Some people say the Japanese have no sense of humor. But *they* never wandered down a narrow street and across a little bridge and into a crowded market place where a man came along carrying his pet kitchen with the fire in one end, and the food in the other, and a pile of heavenly little common blue and white bowls in between. And *they* never stopped the man with a wave of a little bill, and had him set down his kitchen, and make them a bowl all full of spaghetti, with spinach, and soup, and an egg on top, and two chopsticks, and (by this time) a large expansively-grinning audience. And *they* never tried to eat that spaghetti with those chopsticks—oh no. The spaghetti was very slow in staying on, but the crowd wasn't at all slow in piling up. In fact, it grew till even a Japanese

Japanese coolies aren't all men, as one finds at Nagasaki where half the singing, swiftly-working coalers in the tossing black boats are women. This woman carries loads along the road—and she makes express time.

"If you do not climb Fuji once, you are a fool; but if you climb it twice, you are also a fool,"—says the Japanese proverb. So — let us climb this year, and be done with foolishness.

policeman came, and stayed, and was conquered, and grinned with the rest. . . . The people back at the Hotel said we deserved all sorts of diseases. But we'd proved our point. And went unscathed.

When it rains in Yokohama (and it very often does) the streets blossom out with the largest and gayest and shiniest umbrellas in the world. (Why do ours have to be black, we say rebelliously, black and *dull?*) And every time a motor splashes through a narrow street, every umbrella carrier drops his big flower-topped bit of quaintness till it stands vertical, level with his feet so he won't get muddied. Even the babies do it, with smaller babies on their backs. They don't look cross, either, but rather as though it were a sort of amusing salute to Progress.

One day we planned to drive to Kamakura to see the big bronze Buddha who has sat there, peacefully receiving pilgrims in his green fold of the hills, for six hundred years. Twice he has had temples built over him; but tidal waves took them away—the last one went in 1494—and since then, while America has grown from nothing to what it is, he has sat, and thought. He scarcely shifted his posture during the earthquake of 1923. Witnesses said, however, that he swayed perilously in September, and even more so in January, but he settled back on his mighty pedestal, still gazing serenely on Fujiyama, and reigning ever majestically, unperturbed. We don't know which we found the more interesting — Buddha when we got to him and couldn't realize we were really there, in the middle of a photograph we'd seen so many times at home; or the little toy country we drove through on our way to his serene remoteness.

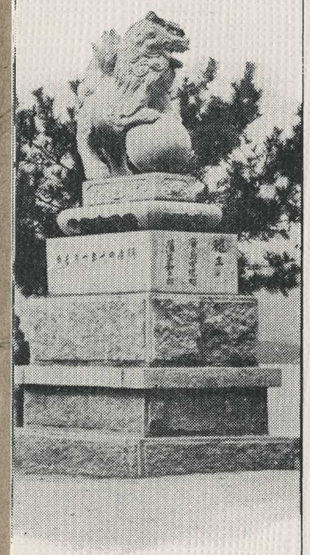
We wanted to stop the car every five minutes and play with those farmhouses and their little bamboo fences, and their little thatched roofs, and their terraced handkerchief-sized rice-fields, and their dozen and hundreds and millions of butterfly children, and their old-old-old people who looked as though they were carved out of brown wood. And everybody smiled at us . . . and we smiled back.

But think of our having been in Yokohama all this time and never having gone up to Tokyo! (Of course we *have*, but we couldn't talk of everything at once.)

Tokyo is only a streetcar-ride away, in this miniature country, crammed with colored life as a Japanese garden two feet square is filled with delicate enchantment. Almost every day there is a festival of some sort in Tokyo, but, thanks to our friends in Yokohama, we've picked out a really important day. And of course it has something to do with flowers—plum blossoms in February—peach blossoms in March—cherry blossoms in April—wistaria in May—iris in June—peonies in July—lotuses in August—chrysanthemums in September and October—and the gorgeous flame-colored maples in November and December. Only in January are there

The silkworm carries much of the prosperity of Japan on its thin little shoulders, and taking care of it takes much of the time of many a little brown girl whose slim fingers feed the mulberry leaves without which the temperamental creature absolutely refuses to work.

Japan is full of carved dragons ancient and modern, of dogs of Fo, and stone lanterns, and Buddhas, and torii. This beast is Japanese as to his curled mane and fierce grin, but his pedestal is pure Occident, and he stands on the shores of Lake Chuyenji, with his back to the blue-rippled view.



no flowers but the snowflakes of which the Japanese artists are so fond. And even these are sometimes routed in favor of the plum, if the wind from the south blows softly and the trees wake up and sing.

Tokyo is a perpetual play! Lanterns and torches and flowers—babies and kites and street signs—geisha and samisens—canals and "bag streets" (that don't go through)—Uyeno Park where even the tiniest children worship the cherry blossoms with their solemn black eyes—the Ginza where all the world shops, particularly in the new department store where shoes come off at the door (to be quite Japanese) and yet one can ride on an escalator, and even walk down and ride up again, if one is from the country.

There are theatres to go to where the stage rests on rollers and they turn it round, actors, props and all, when they want a new scene; and the audience squats on the floor, and has its lunch sent in. There are wrestling matches to see—or baseball, if one is intent on being modern. There is Asakusa Temple to visit, and have one's fortune told. There are museums of all kinds, if one is sufficiently detached to be edified thereby. There is the Imperial Palace to be gazed at from afar; and of course there are hundreds and hundreds of most terribly attractive shops to be gone into —and out of again when one can tear oneself away.

Figure to yourself a silver tea-set with fitments of Chinese jade—imagine a collection of those lovable little netsuke not to be equalled anywhere else, square miles of humor in a two-foot case—think of the bronzes, the ivories, the bits of lacquer, the hammered silver work—think of the culture pearls, for this is the world's headquarters—think of the ten-fold screens, the kakemono, the prints. Think of the hundred and twenty toy manufacturers of Tokyo, each working away like a mad Santa Claus to tempt the money out of your purse. . . . But think before you come, so you'll have plenty to spend!

"If you do not climb Fuji once, you are a fool; but if you climb it twice, you are also a fool," the Japanese assert. So, perhaps, out of deference to prejudice, we should go to Subashire, and stay overnight at the inn, where we'll get a taste of real Japan, including black-eyed nesans, and white-clad pilgrims. In the morning, before the sun gets up, we start the long climb, having our pilgrim staffs stamped with the red "chop" of each "station" we pass, drinking more tea than is good for us, passing hundreds of fellow-travellers who have no horses, learning the mystic formula they all intone—"May our six senses be pure, and the weather on the honorable mountain fair!" . . . We have to sleep midway of our desire, but the next morning sees us go on till the unimaginable happens, and the sun bursts out of the ocean, and boils through the mist, and the clouds glow, and we forget the discomforts of the way . . . just as we hope sometime

The Japanese coolie girl works in the rice fields, than which there are few damper avocations. But the little handkerchief-size plots half way up the hillsides and in the corners of the valleys gleam like springtime emeralds with sapphire lines between, and she looks as though she liked the life.

This little toy figure endlessly multiplied, treads the day long, as the water splashes into the irrigation ditches to start the rice crop on its way chopstickwards. Nothing is wasted in Japan but manpower — and that's cheap.

to do, when all of life is below us, like the little world of Japan. . . .

And Nikko—we must see Nikko, that wonder of temples and tombs, four hours and a half from Tokyo by railroad, but quite a thousand years as the mind flies. Nikko has been a holy place, up in its mountains, since the year 766. May and October are the best months to go to it—at least the months most free from mist and rain—but there is a dim luxuriance about it in the teeming summer, a still cold wonder under the snow, that makes it beautiful the year around.

Where else can one see such all-engirdling mountain forests—such gleaming copper-bronze roofs, flecked with gold itself, tip-tilted at the corners, thronged with shadows underneath—such brilliant lacquer-red fences and shrines and pagodas—such fat old carved stone Buddhas wearing wigs and earlaps of green moss? The river, too, that mad mountain torrent as blue as melted sapphires, roaring under its sacred Red Bridge; the Great Bell, held by its gilded dragon, and struck with a great old beam by one old priest who alone can sound the hours; the Abbot's garden; the "Sunrise-till-dark" gate that a man may study a whole day long—perhaps nowhere else in the world is there such a gorgeous and bewildering series of buildings and stairways, of carvings and images and gateways all leading to a single tomb.

We of the West think in straight lines (or so it seems to us), think symmetrically. But this place is as strange as the other side of the moon, for nothing is colored or carved as we would have done it, nor does one thing lead to another as we would have had it lead. . . . Each court, each terrace, each gate draws us farther and farther away from reality as it comes to the mind of the West, till we reach at last to the holy of holies, and are given our green gown, and a little sacred *saké* in a tiny red and gold lacquered cup.

Then the priests file in, in robes colored like dreams, and chant the service that must be chanted before the doors open—with wailing flutes and a heart-beating drum, and the great bell back among the gold temples to add its ancient voice. Then comes the younger priests, in white, with shields across their mouths so that their breath may not defile the sacred offerings, and the doors are opened, and they go in. And we, given a lighted paper lantern with the crest of the man for whom this glory has been made, we, too, go in to the loveliest room in all Japan, and hold our tiny glimmer up to the painted panels and the gorgeous ceilings and the shrines too wonderful to be real . . . and even as we stand there sadness steals over us, that we must go out so soon, and that we can remember so terribly little with our foolish, wistful minds. . . . Yet, all our lives we will be glad we raised brave lanterns to the things we couldn't understand, and carried away a bit of memory . . . and a red and gold lacquered cup!

Though the upper classes are separated in their whole mode of life, the women of the poor work side by side with their sturdy menfolk. This smiling little blueclad girl is a clam digger, as one may see from her bag and her rake.

The cocoons of the silkworms are put into hot water, and the fine thread is unwound onto a hand-made machine, operated by hand. But this, of course, is the way things used to happen in Japan, rather than the way they happen in these crowded, growing days. . . . You'd better hurry over, before it's too late to see the good old times at all!

JAPAN *ISN'T* FAR AWAY!

YOU'VE always wanted to travel—you've said it hundreds of times. But the East has seemed as far away as Mars.

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