

# Time of Fallen Blossoms

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## Preface

The events described in this book took place in the year 1946. Almost all is personal experience; a little is that of close companions. The only deviation from fact is that necessary to conceal the identity of persons who might be embarrassed or placed at a disadvantage by having their personal history recorded. For this reason all personal names have been altered; place names remain unchanged.

The events are set down in roughly the order of their occurrence; some slight rearrangement has been made for the sake of continuity.

I purposely omitted for the story proper all economic and political observations except where they bore directly on the subject. But since it is impossible to overlook or ignore their importance I shall attempt to summarize them here, separated from the body of the record.

Any journalist knows, a great deal can be culled from books and newspaper files and set down to produce an appearance of wide knowledge and erudition. While I, as an interpreter and a member of Intelligence, had almost unique opportunities for studying at close hand the life and customs of the Japanese people, I was in no special position to gather information on economic or political matters, or to observe the effects of the impact of the Occupation on the social structure of the nation.

But any person of normal intelligence may, if he takes the trouble, form his own ideas with as much chance of their being right as the next man. Ultimately, the validity of any such judgement, whether made by a layman or the professional economist or statesman, is provable only by relation to the future course of events.

It is notable that, even among the professionals, there are wide divergences of opinion.

One does not have to go to Japan to be aware of the existence of a great struggle, the nature of which is plain enough to all. It is a part of the contest for control of the entire world, between the forces of world Capitalism and the growing power of Communism. General MacArthur is quite frankly on the side of the former, and its high priests in Japan make open obeisance to him on that account. But for those of us whose fervent wish is presumed to be peace and security there is the fear of the same forces emerging from the struggle, with the same ambitions as before.

The common people of Japan, like those of all other countries, do not want war, and will not have it unless their leaders are able to present it to them as something desirable or inevitable. But hungry stomachs are notoriously inaccessible to ethical niceties, and if Japanese living standards fall, or remain stable, Japanese governments of the future will have a powerful lever ready to move the nation once more towards expansion.

Japan, in spite of the prodigious and unceasing labours of its people, hardly approaches at the best of times a frugal self-sufficiency in food. With the raw materials of commerce and industry the position is infinitely worse: she is almost completely reliant

on outside sources for petroleum products, raw cotton, and most metals, all essential to her industrial life.

It would appear that, unlike Russia or America, no rearrangement of the political or social structure, or balances of power within the country, could make her independent of outside sources of supply. Thus Japan's survival appears to demand the return of some of her former territories, however they were acquired. In this connection it is of interest to contrast the statement made frequently by the Allies, that they have no desire for territorial expansion, with the unashamed annexation piecemeal of Northern Sakhalin, the Kuriles and Okinawa. If we accept the view that Japan has no right to them because they were forcibly possessed, then we must admit that the Allies' claims are no more valid.

Perhaps the best solution would be to return some, if not all, of her former territories to Japan, subject to certain guarantees enforceable by the United Nations. This would remove a potential threat to Pacific peace, and offer Japan the prospect of survival and development.

Some have declared their complete indifference to Japan's future welfare, because it was she who produced the cataclysm that engulfed her. Let us not be too smug on this point. It is impossible to evade the fact that Japan's position in an industrial society had become untenable largely through the exertions of her rival across the Pacific. In the circumstances that existed, there was probably no solution other than the drastic one taken. This is in no sense an attempt at condonation of, or acquiescence in, her action - it is a mere statement of fact.

Those who have been surprised to find no sense of war guilt in the majority of Japanese or Germans should ask themselves if they would have had any had their own countries been the aggressor in like circumstances.

Since I left Japan a new Constitution has been written and proclaimed. Many of the brave phrases and copious cribbings from the American Declaration of Independence (apparent in the official English version), high-sounding though they be, have already lost significance and mock the ideal of democracy.

The educated Japanese will read with doubtful pleasure those clauses guaranteeing him freedom and equality, if he knows that they are not granted, in fact, to all citizens of the United States itself. The empty letter of the law has no significance for an American negro - only the existing reality.

Within the British Commonwealth also, after centuries of democracy, there are still 'untouchables' in India and unprivileged Australian aborigines, while in the new nationalist South Africa oppression of the dark-skinned peoples grows from day to day.

The Japanese now receiving their first instruction in the elements of Christianity must be a little puzzled by its injunctions to love thy neighbour and turn the other cheek, with its exaltation of poverty and humility, when the example shown him is to the contrary. To those who advocate his reformation through Christianity, he might well pose the question: What good has it done the West, with its long succession of wars and

accompanying barbarities and injustices? And when we charge him with indifference to the suffering of others, and make cruelty a quality particular to him, he could ask of our coal-mine ponies, of coursing with live hares, of trap-shooting of birds, of rabbits in traps in night-long agony, and of fox-hunting.

For their rehabilitation the Japanese people need, not spurious self-righteousness, but the sympathetic assistance and example of the rest of the world. America, Burma and Siam, among others, have shown, by admission of trade representatives, a relaxation of war-time bitterness, but at the time of writing, the British Commonwealth remains implacable, perhaps from old hatreds, perhaps from fear of Japanese competition in the fast-dwindling markets.

From the war's beginning, Australian Governments have shown political immaturity in their attitude towards the Japanese. On Morotai we were issued with instructions as to the method of returning a Japanese prisoner's salute. We were to 'stare him fiercely and fixedly in the eye' and walk past. In Japan, we were told, they were unhygienic and disease-ridden and unfit to associate with, and we were constantly reminded of their war-time villainies. This indoctrination was without doubt the major cause of the delinquency of a large body of Australian soldiers.

The policies of different Occupying Governments were reflected faithfully in the behaviour of their troops. British soldiers held themselves aloof; the Americans, with a benevolent cheek-turning Christian at their head, indulged themselves to the hilt; the Australians reacted as if they were still at war and Japan and its inhabitants a vast village in overrun territory, subject to the whims and passions of battle-inflamed soldiery.

In Australia it is still fashionable to despise the Japanese for their war-time conduct, and banal newspaper articles, larded with frequent use of the word 'democratic' and with special derisive emphasis of the 'peculiarities' of Japanese life, flow by the mushy bucketful from correspondents in Tokyo. Much of the material appears to have been copied from English-language newspapers in the Press Club lounges. Seldom is any serious attempt made to interpret the great and constant changes that have occurred since the war's end.

But so long as the average Australian, on buying his newspaper, continues to turn at once to the sporting pages, with profound contempt for atom bombs and national upsurges at his back door, there will be a place for this kind of journalism. And so long as his Government continues to conduct its mediaeval White Australia policy with inhuman rigor, so long will we remain in political swaddling clothes, until they are torn from us by the 'inferior' races we choose to despise.

The intense and pathetic admiration of the West that we encountered in the first year of the Occupation did not extend beyond material things. The Japanese have, no doubt, by now assessed the Occupation and the Occupiers at their true value, resulting in a commensurate change of attitude. Whether I shall find them the same again I cannot know until I revisit them. I can only hope they will be fundamentally unchanged.

A good deal of hard thinking preceded the writing of this book. For some time after my return to Australia I was hesitant about expressing opinions that ran counter to the current popular mood, and I deferred to private prejudices born of lost sons, husbands, and close friends. But I do so no longer. All the libraries of hate-books, all the ostracism and unforgiving exclusionism, will not bring back one dead soldier or salve the wounds of the maimed: it could dig the graves of their children.

That is my defence, if there is need for any.

Melbourne, 1949

## Chapter 1

# Arrival

The afternoon sun glittered on the Dakota's wings as it swung high over the mountains of Kyushu.

Thatched houses dotted the rice fields in the valleys. Somewhere near here lived Jimmu Tenno, first Emperor of Japan, kin of the Sun-Goddess.

The fulfilment of twelve years of studying, watching and waiting was near.

What was it going to be like? What would they be like?

Those little brown men of New Guinea jungle, Thailand railroad, and Borneo plantation... I could hear the screams of white men in the agonies of revolting torture, of Dutch nuns at Kuching... the crack of bursting rubber nuts in Sandakan plantations mingled with rifle shots as British, Indian and Australian soldiers, too sick to drag themselves an inch farther along the road to Ranau, received the boon of death from their captors...



Japanese prisoners in Borneo working in their compound under the supervision of the author (*right*).

But, by Christ we'd got even. We'd beaten up the unarmed Nip working parties lined up on the Sandakan Wharf after surrender. Rolled quarter-ton drums of petrol over them as they lay there, too.

Then there was that big captain with the loaded rubber hose. I can still see his elbows weaving through the tent flap. Didn't he love it! That was the way to find the war criminals. Some of them had done nothing, of course, but what did that matter. A Jap's a Jap.

And the embarkation of the sick and wounded, about two thousand of them. Nothing of any value was left to them. Emptied out their rice on the ground; might have been watches or jewellery under it. A kick in the behind or on a raw patch of tropical ulcer on

the leg soon got 'em moving again. When they couldn't climb the ladders we hauled them up the LST's side with a rope. The lads with the lifeboat paddles were waiting for 'em on deck. Sounded good, the crack of wood on their skulls. Bloody hard skulls some of them were too; broke some of the paddles. Those that fell were kicked in the face; if they couldn't get up, overboard they went...

The R.A.A.F. M.O. that interfered; he was bloody lucky he didn't go overboard too. He would, if he hadn't locked himself in his cabin. 'Are you men or animals?' he'd said before we'd made a rush at him. As if the Nips were any better than animals.

They died like flies on the trip back to Jesselton. Every morning they'd be brought up on the lift from the L.S.T.'s tank deck. God, did they stink! Someone said something about peace on their faces as they lay huddled up on the deck. 'All evil shed away'. What did he know?

We tied weights to 'm and cheered as we slid 'em overboard, knocking against hooks and rails as they went down the side. Hope the fish didn't object to eating them.

Remember old Blackie, the cook, how he cut off a Nip P.O.W.'s head with a meat chopper? Never had a chance to get near one before, he said. Wanted to be able to say he'd killed one when he got back home. Quite right too. Cooks don't get much chance to get up the front with the boys.

And then the fellow we made dig his own grave. He'd been given a hell of a belting, but he still said he knew nothing about the Sandakan march, wasn't even there. But you know how you can't take a Nip's word for anything. They laid him on the ground and marked out his length, then gave him a spade and made him dig. I'd never seen a Jap show terror before. When he had finished they knelt down on the edge of the hole and stood over him with an axe. He was screaming his innocence and begging for time to pray when I turned it in. I told them I couldn't stand any more. They went and got another interpreter...

Other thoughts intruded. There was that pilot shot down over Darwin. He'd a letter in his pocket, from his eight-year-old daughter, and a little pastel drawing of his home, pretty good for a child. She'd written on it: 'Please come home soon, dear Daddy. We think of nothing but the day when we shall be together again.' Funny they thought like that. Just like your own daughter.

Then there was Ito, private secretary to Kawai Tatsuo, His Imperial Japanese Majesty's Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to Australia. While his fellow Japanese beguiled their leisure hours in Melourn brothels, we sat in his quiet room in South Yarra and discussed Marx, Bertrand Russell, and Ito's faith in the brotherhood of man. He hoped his children would grow up to serve the same ideal. He didn't live to see it.

And Shigemori, who loved his golf, eschewed politics, and was bossed by his wife. He didn't want to go back to Japan, where he mustn't think of anything but war, wasn't allowed to play golf. (Were the soldiers in China playing golf?) And she couldn't wear her fur coat there. The soldiers in China didn't wear them, either.



Then those lists of names in the records of the *Kempeitai* and *Tokumu Kikan* at Sandakan. There were hundreds of them, men with 'dangerous thoughts' who didn't like the war, who had been sent to work out their penance in the Borneo jungles, to make Japan safe for the militarists they despised.

Well, anyway, I'd soon be able to find out what they were like in their own country. The few travellers I'd met had certainly painted a very pretty picture. Sentimentalists, no doubt, remembering only the better part of it.

Just how far I'd got with the language after twelve year's study I'd soon know too. Reading and writing was easy enough: you could do that from books, but conversation was different. Talking with a few POWs on the same stereotyped technical subjects didn't help much. We were now over the Inland Sea. The buzzer was blaring. That meant we were preparing to land. Below was the strip at Iwakuni. It wouldn't be long now. Better put my revolver on, just in case...

A tiny policeman in shoddy, ill-fitting staple-fibre uniform and wearing a shining nickel-plated sword, sauntered over as we stepped from the plane. He threw us a casual American-style salute and took no further interest in us. Anything less like our traditional idea of a policeman was impossible to imagine.

We were apparently no new sight to him, and even the sight of our jeep being unloaded from the plane failed to move him. It was now three months since the first Americans had arrived and he'd probably seen everything since then.

This was something of a setback to our egos. Consciously or not, we had exalted ourselves to the role of conquering heroes, and had expected to be received in a manner befitting such men, though of course we were to come down from our high positions just to show how democratic we were - none of those distinctions were we came from.

Considerably crestfallen, we piled our own gear into the jeep with our own hands and drove off through wrecked planes and burt-out frames of petrol tanks to the administrative building.

A Royal Air Force officer gave us a courteous welcome and a bottle of Japanese beer each and we ate English canned rations. The quality of the beer was a surprise, as good as we'd drunk, though lighter. Beer has never been a sine qua non of my diet, but to the others that bottle case a rosy light down the long, uncertain vista of their future days in Japan.

Our small group was restless, and the prospect of staying here for the night appealed to no one. We decided to drive the jeep straight through to Kure, about sixty miles away, via Hiroshima. It was getting near dusk when we left. We sped along a pretty fair road, with only an unremembered glimpse of the scene around us.

The cold wind blew through us in the open jeep and froze our heads into insensible blocks of ice. Two days before we had been in Morotai, and we were beginning to feel the effects of sudden contact with winter after many months of tropical heat.

At a small railway station, Koi, on the outskirts of Hiroshima, we stopped for directions. A porter offered to come with us as guide to Kure, whence he would return to Koi by train.

And so we passed through the ruined, unlit city in the darkness, with only a dim hint of its tragedy apparent to us.

Kure was a motley of Americans packing up to leave, and handfuls of advance troops from all parts of the Empire. We moved into a large Western-style building, formerly the Japanese Naval HQ, and wonderfully equipped. On the ground floor was a huge Japanese-style bathroom, with three swimming pools, containing hot water at varying temperatures. After eating, we luxuriated in these for about an hour, then bedded down for the night in a huge dormitory inhabited by a few remaining G.I.s.

By now it was ten p.m., time for lights-out, and I wondered at the alacrity of the Americans in leaping to conform to the regulations. I was not left in the dark, figuratively, for long. The soft clatter of wooden clogs treading a familiar path, the rustle of silk, embarrassed giggles, creaking beds and rhythmic movements made the night eloquent, as Japanese girls made sacrifice, though with no great reluctance, to their country's conquerors.

Very difficult conditions for a lone soldier, newly out of tropical solitude, to find sleep. When it did come it was deep.

## Chapter 2

# Train Journey

Next morning I was up early and set out to see how many illusions would be shattered that day. It is inevitable that one should build, on one's reading and study of things Japanese, a fairyland peopled with wonders at every turn and I was prepared for disappointing first impressions.

It was just as well. Kure is hardly the place from which to begin a pilgrimage to the shrine of beauty. Set in a bowl of hills and docks, it was a ruin of bombed buildings and twisted webs of girders when I first saw it. On the sides of the nearer hills large grey and white houses clung precariously, moulded into the steep face like swallows' nests, and equally inaccessible. Away from the centre, the houses were ramshackle and the facilities primitive. The water supply flowed in ditches past the door, and sewage, as is usual in extra-urban Japan, was applied directly to its most profitable purpose - fertilization of an over-impooverished soil, to produce staple food necessities. The drab grey-tiled roofs and white walls held neither of the expected colour. The only brightness to be found was in the women's costumes. It was winter, and there was a premonition of snow in the icy-crisp air; the flowers were long dead.

The public market (the Japanese always called it, with complete frankness, the black market) was a great sprawling collection of rickety booths on a wide bomb-cleared space. They were crammed with inferior goods of all types, and the many 'restaurants' displayed varieties of dishes of dubious origin and freshness. What few treasures there were, such as bicycles, radios and clothing, were priced as pearls beyond even the coveting of ordinary men. Of pieces of art, pictures and bronzes there were none.

I resolved to get away from it until I had time for readjustment. Then suddenly an ideal opportunity presented itself.

In Borneo, after the war had ended, I had worked in close liaison with certain Staff Officers of the 37th Army Group under Commander-in-Chief Lieutenant-General Baba Masao. (Baba was later condemned to death by hanging for responsibility for the Sandakan-Ranau death march.) The officers with whom I worked, on documents and general matters relating to the Borneo campaigns, had been cleared of war crime suspicion. When I left for Japan they pleaded with me to bear letters on their behalf to their families, telling them of their good health and circumstances. Only one of these was addressed to a place immediately accessible to me, that is, within the B.C.O.F. area. I went to Kure railway station and inquired. The place, Kisa, was well back into the mountains, but if I caught a train at five-thirty a.m. the following day, I could make the return journey within the day.

I set to and made preparations, which consisted chiefly of scraping together enough rations for the day. Humility, pleading and cajoling were necessary, as food had number one priority 'on the black' and, consequently, was as a premium with quartermasters.

I went to bed early that night, my sleep once again punctuated with ghostly footsteps, half-hearted protests, and creakings from over-laden beds.

I gave some considerable thought to what I was about to do: to penetrate into the wilds of what was, in effect, enemy country, with no protection of arms, with nothing but a sentimentalist's blind faith that things would turn out all right. Not much to go on, and a few doubts stole into my mind.

Morning brought freshness of spirit and new faith. Kure station was only a few steps and a Tokyo-bound train stood in the station. I entered a carriage bearing the chalked legend in Chinese characters *Shinchugun Senyo* - 'For the exclusive use of the Occupation Forces'. One glance at the rest of the train gave cause for thanks, for it was overflowing with a human flood. The engine and its tender swarmed with people, sitting on the coal, or clinging precariously to the sides. One or two audacious spirits had achieved the miraculous by forcing themselves through carriage windows, thus presenting the inmates with silently resented *faits accomplis*.

The train struggled out and laboured on to Fukuyama, where I had to change. Here I had a glimpse of the newly-ruined castle. The main structure had been completely destroyed by incendiaries, though little else in the vicinity appeared damaged. The armoury had survived, and its symmetrical classic lines suggested the beauty of the ancient structure that had vanished. The ruins held that nostalgic quality inherent in all old buildings whose walls have not for many years quickened to the footfall of an inhabitant.

It was time to leave on the next stage. The branch line train had no provision for Occupation personnel, and with some diffidence I entered the rear carriage, half guard's van and half passenger coach. This was jammed tight with people, but space was cleared immediately and I was politely forced into a seat against the door communicating with the van. I had decided to show no knowledge of the Japanese language, partly from lack of confidence, and partly from fear of the interminable questions from all within earshot which was the invariable outcome.

Outside it was bitterly cold, and as we drew closer to the mountains fine driving snow beat against the windows and flew past silently in ghostly patterns, sometimes fluttering in through broken panes. It powdered the young green barley that grew in all the fields.

A man beside me began talking to me in rudimentary English, so exasperatingly unintelligible that I was forced into admission of some knowledge of Japanese. This, in the early days of the Occupation, always evoked amazed wonder and admiration, tempered afterwards with tactful and salutary criticism that brought one down to earth again. After the initial astonishment we settled into conversational commonplaces. My companion was an unshaven and roughly-clad middle-aged man with a certain straightforwardness that impressed me.

Inevitably we got around to 'the bomb' and he unexpectedly began roundly to condemn its use as inhuman. I agreed, but added that it had probably greatly shortened the war, and avoided sacrifice of large numbers of men on both sides. He countered that we must have known that they were at the end of their tether, and anyway, there were other ways of exhibiting its power than by dropping it on populous cities.

I had talked this question out so often that I was becoming a bit uncertain about the ethics of it, and was wondering how to change the subject, when a ragged-bearded head thrust out from the door opening into the guard's van. It said 'You!' in English, with an abrupt rudeness possible only to a Japanese using a foreign language. I had come to expect, but not demand, formal politeness, so I ignored it. It was repeated. Then my sleeve was plucked to such purpose that I decided to defer, and followed him in. Half a dozen railway employees were in there, some squatting on the floor, most smoking kiresu - ridiculously small pipes, which hold only a pinch of tobacco. My bearded friend pressed on me a small salmon tin which he had filled from a huge bottle containing something that looked and smelt like methylated spirit (I learned later that it was pure alcohol). I inwardly recoiled at the thought of drinking it, but my bearded one had obviously imbibed deeply and importuned me with sly gestures and familiar embraces that seem to distinguish the behaviour of drunks all over the world. I thought it wise not to offend him, so tasted it and found it fishy and fiery.

My token drink satisfied him, and he inquired politely in Japanese my purpose on the train. I told him briefly, and immediately regretted it. It staggered him that a former enemy was enduring the discomforts of that train to bring peace to the mind of his foes's family. Within a few moments everyone knew. My immediate comfort became the concern and responsibility of all. A couch was made from straw-matting-covered bundles in the van. They were wonderfully comfortable, but their number gradually diminished as we reached their respective destinations, until there was only one left. They refused to let this one go, and sent it back on another train!

When the first frenzy had subsided, it was decided that the populace of Kisa should be told the story by railway telephone, so that suitable preparation could be made to receive me. This was done at Fuchu, a few stations later, where a change of trains was again necessary. I was received at Fuchu by the *Joyaku*, or deputy Station Master, in the same warm and unaffected manner as I had hitherto experienced. He was a man of considerable intelligence and had the quiet air of efficiency and self-assurance of a man who knows his job. This applied also to the staff of three or four girls, in trim navy blue trousers and white blouses.

We sat around the stove in the centre of the room, piled on railway coal, drank railway tea, and smoked my cigarettes. My name, age and personal history were dragged from me in a few minutes. It is easy to amuse a foreigner merely by conversing in his own language. Everything has a touch of novelty, and I learned to repeat 'impromptu' many of my expressions that were always good for a laugh.

Kisa was only two stations further on. Japanese railway stations display on either side of the station names, those of the next station in either direction. This is an excellent idea and a great help to a stranger. Since the Occupation it has become compulsory for these names to be in English also.

As we approached my destination, I was troubled with a few uncomfortable thoughts. What if this soldier's wife hated her husband's former antagonists? Perhaps she had heard that General Baba had been indicted as chief war criminal in Borneo. Was she still living in Kisa?

A knot of railway employees and bystanders met me with great ceremony and I was ushered into the office. A broad-faced sweet woman of about thirty years, in a blouse and skirt, obviously not a peasant type, and a boy of about six years were there. They had come from a relative's home beyond the mountains, whence they had been summoned by a member of the railway staff. She had already been informed of the purpose of my visit. I gave her the letter. She did not thank me overmuch, but simply, as one who is truly grateful gives thanks. We were escorted to a house a few yards away, and there in a little room we were left alone. We sat at the *kotatsu* (a kind of room heater) and she read the letter. There was no breakdown or weeping; just a sublimely happy expression like that sometimes seen on the faces of lovers thinking of the beloved. I was thankful, for their sakes, that he had been free of suspicion, and had not been placed in the potential war-criminals' camp, for probable arraignment later on.

I told her of conditions for her husband in Borneo - and I could do this without fear of causing her anxiety - and something of the campaign there. Some of the warmth of the tropics came back in the heat of the *kotatsu*. This is a peculiarly Japanese invention. In the floor of most rooms in a Japanese house is a small pit about eighteen inches square and of the same depth. Burning charcoal is placed in this, a wooden grating fits over the opening, and above it stands a low table covered with a large square quilt.

We sat opposite each other at this table with our legs stretched out underneath. A delicious warmth crept around us, and coaxed a cat to the table-top - a spot cats are customarily conceded. I sat there with an intriguing feeling of intimacy, barefooted as always when in a house, our legs interlaced and almost involuntarily caressing each other. Of course, it was all so conventional and correct for a Japanese to be thus, but I must confess to a disturbing preoccupation as we talked and drank dark green tea.

For two hours we sat there, until it was time for me to leave. She gave me her address in Kyoto, where she and her husband, who was a painter, had lived before the war, and where she would return as soon as he came back. I said good-bye to her and her grave-faced son, and boarded the train, considerably embarrassed by gaping hordes of passengers. They found me a seat, and I sat there, too absorbed in thoughts of the last two hours to concern myself with my fellow travellers.

As we laboriously huff-puffed up into the mountains, the snow became thicker and deeper, obliterating the barley. There were long stops because of the engine driver's inability to see ahead. At these halts men went to the carriage windows and nonchalantly micturated on to the snow outside, to the complete unconcern of the other passengers. It is difficult, at first, not to assess such actions on the basis of one's own conventions and standards of behaviour. The false modesties of the West have not imposed themselves on the Japanese. The adult mind does not submit to restrictions on natural functions not applied to children. There were many things I had to unlearn when I returned to Australia. In any case it would have been impossible to use the lavatories, since they were packed to the roof with passengers' baggage. How the women managed I was spared from knowing.

As darkness fell, I gradually became uncomfortably conscious of my situation. I began to think of these nodding, dozing people around me were blood kin to the men whose

deeds throughout China and the Pacific had shocked the world, men with minds reputedly inaccessible to Western understanding. And here alone among them was one their enemy, whose own activities had been suitably distorted, magnified and darkened for the benefit of their war effort. Those primitive fears that come with midnight and solitude descended upon me.

The train stopped with a creaking jerk. Heavy snow had made it impossible to go on in the darkness, so all began to settle down for the night. Those that could lay on the floor, in all possible and impossible positions. Some lay across the carriage couplings, their heads through the lavatory doorways. The air became overpoweringly laden with physical odours, like a wild animals' lair. I began thinking again of Borneo and Malayan campaigns, and my composure melted more and more at the thought of spending the night amongst them, isolated in a desert of inscrutable minds. Yet, as in all previous and subsequent contacts, I was fortified by and intuition - a sense that they would not harm me. This feeling, will, of course, remain valid until the contrary occurs. No doubt the presence of women and children reassured me, for rarely does oriental or occidental reveal the brutal side of his nature in their sight.

I was jerked out of my musings as the train, with driving wheels spinning madly, moved slowly forward again. The windows were now crusted with snow, and beyond a broken one was a black nothingness. Before long we were through the mountain barrier and reached the Geibi line which runs from Hiroshima to the castle town of Himeji. We made our final change of trains here. It was herculean labour for others, but I was given a reserved half-carriage and thereafter travelled in solitary and frigid state.

For the rest of the return journey, memory of only one incident remains. At one small country station, a young mother, with a child strapped to her back, found it impossible to board the over-burdened train, and stood there forlorn and anxious on the snowy platform. As I sat, torn between diffidence against inviting her to share a dark, unlighted carriage with an Occupation soldier, and the realization that she would probably have to stay on the station all night, the train moved off and left her standing there. In her face there was no emotion, merely the calm resignation to a life that has been the lot of Japanese women for centuries, a life that has ennobled and dignified them far beyond the men of their race.

## Chapter 3

# Ujina

Supply ships and transports began to arrive from the south, and the former naval wharves at Kure became choked with men and materials. I worked with a docks operating unit, directing Japanese working parties engaged in unloading. We lived in a building in the docks area, and had four house-girls 'doing' for us. Under an arrangement with the Japanese Government, a fixed number of these girls were employed as domestics through all units of the occupying armies, their wages being paid by the Japanese Government. Our four were all sisters, three young ones, shy as birds, and an older sister, a war widow, still very eligible.

When the first Americans came they had fled to the mountains, to return wide-eyed with wonder to find that the barbarians were not quite so barbarous as the propaganda instruments had foretold. With the coming of the Australians, there was another flight to the hills, and another cautious return. They were quite certain of one thing, however. 'If the Chinese ever come, we shall not come back.' The reason for this apparently lay in the lower standard of living enjoyed by the Chinese. Even the meagre possessions of the Japanese would be attractive loot to such impoverished people, they believed.

We spent long evenings together over the stove, and gradually they made me their confidant, and sought advice on all things. Was Captain \_\_\_\_\_, who took more than a polite interest in them, married? Was it all right to remain in the room while the officers undressed? It would not have made any difference to Japanese men, but these Australians seemed so uncomfortable. Perhaps if they did not watch?

There were interminable questions about Australia, which they, like most Japanese, called 'yonder place', as if uncertain where it was, or what it was. Knowledge was gained by mutual straightforward trial-and-error methods, the occasional raised eyebrow of surprise being rather one-sidedly ours.

One ordeal, at first, was the daily visit to the latrines. Long years in the army had accustomed us to communal lavatories, with long vistas of holds that would have warmed the heart of Chic Sale. But to find the adjacent one occupied by a young woman was something outside army experience. The embarrassment we felt seemed a bit foolish, since the lady herself, in supreme ignorance of our discomfort, refused to be in the least moved by the situation.

We gave top priority to the building of a separate convenience for the women, and bade them use it, to the exclusion of all others. This restriction on their liberty gave them to wonder if, after all, there was equality of the sexes in the democracies!

Their customary composure was sorely tested a few days later, when a medical inspection of all Japanese employees for venereal disease was ordered. The women were examined first. 'You'd better stick with me,' grunted the visiting Medical Officer, an elderly jaded man. 'After all, I cannot do everything with signs.' The girls took the whole thing as an affront to their personal honour. They were obviously exceedingly



virtuous, and the imputation of having such diseases humiliated them, quite apart from the ordeal of a physical examination, although the doctor was very considerate with them. The details of the examination may not be recorded, except to say that any gaps in my knowledge of feminine anatomy were filled that day! The poor dears could not look me in the face for a week afterwards.

Troops of all Empire countries began to pour into the city. The Stars and Stripes flew over only one building now, Allied Military Government Headquarters. Sikhs and Ghurkas, Royal Navy sailors and Anzacs thronged the narrow streets and denuded the markets and shops of their shoddy silks, cheap lacquer ware, and gewgaws in general.

Imperial troops met and appraised each other for the first time. An English captain told me of his first encounter with an Australian. He walked down the ship's gangway and was about to set foot on Japanese soil for the first time, when he was confronted by a reeling six foot private, grasping a bottle of beer. 'Have a drink, mate,' was the Australian's greeting. A little taken aback by the unaccustomed informality of the approach, the officer rather superciliously declined. 'Have a \_\_\_\_\_ drink, or I'll chuck yer in the \_\_\_\_\_ water,' roared the Australian. The captain drank without further comment and returned to his cabin to compose himself and ponder the mysteries of Australian army discipline.

I, too, paused to consider the attitude up till now of the population towards us, and found it very puzzling. There had not been the faintest show of hostility. Instead there was a readiness to help and in any way to make us feel 'at home'. Often someone would stop me in the street, and press some rare and desirable article, such as a camera film, into my hand. The donor would then make off, after murmuring a polite '*prezento*' or '*sabisu*' (service), meaning, I took it, part of the service, no payment expected.

My own unit was one of the first to arrive, and we set up headquarters at Tenno, four or five miles out on the Hiroshima Road, on the Inland Sea. Winter had locked the people in their houses, and no diversions offered. Then, after an uneventful week, I received, at ten o'clock at night, one of those maddeningly unnecessary orders often given in the army - to go immediately to a place four miles on the other side of Hiroshima. I was to be posted there indefinitely. I threw my belongings hastily into a waiting jeep, and was rushed off to Hiroshima and my destination, Ujina, fourteen miles away. We arrived at midnight, still without more than a glimpse of the devastated city in the darkness.

Ujina is the port of Hiroshima, and at that time was the headquarters of an American port director, supervising supplies for troops over a wide area. A company of Australians had moved in that day and the Americans were celebrating their departure with a farewell party when I arrived. Their recreation hall thundered to the revelling and dancing of G.I.s and their Japanese girlfriends. On the following day, hundreds of these girls clung to the Americans in emotional farewells on the railway station. When the train pulled out we were alone - one hundred and twenty Australians in a camp surrounded by 'the enemy'.

The camp had been formerly an embarkation and supply depot for Japanese troops, consisting of an expanse of buildings and wharves. It included also a Hall of Victorious Return, built to welcome home the conquering Imperial Armies. Two great stone lions brought from China crouched beside its bleak deserted doors, gazing out over the bay, from which transports laden with the flower of Nippon's sons steamed years before. The stone eyes of the lions seemed to watch for their return. Return they did soon, with bitter irony, to the Hally of Victories, to receive alms and comfort, by courtesy of the Australian Army.

## Chapter 4

### 'Moose'

The Americans had been gone some days and the ladies had had time to dry their tears and appraise the newcomers. In the evening, drawn by the twin urges of curiosity and the need for warmth, they cautiously took up what were no doubt old familiar positions around the sentries' braziers, hands covering their sniggering faces.

Most of the men in the unit had been in the tropics for long periods, cut off from feminine society, and made no secret of what they wanted, or of their readiness, willingness and ability to recover lost ground. The first barrier they encountered was language. At first they circumvented it and relied solely on gestures. What English the ladies knew had obviously been learnt in the lists of love, and consisted of such phrases as 'Oh, my aching back', or some other anatomical region, spoken with an American accent. This was encouraging, but did not get one anywhere, so my services were enlisted to smooth the way to the ultimate goal.

My efforts had mixed results. At the sound of Japanese being spoken the girls would abandon their new-found friends for the speaker. They were as yet indifferent to our physical characteristics. All one needed to be considered handsome was a big nose, and mine was big enough. The girls' attentions engendered a certain amount of heartburning and distrust, and I came to be held responsible for the success or failure of each soldier's venture. If a girl did not appear at an appointed place or lost interest, it was because I had so advised or directed her, for my own lewd and selfish ends. Only once was this accusation justified, and I think the lady was grateful for it.

Outside the flickering circle of the brazier's glow stood several disused refrigerating chambers, the floors spread with matting left by destitutes from Hiroshima. These became the scenes of the final consummation of love, and, like army latrines, were occupied and used by numerous people at the same time. The girls were a pretty grubby, dubious lot, as was to be expected. Camp followers are the same the world over. Nearly all were venereal disease hosts, a matter of supreme indifference to the soldiers. Since the girls had to be given a general name, it was not long before the standard appellation became 'moose'. This derived from the first part of the Japanese word *musume*, a girl. As the girls were the quarry in a great game hunt, the term was singularly apt.

I could never bring myself to condemn these girls, whose immediate past experiences could hardly have been conducive to observation of the niceties of the moral code. Like almost every woman in Japan, their general bearing and manners were dignified and gentle, and, so far as I was concerned, could not be ugly. Certainly in post-war Japan, they were on ordinary occasions sartorially drab and shabby, especially when wearing European clothes, but even then they could do, without a loss of dignity, things that would be crude and disgusting in a Westerner.

Their figures were lamentable in European dress, with their daikon ashi - radish-shaped legs - bowed from being curved around their mothers' bodies when carried as children for long hours slung on the maternal backs. But in their kimonos and obis, they became

princesses of the blood, the beauty of their silk-smooth honey-coloured skin and the unhurried dignity of their movements blending into a being completely satisfying to the aesthetic sense. Their speech, also, took on the character of their costume, and was flavoured with mincing expressions and polite circumlocutions in imitation of Yamada Isuzu, Tanaka Kinuyo, and other currently popular screen actresses.

While the other ranks wandered at will down these pleasant by-ways, the officers' path to love was strewn with the thistles and thorns of military discipline and social convention. They chafed at the knowledge that, as usual, their subordinates were indulging their whims without restriction, whilst they sat in enforced virtue in their mess. I was called in to H.Q., five miles away, for consultation. Was there somewhere in the town where the American officers had sought solace in their exile? Could I find it? Discrete inquiries of the camp carpenter, a little rat of a man, supplied the answer. His sister would be honoured to make all the arrangements. Three officers and myself, tomorrow night? Yes, yes, Kurifuton San. Of course I could be sure of his uttermost discretion. Venereal disease? No, no, no! He would see that our partners' blood was 'pure' (a popular euphemism). At this point I made it clear that I was appearing in the role of interpreter and go-between only.

The officers prepared themselves as for a gubernatorial levee. The youngest of them, newly commissioned, was obviously still a virgin. The excitement always attendant on the prospect of that first rapturous experience glowed in his face and sparkled on his Sam Browne belt and immaculate uniform. We arrived at four-thirty p.m., early for an occidental, apparently a normal time for entertaining in Japan. The rendezvous was a second-class hotel, which I knew later to be the most notorious brothel in the town, and there were many competing fiercely for this honour, as this was a seaport, catering primarily for the needs of seamen. We were introduced to the carpenter's sister and two girls of no great beauty or talent to amuse. We produced presentes of chocolates, biscuits and cigarettes - keys which opened all doors. Tea was brought in, followed by small bottles of hot sake. One drink of this was the signal for the women to make lewd gestures and try out equally lewd English phrases learned from their late G.I. patrons.

The carpenter's sister was a blowzy, bawdy creature of forty-odd, with not one outward redeeming feature, quite unlike the women I had hitherto met. Until now I had considered her merely an agent for the others, but when the time came to separate and worship at Eros's inner shrines, I realized with a certain amount of horror that she was to be a participant in the final rites, and had allotted herself to the young lieutenant. If the woman repelled him, as she did me, he gave no sign, but carried out his duties that night in a manner befitting an officer, if not a gentleman.

At camp the next morning the carpenter surreptitiously thrust three small glass ampoules into my pocket. 'Just in case the girls' blood was not so pure!' he whispered.

I did not dare tell the officers.

Some time after I went to the home of the carpenter on matters relating to work required in the camp. He was not at home, and his sister invited me in to wait. She left me to make tea, and I glanced around the room. In the alcove were four small plain wooden

boxes, and one larger one. They held the ashes of her husband and four children; according to the inscriptions all had died on the same day, 6 August 1945.

All my revulsion for this woman melted into compassion. There is no place for moral judgement when all about which one's life was centred and which gave it meaning was disintegrated in one vast blinding flash; when one became , with a quarter-million other Hiroshima inhabitants, a terrified guinea pig in a monstrous, amoral experiment.

## Chapter 5

# Treasure Island

Three boats lay tied up alongside the camp pier. All had been allotted by the Home Government for the sole use of our American predecessors; now they had gone, their captains stood by, ready to serve their new masters. One was a trim white launch, in charge of a bullet-headed, beef-witted boor. His father, head of the shipping company which owned the craft, obviously despised his perpetually-grinning, rather unsavoury-looking offspring. Another director of the firm had spent many years in America, owned to an American wife, still there, and spoke English of a sort. He combined all the worst qualities of both races and had developed servility to the ultimate degree. Their eagerness to please us was protested over much, and their 'loyalty' obviously lay where the most profit could be gained. Their earlier affiliations were betrayed later when the launch was being scraped preparatory to repainting. Beneath the previous coat of paint was revealed its former name - *Kamikaze*, the 'divine wind' which had scattered and shattered the great fleets of Kublai Khan in the first attempt to invade these sacred shores; the name bestowed on suicide planes in the later stages of the war, in the vain hope that 'divine' intervention might again be conjured up by the heroism of their pilots. All members of this family had declined the invitation to become immortals and had managed to remain 'the men behind the guns' - several hundred miles behind.

The second vessel, a twenty-foot sampan, was home, have and source of livelihood to its owner, a pleast slow-thinking fisherman, endowed with a wife and child, and a philosophy that made him content with the little he had or could hope for. The two rooms below deck were clean and comfortable enough, but cooking on the open deck over a charcoal brazier, fair weather or foul, was calculated to ruffle the placidity of Buddha.

The remaining craft, a tiny tugboat, was a thing apart. It was a mere twenty feet long, and appeared to have a draught of only a few inches. Its 'crew' was an old woman of about sixty years of age, full of vitality, who in some amazing way combined the duties of an engineer, navigator, and helmsman. The single-cylinder heavy oil engine must have been of the same vintage as its operator. The ritual of starting-up was probably known to her alone. A large plug in the side of the cylinder-head was unscrewed, something like a roman candle was lit and shoved inside, showering sparks. Vigorous rocking of the great flywheel eventually induced a tremendous puff, setting the engine chugging and blowing thick, perfectly formed smoke-rings from the smoke-stack.

In all her activity, instinct seemed to most control, and the chain of operations, from starting-up, engaging clutch and taking over the helm, blended into the flow of her movements about the ship. She knew every rock, sunken ship - and these were legion - submerged object, and shallow in Hiroshima Bay and adjacent water, and every inch of the islands in the vicinity.

These islands were formerly navy territory, and fell within the area of our stewardship. During the settling-in period there was little interpreting to do, so one day I took the opportunity to do a little exploring. After a few words of explanation to the skipper I

boarded the tug and we headed for the nearest island about a mile away. As we approached, threading our way through anchored rusty submarines, she asked me how long I intended to stay. The tide was near full, and evidently a point of landing had to be chosen with this in mind. I said about half an hour and leapt ashore, to be greeted by a policeman, one of several posted to prevent illegal entry. He courteously invited me to look around, after the manner of a floor-walker in a department store. I half expected him to add 'no obligation to buy'.

The island, called Kanawa, was nothing more than a high hill, about half a mile across, with a shelf of beach around it. The sides of the hill were shot through with hundreds of tunnels, some laid with narrow-gauge rail tracks, nearly all wired for electricity, though was no power connected. I switched on my hand lamp and entered the nearest one. From that moment time stood still for that day.

The walls were lined from roof to floor with shelves, and on these shelves reposed all the wonders of the modern industrial world. As I moved in the depths of the caves, criss-crossing in every direction, electric clocks, meters, and tools of all possible types and sizes gave way to welding equipment, car batteries and vacuum flasks, bolts of cloth, furs from Mongolia and Siberia, brushes in infinite variety, motor-car engines, radios, photographic apparatus, and chinaware. Hardly anything ever wrought by the hand of man or woman was missing. Much of the machinery and tools was of German manufacture, and bore labels in Dutch and Malay, probably plundered for the Netherlands Indies. There were even a few ingots of zinc, embossed with a map of Australia, and the name of the smelters. These, I learned later, had been brought from Singapore.

No one who does not know the fascination of machines, of the satisfaction gained from something wrought with his own hands in his own workshop, and bearing his own individual character and imperfections, can understand the thrill of being confronted with such a vast array of treasure-trove, its potentialities unlimited, there for the taking. Perhaps a child held in the spell of a vast toyshop would understand. I emerged at length from the labyrinth to find the day darkening, and my original point of entry nowhere visible. Half way round the island from where I had come out was a very forlorn old lady, sadly inspecting her ship as it lay high and dry, the screw buried in the sand. She could have taken it further out, I suppose, when the tide began to ebb, but she had chosen to remain. I tried my best to apologize, but she didn't mind really, now that she satisfied herself that no damage had been done. The tug was her home and she could eat and sleep at will wherever she was.

I had been in the caves from ten a.m. to five p.m. and had not given a thought to food, but now the need for physical sustenance made acute demands and drew me quickly from my trance. I accepted gratefully the old lady's offer to share a dozen or so roasted eels she had prepared. We sat there in the crisp, clear twilight, waiting for the rising tide, and, as we ate, talked, not of wars, or of where I came from, but of the sea, the sky and its stars, and the virtues of fish as food.

Old Japanese ladies are not very easy to understand, especially when they flavour their speech with words of the local dialect, half forgotten by the present generation, but I

learned a little of her history. It had been her husband's ship, and when he had died, a few years earlier, she had been content to carry on. Necessity had taught her what little she did not know about the handling of the ship, and as she nosed it gently homeward in the darkness, I pondered on how much of her knowledge had been learnt, and how much of inherited from, maybe, generations of fisher folk.

There was no need to ask pardon for my unlawful absence from camp, since I carried in my arms forgiveness in the shape of an electric clock, excellent crockery, vacuum flasks, and sheeting, with promises of hidden treasure yet unmined.

Next morning I returned to the island with the officers, with a long list of items which had suddenly become essential and urgent requirements. They were all there, literally everything from needles to anchors. The primitive camp equipment gave place to the luxury of real china, bed sheets, clocks that told the correct time, and fur-lined boots. Radio sets, minus power units as yet undiscovered, offered long hours of potential pleasure, and electric fans that were mere curios at this time of year, were stored away by a far-sighted quartermaster.

I did not forget 'Captain' Hamaguchi. All she asked was a couple of dippers for bailing water, and a few yards of sheeting. That was all she, and her ship, needed to make her world a better place to live in.

Constant, daily use of these craft changed us from timid landlubbers who stepped gingerly about and clung fiercely to some support, to men with the lilt of old sea-dogs in their walk as they paced the deck, scanning the sky for weather signs, or sat at the helm or tiller changing course with an infinitesimal turn of the wheel that brought us fairly between two ships at anchor or round the corner of some island and dead ahead for our home port.

When weather permitted we went far afield. We lived on the edge of what is reputedly one of the most beautiful stretches of water in the world, the Inland Sea, containing Itsukushima, or, as it is usually called, Miyajima. This island, close to the mainland of Honshu, is one of the 'Sankai', the three famous beauty spots of ancient times. It was a bit disappointing on our first visit, like most much publicized places, and the impression was of gaudy shops tricked out for the benefit of tourists, of street-corner photographers with their crude, while-you-wait product, and inartistic souvenirs bearing the name of the place. But there were also shops that had, hidden away, some choice pieces of Japanese handcraft, and I managed to unearth two magnificent porcelain dolls, and a royal purple kimono, woven with a design of gold thread. These took more than half of ten thousand yen (208 pounds), souvenired in Borneo as worthless, and now found still to have currency. The balance went into a bicycle. All these purchases met a tragic end within a week.

Beyond the shops were beautiful cryptomeria trees, symmetrically trunked pines, and maples, and a brilliant vermilion Shinto shrine. Rising out of the sea before this stood the famous torii, 'the most perfect gateway in all the world'. Seen in the early morning wreathed with mist, it stirred deep-buried memories and visions of long forgotten fairy-tales. The shrine of Itsukushima draws constant streams of pilgrims from all parts of



Japan. The tutelary goddess is credited with a special fondness for shamoji - wooden rice spoons. In Senjokaku, 'Hall of a Thousand Mats', a temple devoted to Hideyoshi, Japan's great peasant statesman and hero, lie mountains of them, ranging from salt-spoon size to some that would do great service as galley oars. Tourists from all countries have added their tribute, and shamoji bearing American and even Australian place-names mingle with the multitude of Japanese ones. Swinging from the roof above them is an anachronistic aeroplane of early type, presented by some Japanese squadron seeking protection of the goddess.

Footgear is never worn by Japanese in these sacred places, and with the coming of the Occupation forces the shrine authorities have discreetly arranged at the threshold a large assortment of overshoes made of cloth. I have never known a soldier to enter without first slipping a pair on over his 'half-heavies'.

On the return journey a few sen purchases the privilege of feeding a plateful of fodder to the 'Divine Horse', an off-white beast confined in a cage-like stall, who wearily turns in a circle if the word '*Maware*' - turn around - is spoken. This he does even when presented with the problem of reconciling with the native tongue the highly-imaginative rendering of the word by Anglo-Saxons, who traditionally reserve the right to pronounce foreign words as they choose.

This first trip was done by sampan, and on the long three-hour voyage home I became the guest of the owner and his wife at a simple dinner below-decks. That evening I heard for the first time the story of the first atom bomb (civilian type) from an eye-witness. From this and other accounts heard later, I gather together the story that follows. No one person knew it all.

## Chapter 6

# 'Pikadon' - the Atomic Bomb

Hiroshima ken, or the province of Hiroshima, is the central one of a group known as *Chugoku*, 'the Middle Provinces'. This word is met with often throughout the province. The Hiroshima daily newspaper is the *Chugoku Shimbun*, and a bank and various companies and organizations in the district incorporate the word in their titles. Chugoku is also one of the names given by the Japanese to China, which is apt to confuse anyone not familiar with its local application.

Japan was once a heterogenous collection of *kuni* or small states, nominally owing allegiance to the Emperor and Shogun but in fact independently governed by feudal lords. War between these *kuni* was almost continuous in early days, and power sometimes overflowed from one to the the other. Hiroshima was a fusion of two *kuni*, Aki and Bingo, and these names are still used throughout the Prefecture to distinguish between two places of the same name: e.g. Aki-Saijo and Bingo-Saigo.

The city of Hiroshima (pronounced Hi rosh'i ma) is built on a group of islands formed by the seven branching mouths of the Ota River. The city probably derived its name from one of these islands, since the word means 'broad island'. It is enclosed almost on three sides by a curve of mountains, the open side facing the Inland Sea.

The hub of the city was a castle built by the old feudal lords. Around this, units of the Chugoku Regional Army had their headquarters. Ujina, the seaport, was a vast depot for provisioning and embarking troops from western Japan. It also boasted the largest rayon factory in Japan. The best oysters in the Orient grew prolifically in Hiroshima Bay.

There were a good number of Western style ferro-concrete buildings, a fine university, city hall, an eight-story department store, and an industrial museum, the show place of the city. And on the edge of the city was a very large brewery, producing an excellent light beer.

The pre-war population, was 300,000 odd, but during the war it dwindled to 250,000, mainly through evacuations for safety reasons. A greater number of people have migrated from Hiroshima to America than from any other prefecture in Japan. Many must have returned home, since there is a surprising number of people who speak good English, with an American accent. German Jesuits had established a novitiate a few miles from Hiroshima many years before 1945. They had worked hard at spreading the Catholic Faith and claimed a moderate number of converts. They had built a church in the middle of the city, and near by was a mission building.

Such briefly, was Hiroshima up to 5 August 1945.

The morning of Monday, 6 August 1945, was warm and oppressive with the intense humidity of the Japanese summer. The seven branches of the Ota River added their measure of moisture to the sluggish atmosphere. The semi-circle of hills behind the city shimmered in the hot air, and from the Inland Sea came no refreshing breath of sea breezes. An over-imaginative writer of a year later might have written, wise after the

event, of the doom-burdened air lying dark and heavy over the city, like the Dragons of the Middle Air over ancient China.

But the people below, having no foreknowledge, moved listlessly about, after a night of fitful sleep, broken by the sullen roar of 'B *san*', 'Mr B', American Super Fortresses on reconnaissance flights. Japanese often apply the polite '*san*' to anything they have learned to respect or to hate. Each time the planes appeared, Ack-Ack gunners from units grouped around the castle in the centre of the city fired a few rounds at them, indifferently, aware that the action was little more than a gesture of defiance, since the height at which the planes flew placed them beyond danger from ground guns.

Up to 6 August there had been many traverses over the city, but never had so much as an incendiary been dropped, so that the inhabitants had come to turn a shrugged shoulder and sink back into sleep. In the later days of the war, sleep was cherished as the most efficient method of conserving losses of energy insufficiently recouped from the scant war-time rations.

At about eight a.m. the low familiar rumble of four-engined bombers was again heard over the city. Troops crouched in slit trenches on the edges of the wide parade ground near the castle, whilst civilians thronging streets and trams on their way to work watched doubtfully as a parachute supporting a cylinder swung down over the Aioi Bridge, a little west of the castle.

A few moments later, at exactly eight-fifteen a.m., came the end of the world - the world of the 250,000 people of Hiroshima. Not all died - only about 100,000 - but their world flashed into dust in one brief bright instant. The unfortunates - those who did not die at once - lived on for a while in scenes that surpassed anything created by most imaginative mediaeval religious painters and writers, who sought zealously to portray the exquisite refinements of agony of the Christian Hell. Not that they should have felt discouraged. It took the highest development of twentieth-century culture to eclipse them.

A man who had been fishing lazily from a sampan in Hiroshima Bay suddenly found himself unaccountably struggling in the water. As he clambered back into his oddly-shuddering boat, he wondered if he had dozed off and fallen in. He looked around and saw in the direction of land a huge yellow cloud coiling and undulating above a great pillar, rather like a mushroom in shape. It occurred to him that one of the many ammunition dumps in the city had 'gone up', but he immediately dismissed the thought. He seemed to remember a sort of flash, but had heard no sound of an explosion.

There had, indeed, been a sound - a sound overwhelming and encompassing all other sounds - too vast to be audible.

Weaving laboriously on his single stern-oar, he at length beached his craft, and began walking through the strangely deserted streets of Ujina, three miles from the heart of Hiroshima, on towards the fringe of the vast yellow cloud. As he moved silently along the tram-tracks, passing an occasional deserted stationary tram, the street became sprinkled with people all moving dubiously and with vague misgivings towards the centre.

The fisherman turned the corner at the Government Monopoly Tobacco factory, and looking across the Miyuki Bridge, spanning one of the rivers, saw the base of the cloud for the first time. And out of it seeped slowly the horror that it contained, as if so much could not be held in such limitation of space.



At Meijuki-bashi, near Ujina Hiroshima, one hour after the atom bomb fell.

He saw first naked beings, bald of all hair, their skin all crepey blisters, or hanging in flutters like wallpaper from walls of old neglected houses. The eyes of some had melted into solidified trickles of tears on bones where cheeks had been; their hands fumbled in the air before them. Coagulations of blood streaked below ears, nostrils and mouth. No sound came from them as they wandered on through a ghastly dream world.

The parapet of the bridge had been neatly sliced off at its base. On one side it lay flat on the pavement. On the other it had been swept into the river. The bodies of people who had wandered blindly over the edge floated in the shallow water. Still figures lay here and there on the bridge surface.



Hiroshima after the bombing.

The fisherman moved on in gradually-growing stupor, struggling over increasingly numerous bodies, until he found himself one of a multitude that flowed towards a new focus - the Red Cross Hospital. Fanning out from this were tens of thousands of people, some in the last terrors of life, many in the mercy of death. They lay so thick that it was

impossible to pass without treading on them. The fisherman apologized to living and dead alike as he did so. The living cried out to him for various urgent needs: water, doctors, even death, anything to relieve their agonies. He tried to raise one or two, but recoiled in mingled bewilderment and disgust when their bodies shed sheets of skin where he had laid hands on them. They sank back and added their numbers to the growing dead.

Inside the Red Cross Hospital a handful of doctors, most of them injured, worked without knowledge of time or events in their hopeless unending attempts to give medical treatment to a torrent of pain-crazed creatures that threatened to engulf them time and time again. What few drugs remained were applied to only the desperate cases. The others lingered on for a while, then vanished among the accumulating corpses in the hospital grounds and in the streets, which showed hardly a bare spot anywhere.

Rain, generated by atomic fission, began to fall in huge drops. It beat down the yellow cloud and revealed fires rising from stoves of houses that no longer existed. As these fires spread slowly through the city, people began to search feverishly among the debris for friends or relatives. The screams and cries of those pinned or buried under the ruins rose higher and swelled in volume as the fires overtook them. Those who had been denied death bit their tongues as the fire swept over them and the hated life ebbed slowly from them with their blood. Mothers crouched beside their children, pinned beyond possibility of rescue under immovable masses of collapsed buildings, and as the fire approached, became possessed with the thought that their little ones might suffer as they themselves were suffering. Some of them gnawed through their children's wrist arteries, with no nice consideration of the moral aspect, and were rewarded with the relaxing of their tiny tortured faces.

A Japanese naval launch crawled up each of the rivers and blared encouragement to the survivors over loudspeakers. A hospital ship was coming, it said. Then it fled. For days afterwards the city was left to look after itself. There was no food and what water there was had become radio-active. This caused violent vomiting and ultimate death. The countless corpses lay unburied in the streets, and as days passed their putrefaction, accelerated by radioactive burns, added one more particular horror to the general scene. The promised hospital ship never came.

The group of German Jesuits in the mission building, less than a mile from 'the great flash', had all survived the holocaust - by a miracle, they like to say. Oblivious to injuries that were only minor by comparison with those surrounding them they doctored and ministered to believers and unbelievers alike, unhindered by differences in race, creed, or standards of behaviour. Consideration of these and thoughts on the originators of wars would have been merely blasphemies to add to this one great blasphemy. By their unexpected guidance and help many sufferers were able to find their way to the almost intact railway station to be removed by train to the country for such treatment as could be given by doctors with pathetically meagre supplies of drugs. Death followed many of them and claimed them on the trains and in remote villages.

A month later a typhoon tore through the province, and thousands who had begun to recover or who lay ill in flimsy improvised hospitals were swept away in a great flood

that cleansed the city with a thoroughness beyond the capabilities of its inhabitants. Then there came a great calm and peace.



Hiroshima - the A-bomb dome.

If you went to Hiroshima to-day you would see groups of tombstones springing fresh and clean from the rubble, like mushrooms from some rich decay. There would be hundreds of raw wooden barracks scattered among the ruins. Inside these barracks, if you condescended to look, you would see armless and legless children, schoolgirls, still living, with their chests showing muscles and sinews like a coloured plated in a book on anatomy; or the 'one sided beauty', a young woman hideous on that side of her body that faced the flash, beautiful as a flower on the other.

You would see children with such revolting disfigurements that you would want to hold them close to you, to protect them from their own ugliness, and to cover your own shame in thinking them so; perhaps identifying yourself or your own child with these poor maimed creatures, who could know nothing of war and its causes. You would perhaps rack your brains to find reasons to dissociate yourself from any responsibility for all this. Perhaps you might like to think that maybe these people (the women and children anyhow) did not suffer at that time, that they had transcended the limits of human agony, as the martyrs did. You might want to believe this because you, and your children, might one day find yourselves groping your own tortured way through the streets of another city, blotted out by another yellow cloud.

Before you leave Hiroshima you should go to a school, any school. As soon as you enter the grounds you will be swept away by a mad rush of children thrusting flowers or small gifts into your hands or pockets, or dragging you to a vantage point just to look at you and listen to you speak. There would be no fear or hatred of you there, just happy exuberance, abounding curiosity, and eagerness to understand you. If they spoke of the atomic bomb, they would not say '*Genshi Bakudan*', a cold, scientific term. Their word would be '*Pikadon*', the 'flash-bang', a merrier, warmer word - a word for children to use.

Your children would find much in common with these.

## Chapter 7

# Fire Within, Fire Without

We were getting pretty used to our new amenities by now. In the evenings most of us sat by radios branded 'Military Secret' in Japanese, listening to the local Japanese relay station of N.H.K. the only one audible. We made toast over electric toasters and kept an eye on electric clocks for 'lights out'. In bed, white sheets protected us from 'the rough male kiss of blankets' for the first time in years. All in all, we were reasonably content.

The officers, however, being of finer and frailer flesh, must needs have their sheets hemmed, and I was sent out to find someone with a sewing machine. In Japan, as elsewhere, the best thing to do in the circumstances was ask a policeman. They told me at the police station that the only machine in town was to be found in a near-by hotel, or more correctly a lodging-house, since beer or liquor is not usually sold in such a place, its primary purpose being to accommodate travellers. I was escorted there and handed over to the care of a pretty, bright-faced girl with a most infectious smile, and a carefree manner that made one feel at ease at once. She was about thirty, but, like most Japanese, looked a good deal younger. Something about her charmed me and made me wish, not without a certain quickening of the pulse, to see her again, and soon. She apologized that the machine was out of order, but she would be pleased to hem the sheets by hand, and could I come back for them that evening? I most certainly could, and would, I assured her.

I returned after the evening meal, which I only dimly remember eating, this time armed with a precious quarter-pound block of Cadbury's chocolate, the most sought-after of all the things we had to offer. The hotel had undergone a transformation. From a quiet, unpretentious place it had changed to a brightly-lit *palais*, with half a dozen brilliantly dressed women seated around low tables playing with *hana-fuda*, a Japanese variant of playing cards. As I sat on the edged of the raised floor of the *genkan*, or inner porch, a suspicion forming in my mind crystallized when a Japanese entered, and after looking at me dubiously, asked for 'entertainment'. One of the girls rose and led him upstairs. After what seemed to be an inordinately short time, perhaps a quarter of an hour, they reappeared and washed their hands in a basin. The man left with as little ceremony as he came, and the girl returned to the group at the table and resumed her hand at cards.

Disillusioned and disappointed, I sat musing at the deceptiveness of life, when Hiroko, my seamstress, appeared in a gorgeous kimono and obi, dazzling to the eye, and with a faint odour of strange perfume around her. She sank to her knees, bowed low, and said: "Won't you please come in?" and I, being human, and with six months of enforced tropical celibacy behind me, could not resist. She took by the hand as one would a child and led me up the steep stairs into a small, exquisitely clean room overlooking the street. She sat me at a small table, the only piece of furniture there, and left me, to bring refreshment. The little room, the atmosphere, the strange Oriental uncertainty of it all, entered into my whole spirit and utterly bewitched me.

Hiroko returned with hot sake, and the neatly-hemmed sheets. We sat, and talked and looked at each other, and I sank deeper into the spell. Outside light snow was falling,

and there was a warm red glow in the sky in the direction of our camp. Inside there was another warmth, older than fire, which drew greater strength from the hot sake before us.

This was so far removed from the sordid squalor, the simulated passion, and the demand for payment in advance inevitably associated with the oldest profession in the West, that no effort of mind could possibly relate the two. Surely here there was no place for shame. I know that I should not have felt any had I succumbed.

But the fire in the sky now streamed through the falling snow and stained the white eaves below, calling up vague misgivings. A discreet knock on the wall and a small excited voice outside confirmed them. 'Please excuse me, but as the camp of the Shinchugun is on fire...'

I hurried home in the all-enveloping red gloom, absently fingering the chocolate that was still in my pocket. Perhaps I had forgotten it; perhaps I had not dared to offer it for fear of being misunderstood.

In front of the fire station adjoining the police station, several firemen were working frantically to start an ancient fire engine. I realized then the futility of hurrying to prevent what was now accomplished, and hoped for the best.

The fire was nearly out when I got there. The first thing I saw was the officer's quarters, then the barracks alongside, both unscarred. Beyond them was a great glowing smoking mass. In the heart of this lay everything I had brought to Japan and had acquired since. Everyone else had made neat piles of most of their gear out of the reach of the flames. Mine only was not accounted for. The old Navy quip came to mind: "Haul up the ladder, Jack, I'm aboard." That night I could not remember much of what was lost. That came later. The beautiful dolls, the kimono, camera, binoculars, the gold locket with someone's hair in it, all the little treasured, irreplaceable things... Even now something occasionally occurs to me.

Near by was a Salvation Army jeep, always just where and when it was wanted. The Red Shield man was dispensing chocolate, biscuits and hot drinks to ... no, not Australian soldiers, but by common consent to grimy, smoke-blackened Japanese. A corporal said: 'I just don't understand these Nips. Our camp catches fire and they come from everywhere, form bucket chains, risk their lives saving furniture and gear (some were badly burned), and generally work like niggers to help us. Two of our chaps are in the Nip hospital with burns. The nurses came down for them with stretchers. Their own mothers could not have been gentler. Others have brought us clothers, blankets, and furniture, though God knows, they've damn littled themselves.'

'Can you imagine what it would have been like if it had been their camp in Australia? It would have been "Burn, you bastards, burn!" and we'd have stood well back and enjoyed it.'

'They're a funny people all right,' he said, and put a friendly hand on the shoulder of one standing at his side.



I slept that night in the officer's mess with a couple of other warrant officers who had lost most of their possessions. Under me was a pile of eight staple-fibre Japanese army blankets given to us by our Japanese neighbours. Over me were another eight, yet I swear I have never been so cold in my life as I was that night. No wonder Australian blankets were selling at anything up to five hundred yen (ten pound odd) on the Japanese 'black'.

The fire brigade's report on the cause of the fire came in next day. 'Owing to the overloading of the electrical system by a large number of appliances such as toasters...' The treasure-trove of the caves of Kanawa had been paid for, in full.

After a week or so we had sorted ourselves out again, and had moved into new quarters, a comfortable building opposite the police station, close to the main street of the town. Most of our army issues had been replaced, but the personal losses still saddened the few who had saved nothing.

I had not been away from camp since the fire and I wanted to go and see Hiroko, for the sympathy and consolation I needed, and knew I would get.

I went to the hotel with the same pounding heart, but there was no Hiroko. Two days before she had gone into the Red Cross Hospital in Hiroshima for an operation for a form of osteomyelitis. These bone diseases seem to be one of the commonest complaints in Japan, and were possibly of malnutritional origin.

That evening I went to the hospital, the scene of so much misery and suffering, and heroic selflessness on the part of a few doctors and nurses on Pikadon Day. Outwardly it looked clean and neat, with little superficial scarring. Opposite it the university stood squat and solid, its blank windows staring into the darkness.

All buildings immediately surrounding the hospital had collapsed in heaps of rubble. Only an occasional tall cylindrical chimney stood out oddly and unexpectedly against a background of debris half buried in snow. The darkness hid the rest of the city.

Inside, the hospital was shabby and depressing. The walls were cracked, and laths showed through the plaster. The rooms lacked doors, the floor covering. There were no doctors on duty, and a nurse I spoke to could not find Hiroko's name in the records. I might have known she would not have used her right name in the hotel. I described her to the nurse, and she smiles as she recognised her. We went upstairs and found her in a dingy single room with no door. She was just as cheerful as ever. The doctor had decided her condition necessitated an early operation, and she was being 'built up'.

I sat beside her and she told me part of her life story. Her husband had been a soldier and she had had no news of him until the war ended. She learned then that he was dead. During the war she had worked on munitions, but now there was nothing for unskilled women, especially widows. She went to the hotel as a kitchen-maid, for a few inadequate yen a month. Economic necessity, and pressure from the hotel-keeper, or procurer, to give him his proper title, had driven her to the first step. It was only 'part-time' with her, and she chose her own companions. This all seemed a little plausible and it flattered me to believe it, but I found later that it was true and that many a woman of

character and intelligence had succumbed in the face of similar circumstances. Before passing judgement, it is necessary to consider the place of prostitutes in Japan, where the profession has acquired over centuries respectability and condonation from many classes of society. There were many worthy people among their ranks.

Hiroko had kept her activities a close secret from all her friends and relatives, and I swore to reveal them to no one. On later visits I met her sister and a cousin, who had established themselves in the room and there did all her cooking and washing. The window-sill was always strewn with great white radishes and vegetables of all sorts. The meals were cooked over a portable charcoal brazier in the middle of the room. This was not normal practice in a large institution, but was now customary in the small one-doctor hospitals found all over the country, where relatives take the place of nurses in everything but strictly medical treatment.

A constant visitor was a tall, lean tram-driver, an old family friend. He was a likable person, and the three of us made a pretty cheerful group.

Just before the operation Hiroko asked me to take a note to the hotel-keeper, directing him to give me some of her kimonos. She sold these to pay the surgeon's fees, which left her without a sen. These girls were never able to save money, as they received only a fraction of the fees paid to them. This arrangement was deliberately planned to prevent them from becoming independent and giving up the life.

Whether because the operation was a difficult one or from lack of proper equipment, Hiroko went through a pretty bad time afterwards. I arrived one night to find the tram-driver being over her, bathing her chest with cold water as she lay in a fever. As I stood by the bed, one of the most revolting things I have ever seen associated with a woman occurred. From her open, panting mouth crawled a great worm, almost as thick as a pencil, and a couple of feet long. The tram-driver calmly drew it out and laid it on a sheet of paper with two others. 'They come out for food', he said quietly, and resumed the bathing. His devotion to her disturbed me, and I think it was then that I realized that he was in love with her.

As for the worms, the doctor told me they were common among Japanese and were introduced into the body through the practice of eating raw vegetables and fish.

Before she got well, I left Hiroshima for a month. When I returned she was gone. She had left a letter for me. It said she had married the tram-driver, and they had gone south to Kyushu to live.

I knew her problems were solved, and that they were happy, and the knowledge softened the blow.

## Chapter 8

# 'Wogging'

Up till now I had nothing to do with the black market, mainly because it seemed undignified and demeaning to barter with people to whom we were supposed to be shining examples of the new and better way of life we were imposing on them. Most of the others, the men personally, and the officers through their batmen, had been 'wogging' canteen goods ever since their arrival, chiefly to buy *sake* and beer, and to pay for their erotic experiences, all very costly in more than one way.

The fact that three or four tins of cigarettes or condensed milk brought the same price as one of Hiroko's beautiful kimonos offended my sense of the fitness of things, and her need for further funds sent me off one Sunday to Hiroshima Station with bulging overcoat pockets.

I boarded one of the trams that ran into the city from Ujina. The bomb had destroyed most of the rolling stock, and those that remained were dirty rattling wrecks that made an adventure of every journey. Holes gaped in the floor of this one and gave a full view of grinding, sparking driving motors as the vehicle swayed and bounced its way along tracks that floated and sprung on their beds. The tram was jammed tight with passengers even before it left the terminus, and a person other than a member of the Shinchugun stood little or no chance of boarding it en route. The motorman's compartment was not partitioned off, so that he had barely space to manipulate the controls with the press of passengers around him. He entered and left the tram through the front window.

We had not gone very far when the tram drifted gently to a stop, and the driver called out in an apologetic voice: '*Teiden de gozaimasu*' ('The power has been cut off'). I heard these words with maddening frequency in later days. It happened at least once a day; always, it seemed, at the most inconvenient time. We never paused to consider the miracle of there being current at all, with the city as it was. Sometimes it would be off for minutes only; at other times it was hours before it was restored, and one was faced with the choice of walking or waiting. On this first occasion I chose to walk, in order to get a close look at the ruins. I had only gone a hundred yards or so when the tram lumbered past, hardly visible under a mass of people clinging desperately to even the smallest projection.

Among the debris on all sides the rough outlines of building foundations were still discernable. Private houses were identifiable by fused crockery and cooking utensils, and heavy steel safes marked the sites of banks and industrial houses. On one such spot I raked out a handful of large oval coins of the Tempo era, some welded together by the blast. The university, town hall, library, and a few other ferro-concrete buildings that still stood added emphasis to the flatness of the vacant places. Where the castle had been for centuries was now a few scattered stones surrounded by a scummy, stagnant moat, half-filled with rubbish.

Traffic lights dangled awry at street intersections, and steel poles bowed low like bamboos in a hurricane. And from all this rack of atomic storm rose the columns of tombstones, sprouting clean and fresh in mushroom patches. The bodies of those whose names they bore were lost, unrecognizable ashes, burned, blown, and washed away by fire and flood.

The first sight of this 'atomic desert', as it is called locally, created a mood of deepest melancholy and despondency, and the fate of a hundred thousand men, women, and children weighed heavily on the spirit. But frequent visits dulled its influence, and I gradually grew to accept it almost as normality; so much so, that on a later visit to Tokyo, the great devastation in the northern suburbs of the capital made little or no impression.

The road led eventually to a rough trestle bridge, carrying the tram-line across one of the rivers. On the far side was the railway station and the shopping centre. People were crossing with apparent ease, skipping nimbly from sleeper to sleeper. I started off all right, not looking down too often, but the sleepers lost their even spacing and I lost the rhythm and suddenly found myself standing paralysed, half-way across, forty feet above the flowing water, waiting for a tram to come and finish me off. I tried not to show fear before passers-by, and feigned a tremendous interest in the minutest detail of the bridge's construction. After a while I began again with uncertain steps, and in an agonizing few minutes gained the other side, with a tram running dead slow behind me and the station and black market ahead.

The black market, or *Yamiichi*, was not just an abstraction in Japan; it was a very substantial reality. The Japanese made no attempt to conceal their activities, or their methods of operating, which were anything but subtle. Prices of most new goods were fixed by the Government, and the price was stamped on them. But there was no control on second-hand goods, and new articles in short supply were transferred to the second-hand market by the simple process of mixing them with a few old articles of similar type. A typical example was that of gramophone records, fixed price for which at that time was twenty-one yen. They could rarely be bought in the regular music shops, but large numbers were available on the 'second-hand' stalls, at anything from fifty to one hundred and fifty yen, according to popularity.

Opposite Hiroshima station was a wide expanse of shops and stalls, comprising the city's main shopping area.

A dozen soldiers alighted from the tram that had followed me in, and moved into the throng of people already gathered in tight little circles about other soldiers. New circles formed immediately around the newcomers and hid from the eye of any roving provost the contents of pockets and haversacks now spread on the ground. Prices had found a more or less fixed level, variations being a mere yen or two. A quarter pound of chocolate was fifty yen, condensed milk, highly prized by mothers, was sixty yen, twenty cigarettes were forty-five yen, and cigarette lighters (army issue), one hundred yen.

Some Australians with experience of the Middle East, or with vague memories of books about Chinese or 'native' merchants, tried for higher prices but seldom got them. Haggling is a practice not common to Japanese in normal times, but in their present need they were sometimes forced into fierce competition with each other for the limited supplies.

The spectacle of soldiers trying to drag the last possible yen from these bomb-stricken people, some of them mothers with pale weakly children, somehow repelled me, and with good resolutions gone, I returned to Ujina *sono mama*, as the Japanese say - in the same condition as I arrived. But Hiroko's need was still urgent, so I sought out a restaurant-keeper with whom I had struck up acquaintance. He was a man of some learning and a profound interest in the classical music of the West. In the early days when we were permitted to enter Japanese shops, he charmed away many a lonely evening with superb German recordings of Beethoven, Bach and the rest.

I told him of my problem and we came to an agreement, whereby he would buy at normal prices all that I had to offer. He had a wife and three children, and I think he welcomed the opportunity of supplying their wants without the risk of confiscation by the provosts or Japanese police. Like the average Japanese he could not understand why it was wrong to buy what soldiers had, after all, legally obtained. 'Why must I pay, for instance, fifty yen for very inferior locally-made biscuits, when I can buy from your soldiers infinitely better ones for forty-five yen?' was a question he put to me. Neither the provosts nor I knew the answer, nor was any attempt made by the authorities to explain it to us, though no doubt there were sound economic reasons for the regulations forbidding it.

Because of this arrangement between us, perhaps also because of his faith in our friendship, this man died within six months, and, even now, his wife and children are an unwitting and silent reproach, and their welfare is a burden on the conscience. Whether this should be so or not is a matter for individual judgement. The circumstances shall be told later.

## Chapter 9

# Elections

March had come, and tall weeds and grasses grew in wild luxuriance over the ashes of the city, hiding its desolation and giving the lie to the sages who said that nothing would grow here for fifty years. Vivid green shoots burst through the limbs of the trees lining the streets as if the already prolific spread of leaves offered insufficient outlet for the forces of growth within. Everyone waited expectedly for the blooming of the cherry.

The Japanese cherry tree bears no edible fruit, and is grown for its blossom alone. But it is much more than a mere flower to the Japanese. It is the living symbol of the great love of beauty in the Japanese character, a beauty seldom given audible expression, but whose outward manifestations are to be found in their arts and handcrafts, the arranging of flowers, and their religious and social ceremonies.

The glory of the cherry blossom endures for only three or four days, after which its pink-white fragrance vanishes at the touch of the spring breeze. Hence it became the emblem of the samurai of old, who chose to meet death on the crest of his career, rather than to wait for it in doddering decrepitude, all glory departed.

At the first breathless word of its blooming the people stopped their activities, donned their finest clothes and made for the spots where the cherry grew best, to the shrines and temples, to Miyajima and little villages in the hills.

In the midst of all this beauty, the powers that were decided to hold the first general elections under the new post-war dispensation. Just how the people would react, and how much they understood of democratic processes had to be measured and recorded, and polling facilities had to be established and supervised.

At headquarters of Occupation units throughout the whole country teams were formed and briefed and issued with distinguishing armbands and maps showing their areas of patrol.

An officer, a driver, and myself set off by jeep one morning, with our destination a mere shaded-in patch on the map. None of us had ever been out of the cities before (except for my train journey to Kisa). Our instructions were to set up headquarters at a Japanese inn in any convenient town, and to remain there until a fortnight after polling day. After close study of the map for arterial roads, we cut through Hiroshima city in a northern direction and ended up on a narrow rough track that threatened to peter out at any moment.

I inquired for the main road to the north and was told the disconcerting fact that this was it! The prospect of travelling fifty odd miles on such a surface was not very comforting, but it seemed that just here the road had been washed away by floods and the surface soon improved, though the road always remained narrow, and restricted on either side be the dykes of rice fields, farmhouses, and sheer mountains. It was utterly impossible to pass another vehicle, and when we did meet an occasional one - usually horse-drawn - it involved, on our part, a lengthy and tortuous retirement in reverse gear to the nearest

crossroad or farmhouse, in the very porch of which we would back, followed all the way by the discomfited Japanese, forever raising his cap and bowing, and apologizing for his very existence.

The whole countryside was alive with activity. Young and old, men, women, and children, worked with the zest of the spring season, hoeing and digging, without pause, to prepare the fields for the planting out of the young rice-shoots that grew green and brilliant in near-by paddies. The toilers' picturesque rush hats and head-cloths made bright flower-like patches among the brown, freshly turned earth. Here and there, in a rich man's field, a solitary cow leisurely drawing a primitive wooden plough replaced human labour.

The road began to follow a deep river made rapid-flowing by the melting snows. The bridges spanning it were crude replacements of ones swept away in the floods that followed the typhoon a few months earlier, and the round logs that formed the floor rolled and rumbled perilously as we crossed.

The narrow streets of villages we passed through filled with gaping peasants, many seeing for the first time the 'men with different coloured eyes' as they called us, since their own were always of the same brown hue.

A Japanese village is at first sight unalluring to the eye, the buildings being of unpainted weathered wood, the practice throughout the country. By contrast the farmhouses were fairy islands in the seas of fallowed fields, with glistening chocolate-tiled roofs and dazzling white walls, framed by feathery pines, evergreens, and the blossoming cherry. The older homes had thatched roofs, some mellowed with mossy growth, all superb examples of an ancient craft. We decided that our destination would be a town called Yoshida, just because it had the biggest name in the centre of our map, and presumably the biggest inhabited place. When we eventually arrived, we found it to be little different from or larger than the villages we had passed through, and it was a considerable distance from the railroad, which might have complicated supply and communication problems. But it was too late to change our plans, so we decided to make the best of it. We chose an inn near the police station, which was to be our communication point, for at that time it was part of the only reliable telephone system in the province.

The inn was called the 'Iroha', the name being roughly equivalent to ABC in English. Like all Japanese inns, the exterior was dreary and uninviting, and as we sat in the porch and went through the irksome business of removing gaiters and boots we regretted our choice of residence. Not for long, however, for inside were beautiful, clean rooms and underfoot the *tatami* mats were soft and comforting to the feet. On the wall hung the ubiquitous *gaku*, a framed proverb from the classics. This one read, 'A good guest is like a bright cloud.' No doubt it conveyed to a Japanese shades of meaning beyond our occidental intellects, but its friendly implications were reassuring, and the innkeeper more so. He was a man of about thirty-five with a quiet gracious manner and none of the hateful obsequiousness sometimes met with. We decided immediately that he and his young shy wife were 'good types', worthy of respect. His aged parents had

handed over to them the tasks of administration, while they sat *overhibachi*, glowing charcoal braziers, smoked their tiny pipes and dreamed of the old heroic days.

We were given a large bright room opening on to an inner garden about twenty feet square, an exquisite miniature of small trees, shrubs and rocks, but no flowers. But our minds were on other things at first. We wanted a bath, and we wanted to be well fed. As interpreter the responsibility for all such matters fell on me.

There was the maid of all work, Sadako, a girl of about thirty, with a sad face, even when she smiled, that hinted of tragedy not far back. She took the rations we had brought, conducted me to the bathroom, the first native-style one I had seen, and then left me. The bath was like a large copper, filled with steaming water, with a round wooden board floating on it. A fire burned underneath, and the board was apparently to keep one's feet off the metal bottom.

After undressing I tested the water with one finger, and thought I had lost it for ever, for the water was nearly boiling. There was no accessible supply of cold water in the room, and I was considering dressing again in order find some, with the door opened and Sadako entered with two buckets of cold water. A blush of shame stole over me from head to foot as I stood facing her. Not in the least perturbed and showing considerable interest in my form, she asked, 'Is the water too hot?' I answered emphatically that it was, and she emptied both buckets into the bath, thereby lowering the temperature by about one degree. 'I will bring you more,' she said, and left slowly with another thoughtful sidelong glance at me. I was nonchalantly holding a towel before me when she returned with two more buckets. She emptied them in, then announced that she would wash me. My protests were brushed aside like those of a naughty child and little wooden buckets of what seemed scalding water were dashed over me. I submitted to the inevitable.

When it was over, I was invited to enter the bath. I did so and never thought to survive the ordeal. I learned later the trick of immersing completely and at once, and then keeping perfectly still. This was the only way to mitigate the agony of the scalding water.

In Japanese baths the body is always thoroughly cleansed before immersion. The water, since it remains apparently clean, is seldom changed. In the ordinary household, where the health of members is known, the practice is probably hygienic enough, but the possibilities of infection from public baths is rather alarming.

Sadako handed me a clean cotton kimono, always supplied to guests, and I was soon back with the others, feeling very much refreshed, and keeping very mum about the bath. The officer went in next, and I waited with some relish to hear of his reactions, since he was a bit of a disciplinarian and rather addicted to formalities. His was a stronger spirit than mine, for the maid was bundled out of the bathroom after the first two buckets, and he bathed in the good old-fashioned uninteresting way.

I asked Sadako and Kazuko, as we rather familiarly began to call the host's young wife, if they knew how to cook European-style food. With just a bare hint of the affront they



felt at our doubts, they assured us they did, and we ordered steak and eggs, chipped potatoes and toast, the raw materials for all of which we had brought with us.

After two hours of famished waiting, the food arrived, beautifully cooked, but stone cold; the 'toast' was thoroughly warmed, with not a trace of brown clouding its snowy surface. We were hungry enough not to care overmuch, but we resolved on a few changes being made in the future. After dinner we sat around the *kotatsu*, with our feet under the quilt covering, and talked, or rather I did the talking, to the girls and our host. He produced one of the best collections of recordings of the jazz classics I have ever seen. Benny Goodman, 'Fats' Waller, Muggsy Spanier, Bunny Berrigan - they were all there, and a lot I did not know of - all American records.

Bedtime came and the mattresses were produced from behind the sliding doors in the wall and spread out around the *kotatsu*. We lay down with our feet under the quilt, resting on the grating over the hot coals. 'What about pillows?' I asked, and out they were brought, little wooden and bamboo ones, on which samurais and their ladies rested, not their heads, but their necks, not to disturb their elaborate coiffures.

'Make a note of it for to-morrow, Sar' Major; pillows, No 1 priority!'

Sleep came late that night for me. It was not through lack of a pillow, but because of that excitement stemming from the unknown that was all about us. At odd intervals of time the watchman could be heard in the silent streets, clapping his sticks together before calling the hour, and ending with '*Hi no yohin*' ('Be careful of fire').

Presently he, too, faded into a dream.

## Chapter 10

# Truly Rural

Because of the importance of the village as a unit in rural Japanese society, it would be as well to interpolate here a brief outline of its organisation and function.

The first political division of the nation is into *ken*, or prefectures, which approximate geographically to the English counties. Each *ken* is subdivided into *gun*, or 'regions', and these again into *mura*. (The *gun* was abolished as a political unit some years ago, but it still survives as a geographical and social entity.)

*Mura* is usually translated as 'village', although it has not the English connotation of the word. A *mura* is rather a group of settlements forming a tiny shire. It is the rural unit of government and is responsible ultimately to the Central Government through the Prefectural Administration.

The village is governed by a *soncho*, or 'village chief', his deputy, the *joyaku*, and a group of councillors, all elected by the local community. The *soncho* is responsible for the collection of taxes, supervision of elections, road and bridge building, and for the direction of the many diverse co-operative activities within the village. He receives only a small remuneration, insufficient to subsist on, and consequently is usually chosen from the wealthy members of the village. His is a position of high respect and considerable importance.

One of the functions of the Village Office is the keeping of *koseki*, the records of each family and its individual members. In the *koseki* are recorded all births, adoptions, marriages, and deaths. If a member is convicted of a criminal offence this is also recorded. When a girl marries, her name is obliterated from her family *koseki*, and entered in that of her husband's.

The Village Agricultural Association is an organization of farmers, who, naturally, comprise the great majority of the rural population. It is purely co-operative, buying and selling on behalf of members, and performing the functions of banking. Its experts advise on all matters pertaining to production.

Co-operative assistance is widely practised among rural Japanese. If through fire, flood, or other 'natural calamity' a man loses his possessions, the Village Office raises a levy of labour and materials and as far as possible replaces his losses. When roads need repairing, or bridges rebuilding, the Village Chief, after consultation with group leaders, fixes a suitable date, usually during a slack period. A person from each household is chosen, and a 'working bee' formed to carry out the appointed task. Whatever overseeing or directing is done is purely mutual and each person applies himself to the particular activity required of him.

The same procedure is applied by the Agricultural Association to the planting of members' crops, which is done on a rota system. So strong is this impulse towards mutual assistance that few would dare to evade their obligations. The greatest deterrent to this is the village office's power to refuse assistance and co-operation to the

transgressor. Since this aid is indispensable, there is no place for the rugged individualist in rural Japan. The few 'misfits' usually leave the district for the big cities and 'higher culture'.

In these demands for labour no class distinctions are made and the levelling produced by grouping together rich and poor alike for a common purpose is a great unifying influence.

This form of rural society has continued for many years in Japan, with little change. In the recent war years, when labour was short, contractors from the cities sometimes undertook such tasks as the transplanting and harvesting of rice, bring their own labourers with them. These contractors, along with brokers who speculated in rice, were universally despised by farmers, partly because of their sharp practices and lack of scruples, but chiefly because they produced nothing of value to the community.

Our first call in the morning was at the Yoshida Village Office, to make ourselves and our purpose known. It was only a couple of hundred yards, yet we had to go through the infuriating business of removing gaiters and boots before entering, and putting them on again a few minutes later. Of course, we did not have to do it, but as emissaries of the new, benevolent culture we could hardly have ridden roughshod, as it were, over native customs and the smooth floors polished by countless bootless feet.

Within a minute of our arrival we were drinking green tea with the village chief, served by a little girl who was too awed by our presence to speak or smile as she offered us the small handle-less cups and bowed her way out with an enviable grace. We were depending on the chief for the setting up and conducting of polling booths at suitable places, and for the dissemination of all relevant information to all in his domain. He assured us of his co-operation, and suggested schools and public halls for the booths, since these places had always been used in previous elections. For informing the people, there was a long-established and effective means - the *kairanban*. This is a circulating notice board, which is passed from hamlet to hamlet, where it is shown to the individual members by some responsible person.

There were about half a dozen village offices in our territory, and all had to be visited for the same purpose. For six days we travelled, returning each night to our inn, sometimes climbing narrow roads into wild mountain country, through snow storms that froze into rigidity the wind-shield wipers and had us peering round the glass into the icy air. But the unconquerable jeep never faltered, and carried us on, shaking the snow from the pine trees as we passed. Sometimes in the heart of the forest a tree screamed as electric saws bit into it, for electricity was everywhere, in deep valleys and remote mountain heights.

On such days we lingered over the charcoal braziers in the village offices, and sipped potent orange wine with the officials who, still clinging to the ceremony of other days, raised their cups to their forehead in gestures of respect before drinking. The fire of the wine crept through us, and gave us fortitude for the cold continuation of our journey. The driver, with admirable prudence, declined to drink, and received his portion in a bottle, to be consumed on his return.

But there were warm days too, when we idled along through the lowlands, where water-wheels groaned and creaked on their wooden bearings, pounding away at their task of hulling the barley that was spread in stone pits under the hammers. Each wheel bore the name of its owner and his price for the work it did.

We stopped often to talk to the friendly farming folk, and to girls who searched among the roadside grasses for edible herbs and spices to add interest to their insipid, monotonous diet.

In the highlands men with rifles or shotguns roamed the roads and forests. We wondered at first at this, until we inspected their armbands and papers which proclaimed them to be licensed hunters, who strove to suppress the rabbits and badgers that ravaged the rice crops in these remote regions. Some of their weapons were superb pieces of Krupp craftsmanship, or finely chased 'over and under' Remingtons, that made some of us regret we had not the right of confiscation.

There were also itinerant priests in their huge head-concealing hats, who led us to the mud images of Jizo and told us of him and his works. The god Jizo is many things to a Japanese but to the mother he is especially the patron saint of children. According to Buddhist legend, when children die they go to a river under the earth - 'the Dry Bed of the River of Souls'. There they must gather stones and build them into mounds to the end of eternity. Wicked demons constantly beset them, destroying their work as soon as it is completed. But Jizo, out of his deep love of children, has renounced Nirvana, so that he may always be with them, to drive away the demons, and comfort and protect the little ones in the sanctuary of his great billowing sleeves. The Japanese mother believes that by placing stones at the foot of a wayside Jizo, she can help him in his endless task of alleviating the toil of her lost child.

It is said that Jizo is a creation of the women of Japan, to whom the inexorable law of progress toward Nirvana, as expounded by the Lord Buddha himself, is an intolerable and unacceptable concept when applied to their beloved children.

That this is true I choose to believe, and I am not ashamed to admit that I have never passed the image of Jizo - and he is everywhere - without adding a few stones to the pile at his feet; not because I am superstitious, but as a gesture to the faith of mothers, and the humanity expressed in the legend.

Many similar beliefs that are unknown in the modern cities still survive in the country. By the crossings of mountain streams we often encountered a piece of white cloth, suspended by its four corners over the water on four stakes. Alongside there was always a tablet bearing the name of someone's dead beloved, and a small ladle, so that passers-by might pause a while, and, murmuring a Buddhist invocation, pour a ladle or two of water through the cloth. When the cloth is worn through by the pouring of water and the compassion of the pourers, the dead soul is released from its travail.

It is said that in some temples the priests offer for sale a fine fragile cloth at fabulous prices, for the souls of the rich, while for the peasant's few sen a coarse durable stuff is provided. Whoever looks after these matters in the other world will, I hope, make a poetic and appropriate compensation for this.

The Iroha had not seen much of us during these days, and at the end of a week we were glad to get back for a day's rest, to check over the results of our work and to count the spoils of our journey.

No matter the circumstances of those we had visited, there had always been some small parting gift - a picture, a doll, some wine or fruit, or perhaps only a flower or two from one of the girls. There was never a hint of hostility, only the courtesy and kindness due to a guest. And with such hospitality we could only think of ourselves as such. Some of them had lost sons or brothers in the war, but the foe had always remained impersonal and abstract, not identifiable with us. Nor could we liken them to the enemy we had known and grown to hate in the jungles.

Now, when we stopped to consider, we found ourselves uncertain of many things.

## Chapter 11

# Yoshida

On odd evenings at the inn I was invited to the room of the old man, no doubt to relieve the young people of the tedious task of beguiling away his long lonely hours. There was, however, no need for feigned interest or polite patience on my part, for he was still keen-witted and not at all crotchety, with a wealth of anecdote that lay just beneath the surface, readily unearthed by any who sought it. We sat on the floor and leaned on the warm porcelain hibachi in the centre of the room, and he smoked his tiny pipe, filling it with a pinch of tobacco, which was exhausted at a puff, and immediately replenished. I let him do the talking and he told me much of the history of the place.

Nearly four hundred years before, in the days of the old provinces of Aki and Bingo, all of western Japan was the domain of Mori Motonari, a daring and astute general. These very streets resounded to the tread of his armies and from his castle in the neighbouring hills he planned his conquests of the southern islands. The castle site is still visible, and his tomb is near by. There is a legend that when he lay dying at the age of seventy-five years, he called his three sons to him on his death-bed, and taking three arrows in a bundle, tried in vain to break them. He then broke them singly and died uttering the words 'Hyakuman isshin' - 'one million people, one spirit' - the Japanese equivalent of 'union is strength'.

I had seen this phrase often throughout the district and had wondered what its significance might be. It is used as a trade mark for many local products, particularly the justly famous pears.

With just a tinge of pride, the old man pointed to iron heads of arrows that had in some early battle penetrated the thatch and still protruded from the roof beams above us. I do not know how old they were - they might have been relics of the civil war of Restoration times - the 1860s - but it was charitable to accept their implied antiquity.

The next Sunday afforded opportunity to explore the town, unhindered by jeeps and 'foreigners' in uniform who spoke only English. It was a perfect spring day, officially a day of rest, but the farmers, like their Western counterparts, refused to interrupt the even course of their activity.

The main street was narrow and without wasteful footpaths. Most of the shops seemed to ironmongers and chemists. Japanese must surely rank high among the world's greatest consumers of patent medicines. As elsewhere, the same cure-all properties were claimed for the same mixtures and pills. One could also buy baked snakes, which were ground like coffee while you waited. Various miraculous properties were attributed to this repugnant stuff, and it seemed to have a ready enough sale.

Election posters covered every available space on walls and fences and proclaimed dates of meetings and the unique qualities of the candidates. Socialists, Liberals, and 'progressives' were in force, and there was one Communist, but the most numerous 'party' was Independent.

One incident occurred that irritated and disappointed me. In front of a chemist's shop was a large blackboard, belonging to the local branch of the newly-formed Young Men's League. On it in chalk was a message urging the youth of Japan to become aware of their newly-acquired responsibility for rebuilding their country, and reminding them of the opportunity that presented, for the first time, of taking an active part in the reconstruction.

The message contained two ideographs unfamiliar to me, and, after studying them closely, I copied them on a piece of paper and went back to the inn to look them up in the dictionary. I returned in ten minutes, to find the whole message erased. The misplaced suspicion and implied lack of faith in our purpose infuriated me and I stormed into the shop and demanded of its very frightened tenant who had done it. He replied that he had.

'Can't you understand,' I said, 'that our purpose here is to help you to do just those things that your had urged in that message? Unless the youth of Japan can feel that the future of their country is in their hands, that there is no longer the need for subterfuge and secrecy in matters political, there is no hope for them or their country, and the whole purpose of the Occupation will be defeated?'

These were words full of meaning in those days, and my sincerity so impressed him that he asked me to sit and tell him all I knew of democracy, its theory and practice. I discovered then how nebulous and confused were my own concepts of it under relentless questioning. I recalled afterwards something of a letter written by Francis Xavier, during his mission in Japan, to Ignatius Loyola: 'Send me only tried and patient men as teachers. They will be persecuted more times than they realize. At all hours of the day and night they will be called on to answer questions, there will be no time for prayer or meditation, no time for saying Mass, hardly time to eat or sleep. The curiosity of these people is such that they question and argue without knowledge of time. They must have answers, to communicate to others.

They are the delight of my soul.'

My reward was to see later that day on the blackboard a new and more inspired call to youth, in a firmer and bolder hand.

On a shelf in the hills outside the town stood the school, and its grounds offered an excellent point for panoramic observation. In a few minutes I stood there panting and gazing at the vivid fields and farmhouses beneath, and all around me was the fragrance of cherry blossom and cedars in the warm sun. Then from somewhere in the school near by a piano tinkled and a thrilling soprano voice began to sing:

'Du meine Seele, du mein Hertz,  
Du meine Wonn, O! du mein Schmerz.'

In such a place the words of Schumann's 'Widmung' were an unexpected and incongruous delight. When the song had ended, I stole over to the hall, and peeping in through the door found myself rather foolishly face to face with the singer. She was plump and vivacious, not the least bit shy, and obviously not country bred. We

exchanged names and brief histories. She was a student from the Imperial University of Music in Tokyo, and was here on holidays. Her father was a prosperous farmer in the locality who indulged his only child rather more than was customary with daughters in Japan.

On the piano was a copy of Somerset Maugham's *The Razor's Edge*, borrowed from an American friend. She apparently knew English sufficiently well to understand it, but like most Japanese was unable to cope with the pronunciation and would not speak it unless forced to.

She sang me songs in French, Italian and German, but confessed she did not understand the meaning of the words. I translated as best I could the lines of 'Widmung', with all their passionate burden, which disturbed her not in the least. She was a city girl, different from all the ones I had hitherto known. Her sophistication would have been considered reserve in a Westerner, but it contrasted oddly with the quiet charm of the maidens of Yoshida.

My next visit to the school hall, two days later, was in rather different circumstances. I had received an invitation from the chemist to hear his favoured candidate, an Independent, give his policy speech. On arrival I was ushered to a seat on the rostrum, next to the candidate. This confronted me with a delicate problem, since my attendance could have been construed as carrying with it the imprimatur of the Occupation forces. At somebody's urging I got up and made a bit of a speech, as non-committal as I could make it, about democratic principles and all that, then excused myself.

My presence may have made some impression, for the candidate was subsequently elected. Months later I met him on Hiroshima station, in morning coat and striped trousers, and he hardly deigned to return my greeting. He had become just another politician by then.

Polling day was a mad rushing from village to village and booth to booth to see that all was well, but there was nothing for us to add, or amend, so thoroughly had they ordered everything.

Women voted for the first time, for the first women candidates. Thirty-nine women were elected out of a Diet of four hundred-odd members. Interviews on the lines of a Gallup Poll later revealed that political parties had been ignored in the choice of members. With everything unstable and uncertain, and with no precedents to follow, votes had been cast for personalities; people who were known by their past acts, and not by their future promises. Many women candidates, particularly educationalists, were held in high regard.

Our work was now at an end, and it was time to return. We all, in our different ways, felt tugs at leaving these people we had grown to know and respect. I knew I would miss keenly the days in the kitchen, laughing, and being laughed at, by the women when I helped them with the meals; the lovely inner garden; our earnest host who would not believe that Japanese soldiers could commit atrocities, because he was incapable of it himself... no more would I hear the words: 'Take care of yourself', as we set out each morning, and 'Welcome home, how tired you must be', on our return, that had seemed to



us not conventional greetings but anxious concern for our well-being... No doubt the others had their thoughts too, for we were all very subdued on our last evening, when a small farewell party was given for us. The village chief came, and so did the singer. We exchanged parting gifts, and avoided the customary tips that are given even to the innkeeper in Japan. We couldn't have offered tips to these folk.

The singer offered me a long weighty cylindrical parcel which I guessed and hoped was a *kakemono*, or hanging scroll, rare in this part of post-war Japan. After they all had all gone I opened it up and found a dozen eggs neatly arranged in a row. Half of them were broken, too.

## Chapter 12

# Devil's Language

Ujina was rather alien corn for a while after a month of lotus-eating in the country, but the rest of the unit had become well consolidated. Its members had explored every street, shop, and wharf in the town, and necessity and a remarkable intuition had guided them to most of the sources of sake and beer. To raise funds for buying these, they had established in the lobbies of the local 'live' theatre a *Yamiichi* - 'dark market' - where native and visitors alike congregated, bartering and haggling for their diverse needs, in scornful indifference to the clashing of swords and the shouts of samurais in the fourth-rate stage performance that went on unceasingly.

Allied cigarettes, condensed milk, and chocolate changed hands at twenty times their cost price, and the money received bought cheap-jack silk handkerchiefs and fans, or bottles of beer, on villainous terms.

In these transactions, dog ate dog, and no quarter was asked or given.

Because of the total lack of sugar in Japan at that time sweetened condensed milk was the most sought-after commodity. Not much of this was available to the troops, however, and some offered instead the easily obtained unsweetened milk in an identical can. This subterfuge was soon discovered, and thenceforth the contents of the can were always tested before buying by shaking, the thinner unsweetened milk thus revealing itself. The troops countered by shaking the tins so vigorously immediately before sale, than an internal froth was created that defied detection.

But soldiers, like other mortals, do not live by bread alone. The season was spring and they were all young, so that it was inevitable their minds should turn to the contemplation of the *musume*. It was not long before most of them had, by devious devices, involved themselves in varying degrees with one or more of the local lasses. These innocents were accosted in streets, waitresses were cajoled in cafes, while the less enterprising swains were pursued by those girls who had tasted of the white man's exotic fruits with American predecessors. Physical characters were not important to most girls, though a man with a big nose was deemed handsome, whatever other defects he had. But excessive hairiness placed him in the outer darkness, for the smooth-skinned Japanese have secretly abhorred the 'hairy foreigners' since their first advent centuries ago.

With the professional ladies, money, gifts, and gestures overcame all language barriers, but the shy and virtuous ones had to be courted carefully and under great difficulties. Mutual ignorance of a common tongue confined communication to a few fragments of both languages, ruthlessly mutilated.

As romances budded and blossomed, the girls began to write love-letters in their own language to their chosen suitors. The recipients, after a brief bewildered contemplation of them, brought them to me and pleaded for translations. So I took and read them. Sheltering behind their lover's ignorance of Japanese they poured into these letters all

the surging flood of passion and the craving for romantic fairy-tale love that had for years been dammed up in their hearts by rigid conventions, and which now had found an outlet.

Some of the letters were pure poetry, with a beauty that was deepened because its meaning at times could only be half comprehended, only guessed at, by an alien reader. And this alien was stirred and inspired to produce translations whose expressiveness excelled anything he had ever managed to create in his own sentimental youth.

After a time he became conscious of a certain similarity in the letters. Surely not more than one person could express their reaction to a moon-lit bay in just that same way? Such passages as 'If it were death to love, I should wish to die ten thousand times over,' sounded a familiar bell, and were gradually recalled as lines from some of the anthologies of classical Japanese poetry - the *Manyoshu*, 'Collection of a Myriad Leaves' and others.

But the sincerity of the writers was not to be questioned because of this. Why should they not, aware of their own inadequate talents, search in the works of the masters of poetic expression for moods that matched their own? The ability to recognize the quality of the words they chose was in itself a sign of the divine spark within.

The soldiers' answers to these letters were pretty crude efforts by comparison, and consisted for the most part of well-worn words and phrases. Nor did they gain much in the process of conversion, by one who only vicariously experienced the emotions that inspired them, into a language in which the intention was to be implied rather than stated. Perhaps they were redeemed from banality by the mere novelty of the occidental constructions and mode of presentation.

There were times when a lady's passionate outpourings were not reserved for one alone, as her letters, presented to me by more than one man, revealed. Nor were all soldiers as constant as their protestations seemed to indicate. My position being a combination of father-confessor, postmaster, and censor, all their secrets remained inviolate, though it must be admitted that the translations of 'two-timers' lacked the warmth and earnestness of those of the single-minded.

In spite of the great limiting disadvantage of not knowing Japanese, few soldiers made any serious attempt at a systematic study of it. All of them picked up a few phrases and words in everyday use, but only a handful went further than this. The chief reason was no doubt because the language, especially when written, appears at first sight terrifyingly difficult, devoid of all form and reason, and the committing of it to memory a feat encompassable only by mental freaks. This is a false impression however, and an earnest student soon begins to recognize the inevitable pattern of it.

The Kanji script was brought to Japan from China in the early days of the Christian era. The Japanese and Chinese ideographs are therefore identical, though not nearly so many are in common use in Japan as in their land of origin.

As far as it is known, there does not appear ever to have been an indigenous form of Japanese writing, although it is believed that the early tribes that settled there may have

brought some forms of writing with them. This absence of a native script seems rather remarkable. The fact is, however, that no records or examples of proved authenticity exist.

The ideograph in its original form was essentially a pictorial representation of the object itself. An abstract idea, such as love or hate, was expressed by depicting an object, or group of objects, associated with, or suggesting, the emotion or concept.

In course of time the ideographs acquired simplified and conventionalized forms, for the sake of convenience and speed in writing, and for easy and universal understanding. No doubt early China too had its impressionists, whose concepts of everyday things like trees and clouds deviated to such a marked degree from the 'normal' to be incomprehensible to the general. Centuries of scribes and Philistines have reduced the ideographs to forms that are constant within narrow limits, recognizable by all.

A mouth, for example, has become a simple square instead of the original oval shape. A man has been reduced to two strokes that barely suggest the human figure. From 214 of these simple elements has been built up more than 40,000 characters, some of which are highly complex, but once the 214 elements are memorized, ideographs lose much of their mystery, and a pattern is readily recognized.

The origin of the composition of most ideographs is unknown, and the many, varied, and complicated explanations offered are valuable only as aids to memorizing them. Some are easily comprehended, as the ideograph 'to be fond of', which consists of two simple elements, a woman and child side by side. Some others are exceedingly fanciful, however. It is not readily obvious, for instance, why a hand, three mouths and a tree signify chastity.

While the written language is less formidable than first impressions suggest, the converse might be said of the spoken language. It appears to have no affinities with any other tongue, with one unexpected exception, the Bantu of Africa. It has no genders, no plurals, and no definite article. This very simplicity snares and deludes. 'Prepositions' are called 'post-positions' since they follow, not precede, the words they govern. Pronouns are rarely used and first, second and third persons are usually distinguished by the degree of politeness of the words that accompany them. If a man, for example, uses a polite word for 'wife', one can be sure he is not referring to his own, but to yours, or someone else's!

The honorific prefix O is much used, and gives rise to the stupid practice of placing 'honourable' before words in translations into English. In many cases this honorific has long lost its significance, as in the word for stomach, Onaka (honourable inside).

In animated conversation, the European linguist, unless he strains a very attentive ear for the polite inflections, finds it very difficult to discover just what is happening to whom. The spoken language is made more mystifying by the huge number of words pronounced exactly the same. A simple word like 'cho' appears in one dictionary under eighteen different headings each with its own distinct ideograph. Most of these ideographs are again capable of expressing several different meanings. This confusion can be attributed in part to the fact that when the Chinese characters were adopted their

Chinese sounds were retained and used in conjunction with the Japanese synonyms. The distinguishing Chinese 'tones', however, were discarded.

Some words when spoken may have two conflicting meanings. The word '*koso*', when applied to guns, can mean either breech-loading or muzzle-loading, but a glance at the written characters immediately solves the problem. There is one character, however, which can mean either to stand still, or to wander about!

It is not unusual, during a conversation between Japanese, to see the speakers drawing ideographs in the air before them, to clear up some ambiguity.

It is thus easily seen why Roman letters have not been substituted for the Chinese characters.

Personal names create new difficulties, since the pronunciation of a man's name does not necessarily indicate how it is written. Consequently visiting-cards are in wide use, but a visiting-card alone gives no infallible key to the pronunciation of the characters on it.

The abundance of homonyms affords unequalled opportunities for the punster, and the pun is sanctioned by centuries of poems and epigrams by emperors, lords, samurai and common folk.

A current pun may be quoted as an illustration. A man who evades payment of train or tram fares is often derisively called '*tadanori*', the name of a famous historical figure. But if written with different characters, '*tadanori*' can also mean 'free ride'.

By contrast, the pronunciation of Japanese is extremely simple. Several English sounds are missing. There is no 'v' or 'er' sound, and the average Japanese renders a word like 'verb' as 'barb'. The sound of 'l' is also lacking and 'love scene', a typical expression adopted from Hollywood publicists, is rendered as 'rub-sheen'!

The speech of women is much purer and more melodious than that of men, as they rarely use vulgar colloquialisms or foreign or technical terms. A multitude of words from other languages, especially English, have been assimilated into Japanese, though not always do they have the same meaning. A 'pipe' for instance, is a cigarette holder, an 'apron' is a smock, a 'playing card' is a 'trump', a 'machine' is always a sewing machine, and 'sauce' is Worcestershire sauce.

Extraordinary abbreviations of adopted words are sometimes met in newspapers, as in '*zenesto*' for '*zeneraru storaiku*' (general strike), and General MacArthur is often irreverently shortened to 'Ma'!

The early Christian missionaries may perhaps be excused for asserting that the Japanese language was invented by the Devil to prevent dissemination of the Gospels!

## Chapter 13

# The Hall of Victorious Return

The fierce summer sun brought waves of quivering hot air from the American-built Liberty ship as its half-exposed screws threshed up the Inland Sea. Mute men in ragged uniforms drooped over the rails at the bows, and scanned the sea's confining hills and the hilly islands, here verdant and vivid to their tops with young sweet-potato plants, and there golden with ripe barley stubble.

Beneath their feet a long line of letters ran along the ship's bow, a name familiar to readers of adventurous fiction - *James Oliver Curwood*. To the men above, it signified nothing - in any case, they were past adventure. This was 'the most beautiful waterway in the world', but they had no eyes for it either.

Sometimes the ship passed close to a lone fisherman, standing in the stern of his small craft, tiller-pole between his legs, as the small engine thrust it forward in smooth jerks. He did not raise his head, but stared before him, lost in his own small world, in which fish stood higher than passing ships.

An instinctive pressure against the tiller-pole to swing his boat head-on to the wash of the overshadowing vessel was the fisherman's only sign of recognition of its existence, and the repatriates on board passed in silence.

As the ship neared Ujina Bay, and the tall smokeless smoke-stacks of the ruined rayon factory showed dark against the lighter hills beyond, the screws beat more slowly, and *James Oliver Curwood* glided silently to anchorage among his fellows, *Max Brand* and another, unremembered, straining gently with the ebbing tide at their mooring bouys, as if anxious to return home to America, from where they had been sent for their special task.

The rattle of anchor-chains roused hundreds of men lying on the hot decks, and as they heaved to their feet, the mountainous burdens of gear and equipment on their backs, and on which they had rested, rose with them. The brown-skinned crew - there were no white men aboard - made ready with ladders for the approaching barges. A little later the first of these was alongside, and the men clambered gingerly and awkwardly down the side. Laden to the gunwale the barge moved off shorewards, and its occupants struggled on to the pier and trod again, after long absence, the sacred soil of their homeland.

The fierce sun distilled tarry, woody odours from the planks beneath their feet, and under the weight of a surging emotion and the load on their backs, they sank to their knees on the boards. Quickly and gently, sturdy, placid-faced Japanese nurses, in their little round Red Cross caps, relieved them of their burdens, and raised them to their feet. Stooping in front of the weak ones, the nurses took the tired arms over their shoulder, and bending forward bore them off to shelter from the heat.



Nurses at the Quarantine Hospital, at the Repatriation Centre, Ujina.

At the head of the pier stood two tall wooden columns, and down their sides ran bold characters: 'Welcome home!', 'Thank you for all you've done!' and 'Don't give in!' A little farther on the repatriates found themselves face to face with two ancient stone lions from China, crouched on either side of the entrance to a splendid hall. And by the doorway of the hall was its name: Gaisenkan - 'The Hall of Glorious Return'. The cruel irony of it half shamed them from entering, but inside was the cool of Heaven, and a place to lay down their loads. They dropped them anywhere - it didn't matter much now; there was nothing worth stealing any more.

When their eyes had become accustomed to the cool gloom, white patches on the walls shaped themselves into a bewildering confusion of notices, telling them of the ordeal of examinations, filling-in of forms, inoculations, and medical inspections that they must endure before they left the precincts.

After a little while they were marched off to a great barn-like building, whose walls, floors, and furniture were blanketed with a covering of fine, grey dust. Nurses in masks stood beside chattering pumps and held instruments like giant fly sprays heavy with D.D.T. powder. As the men halted before them the nurses thrust the nozzles down their open shirt necks, pressed triggers, and great blasts of powder-laden air rushed inside their clothes and around their bodies. 'Do not wash for twenty-four hours,' the nurses said, as the men moved on, but the irritation of it on their hot skins drove many of them to the nearest taps. They were lead back to their gear, while Allied soldiers searched for weapons, drugs and contraband. Brown eyes watched timid and anxious, fearful that the few worthless treasures that remained to them might be confiscated. But all that had been done with, and after a dusting with D.D.T. it was their to do with as they wished.

Inoculations followed. Coldly efficient nurses, with the callousness of long practice, jabbed them with numerous hypodermics, and sent them on with swinging, smarting arms to the doctors and specialists.

After medical examinations there was searching through records and interminable documentation. As they passed, from building to building, little bright-eyed girls, volunteers from the near-by town, gave them ladles of water for their parched throats, and apologized for the heat. Each of the hundreds received the same greeting, with the

same sympathetic smile. 'Go kuro sama deshita', 'Thank you for all you've done.' To the guards at the doors, the scene suggested the crush in a theatre foyer, with the girls calling, instead of 'tickets please', a greeting whose meaning and original sincerity had become lost in monotonous repetition. Occasionally a nurse received a word of advice or instruction from a guard, which she acknowledged with a shy smile and polite bow, and the repatriates marvelled at the sight of Japanese girls moving, at ease and unafraid, among the barbarians they had been taught to hate so intensely.

Such was the ordered efficiency of the Japanese Repatriation Bureau that the whole process of demobilization took only a few hours, and when the repatriates first ashore had filled in their final form, and had received a one-way railway ticket for home, there were others crowding at their heels to take their places. They picked up their gear and moved out into the blinding sun, free men at last.

Free to take their place in a new, frightening, and unfamiliar world, or to try to find a new place if the old one were gone. Free to live among people who, in their hearts, and against their natural feelings, begrudged the food for these extra mouths, that would deplete further the nation's meagre rations.

There was another reason, too, why the soldiers' gaze sometimes met sullen faces among their once hero-worshipping kinsmen: They were no longer conquering heroes, but soldiers defeated in war - men without honour in their own, or any other, country.

They sat on their baggage in the scant shade, and pondered on the past and the future, until moods of utter dejection settled over them. No one watching them could fail to stir feelings of pity for them, and an Allied interpreter went among them, offering a cigarette here and there, and begging them not to rise, as they had been told to do, in the presence of Occupation Forces. They almost feared to take the cigarettes, as if it were some form of torment to humble them further. When they did take them, they held them up to their foreheads, and receiving a light, drew in long, ecstatic gusts of smoke. There were only a few cigarettes to give, and these disappeared in a couple of minutes. The more fortunate shared theirs with their comrades, and all felt the world to be a little better place.

The interpreter watched and wondered about these men, and where they had come from. The label on one said 'Borneo', reviving not-so-old memories... first glimpses of Sandakan from the air, the bomb-pocked aerodrome... the negotiating of surrender terms in the black 'Cat' riding in Sandakan harbour, packed with Japanese service chiefs and four Australians, while on shore, a few yards away, waited three thousand fully-equipped Japanese troops, doubting their Emperor's call to capitulate, and waiting on a word from their commanders for their next action... Along the road from Sandakan to Ranau, the bursting of rubber-nuts in the plantations crackling like distant machine-guns, and in the ground beneath the bodies of two thousand British prisoners...

Burma, Thailand, Singapore, the labels conjured up scenes of horror, and ultimate degradation of human beings... But there were no marks on these haggard, impassive faces to show what manner of men they were, or had been; only the dark uncertain



future was there, holding perhaps expiation of evil deeds for the guilty, and martyrdom for the innocent.

When they had rested, they took their bundles to the railway station a few yards away, ready for the trains that would come to take them to all parts of Japan, to their homes. Those who had long hours to wait boarded trams and went into Hiroshima. Their uniforms did not distinguish them from the crowd, for many denizens of the 'atomic desert' wore similar clothing; had in fact, nothing else to wear.

But the soldiers sensed a difference, a tangible separation from the other passengers, and they spoke only to each other quietly, until the first sight of the disaster crushed all speech from them. They stared like country bumpkins on their first visit to a city, at scenes that had long become commonplace to the inhabitants.

When, hours later, they boarded trains at Hiroshima station, the shame of defeat was a little more endurable and submission more understandable in the face of such a force whose power they had just witnessed.

Those who returned home in later months were not so neglected and friendless. The Home Government had by that time made the nation aware of its responsibility to the soldiers they had feted and glamorized in victory. Posters and placards everywhere proclaimed: 'Repatriates are your brothers. Do not forget they offered their lives for you. Give them your sympathy.'

Japanese civilians, too, returned home. Children who had never seen their parents' homeland were nervous and ill at ease among their unfamiliar surroundings, and their parents quailed at the prospect of a life of austerity, so different from the ease and comfort abroad.

Some time later, a letter came, bearing the postmark of Kisa, a name that by now was little more than a small memory lost in a crowd of greater events. The letter was written in beautiful picture-like characters, as only an artist could have written. Here is part of it:

*Dear Mr Clifton,*

*Even in the cold Japanese winter, the plum and cherry trees blossom, the air gradually becomes warm, and mountain, field, and sea take on the hues of spring.*

*I suppose that you who are not accustomed to our Japanese climate and customs are suffering many inconveniences, but are you well and busily working?*

*I left Jesselton on 22nd March in a ship called the Phoenix and arrived in Japan on the 29th. The waves were a little high, but the ship was fast and we had a comfortable voyage.*

*The Southern Cross disappeared, and Orion from directly overhead sand gradually to the south, and it became very cold in the ship. I put on all the clothes I had, but they were all 'hot-weather' garments, and did not help much.*

"Time of Fallen Blossoms" by Allan S. Clifton

*On arrival in Japan, I saw at once the 'Rising Sun' badges on the hats of Australian soldiers, but among them were no familiar faces, although I looked very carefully to see if you and Sergeant Sissons, who had been so kind to me on Labuan, were there.*

*On the 31st March, after five long years, I rode once again on a Japanese train, and looked once more upon Japanese scenery. The great joy that I felt changed to a sad loneliness at seeing the ruins of Hiroshima.*

*I returned the next day to home of my family. I thought that the delight I felt at the time was the same as that of returning Australian prisoners whose pictures I had seen in Pix. My wife told me of how you had come, even to this distant, inconvenient country place, to tell her of my happy circumstances in Labuan, and to give her my letter.*

*I was deeply thankful to hear this. I told my wife of the many kindnesses I had received in Labuan from you, Captain Wright, Lieutenant Bryan, and Sergeant Cox. My wife heard with great gratitude. By this letter I thank you from my heart. Soon I shall go Kyoto to begin life again. When I am established there I shall let you know. If you have some spare time, please come. Kyoto and Nara are representative of the true beauty of Japan, and shall be your guide.*

*I pray that this happy day comes soon.*

*Nakase.*

## Chapter 14

# Honeymoon for Three

I should have mentioned Harry before this, I suppose. I first knew him in Borneo, and he came on to Japan with us. He was about thirty-five, and there was more of his Irish father in him than of his English mother. He was a medical sergeant and by nature a Good Samaritan and a champion of the underdog. I think he chose the medical branch for the opportunity it gave him of relieving pain, instead of inflicting it. His duties included treating the camp's Japanese staff for injuries incurred at work, but the number of 'strangers' who paid him more than the usual respects when he passed through the streets hinted at an extensive surreptitious practice outside, and it was rumoured that vitamin tablets and packets of sulphanilamide that were scorned and discarded by us had saved the lives or health of many a Japanese child, old man, and woman.

He first met Terumi on one of her evening walks to Ujina railway station. She was twenty-two, and very beautiful, with a classic oval face - one the Japanese call a 'melon-seed face' - that made you feel that beauty, after all, did not belong to time or country, but was timeless and universal.



Terumi.

On those evening walks Terumi was always accompanied by her two small sisters. Harry thought at first that she was their mother. The children completely charmed him, and he used to give them pieces of chocolate or toffee each time he saw them, which was often. I was with him one evening and talked to Terumi for a while. She fascinated me too, because of an extraordinary resemblance to a girl I had once known and admired, if nothing else. She told me she was the daughter of a man whom I immediately recognised as a high official of the Prefectural Administration, and with whom I had frequent official business.



Terumi's young sisters.

He was of the old school, forthright and intelligent, just and austere. Like most of his class and generation, he adhered to the old formalities, and Terumi and an elder sister were never to be seen alone, whether inside or outside their home. Whenever Harry and I visited the family, often on fictitious official calls, Terumi was never left alone in a room with us. If her father had to leave even for a few minutes, he always called for another member of the family before he excused himself.

So quickly did their friendship develop that one spring day Harry took Terumi and her two little sisters for a trip by launch on the Inland Sea. Her father was absent on Prefectural business, and her mother, perhaps remembering her own romance-less youth and marriage, was a ready conniver. What happened that day I do not know, but thenceforth there was a closeness between them that words never conveyed; only the glance and the touch of lovers bound irrevocably.

One summer evening I was having tea in my small room, where once a sergeant of the Kempeitai slept, when Harry came in and sat beside me on the bed. I sensed what was coming.

'I want to get married,' he said..

'To Terumi, I suppose?'

'Yes. Do you know how it is done. I mean officially?'

He was thinking of the so-called marriages that had taken place between some of our soldiers and their Japanese *koibito*. 'I must have it so that it will be binding, and there'll be no doubt in Terumi's mind of my intention.'

I sat back and thought for a moment.

'First,' I began, 'I had better give you some idea of the form of the Japanese marriage contract. I think I've told you before of the *koseki*, which is the history and record of the

Japanese family and its members. This is kept at the village office or the municipal office in the the place of a person's birth. When two Japanese get married the wife's name is struck from her family's *koseki* and is then entered in the *koseki* of her husband's family. The reason for doing this, and the date, are written alongside. A copy of this transaction is forwarded to the Prefectural office. This is all the State requires. As in our own country, any religious ceremony is purely a matter for the participants, and is not an essential part of the contract.'

'But what happens in the case of a foreigner, like myself, who has no *koseki*?'

'Before the war, I knew an Englishman who had married a Japanese girl. The procedure then was to receive from the village chief who performed the ceremony a copy of the contract. The parties then presented themselves and this copy to the British Consul in Japan. If he was satisfied that the couple were legally married *lex loci*, according to the law of the land, he forwarded the document to Somerset House in London, where records of all births, marriages and deaths are kept, and the marriage then became law and the Japanese girl a British subject.'

This troubled Harry a bit.

'But at present there is no British consul, and in any case, you know I daren't breathe a word of it to anyone but you. Above all, her father must not know, as I'm certain he's too conservative to approve. He would probably tell someone at B.C.O.F. immediately, and you know what they would mean - I'd be on the first boat for home - and demob.'

'I know. That's a problem we have got to overcome. Will you leave it with me for a day or two?'

So Harry left it with me.

I decided to take our problem to the fountainhead: the *Soncho* of Terumi's native village. This was a small place in the heart of Hiroshima Prefecture. The *Soncho* was a middle-aged pleasant man, and received me with the usual courtesy and hospitality. After a cup of green tea and a salty biscuit, we lit cigarettes and I took him into my confidence, urging him to profound secrecy. He was thoughtful for a few minutes, and then said that there were many things to be decided before he could pronounce judgement. First, was Terumi of legal age, and therefore beyond parental control? Was she single? A glance at her family's *koseki* in the old earthen fire-proof storehouse at the rear of the village office assured us that all was well here.

Then the man. Was he similarly eligible to marry?

This might have proved very difficult, had not I suddenly thought of that precious possession of a soldier, his next best friend to his rifle - his paybook, wherein is recorded among other things his date of birth, and his next-of-kin, and consequently, his marital state. After careful consideration of this, the *Soncho* agreed to accept it as proof of Harry's eligibility.

We now laid our plans. Terumi pleaded a slight illness - there was the shadow of the dreaded haibyō, tuberculosis, over her family - and asked to be allowed to spend the rest of the summer with her mother's sister, in the village of her birth. We had already met her aunt, who had the farmer's instinctive dislike of government officials and had never accepted Terumi's father as a useful citizen. From her, certainly, would come no whispers of our secret. From now on, her home was to be the rendezvous for meetings between Harry and Terumi. There was nowhere else. We did not look into the future beyond the end of summer.

The following week-end, we got leave together, and Harry and Terumi were married according to the laws of Japan. The *koseki* of the house of Terumi Hirota no longer bore her name, and the only formal record of her existence reposed in Harry's pocket, against the time of the signing of the peace treaty and the appointment of the first post-war British Consul.

Terumi had chosen the place for a honeymoon - a refuge for the mid-summer heat in the cool of the mountains. It was not very distant in miles, but it involved long slow hours and train and road travel through mountainous country. Terumi came to the station in a black frock - the first time I had seen her in Western dress, and she exhibited a figure rather unexpectedly exquisite. A Japanese lady's legs are not the feature one dwells upon, and her knees rarely make each other's acquaintance, but keep an awkward distance forever. But Terumi could have walked with ease with a visiting-card between her knees as the geisha do in their early training.

There was no 'exclusive use' carriage on the train, so we rode in the *shasho shitsu*, the conductor's compartment, at the rear. It was a favourite spot of mine, on any occasion, for all kinds of persons came and went: farmers, railway-men, and common folk, with many an original character among them.

Harry and Terumi sat close to each other, silent and thoughtful, still without the gift of a common speech for everyday intercourse. I talked with the conductor and his occasional visitors and the time passed pleasantly and quickly enough.

We were moving through country that presented an ever-changing scene. The railway ran almost continually through hills clad with pines and maples, which this hot summer sun would burn into an autumn glory in a month or two. An occasional break revealed valleys of rice and fields of the giant radish, and renkon - the lotus whose root is eaten, and patches of the stunted mulberry, for the food of silkworms. Often in the thicker fastnesses of the forest, a straggler from an overhanging thicket of bamboos swished thunderously along the carriage roofs.

For the most part it was very slow going, because of the steep gradients and the low-quality coal, which looked more like dark clay than anything else. Sometimes we remained at a station for half an hour or so, until the engine gathered up sufficient head of steam to tackle the next long pull. This was ancient country and the stations had odd names, bearing no resemblance to the modern reading of the ideographs above them.

We left the train at last at a station called Tojo, the Eastern Castle, though there was no sign of such an edifice. We boarded an ancient charcoal-burning bus terribly overloaded.

We got on last, to avoid the stifling physical odours with and the crush and curious gaze of the passengers.

Harry went near to losing his beloved within a few minutes. The three of us were on the outer step, and when the bus suddenly swerved in a narrow street, a telegraph pole scraped along its side and only a tremendous effort on our part dragged Terumi from being crushed. For a little time afterwards we were rather quiet.

A hint of dusk was in the air as we wound and twisted through rocky tunnels and steep hills to the edge of a small deep lake, set in a deep crater in the very summit of a mountain, like an emerald in a ring. A path led to its edge and to a lovely clean-lined native inn. It was just like a huge houseboat moored at the lake's brink. All the interior timbers were unpainted, but polished to show the clear grain at its best. A verandah running round the upper floor gave views of exquisite maple and pine-covered hills and the deep green water of the lake.

There were no other guests and the upper floor was all ours. There was a family group in the kitchen below, and an old thin-bearded man, meditating. There was always an old man in these inns.

We had a bath in icy water piped through bamboo from a distant spring, and then went upstairs and rested awhile until the evening cool replaced the day's heat. We then began preparations for the wedding banquet. I did most of this, partly because I liked to, but chiefly to leave them alone. There was fresh-caught fish at hand and we had brought all else we needed. I worked in the kitchen with the landlady and her daughter, and the old man looked wonderingly on. Between us we produced an elaborate though strangely assorted meal, and we sat down at the lovely low lacquer tables on which Australian bread and cheese, fruit and sugar lay beside Japanese fish, rice and sweet potatoes.

My function up to date had been that of a *nakodo* - the go-between who traditionally arranges all matters concerning a marriage - and I was installed with mock ceremony as the honoured guest at the marriage feast, according to the custom of the land.

It was a merry meal, mostly because of Harry's attempts to converse in Japanese and Terumi's answers essayed in 'English'. Australian beer and some wine, drunk from absurdly small lacquer *sake* cups, added its portion.

We sat afterwards in a languid daze, and then clapped hands in the customary manner to call a servant to clear away. We heard a distant '*hai*' in acknowledgement and soon the lacquer tables were bare of all but the wine and the little cups.

I went out and sat on the verandah rail. There were no mosquitoes here and the air was fresh. Presently Terumi went into a near-by room. In this one she spread a single futon from a wall-cupboard. 'For you,' she said to me, and smiled apologetically. In a room across the passage she spread a large one. The she returned and taking Harry's hand, that trembled a little, led him away with a smile and a bow, as though they were two children.

I sat for a long while on the verandah rail, immersed in many thoughts, while in the water below an energetic fish plopped frequently. On the far side of the lake a fish watcher crouched by his lantern, for the water was low, and the fish easily caught, and he took his turn with his fellow villagers to guard them against the hungry intruder. Away in the hills an old water-wheel ground out ghostly whines and creaks as the trickle of water barely contrived to turn it.

It would have been a long sleepless night for me, had it not been for the wine that remained, and I was thankful for the oblivion it brought.

The next morning I went boating and fishing on the lake - alone.



## Chapter 15

# A Night Out

Back in Ujina I was pretty busy, and duty took me to places far and near. Our principal task at that time was the seeking out of military stores and equipment, the destruction of discovered weapons and ammunition, and the turning over to the Prefectural Government's 'Diversion' Department of any useful goods, clothing, food, and other material, suitable for conversion to civilian use. This was a continuous and monotonous process, with rarely a good find to highlight a day's work.

Associated with this task was a search for individuals or organizations which might attempt to resurrect the old militarism, or to preserve it if it was not dead. There was a rumour that some such activity might be carried on in my own neighbourhood, in a club which had been the gathering place of army and navy officers during the war. It sounded like a possibility, and I could not afford to overlook it.

The place was on the coast, a mile or so from our camp, and the road to it led past ruined factory buildings and stagnant lotus ponds, and across a shallow tidal river. A little farther on found me outside a large house between the road and the sea, almost hidden behind high walls. The barred wooden gate was silent and discouraging, and the house beyond was indeed a 'fine and private place'.

I stood outside and called '*Gomen nasai*' rather diffidently and half apologetically several times, and eventually heard an answering '*Hai*' from somewhere within. Presently a woman in a white overall unbarred the gate with not a little timidity and admitted me to the *genkan*, that part of a Japanese house which serves as a porch, and from which one ascends a couple of feet on to the floor of the house proper. I asked if I might see the master of the establishment. The woman vanished inside and a few moments later a well-kept man of middle age, with greying hair, came to the entrance and politely invited me to enter. As I sat and wrestled with the gaiters and boots I glanced inside past the screen that sheltered the interior from common gaze, into rooms wide and spacious, with immaculate *tatami* on the floors and austere plain sliding wall panels.

Ungaitered and unbooted at last, I followed the old man through the house to a large room giving on to the sea. The panels that formed the seaward wall had been removed by the simple operation of lifting them from the grooves they slid in. A garden of pines, dwarf trees, and shrubs lay between the house and the sea wall and its tidy neatness was in perfect accord with all within.

My host bade me sit on the floor at one side of a low red lacquer table, the only furniture in the room, and he took his seat opposite. Behind him in the *tokonoma* - the alcove which is part of the chief room of all Japanese houses - was a flower group arranged in the incomparable fashion of the country. A hanging scroll bore no picture, but only two ideographs written with great skill and imaginative abandon. The lower one strongly suggested a sleek black cat crouched on an invisible wall, his fat furry tail

drooping to the lower margin. Together, the two characters read: '*Buji*', whose only meaning I knew was safety. In answer to my question the old man took me into a maze of Confucian philosophy and Mencian ethical principles. The inner meanings nearly always eluded me when confronted with these old epigrams, though I have consoled myself by considering how one could explain satisfactorily to an oriental some of our own commonly used phrases. How does one explain 'Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty', even in English!

During his dissertation the woman who had first admitted me laid before us two thick brown bowls containing a few spoonfuls of a pale-green frothy concoction. In one was a small bamboo whisk, obviously the producer of the froth. This lukewarm and exceedingly bitter liquid was *matcha*, a kind of tea made of the leaves ground and powdered. I knew I should have praised its flavour and quality, but I was thankful there was so little of it.

At length we came to the reason for my visit. I told him it was my duty to investigate the activities of all organized bodies, and wished to know the club's aims and membership. He answered that during the war the building had been turned over to the entertainment of military and naval officers and had now reverted to its earlier function: the meeting-place for members of a club formed by business and professional men for mutual cultural advancement and the interchange of ideas. Meetings were held monthly and were followed by a banquet. If I cared to attend at the next one, in about a fortnight, perhaps with a friend, he would be honoured. I accepted and promised to bring a companion, chiefly to check if my judgement was sound.

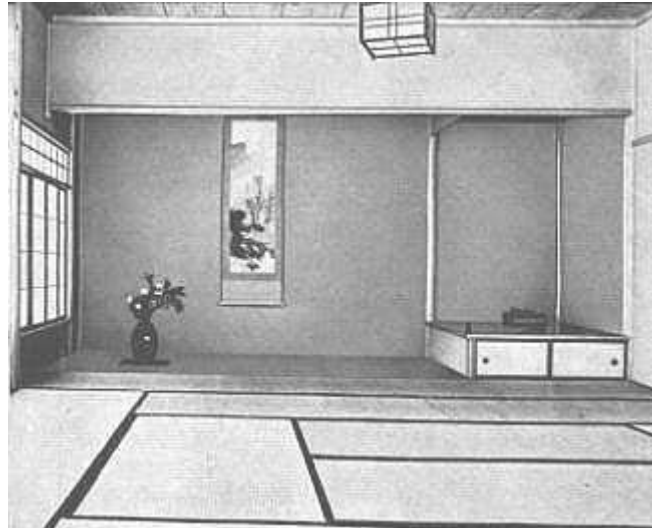
There was in my mind a colonel, still young, a student of life and those who lived it, an intellectual oasis in a desert of oafs. Because of his position, and his strict enforcement of non-fraternization rules, he had no opportunity of approaching the people within distances that made intimate observation possible. I told him of the invitation and suggested that, from an intelligence angle, it offered a unique chance to gain some first-hand impressions. He was glad of the artifice and said he would come.

We told no one but the unit Intelligence Officer, and on the appointed evening our car wove its way across barley stubble and between lotus ponds on the edge of Hiroshima to the road by the Inland Sea. It was a perfect evening to a hot day, and the rising moon was nearly full. The people of the fishing village near by were abroad in the cool of the evening, fishing from the sea wall, or strolling in their light summer kimonos and stockingless feet on wooden *geta*, the coolest and cleanest of all mankind's footwear, enviably different from our hot heavy boots and gaiters, and tight-necked shirts.

At the entrance to the club we dismissed the car, instructing the driver to return at about eleven p.m. His pleasure at this order spoke of a *koibito* waiting somewhere to beguile his spare hours.

Our host and two pretty daughters were waiting to welcome us. They stood in awkward silence while we tore off our footgear. The colonel cursed under his breath at a hole in his sock and surreptitiously worked it under to the sole. It was one of the minor tragedies that befall one on entering a Japanese house, but one I had learned to avoid.

We were escorted to the room of my first visit, but now the sliding *shoji* were all in place. These *shoji* are mere wooden skeletons divided into squares, each one covered with a thin rice paper. Their untorn condition seemed to preclude the presence of children in the house, for though in ordinary use they are durable enough, a child or two wreaks extensive and continuous destruction on them.



A Japanese room interior.

Most of the other guests, the club members, had already arrived, and I noticed with a guilty start that Terumi's father was among them. An interminable round of introductions began. Most of the guests were retired business men and all were sticklers for ceremony. As the first of them was presented to us, he began a series of low bows that took the colonel by surprise, so that I responded on behalf of both of us with equally low salutations, being careful, from a past experience, to keep such a distance that we did not inadvertently crack our skulls together. These bows usually go on indefinitely, unless a friend intervenes, it being considered impolite to be the first to stop. On this occasion, however, our host passed us from one to another, so that for me the performance was continuous.

At last it was over, and we were seated cross-legged on wadded cushions in the traditional place of honour - with our backs to the *tokonoma*, the alcove in which the scroll I have mentioned hung. Immediately there came to our sides the two daughters of our host, dressed in bewildering beautiful kimonos and obis. No description in words alone can capture the magnificence of the costumes, their colours and textures, the faint fresh odours that breathed from them, the thin line of white silk at the neck-line against the honey skin, the shy smile and quiet incomparable grace of the wearers.

The colonel and his fair companion melted into a dim and distant background as I gave all my faculties to a proper study of my own lovely creature. I thanked my stars for the gift of common speech that we had. I knew she would be by my side, all the evening, wherever I went, to minister to my least wish, to study my tastes in food, wine, and song, even the topic for conversation. She poured me a glass of Japanese beer, of whose excellence I already had knowledge. She did not drink too, but remained kneeling

beside me, sitting back on her heels. This appeared to be the posture for most women; they never sat cross-legged as men did, nor did men sit in the feminine fashion.

We were all very formal still, the other guests never addressing us without first laying a hand on the floor. This old etiquette created an odd sensation, as if we were living in an earlier age. The sombre kimonos of the men, long slender pipe-cases and fans thrust in their sashes like swords gave a heroic touch to their majestic bearing. This was no fleeting impression induced by drink; it was experienced on every occasion. Let it be emphasized that in these gestures was no subservience to superiors or conquerors, but an old etiquette that has survived westernization and commercialism, which are shed with the European costumes in the home, where the older people revert to earlier modes of living and habit.

Before long servants brought food and the meal began.

The first offering was *sashimi* - the raw flesh of the *tai*, the best of all Japan's fish, sliced thinly, but still remaining in compact laminations in the shape of the fish's body. The colonel looked appealingly at me, and I in turn at my sweet companion, whose name was Murako. 'Do not eat it if you do not wish,' she whispered. 'But please leave it before you; it is also intended to be looked at, and, if it merits it, to be admired.'

To the Japanese, the appearance of food is as important as its culinary preparation. And indeed, the whole dish was a small detached piece of art; the shallow pale platter and the iridescent skin of the fish, and a little bright berry or two to add the perfect touch of colour.

There followed *ise-ebi*, the giant prawn, and Hiroshima's famous oysters in the form of *tempura* - fried in batter. Then came what was for us the most delectable and satisfying course of all: *sukiyaki*. The word means fried on a plough, and its origin, it is said, goes back into ancient times, when the Buddhist restriction on the eating of the flesh of animals was much more rigidly enforced than it is to-day. According to the legend, it became the practice of toilers in the fields to convey secretly to the scene of their labour tasty morsels of beef, where, upturning their plough they lit a fire beneath it, and fried their steaks on the mould-board. One can imagine the impatient appetites that waited on those sizzling steaks. Certain refinements on this method of cooking were now at our disposal. A charcoal brazier was placed on the table before us, and a huge platter of thin slices of beef, mushrooms, shallots, giant radish, beans, and young peas in pod set beside it, so that we could watch the whole process of cooking.

A piece of beef fat was rubbed lightly all over the surface of a pan over the red smokeless coals. Into it was laid a few slices of beef, a little each of all the other things, a sprinkle of sugar (a present from me) and, most essential of all, some *shoyu*. This Japanese sauce has a salty character all its own, and has no affinity with the sweet insipid Chinese variety.

In a matter of minutes, the first pieces were ready. The girls lifted them out into little bowls, and we sampled them, and found their savour beyond dreams. More pieces were added to the pan, and the mixture, feeding on itself, grew richer and richer, adding

flavour to flavour. My handmaid had soon learned of my predilection for mushrooms, and I had more than my share of them that evening.

Throughout this long course there were interspersions of beer drinking and toasts *insake*. The etiquette of drinking was as yet only partly understood by me, but when a man across the table dipped his tiny cup in a clear bowl of water and handed it to me, I knew that I must take and hold it while he filled it with warm *sake* from a small porcelain bottle, one of several that stood in a cruet-like container of hot water. I drank with as much grace as I could manage and returned it, filling it again from another bottle. We then repeated the whole operation with my own cup. The colonel had also been receiving attention, and had followed me slavishly.

What we had drunk at length forced upon us a natural necessity. I turned to my host for guidance and he nodded to the girl at my side. She rose and beckoned me down a long passage at the end of which was what is picturesquely called an *asagao* - the Morning Glory - because of its close resemblance to the bell of that flower. She stood beside me with a towel wrung out in warm water, and wiped my hands when I had finished. It was done so simply and unselfconsciously that one had no feeling of surprise or discomfort. But I looked forward with malicious pleasure to my colonel's turn.

At the end of the meal came fruit - grapes and mandarins, the grapes peeled with infinite patience and care by Murako; the mandarins stripped down to their tiny cells of juice, and held to our mouths in soft delicate fingers.

Toothpicks were produced, and we plied them gratefully as our fellow-guests did, with the left hand held like an inverted fan over our mouths to conceal the inelegance of the operation.

One of the girls began to strum a *samisen*. First she sang a bright Geisha song, in which all who knew it, and some whod did not know it, joined. Then one or two men recited, weird moaning chants that seemed to be in the repertory of every Japanese, perhaps because it is impossible to detect whether one is in or out of tune!

Then something happened that I did not think I should ever see. As if some common urge had commanded it, the *shoji* of the seaward wall of the room were taken away, the lights were extinguished, and we sat there and gazed, through a thin tracery of the pines in the garden, at a calm sea shimmering under a moon the like of which I do not think I will ever see again. Someone began to play softly a *shakuhachi*, and a girl sang a song of a fisherman and the maid who loved him. 'Perhaps this same moon looks down on him, though he is a thousand *ri* way, and my pillow is wet with tears for him,' she sang, and the tones of the flute rose and fell and floated out into the still night, over the sea.

The wonder of it was the unanimity of the mood that had settled over us. All knew, sensed with certainty, that there was no dissentient, no inharmonious spirit among us.

It had to end, of course, but the memory still remains.

When the world returned to us, there was a delicious weariness in our bones and an uncontrollable desire to sleep. Sensing this, my companion drew from a wall-cupboard

several more cushions, and spread them behind me on the floor. I caught the half-reproving, half-envious gaze of the colonel as sweet oblivion enveloped me.

I was awakened by an apologetic host and told that our car was waiting outside. I turned to the colonel and found him as I had been a minute before: stretched out in a celestial comfort on still more cushions, his holey sock gaping unashamedly. I woke him and waited until he had regained some of his customary composure.

All the other guests waited with polite impatience for our departure. When we were once again booted and gaitered, we took our leave, pledging friendship and an early reunion. We drove off into the chill morning and I asked the colonel if it had been worth while. His short 'Yes' was all that the question required. I knew that he was at one with me.

A day or two later, when I paid my respects to our host and thanked him for the pleasure of that evening, I asked if there were any impressions he had formed of us. 'There is one thing I shall not forget', he said. 'When you had said goodnight and prepared to leave, a colonel held the door of a car while a warrant officer, with no salute or stiff formality, preceded him inside. This perhaps marks the difference between our ways of life more clearly than anything else. It shall be the theme and subject for study at the Club's next meeting.'

## Chapter 16

# British Justice

*- missing pages here due to a binding error – a blackmarket associate of Clifton was on trial for black marketeering. Clifton was assigned to act as his interpreter.*

-tensive shaded patches. Beside the drawing, a doctor's barely legible scribble told in cold scientific words of an advanced stage of T.B. It was not the first appeal tendered to the court on health grounds for mitigation of a sentence. The judge had usually rejected them as exaggerated or falsified. No time was wasted on this one, and sentence was pronounced. Nine month's hard labour.

I made no appeal on his behalf, no admission of my part as an accessory.

This might be forgiven because I sensed the futility of it, and because of a belief that ultimately 'the Occupation' might suffer by a soldier's admission of complicity.

At any rate, I kept silent and saw him led away to an existence that would be barely tolerable to a person such as he.

In my mind stirred a promise to apply myself to his release and his restoration to his family.

I avoided them for a month, until I had prepared an appeal through a Japanese lawyer, and some hope of success seemed possible. Then I went to see his wife. She was as she always had been, gracious and friendly.

After a cup of tea and some inconsequential talk, I asked how her husband was. She turned on me that baffling Japanese smile that hides all signs of deep tragedy and suffering, and said simply:

'He died last week in Yoshijima.'

She added quickly, apologetically, to be sure that no insinuation of blame might be inferred:

'He was always very weak, you know!'

## Chapter 17

# Indian Summer

One's first summer in Japan is an unwanted surprise. After the cold snows of winter and the gently 'plum rains' of spring, the newcomer looks forward to a period of mild warmth in which to laze and dream away the days, and go comfortable to bed at night.

Then suddenly at the turn of the season there comes a wilting heat and a stifling humidity that drains all one's energy and leaves one panting and prostrate after the slightest exertion. Not even a wet season in Borneo jungle produced the same degree of discomfort.

The foreshore of the Bay of Hiroshima at Ujina is mostly land that has been reclaimed from the sea and the area behind it is low-lying, holding in its hollows great pools of stagnant water, which under the heat of the summer sun saturate the air with moist vapours.

From the depths of these ponds rise the ragged fan-like leaves of the lotus - cultivated for its edible roots and stems. Because it has its origin in slime and mud and rises above it to produce a pure lovely flower, it has become a Buddhist symbol of mankind, who, springing from primitive and base beginnings, can rise and blossom in goodness and virtue above them. This same lotus was known and grown by the Egyptians in the waters of the Nile, and the cross-section of the tuberous root, with its wheel-like structure, is supposed to be the origin of various conventional designs.

Images of the Buddha seldom occur without some form of the flower or its petals incorporated.

The winter barley had long been garnered, winnowed and husked with great expenditure of manual labour and a slow, infinite patience, and from the same ground rice plants now leapt lush and green, so that one could fancy to see movement of its growth. As the ears of grain filled, paper discs bearing grotesque resemblances of human faces danced over the paddy fields on strings attached from margin to margin, to discourage marauding birds and insects.

The discs were set leaping and diving by the faintest breeze, which was as well, for there was little movement of the air. In Japan, it seemed, there were only the two extremes, a still calm, or a raging blast that plucked houses from their foundations and laid great trees low, only the pliant bamboo, bending but not breaking, withstanding its fury.

On these days no one worked beyond mid-day in the towns and cities. Only a few government offices remained open, such was the heat.

Those who could afford to fled the cities and sought relief in mountain villas or at the seaside. Only those whose fierce battle for the bare necessities of life compelled them remained, held by strong, immovable roots to the city.



All day, meticulous housewives scattered water on the parched streets to lay the powdery dust that rose with every movement of shuffling feet and the wheels of each passing cart.

Evening brought no relief, only prodigious clouds of mosquitoes from the lotus-ponds to torment and harass strollers seeking relief in the still night air. Some enterprising people carried a slat of bamboo, which they swished in a wide swath around them as they walked, the bodies of countless insects rattling faintly against it as they were struck.

The rooms of the houses were hung with great mosquito nets the same size as the room. An evening visit on a friend often discovered him and his wife, both stripped to the waist for comfort, seated behind such a net, while outside the baffled mosquitoes sought to gain entry.

Finding the small space in my room intolerable at night, I became addicted to walking the streets, sometimes returning by train or tram if my wanderings had taken me too far. This was one of my greatest pleasures, for there were many people to talk with me, people who had come to know and understand 'the man with different-coloured eyes,' as I felt I now had begun to understand them. There was hardly a home or a shop where I could not go and be sure of a cup of *O cha* or perhaps some fruit or an 'ice-cake'.

From the first moment of my arrival in Japan I had sworn never to participate in any of the petty pillaging that appears to be an inseparable part of a military occupation. To some it seemed of little moment to seize two or three oranges from the stall of an old woman in a market-place, but a few such losses during the day could deplete her poor hardly-won stock and leave her broken and resourceless, with a bitterness towards those who had caused it.

Whatever my dealings with the people, I had always striven to be just, though it often meant the carrying off of a husband or son to prison. At any rate I became known far and wide, and may perhaps be forgiven a little pride in the courtesy shown me in the oddest places and circumstances.

Often, when riding in a tram or train, some little souvenir or parcel of fruit was pushed into my hands or pocket with a murmured 'please'. Once a large number of *biwa* (the Japanese loquat, larger and more delicious than ours) were emptied into my greatcoat pocket before I was aware of what was happening. But the greatest satisfaction and pleasure came from the school children who sidled close on the trams, looked up and smiled, and said '*Kurifuton San*'. Some of them bore the hideous keloid scars of atom burns on cheeks and neck, but the effect of their experience appeared to have gone no deeper.

The Hiroshima evening newspaper, *Yukan Hiroshima*, publicized me further by asking for my impressions of Japan and the atomic bomb. I wrote them out at the newspaper office, using a brush for the first time and making a woeful mess of it. After being suitably edited and revised, in typical newspaper fashion, I wrote it out again and was photographed. From the time it was published I began to receive fan mail, containing offers and requests of all kinds, from offers to teach me how to write with a brush to requests for the removal of certain unfavoured schoolteachers!

Among the most friendly were the girls from the hotel where I had met Hiroko. Notwithstanding their occupation they were gently, worthy creatures, and invariably greeted me with a warmth that raised many an eyebrow among my more prim friends.

They had seized on my friendship with Hiroko to create a situation that had extended far beyond its actual termination. If they saw me with another girl, to my great embarrassment they would call out, with mischief in their voices: '*Uwaki shitara dame yo!*' (You must not be unfaithful.)

On humid nights they sat outside in the streets on benches and if I passed too closely drew me down beside them. They talked to me, held my hands or laid their heads on my shoulder like the children that, at heart, they were. My other friends, shocked at first, came to know that I never entered the hotel beyond the porch except in the company of provosts on some duty or other, and all was well.

About this time a different kind of woman entered my life for a brief period. I first met her by an unusual circumstance.

A letter came one day, written in very good English, from the *Chokaicho* of a neighbouring suburb. (*Chokaicho* is the suburban counterpart of the *Soncho*, the rural village chief.) He invited me to call on him to discuss 'a problem'. 'Problems' were my business, so I accepted. His home was near the Hiroshima Club, in the comparative cool of the coast. At my first glimpse of him, a youngish handsome man in white trousers and shirt, leaning over his front gate I knew him for what he was, a Nisei - an American-born Japanese, who had returned to the land of his parents.

He said, 'I'd like to show you something,' and we walked across the road to a tunnel in the face of a small hill. These tunnels were to be found everywhere, and had served both as naval and military storehouses and air-raid shelters. Along the floor trailed thick lines of a cord-like material, that led to a couple of dozen large iron drums. The cords had been pushed into apertures in the drums.

'Do you know what they are?' he asked. I could see the name on them: 'Depth charges'.

'Children are always trying to detonate them with those fuses. They are full of TNT. Can you have them removed?'

I promised to inform the appropriate authority, and made to leave.

'But that is not why I asked you here,' he said. 'Come inside,' and we returned to his house.

There was a girl seated at a table.

'This is Chieko,' he said. 'She is in love.'

I bowed to her. (I bowed to everyone these days, almost without knowing it.) She wasn't pretty, but her manner distinguished her from the average Japanese woman. In a word she was 'interesting'.

She said, 'How are you,' in English, but nothing more.

'She is hopelessly in love with a man in your camp,' began the *Chokaicho*. 'He wants her to marry him, but she can see so many obstacles that she has appealed to me for guidance.'

I asked his name.

'She only knows him as "Fred". Does that help?'

I told him there were half a dozen 'Fred's'.

'What worries her most is what would happen if the Occupation Forces were withdrawn. Fred has told her she would be allowed to go back to Australia with him, but she hardly dares believe it. Besides, what about possible children?'

I told him frankly that it was highly improbably that any Japanese would be allowed into Australia for years to come, and that most certainly her position as wife would not gain her any privilege.

All this time she sat silent, apparently not understanding anything of our conversation. I now turned to her, and began speaking in Japanese, asking her about Fred.

In all her speech of him was evidence of so strong a love, or infatuation, that I thought this Fred to be some God-like creature, and doubted if he could be from our unit, for I could think of no one among the whole one hundred and twenty of us with the qualities she attributed to him.

Despite her earnestness, I told them both I felt it very unwise for her to enter into any relationship with Fred that she was not prepared to have terminated when he returned home.

We left it at that for the evening. On a later visit, when I learned his surname, Fred was revealed as a great illiterate boor of a batman, with golden hair and a big nose that, to a Japanese, gave him some pretensions to good looks. The lower dives of Hiroshima knew him better than the average soldier, but his intellectual poverty was hidden from her by inexperience and ignorance of English.

One evening soon after our first meeting I met her on the waterfront of Ujina, a very boyish un-Japanese figure in blouse and skirt, riding bicycle.

We began to talk in commonplaces and gradually settled ourselves down on the edge of the pier, dangling our legs over the edge, and smoked cigarettes. Her conversation showed her to possess a standard of education not often met with in a Japanese girl. Her studies had embraced philosophy and psychology and a wide reading of the literature of England, France and Germany, in Japanese translation.

She had with her that evening a volume of English plays in Japanese: Bernard Shaw, Galsworthy, and, incredibly, J.M.Synges's *Playboy of the Western World*. I could not have believed that anyone should have ventured to reproduce in another language the

lovely Irish idiom, but there it was, though what it conveyed to her was beyond conjecture.

Hers was a typical Japanese temperament, whose essence was a kind of Weltschmerz - what the Japanese call *mono no aware wo shiru* - to know the sadness of things. But like many such people she had a ready wit and a quick comprehension of all that was said to her. She was one of the few Japanese I met who attempted to interpret their own people to me.

We met many times after, at her home, on the waterfront, where we used to climb to an old lookout platform on the roof of an old army building and watch the moon rise or set behind the islands of the Inland Sea.

Then in the darkness we sang to one another our own individual songs. It is easy to sing to a person unversed in either the singer's native language or music - the mere novelty of it has sufficient charm and interest. Of all the songs I sang, none pleased her more than 'When Irish Eyes are Smiling', and a popular song, 'The Wind and the Rain in your Hair'. For all I knew my taste in Japanese *uta* was just as uncritical.

Through these meetings she learned to evaluate the Westerners more correctly, and her preoccupation with Fred was gradually and spontaneously dissipated, though with no development of a corresponding emotional attachment towards myself.

She was twenty-eight years old, long past the marrying age in Japan, and for love to have come to her then was Indian Summer, soon spent.

She disappeared from my life as abruptly as she had entered it. I called at her home one night after an absence of a month or so, to find only her mother there. Chieko had gone travelling 'somewhere' she said with an air of melancholy resignation acquired from many earlier absences.

'She is always in search of something,' she sighed. 'Something she does not speak of to me.'

She had not returned from her seeking when I left Japan, six months later.

## Chapter 18

# Police

My duties as interpreter in the early days at Ujina were concerned chiefly with the establishment of the unit and the exploration of the area under its control. In a couple of months this phase was past and there were left only a few uninteresting routine jobs.

The officers had three house-girls 'doing' for them, one, a young Nisei, who lived near by with her family, and who spoke excellent English and Japanese. Since she was always at hand, and, no doubt, because she was a more interesting companion than myself, the officers chose to employ her on interpreting work that did not involve security matters, such as the examination of repatriation ships and the general conduct of the camp.

This left me with nothing useful to do, and with some trepidation I asked headquarters for further instructions. To my joyous surprise I was told to stay where I was, and was given a roving assignment in various wide and potentially fruitful fields, which covered smuggling, illegal entry (mostly from Korea), black-marketing, and the possession of weapons. (To these duties was, unhappily, later added the investigation of crimes against civilians by B.C.O.F. soldiers.) Most of the crimes being also in the civil code, I was to co-operate closely with the Japanese civil police, to support them in their task of maintaining civil order, and even though the offences were breaches of S.C.A.P. (Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers - ie General MacArthur - ed) directives only, to demonstrate our confidence in them by having them apprehend the culprits.

My first encounter with the police occurred within a couple of days after my arrival in Ujina. It was an evening of heavy snow, and I was passing the stone lions at the Hall of Victorious Return. I started as a maid in kimono fled from the doorway like the proverbial bat out of hell, with an American G.I. in close pursuit. She flung herself at me with a wild dramatic cry of 'Save me!' or some such appeal, and I found myself thrust between her and the towering bulk of a thwarted, and therefore angry, American. I considered it discrete to make no great display of defending her honour, but instead asked her a couple of questions in Japanese. This so nonplussed the G.I. that he abandoned the chase and sauntered away.

Having decided that the girl was safe, I started off again, with the girl trotting at my side. It soon became evident that she had been in no great danger, and was quite able to defend herself, if indeed she still had anything to defend.

As we approached the police station she said, 'Let's go over here and get warm,' and led me across the road into an abandoned army building, in which a red-hot stove glowed unattended. There was an old sofa beside it and it offered some welcome refuge from the snow outside. We had only been there a minute or two when a movement in the room swung me round and I was in a circle of men in crumpled dark uniforms, with glittering nickel-plated swords at the waists. Trapped by a woman at last! I thought, but they saluted and begged in broken English that they might stay and talk. They squatted by the stove, the Allied cigarettes were passed around and in a moment we were friends.

They were from the police station opposite, and it was their duty to guard the building. One of them was the girl's brother and she often came here to warm herself.

The building later became my home for the greater part of my sojourn in the country.

Thus, long before I had any official dealings with the police, I came to know them and make friends among them. They were nearly all raw recruits, for most of the war-time police force - those who had survived the atomic bomb - had been dismissed as unreliable and a potential danger to the Occupying force. The new men were from many callings, their uniforms were woefully shabby and ill-fitting, and their swords, which were largely ornamental, were beginning to tarnish. They lost them later in the general modernization of the force, and gained in their place, to their great disgust, wooden batons and a long list of instructions on how to use them, though one would not have thought there was any science involved.

I still remember the final paragraph: 'In the case of riots, take care that reverse use is not made of the baton.'

From a European viewpoint, the Japanese police appeared far too polite and affable in their contact with the people. This impression, however, belied their true character, and their devotion to duty and persistence in discharging a task were admirable if at times irrational.

On being asked one morning by a constable if I could regain for him his irreplaceable identity card from a soldier in the unit, I asked how a soldier came to have it. He replied that he had been shadowing, under orders, a suspected criminal the night before, when two soldiers had held him up and robbed him of everything he had. I said why hadn't he reported it immediately and he explained that he had received orders to follow his man, but none on how to deal with such fortuitous incidents as being robbed!

The whole force seemed to work in a haphazard way. If we wanted a man for questioning, whether for the minor crime of black-marketing or the major one of carrying weapons, a constable would go to the suspect's home during the day, in his absence, and tell his wife that he was wanted for interrogation and request him to appear at the station after his evening meal. That he did not fail to do so remains a matter of perpetual wonderment.

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The officer in charge of the station was a man who at first sight might have been taken for a criminal freshly out of the cells. He was shabby and always wore a heavy stubble of beard. He probably drank a good deal and was dubbed 'Bert' by us. The name survived a long acquaintance with him.

Before I had known him long it became apparent that he was very efficient, and thoroughly reliable; how much so we came to know later when he has transferred to another district.

He gave us access to the police telephone network at all times - a great boon, for in those days the civilian telephone system was chaotic and completely undependable, the Government having decided that there were more urgent and important utilities to be restored first.

In later days, when the deeds of Australian soldiers had cast a deep shadow over many of my friendships, 'Bert' was ever ready to dispel the shame I felt, and his mature wisdom and complete frankness were a refreshing stimulus.

He was not too proud to lend a hand when an occasion demanded. One morning a Korean reported the theft of 400,000 yen (about 8000 pounds) in cash from his home, where he had secreted it as proceeds from black-market transactions. The same afternoon 'Bert' came shambling along the main street driving the culprit before him, like an obstinate sheep, in one hand a great mass of bank-notes tied in a square of silk, and in the other a pistol he had discovered with it. How he found the man I never knew, and I shall not belittle him by assuming it was by a mere chance.

Two incidents involving the Japanese police are worth recording for the light they shed on the Japanese character.

The first occurred at night as I was walking with a provost in the main street. A shot rang out behind us and a group of Japanese we had just passed broke up and fled down a dark alley. The provost drew his pistol and was at their heels in a flash. When I caught up with him he had five men held up in a corner. I searched them and found a holster on one, and in the gutter nearby a small calibre automatic of German make. We marched them to the police station for interrogation and got our first good look at them. They were all in their twenties, dressed in dark kimonos, and had just come from a bath-house. There were of more than average height and all were handsome. One wore a belt fashioned from parachute harness. All had been drinking.

I demanded to know who had had the pistol and how it had come into his hands. No one answered. Then 'Bert' took over.

He talked to them for about five minutes. I could not follow it all, but a man's personal honour and the benevolence of the Occupation were the themes.

The five sat silent until he was done, and then one stood up with tears on his cheeks and said: 'I had the pistol.'

One of the others immediately stepped forward and protested: 'He is sacrificing himself for me!'

And then the same from the other three, until I had five grown men weeping their hearts out in protestations of their own guilt and the innocence of the others.



'Bert', the police chief of Ujina

The spectacle was too much for me and in desperation I cried, 'Lock them all up!' and fled the bedlam.

The one who had first claimed ownership of the pistol was later sentenced to two years' hard labour, though I swear he was innocent. He strode from the court like a saint in the glory of his martyrdom, content that his friends were free.

The second incident was enacted in a former rayon factory, converted into a depot for re-patriates awaiting movement.

At one time there were a couple of thousand Formosans, long residents of Japan, awaiting a ship to take them back to their country, newly restored to China. Three or four of them in need of a little pocket-money seized a bag of sugar from the depot stores and set themselves up in the public market in the main street, offering it at an exorbitant price.

A single policeman demanded that they should surrender the sugar and themselves to his custody, but they replied that they were no longer Japanese citizens and not answerable to him. They finished by saying that if he wished to do something of benefit to the community he should go immediately and drown himself in the harbour.

Instead the policeman made a discreet withdrawal and came to us for advice, as the Formosans were technically Chinese citizens.

We decided that the law should be upheld, and gave him permission to take them. Three constables and I, a living badge of authority, set off for the market, perched precariously on the tray of a three-wheeled motor cycle.

The birds having disposed of the sugar, had flown back to their depot in the rayon factory. We followed and found inside the gate a thousand or more Formosans congregated in an open arena.



I looked for the Australian guard, of which there should have been half a dozen, but there was none in sight. The policeman who had first attempted to arrest the sugar-sellers moved among the crowd until by a miracle he discovered one of them and immediately laid arresting hands on him. The constable was immediately struck several heavy blows and ejected savagely from the crush.



Two of his policemen

The other two went to the assistance of their reeling comrade, but the mob moved menacingly towards them and they retreated to where I stood, a few yards back. Farther back than a pace in front of me they refused to yield.

I called to the Formosans to send forth the men we wanted, but if they understood they ignored me and with an angry murmur that rose and grew continued their slow approach. One stole ahead, aimed a blow at a policeman, and rushed back to the protection of the others.

Behind the barrier formed of the three little Japanese, I turned in a growing panic and shouted for the guard in a voice that I hoped was calm.

The policeman continued to be pushed and buffeted back until we found ourselves up against a low wooden fence running around the main building, and there was no further retreat.

They now came at use from the sides, and the more daring cowards among them continued to steal in, strike a sly blow at a policeman and scurry back to the mob's protection.

In sudden realization of the hopeless situation we were in, my fear left me, and was replaced by a furious rage. I struck back at one Formosan, who did not retaliate.

The policeman and I were shoulder to shoulder now, ready to die together, forlorn and forsaken heroes.

Then someone behind us called and the guard were there, four half-naked lads dripping with bath water, fixed bayonets on rifles levelled over the low fence at the Formosans.

I gave the orders to load, aim ... my mind crowded with visions of men, brown and white, lying dead at my feet ... of an international incident between China and Australia; of my first active command of soldiers and my misuse of them; the censure of my superiors ... disgrace ...

From all this I was delivered by a man who came from the crowd facing us and declared himself to be their spokesman. He would surrender the sugar-dealers into my hands, but not into the Japanese; a last attempt to save face. I agreed, they stepped forth, the crowd dispersed and it was all over.

We put the pair in the carrier at the back of the three-wheeler and took them to the police station. I thought of warning the police not to ill-treat them, but decided they deserved anything they might get and said nothing.

That evening I begged and borrowed half a dozen bottles of beer, mortgaging my drinking for a month ahead, and took them over to the station, where, like old comrades after a blood and victorious battle, we drank our mutual health and everlasting friendship and to hell with all Formosans!

The sugar merchants were released on bail the next day, and they came to me and offered profound apology. They were bright and cheerful after a night's sleep, and there was not a mark of ill-treatment on them.

## Chapter 19

# Fifth Column

Loyalty, however misplaced or exaggerated, is a virtue that compels respect. It attains its highest expression in the Japanese, a homogeneous, insular people closely knit together by family loyalties and by extension bound to their racial father, the Emperor.

This quality had not apparently weakened in defeat, and the task of those whose duty it was to supervise and sustain the demilitarization of the country was made infinitely more difficult by the lack of informers. From accidental discoveries and occasional unguarded conversations it became obvious that large amounts of weapons and ammunition had been, immediately before the Occupation, secreted away in remote, inaccessible places, against the day when the Japanese nation would rise in righteous anger and throw out the 'hairy foreigners'.

An initial benevolent Occupation policy had dissipated the immediate necessity for this, but the weapon-concealers dared not uncover them. There can be little doubt that a great deal still remains hidden, although, if a time should arise for its need, it would be useless from rust and corrosion.

But if the Japanese kept their own counsel, there were those within their country who, for various, reasons, did not. They were the Koreans, of whom there were about three million.

After Japan's defeat many Koreans professed a violent antagonism towards the war and the Japanese, and requested to be returned to their homeland, or, rather, that of their forefathers, since many had been born in Japan. But when the time came many were loth to avail themselves of the opportunity to leave Japan, and the flesh-pots of the black market. Having been willy-nilly repatriated to their homeland these reluctant ones set about devising schemes to return. Small ships crept back under cover of night to Japan, and sympathetic or mercenary captains of large vessels smuggled them in and dropped them off into small boats in the Inland Sea.

Those still remaining in Japan became a highly-organized pressure group, with intelligent and astute leaders, and branches of the League of Koreans Resident in Japan extended to remote villages.

My first encounter with them was in company with Japanese civil police. 'Acting on information received' we searched one of the League branch offices for illegal weapons. We found none, but in a desk drawer was a box of percussion caps and in a radio cabinet a tin of Allied fruit saline. Possession of the former alone was a serious crime.

The significance of the outcome of this search was not lost to the Koreans, who at once seized the opportunity to avenge themselves on certain of their enemies. Thereafter we received many intimations from the Koreans that a Japanese called so-and-so had a sword or a pistol. Surprise raids rarely unearthed any weapons, but there was always a store of black-market rice, which by its nature was forfeit and its possessor prosecuted -

a subtle form of revenge since nearly everyone in Hiroshima was guilty of the same offence.

After a series of these anonymous notes, some of them written in 'backhand' to elude the over-curious, direct contact was made with me in the form of an invitation to visit one of the Hiroshima branches of the Korean League. It was well out of the city at the end of tram-line in a district notorious for its lawlessness. Since I had become accustomed to moving among the Japanese unarmed, I thought it wise for reasons of policy to do the same in this case. I reasoned that if I carried a pistol someone might easily dispossess me of it, and in the Japanese phrase, 'make reverse use of it'.

The tram took me across numerous bridges and rivers, through streets of hovels that had existed long before the bomb made such dwellings highly-desirable habitations. At the terminus a man was waiting, and in a few yards we were at a newly-erected shop-like building, over which flew a flag bearing the red and blue emblem of Korea.

The place was packed with young men and women, all with the revolutionary zeal shining in their faces. The men were by physique and clothing indistinguishable from the Japanese, but the women wore the Korean billowing skirt of raw silk. They eyed me with some suspicion and a long discussion in Korean followed, of which, of course, I understood not a word. Then a man who would have been picked out as their leader by anyone, addressed me in a curious kind of Japanese, all the hard 'js', 'ds' and 'bs' softened to 'ch', 't' and 'p'.

Many of the Australian prisoners of war, had they heard it, would have remembered it as the accent common to some of the more brutal guards in the camps of south-east Asia.

The leader suggested we should adjourn to a Korean's house a few hundred yards away. It was very apparent as we walked through the streets that there was a strong antagonism between the two races, and I was relieved to reach the house and escape the questioning, almost contemptuous scrutiny of the Japanese.

We sat at a low table, on which was a huge dish of the bodies of small birds, roasted *in toto*. There were no trimmings or side-dishes.

'Sparrows,' said one of the Koreans, seizing a bird by its leg.

'We catch them with nets in those fields,' and he waved the bird towards the open doorway. He then began unceremoniously to crunch it.

My host urged me to help myself, which I parried by pleading that I had just eaten. But they pressed me and I ate one of the loathsome things, entrails and all.

During the meal my companions spoke sometimes in Korean, and at others in Japanese with the curious accent. At first it was completely unintelligible, until I began unconsciously to substitute the hard sounds for the soft.

After a preliminary wrangle as to who should be spokesman, one of them began a long tale of oppression for many years by the Japanese, of how the Koreans were now ready

and eager to take revenge. The speaker now would give such information as would cause heads in high places to fall. First he would tell me about the American bomber.

It had been hit by A.A. fire over Ujina a year before and had crashed in the mountains beyond. There had been eleven in the crew, only four of whom had survived. Two had parachuted into the sea and while still in the water had been battered to death with gaff-hooks. The other two were taken from the plane, and after interrogation and God knows what else at the headquarters of the Kempeitai in Hiroshima, were tied to posts in the main street and stabbed to death with bamboo lances by policemen. Certain high police officers and prefectural officials had been the instigators. A paper containing their names was then passed to me.

Subsequent investigation showed that all but one of the persons listed had been killed by the atomic bomb. In the circumstances it is highly probable that the Koreans were aware of this.

Eager to consult with my superiors, I begged to leave, but first there was the inevitable 'request'. This time, it seemed, the Japanese, having guessed that the Koreans were assisting the Occupation authorities, were refusing to supply essential goods to them.

The owner of this establishment, a mean place judged even by post-atom bomb standards, had been boycotted by the ice-sellers. Could I help? It seemed an easy way to make an impression and so hold their goodwill, so I wrote on a sheet of Australian Comforts Fund paper the following:

*To the Iceman,*

*Please supply to Mr Yamagata (the Koreans all had Japanese names as well as their native ones) with one block of ice (quite small) per day*

*and signed it with name and rank.*

A couple of months later, when I visited him again, my host was a very prosperous cafe proprietor and I wondered at his sudden success. The reason was soon clear.

In an ice-starved sweltering city he had shown my letter to every ice-seller he could find and on its authority had received from each countless blocks of ice, from which he had made *kori-mizu* - shaved ice with a fruit flavouring, selling at a huge profit.

They were finished with me when they had received their ice order.

Two of them escorted me to the tram. We had only gone a few steps when we came up against a milling mob of about fifty people on a street corner. About twenty men of the most villainous types stood in a circle, each armed with a sword or some sort of knife. From the head of one of them a great gash streamed blood.

In the near-by shop doorways women fingered knives and choppers, in self-defence or to succour their men.

The scene exactly resembled a tableau in a kabuki historical drama.

'Ignor them, they are very bad men,' whispered one of my companions, and he attempted to hustle me past. But I could not ignore those prohibited weapons and to show fear was too great a risk to take. I walked foolishly in among them, waving my arms and shouting 'Break it up!' in English.

They stood glaring at me for a few frightening seconds, then turned and slowly dispersed. My Korean companions were not in the least impressed. It was obvious they considered my action mere bravado.

We found the American plane next day, a few miles off the main road, half buried in the side of a hill. It now being nine months since the Americans had first spread throughout the country it seemed too absurd to suppose they had not already discovered it. Yet it was not known to them, and no one had considered it their business to inform them to date.

This was the first of many such adventures and anticlimaxes. The last came several months later. This was to be something big, something that would surely oblige us to transfer considerable quantities of clothing and raw materials from the Japanese military warehouses to the storerooms of the Korean League.

The investigating team this time consisted of an Intelligence corporal and myself, and two Koreans as guides. As usual, they told us nothing of our mission and we were wholly in their hands.

At their direction we drove down a long, barren peninsula with a group of low hills at its head. As we drew near these the Koreans became uneasy and asked that they should be taken no further. They pointed to the top of one of the hills and whispered: 'There!' Then they bolted back the way we had come.

We went on slowly to the near side of the hill, and leaving the jeep there climbed up through thick scrub and undergrowth. Up till now we had no idea what we were looking for, and it had begun to look hopeless, until we suddenly reached the top. Before us was the Inland Sea panorama; immediately below us were three small brick buildings set in a clearing in the trees. We worked down to them and found they had steel doors, heavily padlocked. From each lock ran a steel wire through the thickets and downhill towards the beach at the foot. The terminated at the rear of an old shack in an extraordinary alarm system. It consisted of a collection sheets of glass and old cans so poised that they would fall if the wires were slackened.

We drew our pistols and called to anyone in the shack to come forth. There was no reply. We entered and found it empty.

It was obviously the habitation of someone very poor, and a thief would have found little to repay him for a visit. Through the doorway which faced the beach, a few dim figures could be seen moving about at the water's edge, a good distance away. Having covered our rear we returned to the brick buildings and undid the wires. A great crash of breaking glass and clanging cans proclaimed the efficiency of the alarm. A short iron bar soon had the first lock off, and with a pious hope that no further traps were set we kicked the door in. A pungent, sickening-sweet smell wafted out on ice-cold air and

turned us momentarily back. But we could see all that was necessary from where we stood.

The building was stacked to the ceiling with wooden cases, containing thousands of sticks of dynamite, percussion cap, and fuses. It was the same with the other two buildings.

It looked as though we really had something big at last. We went back to the cottage and prepared for the return of its tenants. A careful examination revealed no weapons, but in the kitchen was a rack of razor-sharp knives and choppers of all sizes, which are to be found in every Japanese house. We dropped them all through a loose board under the *tatami* mats, and sat down to wait - for how long we had no idea.

It was nearly dusk when two figures came slowly up from the beach laden with nets and a few fish, and draped with trails of hard-won edible seaweed. We drew out pistols and waited tense. A little later we were confronting an aged fisherman and his wife, both terrified beyond speech at the invaders of their home.

Without preamble we drove them before us up the steep incline to the brick storehouses. An angry look leapt into the face of the old man when he saw the shattered locks, but he checked himself.

The explanation we demanded was given immediately.

The explosives belonged to a sixty-year-old firm of gunsmiths and explosive dealers, still trading in Hiroshima. The old man had been appointed caretaker and watchman, and received tenancy of the cottage as reward. So far as he knew the firm held a license from the Japanese Home Government to carry on business.

We knew from his manner that he was telling the truth, but we sent for a Japanese constable and placed him on guard - a necessary precaution in any case, with all the locks as they were - and returned to Hiroshima to check up. All the old man had said was true.

It was when I was in bed that night, despondent over our latest fiasco, and reviling all Koreans, that I thought of the old lady's knives, still under the floor, and wondered what curses she was heaping on the thieving Shinchugun.

## Chapter 20

# Yabanjin

I stood beside a bed in a hospital. On it lay a girl, unconscious, her long, black hair in a wild tumult on the pillow. A doctor and two nurses were working to revive her. An hour before she had been raped by twenty soldiers. We found her where they had left her, on a piece of waste land.

The hospital was in Hiroshima. The girl was Japanese. The soldiers were Australians.

The moaning and wailing had ceased and she was quiet now. The tortured tension on her face had slipped away, stained with tears like the face of a child that has cried itself to sleep.

The eyes of the doctor and nurses turned questioningly, unemotionally towards me.

I had seen that look so many times before, in this same hospital. Always it said this: 'So, we are barbarians, and you are civilized, and this is your way of life that you fought against us to preserve, that you now command us to accept. How is it then, that all through the Far East your tribunals are now trying Japanese soldiers for these very crimes? This girl is not a soldier. She had no part in the war. Besides, the war is over.'

It was easy to answer them at first: 'This is not the act of a typical Australian. Such brutes as these are found among all people, in all armies. It is a question of proportions. There were so many more of them in your army.'

That was the first time it happened. But since then I had become a monotonously regular visitor to the hospital, always bringing with me a victim of the *Yabanjin* - the barbarians - as they began to call the Australians.

Last time it had been a young lad, who had been knocked down and kicked unconscious, and left lying in the gutter. His head had been distended like a bladder, the features of his face made indistinguishable by the taut skin, one ear pierced by an iron-tipped boot. He had not been robbed, and he was too young to have been a soldier, but he was a 'Jap', and no better reason would have been needed by his assailants.

It was the unhappy Japanese women who were the chief sufferers. In pre-Occupation Japan, a woman could walk abroad at any hour of day or night without fear of molestation. They supposed, reasonably enough, that if they could do this among their own men, how much more secure they would be under the protection of the *cultured* white men. They were soon disillusioned, but in the meantime they exposed themselves unwittingly to the attentions of any louts who felt like a 'bit of fun'.

Staying indoors was not sufficient to give women protection. One evening a young married woman was reading a book in bed in a hotel. Her husband was absent for the night on business. In the next room, separated only by the paper sliding partitions, a party of Japanese men were playing cards. It was a hot night and she fell asleep in the middle of her reading, with the light still burning. She woke a little later to find a huge



Australian soldier kneeling beside her, and another swaying in the doorway, his drunken leer telling more clearly than any speech or gesture what was to follow...

The men in the next room heard and watched; saw all and did not intervene. To call them cowards would be to presume the obvious and improbable. The reason lay elsewhere: in their blind unquestioning acceptance of instructions from the Government that placed the *Shinchugun* beyond criticism and Japanese justice; in their self-discipline; and in their only mild interest in the welfare of the woman. I think that if the Australians had been Japanese in our country, we would have killed them and risked the consequences.

Instead the Japanese went and told the police.

The police, having no power, could do no more than inform us, when it was too late. They brought the girl to the police station, and later two provosts came, with the man swaying between them in an elaborate attempt at simulating drunkenness. His accomplice followed, cocky, insolent, and talkative.

I expected to see a low-browed apish creature, with little intelligence and education. This description certainly fitted his companion, who had remained a spectator.

But I was amazed and shocked to see a tall, handsome lad of twenty-one or two years of age, with a mild look on his fresh face. One could imagine him in flannels on a cricket field, or at tennis in any middle-class suburb; the pride of doting parents and the quarry of pretty women.

While the provosts tried in vain to get a statement from him, the police wrung the story from the girl.

I shuddered at their callousness as they probed and questioned so that no smallest detail should be unrecorded, and no aspect of the affair forgotten or overlooked.

She re-lived it all as she told it in revolting detail, until, desperate, she turned to me and said, 'It is all done and over. What possible benefit can it be to me if this man is tried and punished? Nothing but bitterness and humiliation for me and disgrace for the soldier can come from a trial.'

I tried to explain to her that only by trial and punishment by a properly constituted court could we deter others, so that other women would be spared a similar experience. When asked if the sentence would be heavy.

I said, 'Five, perhaps ten, years in prison.'

She started and said, 'He is so young, and it is so much of a man's life.'

After a pause she went on: 'There was a war between our countries. He is still a soldier. Perhaps there is justification in that. If he must be tried, please record that it is not my wish that he be punished.'

Her wish was granted from a totally unexpected quarter. At the Court Martial that followed, the accused was found guilty and sentenced to ten years' penal servitude. In accordance with army law the court's decision was forwarded to Australia for confirmation. Some time later the documents were returned marked 'Conviction quashed because of insufficient evidence'!

The exclamation mark is mine.

In the immediate post-war period in Japan, because of economic hardship and semi-starvation, young and physically desirable women offered themselves at street corners or railway stations in exchange for anything that was edible or capable of conversion to food. For this reason, if for no other, any condonation of criminal assault was impossible.

But crimes against women were not the only offences. Bashing of men and youths for the sheer joy of it, setting fire to brothels from pique at being refused entrance, which was forbidden, were others; but robbery, with and without violence, comprised the major number. It is an ugly sight to see a truck-load of twenty or thirty of one's fellow soldiers descend like ravening wolves on a row of market stalls, grabbing fistfuls of tawdy trifles, overturning counters, and punching anyone who looked as though he (or she) might resent it.

At such times no trace of culture, breeding, or restraint was discernible, and one wished that the side-upturned slouch hat did not so unequivocally distinguish the thieves as Australians.

Of all the incidents of which I had first-hand knowledge, there was only one in which resistance was offered by the Japanese.

That occasion was when six Australians entered a brothel and attempted to eject three Japanese seamen. One of the latter was kicked in the shins and was goaded to retaliate. A pitched battle with sticks and stones continued outside the building until the Australians chose discretion rather than valour and withdrew.

The Japanese were very chary of reporting incidents to the police from fear of retaliation or because no recompense could be claimed for damage done, and only inconvenience and unwelcome publicity resulted. Women, naturally, concealed their shame where possible.

This, and the fact that the Japanese could not, or would not, identify their attackers made the army's task of apprehending them almost insuperable.

In the last months of 1946, crimes against the civil population had become so numerous that I was being called out almost every day and night by the Japanese police, so that I was becoming exhausted for lack of sleep.

At length I arranged for the police to by-pass me and make direct contact with mobile provost patrols, who joined me afterwards. Their help was essential, for these hoodlums would tolerate no interference - especially if drunk - whether from officer or N.C.O.,

and on several occasions presented to the Japanese the spectacle of beating unconscious one of our own N.C.O.s who had remonstrated with them. This was beyond the comprehension of the Japanese: they could understand and even accept ill-treatment of themselves; but such behaviour to a fellow-soldier was unthinkable.

The shame of being identified with them moved me later to discard the slouch hat and wear instead the officer-type peaked cap. I shunned the company of Japanese acquaintances for a day or two after each serious incident. When travelling on trams I pretended not to notice how they became silent and edged away. I tried not to see the fear in the eyes of shopkeepers when I went shopping. I did not linger as I used to, but paid and left.

No amount of denial, glossing-over or whitewashing by army authorities or 'fact-finding' missions can change the facts. I saw countless incidents of the kind I have told of with my own eyes and for every one I had personal knowledge of there were half a dozen of which I had indirect knowledge, from provosts, intelligence reports, and fellow interpreters with other units.

Several reasons may be given for the existence and continuance of these conditions.

The major one is that many of the troops were poor types, men who had never taken any active part in the war and who had little or no discipline owing to lack of training. They joined the Occupation Army to evade the responsibility of rehabilitating themselves, to make money 'on the black', or just to have a good time. The leavening of 'old soldiers' had learned self-discipline and tolerance through war years and rarely offended.

A desperate shortage of provosts also contributed greatly to the difficulty of keeping order. Because of the deep-rooted prejudice against provosts only unacceptable types offered themselves for enlistment when reinforcements to the Provost Corps were sought. At one time an area of twenty-five square miles was being policed by a total strength of fifteen M.P.s, all of whom, of course, could not be on duty at the one time. Their movements were of necessity regulated, and soon became known to the average soldier, who arranged his actions to match the absence of M.P.s.

Another factor was the constant quashing by the authorities in Australia of court-martial sentences pronounced in Japan. This was probably due to fear of public opinion, based on a concept that anything our troops might have done was somehow justified by the war-time behaviour of the Japanese soldier. This view was not confined to Australians: when a G.I. was sentenced to hang for the murder of two Japanese civilians in Tokyo, letters written to the U.S.Army newspaper *Stars and Stripes* protested that had he done it two years earlier he would have been acclaimed a hero! The tendency to think along these lines was do doubt partly responsible for the hesitancy to discipline the men of the B.C.O.F.

My knowledge of other troops in Japan is mostly second-hand, but from personal experience I believe that the Australians were the worst-behaved of all, and the belief was widely held by some Japanese - that one could not (have) distinguished between the aborigines and the white inhabitant of Australia - was strengthened, with poor justice to the former.

Here I must express my admiration and respect for the 34th Brigade Provosts. For good discipline, and discharge of their duty in trying conditions, for exemplary conduct towards both Japanese and Australians, at times in the face of great provocation, they are deserving of special praise.

They had their girl friends and 'wogged' their canteen goods, I suppose - we all did - but I have seen many instances of their incorruptibility in the pursuit of their duty.

They appeared to be beyond bribery by money or favour, as many a Japanese black-market broker found to his cost in the Provost Court.

They were just and considerate to Japanese and Australians alike, and tolerant and sensible in interpreting the many restrictive regulations that governed troops' relations with the civil population.

There was no better unit in (the) B.C.O.F., and no finer ambassadors for Australia in Japan.

## Chapter 21

# Marooned

The summer's heat had driven many of my friends to the hills and seaside villas, half the unit had gone into the country for a summer bivouac and no activity offered. There had been an outbreak of cholera on the other side of Hiroshima and because of this the Government had forbidden all bathing and fishing in the Bay.

I had drawn near to the edge of the doldrums when I received a visit from a man who had been the camp carpenter, but who had left us some months earlier for more profitable fields, after getting married.

He asked me to come to his home that evening to discuss 'something'. He was an unsavoury sort, much given to sharp practices, and consequently liable to lead me to matters affecting our position and responsibilities, so he could not be ignored. Besides, he was grateful to me for replenishing from Japanese Naval stores the tools he lost in our barracks fire - though no doubt he had greatly magnified his loss - and may have wished to repay me with information that was useful.

When I arrived that evening his wife, a big foolish creature, was alone in the squalid little house, sobbing quietly to herself. It seemed that her husband had come home a little earlier and found her asleep and therefore unable to welcome him, whereupon he had soundly thrashed her and bounced off in a temper to a friend's home. The fact that she was soon to have a baby appeared to have deterred him not at all.

In the midst of my attempts to console her he arrived back, and after apologizing abjectly, presented me with a kimono, a most acceptable gift, since they were practically unprocurable. It was some weeks later that I learned that he had taken it from his wife's trousseau as an added punishment for her unpermitted sleep! He was an odious creature, ready with insincere smiles, and I would not have trusted him with a sen. He told me a business man of his acquaintance, who lived fifteen miles out of the city on the Inland Sea, had expressed a desire to meet me and had arranged a banquet and fishing trip in my honour for the following Saturday.

The carpenter then handed me a highly-decorated envelope, which he said contained some little mark to signify the depth of his friends's desire to meet me. In it was 1,000 yen (at that time worth about 20 pounds).

Since business men, eastern or western, do not dispense such largesse without some hope of reaping a dividend, I became greatly curious as to his purpose and accepted the gift on condition that it obligated me in no way, and that, if I saw fit, I would return it later. He pleaded with me not to return it on any account, as it would be an unpardonable breach of etiquette.

The Saturday afternoon was hellishly hot, and we had to travel by packed electric train. After an hour of sardine-like existence we alighted at a fishing village, and squeezed our way down dark narrow streets to the scene of the banquet - a large inn on the shore-

line, belonging to our host. He was waiting in the doorway - a different type to any I had met to date, dapper and sophisticated in a vulgar way, with the air of one who got everything he wanted. With him to greet us was a pretty, saucy wench, obviously his mistress, and an older woman, his wife. Like her husband she had a poise and assurance rarely seen in a Japanese woman, and a knowledge of French hinted at a higher education. Also in attendance was his partner, a hearty bachelor, who probably had less business acumen than his associate, but more humanity.

It was apparent that the carpenter's duty had been discharged with my arrival, for he was dismissed in a few curt words, and sent home.

After the initial formalities we climbed by almost perpendicular stairs to the first floor and entered a room furnished in pseudo-Western style, with cane chairs and chaises-longues, and a balcony which overlooked the sea and a crowd of fishing boats at the quay. In the air was the pungency of seaweed and the tang of tarry rope.

We sat and drank iced beer and watched the glow of sunset pale into soft twilight. A daughter of the host came in silently with a *koto* - the Japanese harp - the playing of which is an accomplishment much cultivated among the upper classes, as being in genteel contrast with the popular, and therefore vulgar, *samisen*.

The *koto* consists of a sounding board six feet long and a foot wide, with thirteen silken strings tuned by a system of movable bridges. It rests on the floor horizontally and is plucked like a Hawaiian guitar. This one, like most of these instruments, was a beautiful example of the woodworker's craft.

The girl played several airs having a weird, ethereal charm, until it was time for dinner. We went downstairs to a room off an interior garden of gloomy, fantastically-distorted dwarf trees. The group of men already there had obviously been drinking heavily and were now laughing and talking with a woman of forty-odd, whose great charm and mature beauty proclaimed her a *geisha* - the only one I ever met.

The *geisha* is a phenomenon peculiarly Japanese. She is not, as is popularly supposed, a prostitute, but a woman trained with meticulous care from childhood in the arts of conversation, dancing, and music, for the sole purpose of pleasing men, of creating the illusion and glamour of romantic love, without its disillusionments or responsibilities, a love denied to most Japanese by a marriage system in which the partners have little to do with the choosing of their mates.

Though their calling does not necessarily involve cohabitation with clients, liaisons of a lasting nature are often formed, especially as a *geisha* passes her prime. It is usual in such cases for the patron to establish the lady in some business from which she may extract a reasonably comfortable living.

This woman in our midst was now the chatelaine of a well-known restaurant in Hiroshima dispensing food of a quality that placed it far above any other.

When I was seated, a thick-set, study girl came and sat by my side. She was rather plain of face and figure; only her exquisite costume lifted her above the commonplace.

The heat of the day had worn me a bit thin and after a long meal and some drinking, I had great difficulty in holding my head up. 'Put him to bed,' mine host suggested to the girl, provoking bawdy laughter and suggestive gestures. She led me off by the hand and I stumbled up the steep stairs into a quiet room.

She laid out the mattresses as I undressed, and hung the huge mosquito net, a difficult matter for one person. I flung myself down in an ecstasy of drowsiness. She sat beside me and took from the bosom of her kimono a card and held it before my eyes. In the last moments of wakefulness I read: Certificate of Health... Hiroshima Prefectural Police .. a name Hifumi, an odd one written in Japanese with the figures 1, 2, 3 ... Occupation ... hardly necessary to record ... the impression of a seal against today's date, certifying safety for the time being ... Sleep enveloped me the next moment.

When I awoke the next morning I was alone, and everyone was astir, though it was only six-thirty. After what I believe is termed a Chinaman's wash, I joined the others and we went, without breakfast, or further delay, to the quay, where a tug stood ready for the fishing excursion, deck spread with nets and gaffs.

There were twelve of us, six men and six women. An implicit pairing-off found most men with their wives, my host with his mistress, his wife and his partner, and I with the *geisha*, whom I found to be amiable and entertaining.

The tug was powered by an old-fashioned oil engine, and we chugged softly and smoothly out over the Inland Sea. In the half-light of the early morn, with mists wreathing low on the water, it was a fantastic fairy-tale world. The mist stood a few feet from the water's surface, so that from the level of the gunwale one could look far ahead as through a tunnel that seemed to run to the edge of the earth and beyond.

Such a journey did Urashima Taro make, in the old folk-tale, on the back of a tortoise, to the Palace of the Dragon King, there to stay for three days that were three hundred years on earth, to return and find his line extinct and unremembered; to break a promise and perish.

The mists dispersed slowly under the warmth of the sun, and left us on a wide expanse of glassy water. The mainland was far behind and islands stood all around us. Soon these, too, vanished in the distance and we headed into the empty sea.

The salt air sharpened the growing hunger we felt at the absence of breakfast.

Presently a pine-clad island appeared ahead, and as we drew near nets were payed out astern into the shallowing water. When the ends were drawn together the centre teemed with flashing fish of every hue and size. Half a dozen of Japan's premier fish, *tai* - the sea bream - were hauled out and the remainder released. Never have fish been more easily obtained. We went ashore on the island, which was uninhabited, and all manner of food and the wherewithal for preparing it were unloaded.

Driftwood fires were lit and the busy women cooked the fish and a multitude of other things, and soon we were noisily devouring it all.

During the meal a rather theatrical conversation, with many gestures, ensued between the two partners, and I was obviously the topic. When we were ready to start off again, my host said: 'There is something on an island near-by I should like to show you,' and I knew at once that there lay the whole purpose of my visit.

I stood at the bows and wondered what I was to see, and suddenly my musings were dispelled as the engine came to a grinding, rattling stop. The main bearing had collapsed, and was utterly beyond our power to repair.

Our place of departure showed far astern; nothing else was visible. We drifted imperceptibly until late afternoon, when a sampan hove in sight and we hailed it, and asked its owner to tow us to the nearest inhabited place.

Twilight found us, at the end of a long slow pull, at a fishing village on a small island far from the mainland. It was remote from ordinary communications and hardly anyone there had seen the Shinchugun, but my host's name was known. A house on the waterfront was vacated and we were installed.

We were tired and ravenous, and the food resources of the island were meagre and simple. Fish and rice were about all they could muster, though someone miraculously unearthed half a dozen bottles of beer.

The twelve of us slept that night on the floor of one room in disturbing proximity, while outside a storm raged and threatened to unhouse us at every moment.

In this house, on an island barely half a mile in circumference, we lived for five days, while a new bearing was being obtained from the mainland. There was hardly a place to put one's foot outside. Every inch of flat ground was cultivated, and barren slopes behind the village were cut off from the rest of the island. There was no beach; only a rough and narrow shingle shelf.

After the first day I began to chafe at the enforced inactivity and thought of the search parties that would scour the country when my failure to return was discovered. By the time the new bearing had arrived, everything was ready to receive it, and on the sixth day we were once again at sea, and on our way back. Somewhere near the island we had first landed on, we came to another island, and on the beach, half-lying in the water, were great steel cylinders, like ship's boilers.

'Those were oil tanks,' said my host. 'During the war, the Navy filled them with gasoline until they were just submerged, and then towed them to their destinations, out of sight of your aeroplanes. Now they have been abandoned. What a waste! If they could only be brought to the mainland, who knows what benefit could not be derived from them? They could be converted into boilers to generate steam, with which to clean rice, cut timber for homes, make bread (we were supplying civilians with a ration of flour at this time), and change the whole condition of the people for the better. What wonders from a few steel cylinders!'

'Would it be difficult to get them back?' I asked.



This was the partner's cue.

'Oh, no, they could be towed there one at a time, by such a tug as this. In its present patched up condition, no, but at a later date ...

'Unfortunately, being formerly naval property, they now belong to the Occupation forces, to you! It would be difficult to persuade the police of our high motives and our desire to mitigate the hardships of our people. However, your presence on board at such a time would be unquestionable authority...'

It might have worked had he been a little more plausible or less obvious in his planning. But five unexpected days in his company had told me more than he intended.

It had been worth a try anyhow - one thousand yen and the cost of a party.

As far as I know, the tanks are still where we left them.

Back at camp a complete indifference to my absence made me vow to make the most of my future opportunities and I settled down to work on a large accumulation of other men's love letters, which I had rashly undertaken to translate.

## Chapter 22

# Fruits of Autumn

Harry, who had married Terumi, and I, with memories of my election tour as a stimulus, spent many of our weekends in the country. Transport was woefully inadequate, there being only one jeep to the whole unit, and even for official business we relied largely on what must have been an excellent railway service in normal times, but was now severely over-taxed.

A railway line ran from the main line at Hiroshima north through the centre of the province and then across to Himeji, the castle town. It was known as the Geibi line, a contraction of the names of the two ancient provinces through which it ran, and led to the heart's desires of both of us - Harry's at Miyoshi, whence Terumi came to meet him, and mine at the *Iroha* inn at Yoshida. We thus became familiar figures on the train.

From the beginning there had been a regulation forbidding soldiers to travel on Japanese trains, except in a carriage allotted to them exclusively, but duty compelled me sometimes and the provosts knew this and winked at it. Since no one else mattered, my companion and I travelled with immunity, even though at times the 'duty' would have been embarrassing to explain.

I always travelled in the *shasho shitsu* - the conductor's compartment in the luggage van in the rear. Railway employees often rode there, but there was always a 'reserved seat' for me.

The carriages were old and dilapidated, and the locomotives small, long-funnelled and low-powered, long discarded for main-line work and unsuitable for any purpose but shunting.

When the empty train drew into Hiroshima station an hour or so before departure, the platform was already so crowded with hopeful passengers that many were in imminent danger of being pushed on to the tracks. With the carriage doors still locked, the more agile leaped through the open windows to avoid the frantic rush when the doors were opened. In a matter of a minute the train was crammed to a suffocating fullness and the lavatories stacked to the roof with baggage.

The unlucky weaker ones sat on the platform and resigned themselves to many hours of waiting for the next train and another chance. Some of them, the older people, would lose again.

Harry and I rode together for the last time on an autumn morning of that year.

The train left on time and pulled slowly out, past the brewery, on the outskirts of the city, miraculously preserved from the bomb. In the first days of the Occupation it was the centre round which the lives of most Australians revolved. A 'requisition' written out on any of the myriad army forms was enough to procure a crate of beer. The brewery still has many of these documents bearing the flourishing signatures of Ned Kelly, Ben

Hall, Captain Thunderbolt, and other Australian bushrangers. Now at one's approach to the brewery gates, on no matter what business, a notice signed by the Commander-in-Chief was brandished by the guard; the wording left no loophole through which a thirsty soldier could squeeze a drop of beer.

From the start, the journey seemed constantly uphill, and the mountainous terrain must have been a heart-break to the railway engineers. Nor were the engine-drivers to be envied.

I once road on the footplate for a few miles, and no power on earth would persuade me to do it again. It was a mid-summer day, and in spite of the heat from the boiler, was tolerable, until we entered a long tunnel. The further we penetrated the greater the heat became, and the effect of the hot smoke and sulphurous gases against the skin and in the throat was such that I could barely keep from screaming into the darkness of the hell we were in. When we eventually emerged the driver grinned across at me, apparently immunized by long experience.

There were the usual long halts at stations to generate steam expended and not replenished from the inferior coal. On the main line, trains were allotted pusher-engines for steep gradients, but there were none to spare here.

From our privileged position in the van we could study all the secrets of railway operation, the exchange of staffs (they are discs in Japan), and the replacement of crews when they were tired.

The politeness that is the essence of Japanese life was evident among the railway staffs. At each station appeared a man wearing a cap banded with red. The station master, I thought, but was told he could be of any rank: the red cap gave him superiority over the others for the time being and control of the train while it was in the station. It was his signal only that brought the cry of '*Hassha*' from the conductor and started the train moving again. As they passed each other the man in the cap and the conductor exchanged formal salutes.

There was always a girl or two in blouse and trousers, working in the station offices. They usually attended to the loading and unloading of parcels in the van. They obviously knew the conductors well, and there was considerable badinage between them as they worked. But as the train moved off they became formal again and exchanged grave bows. The girls looked so demure as we glided by, that I could not resist patting them affectionately on their pretty heads, bringing a frown to their smooth brows as if they had been disturbed at prayer.

On this trip a Railways Bureau medical officer travelled with us. He spoke little English, but had a good knowledge of German, for Japanese doctors do a large part of their studies in that language and often write their case-histories in it. We fell to talking of German literature and music, and whiled away the time translating the *Lorelei* into Japanese, each taking a line in turn and submitting it verbally to the other for judgement.

I alighted at Yoshidaguchi, the station nearest to Yoshida, leaving Harry to continue on to Miyoshi, and found half a dozen other soldiers had got off too from among the mass

of passengers. I knew in a minute or two what had brought them: not to visit friends or to sight-see, but the endless search for beer and *sake*, a craving for which ousted even women from their thoughts.

Their quest kept them off the bus for Yoshida, and I was thankful for it as we bumped along the eight-mile journey.

The scene had changed greatly since my first visit. It was now autumn, and the orchards were burdened with fruit, of which the district's famous pears predominated. Each pear had been tied with incredible patience in its own paper bag, to protect it against birds and insects and to preserve its perfection. They were not pear-shaped but squat like an apple.

The rice lay tedded in the fields, or hung from frameworks of poles, while farmers with mattocks turned the earth again for the sowing of winter barley. Their toil was unceasing, only night's darkness and serious illness halting them.

When I arrived at the *Iroha* there was a jeep outside. I was suddenly filled with an unreasoning resentment that someone else should have discovered this little personal Eden. I called out in Japanese, and the same warm welcome from the innkeeper and his wife and family dispelled less pleasant thoughts.

Our room of the first visit was now occupied by three men and three women. The men were officers from an army hospital; the girls were members of an Australian show troupe. They sprawled ungracefully on the floor and were wholly incongruous to the simple Japanese room. All had been drinking and all were patently bored.

I made the usual courtesies with little grace, and asked how they liked being in Japan. They did not like it at all, it seemed. They had the usual prejudices of the superficial observer: the smells were abominable, and the food unconventional and unpalatable.

'As for the women,' one girl said, 'I simply cannot understand how anyone can bear the ugly ungainly creatures.'

It was clear this sentiment stemmed from pique, and the comparison between these painted, loud-voiced women and those of the innkeeper's household, fresh-skinned, shy, and graceful was so clearly unfavourable to the former that I left my protests and went out into the street.

But I was no happier there. The beer seekers had by now arrived and were wandering the streets clamorous and threatening in their demands of shopkeepers. I preferred not to be present at the desecration of my Eden and left on the next bus for the railway station and thence to the quiet of Miyoshi, and the harmonious company of Harry and Terumi.

She had spent the summer at the farmhouse of her uncle and aunt, ostensibly to escape the heat and help with the harvest, but in reality to be free to meet her husband.

They were put up at an inn in a by-street, opposite an ancient temple and away from the path of curious M.P. patrols.

The surrounding hills were aflame with the red and yellow glory of the autumn maples, and the bright orange of the persimmons in the clear evening air made the gardens gay, and consoled the sadness of the dying year.

I was dog-tired and famished, and went straight to the bathroom. In it was a very large rectangular wooden tub, sunk in the floor, and the steam rose from its dark depths.

I stripped and began the preliminary washing, pouring wooden buckets of hot water over myself before entering the bath. The door slid open, and a young woman entered with an empty basket. In a few moments she had filled it with her clothes, and she stood beside me waiting for the bucket.

She had an exquisite figure, a straight back, small firm bosom, and a tantalizingly smooth skin that was a constant temptation to touch. I gave her the bucket and stood watching her, without emotional stirrings, like an art student in a life class, and wondered at the great change wrought on me since the first day of my arrival.

I had dinner with Harry and Terumi, and retired soon afterwards. They had so little time together.

Morning came with the booming of the temple bell, a curious penetrating sound that seemed to vibrate the very cells of the body. From within and without the inn, the devout droned prayers in a monotone that matched the note of the bell.

I spent the day with a former class-mate of Terumi's. She was an old friend of mine by now and had planned to keep me amused, so the two could be alone.

We went to visit a government agricultural research farm, where, she promised, there was something that would surprise me. It turned out to be a lone merino sheep, penned in a stall like a horse. It had come from Australia, she told me, so we stood and stoked its silly head, and mourned its wretched exile. We returned laden with corn-cobs picked at their perfection, and with her duty done she left me to gorge myself with the cobs.

Evening found us at the station and I stood apart while Harry and Terumi made their farewells.

There were few other travellers. Nearby a girl stood fidgeting with her luggage, an anxious look on her pretty face. The anxiety dispersed as she saw me and she bowed in recognition. I hardly knew her as my bathroom companion with her figure swathed in voluminous kimono.

She asked apologetically if I could help her with her luggage and if possible to find her a seat. Her eyes were two brown pools of pleading and distress and any hesitation was drowned in their depths.

Her luggage, a wicker trunk, was certainly heavy, almost beyond her power to lift, and with the conductor's permission we sat it in the luggage van, while Harry day-dreamed in a corner.

The return was much faster than our coming, because of the many down gradients. From Yoshidaguchi, where other soldiers entrained, the journey seemed even more precipitous. In the darkness the countryside stirred old memories and I realized this was the line I had travelled on my return from Kisa, an eternity of nine months ago.

I was roused from half-sleep by my girl companion, who had clutched my arm in a sudden access of fear.

'Tell them I am your friend,' she pleaded in a fierce whisper.

I looked up to see two policemen who had entered by the connecting door from the adjoining carriage.

Apart from a formal salute they showed no interest in either of us. Instead they talked earnestly with the conductor, who turned to me.

'There are some soldiers on the train,' he said. 'They are a little drunk. Could you speak with them?'

We began making our way through the train towards the engine. Half way we entered a carriage that presented a peculiar tableau. The passengers were crowded into one end, and at the other a group of soldiers had set themselves up on a rostrum of seats, auctioning parcels of sandwiches that had been intended as their lunches to the cowering crowd.

They got down when I entered and dispersed in the direction I had come from. Remembering my female companion, I followed close behind.

Before I caught up with them I stopped at a curious sound. It was the locomotive whistle and it went 'whoo wh-wh-who-who, whoo whoo'.

It could only mean one thing: some of our soldiers were in the engine-drivers cabin, and I trembled as my imagination pictured the train roaring uncontrolled, past signals and open points, carrying us all to destruction.

In the midst of debating which way to go the train pulled into a station, and I got out. The conductor, reading my mind, said, 'The locomotive crew are still at their posts, so do not worry. They will make sure the train does not pass against signals. *Shimpai shinai de kudasai.*' I promised him I would not worry and returned to the van, whence three or four of the drunken soldiers had made their way. The sake they had drunk began to overpower them and soon they were spread in a stupor on the floor, snoring like pigs in the loose straw from rice bales.

The conductor's high-pitched call of '*Shuten de gozaimasu*' announced our approach to the end of the journey. At Hiroshima the girl asked me to see her through the railway barrier, and I staggered out into the street under the burden of her wicker trunk. A man came from a three-wheeled motor-cycle and put her luggage in it. She thanked me, climbed aboard the motor-cycle and they made off in the darkness.

I became aware of the two policemen from the train, standing behind me and watching their departure wistfully.

'Why was she afraid?' I asked them.

'We are Prefectural Police. It is our duty to search the baggage of train passengers who, we suspect, are in unauthorized possession of rationed and government-monopoly produce.' (Tobacco is a government monopoly in Japan.) 'That trunk is full of rice bought illegally from farmers and destined for the black market.'

'Why did you not arrest her?' I asked.

'But she was your companion and under your protection; that gave her immunity,' they replied, astonished.

It was my wounded pride and not a sense of duty that made me say sternly: 'Do not let the presence of an Allied soldier deter you in the execution of your duty. Go to it!'

They saluted quickly and hurried off in search of a vehicle. I think I was rather glad they did not find one.

## Chapter 23

# Apologia

In August, my eighth month in Japan, it occurred to me that a contentment I had seldom known had been with me for a long time. That this was not merely a transitory state of mind, springing from some fleeting pleasure, I could not be sure, so I wrote on the wall of my room: 'I am happy, 15 August 1946.' The intention was to record any change monthly. Beside each succeeding month until I left appeared only ditto marks.

From the first day of my arrival, I had lived under anything but comfortable conditions. The food was notably poor and insipid, I did my own laundry and, unlike men of equivalent rank in other units, had no house-girl. My bed was a camp stretcher, my pillow a folded rough blanket, and there were no sheets. Nor did we have showers.

Yet these physical discomforts were hardly sensed.

Whence then, I asked myself, did this contentment derive? The answer could only lie in the fascination of the scene and those who inhabited it.

I had come to the country after years of association with Japanese in Australia, and with some knowledge of their culture, customs, and language, so the notion popular among others that the Japanese were uneducated and physically dirty, unoriginal, and inscrutable had long since been dispelled. I had found them to be none of these things in Australia.

Consequently I arrived armed with a pistol, prepared to sleep with it on the hip or under the pillow, behind locked doors. I lost it in the fire in the first month and never carried one again; my room was open to all who cared to enter - had in fact no lock.

First impressions of the Japanese had remained valid. I had found them industrious and alert, friendly and hospitable beyond measure to the stranger, and devoted to the welfare of their own family group. With all their practical talents went an artistic taste and a sense of the appropriate that was our despair and envy.

As for their inscrutability; well, that was largely an individual matter. One can go through life without knowing much of one's closest friends, even one's parents.

You may say that these were abnormal times, and that the Japanese had set out to create a favourable impression on the Occupying Forces, to humble themselves and to acquiesce in all things so that they would be the sooner rid of us. Had it been so, any but the most ingenuous and gullible would have seen through it before long.

Of course they wanted to get rid of us; a less proud people than the Japanese would have resented the intrusion of foreigners in their domestic affairs. But this resentment was on a political level, and did not enter into personal relationships between individuals. Differences in philosophies, religious or political opinions do not necessarily preclude friendship.

If any doubts still remained they were dispelled by contact with the children.



The spontaneity of their welcome of we called at a school, their friendly greetings in the street, their complete lack of fear, and their interminable questions were unequivocal and left no room for doubt. Had their parents hated, feared, or despised us, some element of their mood would have been manifest through their children.

The contrast between them and the Hitler-nurtured German children was startling.

That these impressions are not confined to post-war conditions and experience can be vouched for by many who lived in Japan before Pearl Harbour.

There used to be a 'sickness' among European businessmen resident in Japan, known to them as 'Japan Head'. This was nothing more than the culmination of a process of change in which the European had come to consider things Japanese to be of more importance than his own country's, when their customs grew to be more acceptable and the women desirable as consorts or wives.

When this stage was reached it was customary for the man to be recalled home, or transferred to another country 'for the good of English prestige'. Some of the personal tragedies so created were solved in the only possible way - the suicide traditional of the country which had given happiness to a man and then destroyed him.

One does not live in a foreign country for long without realizing that human nature and the fundamental requirements of happiness are essentially the same everywhere.

Whether it be Hitler's Germany or Fascist Italy, America or Soviet Russia, enduring friendships are made and individual and national problems understood if not necessarily given sympathy. Such friendships are formed with the people, and they are the nation, not a group of men who happen to be temporarily in control of it. Governments pass, the people remain.

During the Nazi regime in Germany, when men whose only crime was membership of an ancient and cultured race were being slaughtered like dumb cattle or undergoing bestial tortures that degraded the perpetrators below the animals, the Hitler apologists purported to find extenuation and even justice in these crimes.

I do not attempt to condone barbarity, whether it be perpetrated by German or Japanese, Jew or Gentile. But I do wish to confine it to those responsible, and not to impute it to all members of a race, which is the function of propaganda in war-time.

Two such notions which have survived the conflict are: That the Japanese had been dreaming of world conquest for hundreds of years; and that they are at heart barbarians and have always been so.

The absurdity, and even irony, of the first statement is evident to any student of the history of Japan.

From the end of the sixteenth century, when the country had at last been tranquillized and unified under Iyeyasu, the founder of the Tokugawa Shogunate, Japan withdrew into itself, and no intercourse was sought, or permitted, with the outside world. Iyeyasu, by all-embracing formalization, tried to force men and manners into inflexible moulds,

to preserve the golden age of peace and the supremacy of his line for ever. The emperors had long been mere symbols and figureheads, surrounded by women or retired to secluded monasteries.

But the seeds of Christianity sown years before by St Francis Xavier had spread through the land and had grown into a great disruptive force that threatened more than anything else to divide the country into factions, and destroy its hard-won unity.

By supporting factions opposing the Shogun the Portuguese missionaries and merchants brought on themselves persecution and ruthless suppression, which ended in the banishment of all foreigners but a few Dutch. Some die-hard Portuguese tried again to resume trade in 1640, only to be seized and beheaded by the Shogun Iyemitsu.

A group of them was spared in order that they might be sent back to Macao, to tell of what had been done, and to bear the following message: 'Do not fail to inform the inhabitants (the Portuguese) that the Japanese wish to receive from them neither gold nor silver nor any manner of gifts or merchandise; in a word, nothing that emanates from them.

'We have even burned the clothes of those who were executed. Tell them to do the same to us if they find occasion to do so; we consent to it willingly. Let them think no more of us, as if we were no longer in this world.'

Finally they were thus enjoined:

'So long as the sun warms the earth, let no Christian dare set foot on Japan, and let all know that if King Phillip himself, or the very God of the Christians or the Lord Buddha himself should contravene this prohibition, their heads shall be forfeit.'

This condition persisted until Perry's black ships with guns gaping at the gunwales sailed up Tokyo Bay and demanded free access for trading and commerce for the West. The Japanese, like bamboos in a storm, bowed so they might not break, before the irresistible might of America.

In such manner were the seeds sown of which Pearl Harbour was the fruit.

History will also dispose of the belief that the Japanese have always behaved inhumanly in war. Bushido - the way of the warrior - is more than a name; it is a code of ethics that matches knighthood in its influence on soldiery; in its exhortation to chivalry and justice in peace and war, in the sacredness of a vow, and the keeping of a promise. Japanese history abounds in tales that extol these knightly virtues.

That this recent war's cruelty is not typical of the Japanese is apparent from reading the history of the Russo-Japanese war, when the Japanese Army was extolled for its humanity and chivalry. In those far-off days the odd idea still persisted that wars were fought between governments and the forces they controlled; enemy civilians went about their legitimate business as usual, and prisoners of war were treated no whit differently from the civilians.

Count Oyama, in a speech to the Japanese Army in 1894 said, inter alia: 'Belligerent operations being properly confined to the military and naval forces actually engaged, and there being no reason whatever for enmity between individuals because their countries are at war, the common principles of humanity dictate that succour and rescue should be extended even to those of the enemy's forces who are disabled by wounds or disease.'

Here also is an extract from Cassell's History of the Russo-Japanese War 1904-5: 'In concluding this article (on the treatment of prisoners of war) one cannot refrain from paying a tribute to Japan for the way in which she has observed the rules of International Law in her present conflict, her chivalrous treatment of her wounded and prisoner enemies, and her strict compliance with all the laws and uses of neutrality.'

Even in this war the treatment of civilian internees in Japan was in most cases a model of correctness and the prisoners in mainland camps appeared to have fared infinitely better than those far from the central administration.

It is significant that the average Japanese has the same difficulty in accepting the inhuman behaviour of some of their soldiers as Australians would in regard to their own, simply because they would not themselves so behave. The changes wrought by a brutalizing army system and the slow degrading influence of jungle life, the isolation, and the inadequate food, are not known to the civilians.

After the first announcements in the Japanese press, in mid-1946, of the rape of Nanking, incredulity gave way to shame and the desire to make restoration. A Buddhist scholar said to me, 'We must find some way of atoning. We have been thinking wrongly for forty years, and we need your guidance desperately in the future.'

And we must grant them this. Their potentiality for good is so great that it would be criminal folly and a betrayal of posterity not to encourage its resurgence.

After reading this book you may say that I am pro-Japanese. No one called me that during five years in the army. No one could have found any reason to do so.

I fought not against the Japanese people but against those elements who had led them into a futile war, who had sought inevitably if not intentionally, but from the very nature of war, to destroy the pattern of our lives and to deprive us of the small things that make life significant and liveable.

There were times during the conflict when I forgot all this, being imperfect and swayed by propaganda and immediate emotional stress, and by the sufferings of fellow-soldiers and friends.

We must remember that this last war was fought primarily against tyranny, wheresoever found and against whomsoever practised. And the Japanese had suffered tyranny at the hands of their own militarist class for a decade or more. The wonder is that any spark of liberal thought still remained.

To adopt a Christian approach is not to condone guilt. Rather it is a demonstration of faith in the common man, of whatever race or colour. I kept this faith with difficulty during the war, lost it completely in the jungles along the death-road from Sandakan to Ranau, and regained it in the weed-grown ruins of Hiroshima. An American soldier had it too, when, dying, he left his worldly possessions to be devoted to a closer mutual understanding, through education, between Japanese and Americans. It is the faith that offers mankind a chance of survival.

Without it we are lost.

## Chapter 24

# Operation Foxum

The freedom of movement and access to public places that we all had once enjoyed soon became severely circumscribed. A brawl or two in a dance hall or theatre brought to its doors the army bill-posters with their out-of-bounds signs and before long every place of amusement bore a placard that forbade entrance - not to the undisciplined, short-sighted trouble-makers; they remained undeterred - but to those whose contact with the people might have done so much good.

Eventually every building, every house in the Prefecture, was out of bounds, though the law was administered with admirable wisdom and prudence by the provosts. I know of no one discovered in a home where he was obviously a well-behaved and welcome guest, who suffered inconvenience or expulsion from it.

Once we had had freedom to use the trains, but that was before the armed robberies by our soldiers began. After that, only military guards travelled on them, and at Hiroshima and other main stations picquets checked the credentials of all who passed through the barriers.

One or two of the outlying cinemas were accessible by tram, and we still went there and saw Tarzan, Bing Crosby and Gary Cooper with Japanese sub-titles, and watched the audience squirm with embarrassment during the love scenes. They, unlike us, had not acquired the indifference that came from repetition, but saw the kisses for what they were: Hollywood's substitute for the sex act.

Yet the nude women that often roamed through French pictures moved them not at all, whereas the Australian soldiers crowded to see them.

In the periods of inactivity that intervened now and then, I, as an interpreter, was free to rove where the whim took me. I seldom went far from camp; there was so much of interest in Hiroshima that I never tired of visiting it, and rarely went farther afield.

An addiction to collecting odds and ends had long before gained me the nickname of 'The Bower Bird' among my closer friends, and this passion I indulged to the full here. I spent days raking among the wreckage for relics, or talking with those who had lived through 'the bomb'.

I pored over photographs and files in the Chugoku newspaper office, one of the few buildings that still stood. As a newspaper man I found much of interest there, the most unusual sight being girl compositors, tiny creatures of fourteen or fifteen, setting by hand columns of type from cases containing five or six thousand different characters. Clean readers' proofs bore witness to their efficiency.

It was about this time that I met John Hersey, and for a brief period, while he was collecting material for his book *Hiroshima*, acted as his interpreter. I envied him his unemotional approach to his subject, his sense of news-value and the way he worked all

he had learnt into a carefully planned pattern. 'I am writing a sort of *Bridge of San Luis Rey* in reverse,' he said; 'Taking the stories of the survivors instead of the victims.'

Had he not anticipated me with so much of the city's story, I might have set it down here, however unskilfully. It was through my meeting with him that I came to know the German Jesuit fathers, and the doctors of the Red Cross Hospital, who survived the bomb by a series of extraordinary accidents and became Roman Catholic converts in consequence.

In the course of my wanderings in the city, I discovered a ruined temple and went near to committing sacrilege. It stood - or rather lay scattered - near the centre of the city. Hardly anything was distinguishable from the rubble: only a few shattered stone lanterns, and a tall overturned bronze statue gazing at the sky; and beside the pedestal from which it had toppled a carved wooden mask of some god or goddess rested. Like the works of Shelley's 'Ozymandias', nothing else remained.

From my first sight of it, the face fascinated me. The calm of its smooth domed forehead, in which had once been set some jewel or ornament, the sharp-cut, full-curved lips, and the heavy-lidded slumbrous eyes so haunted me that I conceived a plan to take it back to Australia.



Remains of a shrine at Hiroshima: the fallen figure is that of the Goddess of Mercy

At first I thought of making a formal request for it, but decided, illogically enough, that even if I could find someone with the authority to dispose of it, my request could hardly be refused, so I made my own decisions.

On a dark night in August I slipped off a tram at some distance from the spot, and stumbled my guilty way to the scene. A rubber raincape under my arm flapped in the rising wind. I found the face with difficulty and threw the cape over it. It proved to be larger and heavier than I had expected and the cape did not by any means envelop it completely. As I put it under my arm and began to grope my way back to the road a struggle with my conscience that had arisen earlier began to rage more fiercely. I lost my direction in the pitch darkness and after a few minutes of blind wandering came out on a cleared space studded with stone pillars, bamboo vases of fresh flowers set before them. It was unmistakably a graveyard.

I remembered that this was the event of *O Bon Matsuri*, the Festival of the Dead, when the souls of the departed return from the pitiless, ghastly underworld to walk again for a few brief hours the beaches and hills, the valleys and city streets of their beloved Japan, the only heaven they will ever know, or ever wish for, which the love and remembrance of their families and friends have made into a bright and happy garden, fragrant with flowers by day, and gay with lanterns at night. Food in tiny dishes would be set out for them and, at the appointed time, they would be conducted back to these graves until the following year.

There was one column near me, without flowers or any other decoration, just four Chinese characters which read: 'Together meeting, one family'. It was an old cemetery and perhaps all that family were indeed meeting together now. I rested to face of the image against the column carefully and returned with a light heart and a sense of justice done.

When I passed by a few days later it was no longer there.

At night the centre of life was Hiroshima railway station. It was the trysting place for lovers and amateur prostitutes, the trading post for black-marketeers and a haven for the homeless.

As soon as darkness fell, orphaned children of any age from two to about ten years crept from their refuge in the city's wreckage to seek the warmth and security of the station's surroundings. The first sight of them, ill fed and ill clothed, huddled together on the dusty pavement or tossing restless sleep, inflamed us with anger at the cause of their plight and our inability to alleviate it. To offer one of them food only made it worse; one could not bear the silent plea in the others' faces. Later we could look upon them almost with indifference, our sensibilities dulled with familiarity.

Several times each night M.P.s plunged into the darkness and returned with Australians and Japanese surprised in the midst of black-market transactions. If I happened to be on hand I was pressed into service as interpreter. If the man was from my own unit I was greatly embarrassed and usually declined to act. The provosts respected my reasons: my life would have become unbearable in camp within a very short time.

Beyond the out fringe of light waited the 'pom-pom' girls, as we called them, amateur prostitutes who exchanged the dubious and dangerous pleasures of their bodies for anything of value.

These exotic and fertile flowers bore bitter fruit, and the potent seeds that they scattered were gathered in as great numbers as possible by all the resources of army medical services, who struggled to confine the poison to as small a field as possible.

The alarming and ever-increasing incidence of V.D. had produced drastic and direct counter-attacks which were constantly being pressed home. Provosts had the authority to arrest and confine to hospital for medical examination any soldier's female companion suspected of being a 'carrier'. Many an innocent was gathered into the net, but this was inevitable, and some of us learned to meet our respectable friends in more secluded rendezvous.

A solution to the problem of disease could have been found in licensed houses, but the padres were implacably opposed to them, and they never came into being, although one flourished unofficially outside Hiroshima until a fire from the cigarette of some careless guest burned it to the ground.

While the medical service fought the social evil with science, the padres tackled it on a moral basis, and the P.P.P. clubs were born. I do not remember with certainty what the Ps stood for, but I think it was Pride, Purity and Perseverance. There was a less accurate but more popular rendering and I fancy any soldier could guess what the padres' converts were called.

After being treated to a long and terrifying disertation on the physical and mental disorders consequent on contracting the diseases, the men were offered membership of the club, and upon signing the pledge received a card bearing a record of all their good intentions.

On the same evening, when they dragged chocolate or biscuits from their pockets to pay the price of their pleasure, or lay in the bought embrace of a grubby dark-skinned girl, these cards fell to the ground like leaves in a storm, and the great god Pan smiled at the folly of those who strove to destroy him.

The professional women kept to their houses and did not solicit in the streets. They were under the control of the Japanese police and underwent compulsory medical examinations weekly. If found to have contracted V.D. they were debarred from practising until certified cured. They were forbidden to accept Allied soldiers as clients, though a few did not observe this rule. Most, however, preferred to confine themselves to Japanese, claiming that they understood their needs better.

The Japanese Government, in accordance with a S.C.A.P. Directive, had abolished licensed prostitution and had declared null all contracts and agreements binding women to serve as prostitutes. But this did not prevent the exploitation of needy women by unscrupulous inn-keepers, who offered accommodation, food, and clothing to the unfortunates, in return for 60 percent of their takings. So long as no contract was signed and the women were technically free to leave at any time, the law was not broken and the *status quo ante bellum* was restored in fact, if not in law.

Simultaneous check-raids were sometimes made by Allied teams to ensure that no abuses were being practised, and that no one held a license to operate a brothel as such.

The first of these raids was called, with unexpected official levity, 'Operation Foxum'. The whole B.C.O.F. was involved and I was allotted the south-eastern quarter of Hiroshima.

My guide and escort, a provost, picked me up in the early evening and we drove to the heart of the city. Behind the headquarters of the eastern police district stretched a colony of newly-built houses surrounded by the debris of the old city.

'Nearly every one of those is a "pom-pom" house', said my companion. 'We have got a busy night ahead of us.'



It was all, so to speak, virgin country to me, and I told my escort as much as we picked our way down an unfamiliar stone-strewn street to the first house. I called out in Japanese, and a girl came to the door. She gave a little cry on seeing me, and seizing me by the arm shouted back into the house: ' *Kazuko-chan, Yoriko-chan* , come and see who is here. It is Clifton *San!* '

I was half dragged into the house by three study girls, and in my wake slowly followed a very surprised and very suspicious M.P.

When I had unruffled myself, I recognized the occupants as serving girls who had attended at a party given in honour of several officers of my acquaintance by a high police official. I must have done something memorable that night, but now it escaped me.

I explained to the provost, not very convincingly, that I had met the girls 'in the company of the police', which was true enough. I then settle down to ask the girls a series of set questions: How long had they been practicing? How many 'guests' did they entertain each night? Could they discontinue their occupation if they wished? Why did they become prostitutes? Had they ever had V.D.? (To this last inquiry all answered no, but added that their 'blood had been bad' sometimes.)

The brothel-keepers were an evil lot, whether male or female, to whom only the making of money mattered, the welfare and happiness of their employees being of little moment. One of them had the effrontery to claim the sanction and patronage of the American forces and produced a placard that had been nailed to an establishment he had kept in Osaka. It read: 'This brothel is off limits to all U.S. personnel.'

We did not waste much time; there were so many places to visit before we had finished. Many a personal tragedy was uncovered by the question: Why did you become a prostitute? In Ujina we discovered a Japanese army nurse with eight years' service in various theatres of war, an intelligent and capable woman. She had returned to a family bereft of all its male members and had taken the only course that offered sufficient income to support the others. One or two girls whom I had met as school teachers earlier had also joined the ranks of the higher-paid workers.

There were two rosy-cheeked girls of sixteen and seventeen, hardly more than children, in fresh candy-striped dresses. They were not much sought after, said the harridan whose charges they were. They were too young and inexperienced to know how to make men happy.

The reason for their occupation was almost always the same: economic hardship and the responsibility of providing for other members of the family.

Only one bright-eyed beauty gave this answer, 'I am here because I like men and find the life amusing.' With from ten to fifteen clients a night, and nothing to do all day, it seemed too good to be true.

## Chapter 25

# Education

For some extraordinary reason the second phase of 'Operation Foxum' was a secretly-planned inspection of schools, to discover if anything contrary to S.C.A.P. directions was being taught.

The first steps to reorganize Japanese education were taken in October and December 1945, when S.C.A.P. issued directives strictly curtailing the activities of the Japanese education department, and completely forbidding the teaching of history, geography and ethics until new textbooks were compiled - these subjects being obviously the most easily adapted to indoctrination of pupils. The problem of 'screening' teachers was overcome by a simple expedient suggested by the Japanese education department. A proclamation was issued declaring that the teaching service would be 'frozen' from 7 May 1946. Any teacher removed after that date for holding, or having held, ultra-nationalistic sentiments would lose all pension rights.

Before the 'deadline' 115,000 teachers of a total of 500,000 had 'screened' themselves by resigning.

The Japanese education system up to the war's end was thorough and highly organized. There was no scope for individualism: all instructional procedure was strictly conventionalized and set out in official manuals for the use of teachers. To ensure there was no deviation an enormous body of inspectors prowled and probed constantly.

To further the unity and uniformity of the system, almost every school had a radio and public address apparatus, which re-broadcast physical exercises and other forms of conditioning material from the Government stations. During the war great emphasis was placed on training of a military nature, and army instructors taught jujitsu, fencing, and bayonet fighting. Often pupils were supplied with actual rifles and bayonets.

The efficiency and extent of the school system ensured almost total literacy throughout the whole nation.

The school inspection was a task I looked forward to, chiefly because I had always found the children intensely interesting, and also because they were the raw material of the new Japan.

On the morning of the chosen day, however, I was ordered to the automatic telephone exchange in Hiroshima, where I was shown five pairs of terminals by an Australian signals man, and given a pair of headphones. The five lines were connected to the prefectural office, and my job was to plug myself in on any of them to intercept any calls from schools being raided to the prefecture authorities, warning them to be on guard. It was a physical impossibility for one person to monitor five separate lines continuously, so I plugged in at random, constantly switching from one set of wires to another. I heard some very boring conversations, but not one attempt to warn the authorities. The only conversation I can still remember was one between a young man and a girl office worker. It was apparent that he was attempting to lure her to a place

suitable for seduction, but she was politely adamant and he at last gave it up. The conversation concluded with humble apologies from him and ready forgiveness from her, which raised suspicions as to the honesty of her earlier protestations. What impressed the incident on my mind was the similarity of the couple's technique with our own.

The first one we visited was an ordinary primary school. It was two or three miles from the point of the atomic bomb burst, but it still bore marks of the shock - broken windows and ragged roofs.

We drove the jeep on to the playing ground and walked in past the small shrine that holds the Emperor's photograph, and before which, even now, tutors and children alike all make obeisance on arriving in the morning. We were always a bit puzzled about our footwear on entering buildings. The decision to shed them or not was usually made after looking at the condition of the floors. These were clean and shiny with the polishing of countless feet, so we sat down to take them off.

Around the walls of the porch-like entrance were cupboards neatly stacked with the straw sandals and wooden clogs of the pupils. Suddenly one of the school staff appeared with slippers for us. He had noted our arrival and concluded that we would have clumped and scraped our booted way all through the place. He conducted us upstairs (all the schools were two-storied) to the office of the headmaster, where he bowed and politely effaced himself.

The headmaster was dressed as the average Japanese of those days - like a tramp - and I doubted if his suit had seen an iron for years. But he was clean and exceedingly polite. Here let me add that after a while one soon came to distinguish genuine politeness and social graces from mere sycophantic grovelling. Nevertheless I do not wish to give the impression that I considered any of this behaviour ridiculous. Of course it seemed to us highly exaggerated and unnecessary, but to the Japanese it was normal custom, and we were, after all, in Japan.

We announced the object of our visit, which he received with no sign of disquiet. It had occurred to us that any reasonably intelligent man would have guessed our mission as soon as he saw us enter the grounds, and would by now have begun action to dispose of anything incriminating. We therefore went straight to our task and began to 'do' the school class by class. Upon our entrance into the first room the class master behaved just as if he were a sergeant in charge of a squad and we were top-ranking officers.

Pupils and master alike stiffened into respectful attitudes, but relaxed at our suggestion. Without preamble we went straight to individual pupils and asked to see their books. The teacher stood his ground in silence. There were pathetically few books to see. There were none at all on the forbidden subjects - history, geography and ethics - and notebooks were for the most part pads of army and navy stationery. There was nothing in their content to take exception to. There remained only the readers, and we saw for the first time the new expurgated editions. These were printed on poor quality newsprint, frail material even in the hands of careful adults, but hardly calculated to withstand the usage of lively children. Their content matter was that of the earlier books, with the

anti-Allied parts deleted. But since, as yet, there was only a meagre percentage of the new ones to hand, every second child was using the old reader, with the offensive passages struck through with a writing brush, but still clearly legible. I read now what these children had read all through the war: how the arrogant British had at last been rooted out of their long-held positions in Asia; and 'how we bombed Pearl Harbour'; all with appropriate maps and photographs.

It is worthy of record that later, when the problem of finding paper for a hundred-odd million school-books appeared insuperable, the big Tokyo dailies ceased publication for a number of days and donated the paper saved to the purpose. This, perhaps more than anything else, exemplifies the Japanese devotion to education and the sacrifices they are prepared to make for the furtherance of knowledge.

We might have seized the old readers, but in view of the heartbreaking conditions the children had to contend with, we thought it better not to add to their burden. We had our doubts as to whether the controversial material could be considered 'in use' or not, so we made notes for our reports and ultimately passed the buck to our superiors. In any case we could soon have been laden with a mountain of books, as in each of these schools there were approximately a thousand students.

From this first school we made a sweep through the outer circle of the city, with much the same experience in each school. At each we had pressed on us little hand-made gifts: dolls exquisite and rough made, ribbons and drawings, flowers by the dozen, and here and there a plant in a tiny pot. Nowhere was there any sign of fear at our presence. If we had any reasons to date for being proud, we placed this above them all.

As we worked in towards the centre of the city the usual type of school building disappeared, and we found the children in long wooden buildings which the Japanese call 'barracks', or in the shells of old buildings, unperturbed by their surroundings.

It was in one of these buildings that, months before, I had accidentally met the girl teacher who later forsook this profession for an older and more lucrative one.

Lafcadio Hearn had seen Japanese children many years earlier under such conditions in the earthquake-shattered cities of Aichi and Gifu, where 'crouching among the ashes of their homes, cold and hungry and shelterless, surrounded by horror and misery unspeakable (they) still continued their small studies, using tiles of their own burnt dwellings in lieu of slates, and bits of lime for chalk, even while the earth still trembled beneath them.'

In Hiroshima's schools one still sees the more terrible examples of the atom-bomb injuries: the spongy scars on the face and neck, the distortions in the muscles, and the dead patches from the flash-burns. Yet there is no sign whatever of anxiety or other neurosis among these children, and if any of the unscarred ones felt aversion towards their less fortunate companions they did not show it. I feel that a Japanese child would not taunt or mock, as might a Western child in similar circumstances.

An educationalist would no doubt have seen much more to interest him and to compare with Western systems. As a layman I could not attempt a comparative analysis. I might

mention, though, that I was surprised to find psychoanalysis being taught to fifteen-year-olds of both sexes in a middle school. I sat in on a lecture for a few minutes to get the feel of it and to discover just how they had translated some of the well-worn terms.

In every school the pupils were in some kind of uniform, the girls in open-necked sailor blouses and mompei - the soldiers called them 'harem pants' - the boys in all sorts of odd clothing, most of it resembling military uniform, especially the head-gear.

There was a great contrast between these city schools and the rural ones I had seen on the election tour. The latter were well kept and well equipped, the pupils plumper and healthier. For this was the time of high prosperity for the farmer, who, by a twist of a word and a pun, was nicknamed 'millionaire'. The city discipline too was slacker, and there was much time devoted to outdoor practical work - gardening and building repairs - to relieve the strain on the few teachers.

Apart from the bomb-damaged ones, the school buildings generally were excellent, certainly better than those in rural Australia. One reason for this was the large number of children living in the school areas, which demanded large centralized schools rather than small, scattered ones. The playing grounds too were remarkably spacious in a country with a woeful insufficiency of arable land.

But wherever we went, there was about us the refreshing spontaneity of the children's reception; and the complete absence of fear. One cannot but imagine what the reaction of Australian and American children might have been, had the situation been reversed. For it must be remembered that the Japanese propagandists had painted us in not less vivid demoniacal colours than we had the fathers of these children. The boys, I am afraid, often appeared rude and uncouth, from their habit of thrusting themselves forward to examine the stranger or his equipment. This was probably the result of their teaching of the war years. The girls, however, were completely captivating.

S.C.A.P.'s education reforms will doubt bring about substantial changes, but it must not be forgotten that, whatever is taught in the schools, a large part of a child's life is spent at home. Thus the school's teaching could be very largely negated by parents and other adults, holding contrary and anciently established ideas. The strength of centuries-old customs and habits of thought cannot be dissipated in a few months, or even years.

Yet that insatiable curiosity and compelling necessity to learn, which is the common heritage of all young Japanese, are the seeds that will bear bountiful harvests. There is a huge variety of literature available to them. At first glance the bookshops' stocks appear completely cosmopolitan, many magazines bearing titles in French, German, English and Russian; their general format is in accordance with publishing traditions of the respective countries, and are all vaguely reminiscent of periodicals one has seen before. But closer inspection shows them to be mere covers. The contents are almost always in Japanese, but the subject-matter varies from English literature to French philosophy and every branch of science including nuclear physics!

The numerous Youth Leagues established, after having had their objectives duly approved by the S.C.A.P., have become centres for eager young men to exchange ideas, to learn 'American' and study Western civilization. This urge, because of its very

strength, must be given free opportunity to express itself, or it will be diverted into more dangerous channels.

## Chapter 26

# Tokyo

There was a strongly held belief among most soldiers that all of our Japanese linguists were to a lesser or greater degree mad. No normal person would attempt to study the language in the first place, they said, and even if he did he would not remain sane for long.

This belief found some substantiation in the war history of interpreters. There were not many of us, yet two essayed suicide, one successfully, and two others had gone insane. Apart from these there were a few 'borderline cases' among us, even by our tolerant standards.

When, one day in October, still another of our number took his life, the army became alarmed and decided that an examination of us all by a psychiatrist might yield something.

We were called in from all over western Japan to pour out our secret longings and frustrations. I told the M.O. quite truthfully that the only thing that troubled me was that I might be posted elsewhere. Perhaps some of the others' lives were not so simple and uncluttered, for it was decided to send us all away for a rest.

That is how a week or so later I came to be on the B.C.O.F. express with a movement order to 'Lakeside Hotel, Tokyo'. It was a happy enough prospect. Before the war when I thought of Japan I thought of Tokyo. Now it had become a distant, not very interesting place, over-run with Americans. But I looked forward to seeing once more two Japanese friends from the old days in Australia.

The B.C.O.F. express was train travel at its best. Ther carriages were plush-seated, room, and clean, heated or cooled as needed, and Japanese waiters served us in the dining-car with excellent food, and bottled beer at each meal. For this one day we forgot we were soldiers and became tourists.

We were rushed with hardly a pause through places with famous names on them: Kobe, Osaka, Kyoto, past Mount Fuji in the night, with the fields studded with violet neon lights that lured to destruction myriads of ravaging insects.

Morning found us in Yokohama, and we sat at the windows watching for the first glimpse of the great metropolis. But as we approached, rain began to fall, and the scene was dreary and half obscured.

From Central Station we were led straight to motor-trucks and rushed to a staging camp for breakfast. Here I learned that our destination, the Lakeside Hotel, was beyond Nikko, ninety miles away from Tokyo. This appeared to be of little moment to the others, but the thought that I should not be able to see the city and my friends put me in a fury.

After breakfast we were taken through a drizzle of rain to Ueno station on the other side of Tokyo and embarked on the Nikko-bound train.

I was in a black mood and hardly took notice of the great devastation caused by the Super-fortresses to the northern suburbs. The journey to Nikko held nothing unexpected. After leaving the train we ascended by almost perpendicular cable-car to a point where buses took us farther and farther up to the very roof of Japan, and Chuzenji, where our hotel was.

The Lakeside was a European-style hotel, beautifully appointed, set in a park-like garden overlooking Lake Chuzenji. The single bedrooms had hot and cold water and all modern conveniences, the food - titivated army rations - was moderately good. But in spite of the surroundings it was still an army institution, with an inescapable atmosphere of regulation and restriction.

I checked in, still in the same gloomy mood, when suddenly a bright ray of hope appeared in the form of an English girl in the uniform of the Burma Women's Auxiliary Service.

Mutual recognition was immediate. She was an old friend, the daughter of an interpreter from my unit, a businessman formerly resident in Japan. I told her of my predicament and I knew she would understand. Being on the staff of the hotel, she found it easy to arrange that any absence of mine would be undiscovered.

With the future bright again, I gave myself over to Nikko for a day. The story of the colossal monuments to the memory of the first Tokugawa Shoguns has been told in the guide-books in detail. One can only add that about the brilliant vermilion and gold temples and mausolea there is a kind of magnificence, and air of splendour, that amounts almost to a surfeit. Certainly there is justification for the Japanese saying: 'Do not use the word "Magnificent" until you have seen Nikko.'

I was impatient to return to Tokyo, and next day I stepped off one of the speedy electric trains of the Yamate loop system at Tokyo station and walked out into the Marunouchi.

Then for a few minutes I was filled with panic like a lost child. Here before me was a great flow of strange people, Japanese, Americans, Englishmen, and Russians, all utterly indifferent to my existence, all pursuing their own ambitions.

In a word, I was once again in a great city.

I steered a course by guide map to Empire House, the British headquarters, but received a cool reception and a warning that I was not entitled to rations from any source other than the Lakeside Hotel.

Someone whispered that there was food and drink at the American PX and a growing hunger drove me there. It was on the Ginza, Tokyo's most famous street, but everything was drab and grey under dark wet skies.

Once again I was balked. Only American money was accepted in the PX, and of course I had none. An American M.P., God bless him, staked me to a hamburger and Coca-cola, and though I felt like a beggar he brushed my protestations of gratitude aside with a rich Brooklyn accent.



Hunger assuaged for the moment, I set out to find the first of my friends, Koichi Ito. At the time of Pearl Harbour, he had been private secretary to the Japanese Minister to Australia. He was probably the most intellectual of all Japanese I had ever met, a profound student of philosophy and a disciple of Bertrand Russell. The ideal of universal brotherhood informed all his thinking, and he was obsessed with a desire to have his two daughters grow up to be examples to the world of what a Japanese could be.

I went first to the personnel department of the Japanese Foreign Office. Their records showed he had been relieved of his duties soon after his return from Australia, under diplomatic privilege, after the war had begun. There was a hint that he had been considered 'unreliable', a compliment to my judgement of him, for I had known his real feelings about the war.

I said, 'Can you tell me where his is now?'

They fluttered the files further, and there it was: 'Went to Nagano to seek employment. On 8 August 1945, while in a train standing in the station, it was strafed by an American plane; he was struck three times and died soon afterwards.'

Somehow I felt empty, and a favourite quotation of his from John Donne came into my mind, 'No man is an island, intire of it selfe, every man is a peece of the Continent, a part of the maine; if a Clod bee washed away by the Sea, Europe is the lesse ... any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind.'

I believe his loss was Japan's loss, for men of his kind were the desperate need of the new Japan.

I went out to seek his family at the address he had given me in Australia. It was a lonely place in an outer suburb, beside a great cemetery, in which, I discovered later, lay the body of Lafcadio Hearn. No one there had even heard of them and it was clear that my quest was at an end. The loneliness of the graveyard seemed to have been communicated to its surroundings and perhaps they had fled from its influence. Some day I hope to meet them and talk to them about the man who was their father and my friend.

By now I was feeling somewhat forlorn and foolish and I returned to look for Shigemori, a man who was Ito's diametrical opposite. He was obviously wealthy and when in Australia he and his wife revelled in their freedom to indulge their tastes in clothes, and good food, and in amusing themselves. He was an excellent golfer and tennis player, and returned with many trophies from the Melbourne clubs.

When he was recalled he made no secret of his reluctance to return.

'I shall not be able to play golf at all. They will say "Our soldiers in China are not playing golf." My wife will not be able to wear her fur coat. Women would stop her in the street and say, "Our soldiers in Manchuria are freezing to death. Why then do you wear such a coat?'"

'You cannot understand this, but we do, and we will be sad at the difference between our countries.'

That had been seven years before and their fate might easily have been that of Ito. Yet when I entered the head office of his company almost the first face I saw was his. The first thing he said was, 'Mr Clifton!' and the second, to his secretary, 'I am taking the rest of the day off!'

His home was on the outskirts of the city and we went straight there. His wife gave me a welcome that took me back through years of war to peace in Australia. We talked and ate well into the night, with my Japanese now more than a match for her faltering English. Then we went to bed, the three of us together, she in the middle, and he and I talked across her until we exhausted ourselves into sleep.

I spent three days with them, and saw as much of the city as the constant misty rain permitted. The Ginza was deserted by all the fashionable beauties that had made it famous. At its major intersections the American Eighth Army provosts directed the flow of traffic with unorthodox spectacular gestures and great efficiency, and alongside them their Japanese counterparts reproduced their every movement. At night outside the Ernie Pyle theatre, a memorial to the famous war correspondent, hard-headed Japanese realists sold medals bearing the legend: 'Souvenir of American Victory'. For all its novelty, its fine buildings, and broad streets, it was like most big cities, unfriendly to the stranger, and I longed to be back home in the 'atomic desert' among familiar surroundings.

In a few days I was back in Ujina, and the only memento I had of the visit to Tokyo was an amulet granting me the protection of the gods of Furara San Shrine, Nikko.

There was a letter in my room. It was from Terumi and was three or four days old. It was very long, very incoherent, and much of it was repetition.

Here is all of it that mattered: 'Today has been worse than death for me. It has brought home more keenly than anything the ordeal of the women of a country defeated in war. If you were here I would ask for a Court Martial, but as it is, I have hardly the strength to write this letter.

'It was on the Geibi-line train. There were two soldiers; both were very drunk and hardly knew what they did to me... If you ask - you would probably know who they are, but because of what they did they probably will never travel this way again. More than this I cannot write now, but since you will understand how I feel, please come and see me as soon as you can.

'Harry must never know.'

There was a break here and the letter began again: 'Five days have passed since the thing I spoke of. If you do not come to see me in a day or two I shall bury it deep in my heart and endure it alone. Please do not ever question me on it. It torments me too much. Please give me your understanding and sympathy.

'I had thought the Shinchugun were men of the highest culture, but now I know that among them are also unspeakable barbarians.

'I do not know if I shall be alive or dead when you see me again. Just now I have not the strength to go on living. I feel that death would be the best way out.'

Harry must never know, she had written. And know he did not - in this world. Three nights before he had fallen from a launch in the Inland Sea, and in the pitch-dark it had been beyond the boat crew's power to help him. On the morning of my return his body had been washed ashore in a little bay near by.

I never saw or heard from Terumi again, for a month later I was back in Australia. Perhaps she is dead, and with her Harry again somewhere.

I should like to think it is so.

## Chapter 27

# Sayonara

It was December now, and ships were preparing to embark for Australia those who had come first to Japan, and had not signed up for a further period.

Return to Australia was automatic for those who did not choose to stay on for another year or two. The decision for many of us was not easy. The desire to stay a little longer warred with a natural anxiety about finding a place in the post-war world, better than the one we had, while there was still time. This last consideration had receded far into the recesses of memory. Now it came forward to contend with the urge to remain. Before the conflict had resolved itself, the army had made the decision for me, and left me with a week before embarkation to arrange my affairs.

All the things I had planned to do and see 'some day' now rushed from the future and crowded into the present. I became aware that procrastination, laziness, and ignorance had robbed me of many things, and I had to be content to leave them till 'next time'.

Many goodbyes were left unsaid, by reason of the time element alone. Above all, I had wanted to say goodbye to Yoshida and its inn, but it still remains to be said. There are a few others, too, that I had to miss.

The last person I visited was a man whom I had met at the Hiroshima Club. He was old and grey, long retired from business activities, but still vital and flexible in body and spirit, with an unquenchable interest in human activity. When I announced that this was my last day in Hiroshima he took up the writing set he had been using and put it into my hands. He then removed his *hakama*, an outer garment like a shirt, and said:

'These are my parting gifts to you. It is a compliment to offer to a friend those things which one is using at the time of farewell.'

Before we said goodbye he showed me a picture on the wall. It was painted in oils and its atmosphere was unmistakably Australian. Two men in the costume of a century ago stood with their horses beside the crumbling corpse of a man lying in the sands of a desert. An old flintlock was across his knees.

'I saw it in a magazine, and had it copied by a Japanese artist,' he explained. 'It is said to depict an incident in Australian history. Do you recall it?'

I had to admit that I did not.

'The two men are explorers who have pushed far into the interior where hitherto no one had ever been known to go. And suddenly they find this man, whose intrepid but imprudent spirit had driven him on and on, alone, into the heart of the unknown wasteland, long before their advent.

'There is something in this that appeals to me irresistibly. I would like to die like that, in virgin solitude, still seeking what no man has yet discovered.'

And after a golden year I left the country of the Gods.

Our ship left Kure on a crisp sunny morning and dragged its slow way down the Inland Sea, as if the roots we had struck so deeply in the past year strained to hold her back. I was thankful for the early departure; to have seen those pine-covered hills and the smoke-stacks of Ujina in the dim loveliness of twilight would have been unendurable.

Memory revived childhood holidays in the country. When the day came to return to the city and home, every paddock and tree, every cow and sheep suddenly became very precious, as if one were about to die and would never see such wonders again. And one vowed through tears never to forget them, and to return at the first opportunity. I made those vows again and swore to honour them, come what may.

It was to be, not goodbye, but *Sayonara*.

The restraining bonds on the ship were broken now, and we steamed down the Bungo Straits, headed towards home.

I hung over the rail and stared with unseeing eyes into the lacy froth of the bow wave, my mind crowded with thoughts on what had gone and what was to come. This melancholy would not last long; nothing ever did. There would be other interests, other places to lose oneself in.

Memory floated back on the speeding foam to the distant days when Japan had been only a name, like Afghanistan or Uruguay, to a village in the western district of Victoria where, twelve years before, my first lesson in Japanese was scratched out on the earthen edge of a tennis court.

I was spending a holiday with relatives, and the village schoolmaster, an Englishman, had fallen in love with my cousin. As a means of ensuring regular meetings, he had begun teaching her the rudiments of the language, and the ground around the tennis court, where we were accustomed to meet, was scrawled with ideographs from these lessons. A curiosity to know just what he had written prompted me to join the 'class', and from this developed a study that absorbed and compelled until its hold was beyond loosening.

In this fortuitous manner I was introduced to Japan, and not from any special desire or impulse towards her. Yet now I could not but feel that at some time or other I should inevitably have been drawn to her by that strange attraction that has seized and held men from the West, from Will Adams, that first Englishman, who, nearly three hundred and fifty years before, staggered ashore at Nagasaki, bearded, starved, and fearful; to Lafcadio Hearn, Japan's great lover and interpreter; to this Australian soldier who hung over the rail of a ship that was bearing him into spiritual exile ----

'Hello, Padre,' said a voice behind me.

I started at hearing this old, half-forgotten nickname that someone had once, most inappropriately, bestowed on me.

'Oh, hello Blackie. You here too? Are you going back for a second term?'

'Like hell!' His voice held resentment of my appalling assessment of his intelligence. 'Another year among those stinking, grinning bastards? They shrink away from you, bowing and taking their caps off, or else they force themselves on you to try out their couple of words of English! I've had the whole rotten lot of them. Just animals! I'll be back at the butchering soon, and I'd just as soon be killing Japs as sheep or cattle. The crows were good, though. I'll miss them, they were so easy, you could have any of 'em you wanted.'

Yes, he could have had any of them - the pom-pom girls outside the stations, or the half-starved ones in the houses behind the police station. But the vast majority he could never aspire to, the peasant girls, the hospital nurses that were like nuns, the Chiekos and Terumis - unless he too travelled on the Geibi-line trains and got drunk on stolen liquor...

'You going back?'

'No, I'm not, either.'

What was there to bring me back? The quiet of the Iroha and the friendship of its landlord and family? The old ladies who gave me loquats on trams? The stationmaster at Hiroshima and his cups of tea; the girl announcers whom I tormented with grimaces and teased into laughter as they called the names of train destinations for hundreds of miles ahead; the children who greeted me in the streets; the old lady of the tug; the peasants who made straw nests for the swifts, to comfort them at the end of their long migration from Australia...

One thing was certain. I should have to put these people out of my mind from now on. Back home no one would believe my story. They would remember only the Burma-Thailand railway, Borneo and Bataan.

There would be photographs of us in the newspapers and leading articles on how we had been teaching the Australian way of life to our former enemy.

They would not be told about those men in the forecastle, under provost guard, sent back for every crime in the calendar, to be dishonourably discharged and then sent to serve years of penal servitude.

The press wouldn't be told, but their mothers would come, weeping, to clasp them in their arms and cry: 'My boy, my boy! I know you are innocent. No son of mine could do such a thing!' Just as a Japanese mother might do.

From off Australia's eastern coast, we gazed across vast unbroken stretches of land beneath a brilliant sun and haze of bluish air. The eyes strained for some feature to rest on, but there were no mountains, not even a hill, and no pine forests to interrupt the view.

The New South Welshmen grew subdued and restless and talked of the friends who would be waiting to meet them.

Once inside the gateway of Sydney Harbour, we prepared for the customs inspectors. Strings of pearls were hidden in boots or looped around ankles underneath gaiters, fishing lines were stuffed into shirts and cigarettes were bequeathed for an hour or two to friends with less abundant accumulations. For the inconcealables, we crossed our fingers and trusted in providence.

As we drew near the wharf, taxi-drivers hovered like hawks waiting to pounce on their prey, and pale-faced painted women with blue eyes, hairy legs, and thin ankles shouted across the intervening water in loud, harsh voices.

I was home.