

JYOHKO
KAGAWA

CHRIST
AND
JAPAN

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BY TOYOHICO KAGAWA

TRANSLATED BY
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Translator's Preface

This volume contains penetrating insights and illuminating interpretations of the Japanese mind and heart by one who has plumbed both and knows his fellow-nationals as few know them.

The creative process back of this book opens a window into Dr. Kagawa's technique as a writer. Impaired eyesight, periodically bordering on blindness, makes both reading and writing impossible. For six months, in the midst of a program which would drive most men to distraction, he somehow found time to mull over this production, and then, for ten terrific days and nights, with his whole personality aflame, he dictated it to his Japanese amanuensis.

The translator has striven to convey to the English reader the message and the mood of the author. The effort to lure the English language into giving adequate expression to the scintillating thoughts and the glowing soul of the writer, has been an

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agonizing yet fascinating task. Dr. Kagawa has approved of the English text in its final form. The translator wishes to acknowledge his indebtedness to the Rev. K. Ogawa, who rendered invaluable assistance in the early stages of the translation, and to Miss T. Iida for her painstaking stenographic services.

WILLIAM AXLING

Tokyo, Japan

January, 1934

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Christ and Japan

Prologue

CHRIST CLAIMS JAPAN

Japan is famishing for love. Love, God's love, can only be found and fathomed in Christ. He has laid siege to Japan's soul, and she belongs to him.

The cruelties which for three hundred years characterized the persecutions under the Tokugawa Shogunate can hardly be paralleled in the history of mankind. Yet, when the Shogunate fell and the Meiji government proclaimed freedom for the propagation of the gospel, over twenty thousand Christians came triumphantly forth from hidden islands and secluded villages. Japan had not turned her back on Christ.

Japan possesses a mysterious power of preserving values. Confucianism has all but perished in China, the land of its birth. But, in Japan, it is still a vital force. Buddhism has fallen into decay in India where it was cradled. With us it has flowered into new life.

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Repeatedly I say to my Chinese friends, "Come to Japan if you wish to see the culture of ancient China." Japan has preserved the fifteen-hundred-year-old Chinese ideographs and their pronunciation. She has preserved the thirteen-hundred-year-old Tang culture of China. She has preserved the architecture, sculpture, paintings, even the folklore of the Sung, Ming and Tang dynasties of China. Chinese Buddhism and Chinese philosophy, both of which have lost their hold on the masses on their own native soil, are still potent factors in our land.

Across the centuries Japan has also conserved innumerable industrial processes and products. Textile fabrics were introduced from China and are woven into Japan's life. For four hundred years, since the time that Portuguese and Dutch ships began to visit her ports, Japan has kept in perfect preservation the Western sciences of mathematics and medicine which they introduced. Japan is a strange reservoir of civilizations, ancient and modern.

For more than two thousand and five hundred years Japan has maintained the same Imperial line, the same family system, and has kept her Imperial

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realm inviolate. It is an astounding story, but in Japan's centuries-long history not one of her myriad islands has passed into the possession of an alien hand or land.

This genius for preservation has unfortunately included the bad as well as the good. In the same careful way she has preserved the world-wide system of public prostitution, the deadly syphilis brought by the Portuguese traders, the curse-laden liquor and the sin which has reigned since Adam's day. But must Japan preserve these vices forever? Must the sword which the samurai so proudly bore forever be in evidence? Must the brothel, the saloon, the penitentiary, and oppressive police power forever remain in the picture?

O Japan! Eternal love keeps calling! Petulant Japan! Isolated Japan! Abandon your sulky mood and kneel before the God of infinite love. In your effort to rid yourself of sin and to sanctify your soul you, too, must go by the way of the cross.

Christ opened a way of salvation even for Japan. Yes! Though the whole wide world forsakes her, Christ, the revealer of eternal love, will never cease to woo Japan until he wins.

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Oh, Japan! Thou claimed of Christ! Only he can bring you to your resurrection hour. The world may stand aloof and all men forsake you, but Christ will never desert you. No! No! Christ, the patient, pursuing Christ, will never abandon this land that I love.

Chapter One

JAPAN AND THE JAPANESE

RACIAL ORIGINS

From far distant islands off the south-eastern coasts of Asia, the Japan Current bore to the north the boats carrying some of the earliest ancestors of the Japanese people. The large-eyed, heavy-lidded, oval-faced and high-nosed portions of Japan's population belong to that ancestral line. From this southern source came two different types. One was of Malayan stock, the other Polynesian.

From the northern regions of Asia came other racial strains. More than half of the Japanese people spring from Korean stock. Their descendants are located today in the Kyoto and Kyushu areas. From Siberia came the Tartar type, as well as the type whose skin resembles that of the American Indian. They are numerous in northern Japan. The white-faced, hairy Ainu group are fast disappearing as a race, but their distinguishing racial characteristics are to be found all over Japan today.

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The dark-skinned people who immigrated from the south are found along the Pacific slope of the Japanese Islands. People who supposedly belong to the Semitic race, or are descendants from the early inhabitants of the Mediterranean area, are scattered in eastern, middle and western Japan. In their composite character the Japanese much resemble the population of the British Isles.

It is an arresting phenomenon that the Japanese, who until twenty years ago were a short-statured people, are in an astonishing way adding to their height. Actual measurements show that girl students have added two inches to their average height during the past fifteen years. Another interesting fact is that the Japanese are improving in looks. It seems that they are passing through a period of physical mutation.

A LAND OF NATURAL CALAMITIES

Is there among civilized nations one that suffers like Japan from constantly recurring natural catastrophes? The great earthquake of September 1, 1923, and its after effects took toll of one hundred and thirty thousand lives and caused the

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nation a monetary loss of eleven billion yen.¹ Seventy-four per cent of the city of Tokyo was reduced to ashes. But this is not the whole story. In 1925 the two cities of Toyooka and Kinosaki in Western Japan were totally destroyed by earthquake and fire. In 1927 the Tango district, the center of the silk industry of the Empire, was laid waste by quake and flame across an area of twenty-five square miles. That loss alone ran into many millions of money. In 1931 the Izu section near Tokyo suffered a similar fate.

In 1933 a tidal wave swept over the northeastern part of the Empire leaving death and disaster in its trail. The earth's crust on which Tokyo stands is said to be sinking at the rate of two feet a year. The southern section of the city of Osaka is shifting several feet every year towards the sea. Unless the fiery bowels of Japan find release in volcanic eruptions earthquakes are inevitable.

Moreover, the typhoons which periodically devastate great areas of the Far East direct their course across our shores. The poverty of the Liu Chiu Islands is directly traceable to these ever-recurring

¹ Early in 1934 a yen was worth about 31 cents.

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storms that sweep in from the sea. These island people are compelled to reinforce their houses with rock walls in order to prevent them from falling a prey to the fury of the winds. The typhoons are inevitably followed by floods. Japan suffers an annual loss of not less than twenty million yen from inundations. Every four years the crop fails her farmers. In the north-eastern provinces there is a famine every ninth or tenth year.

Poverty, caused by such disastrous natural calamities, has drilled the Japanese in the art of enduring hardship with calmness. Their defense against these onslaughts lies in their philosophy of resignation. The reason that the Christian conception of other-worldliness, which characterized the Middle Ages, deeply impresses the Japanese is because they are constantly passing through ordeals which throw into high light the tragic side of life.

THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE'S FOOD

In addition to facing these natural disasters the Japanese have had to meet the hard fact that eighty-five per cent of the total area of their islands is mountainous. Only fifteen per cent of the land is

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available for agriculture. This means that for each 5,700,000 farm families there are only two and a half acres of cultivable land.

Buddhistic influence has set the Japanese people against meat-eating to the extent that they look upon those who slaughter animals and handle meat as an outcaste class and ostracize them. For the same reason they have not utilized the mountains for goat and rabbit raising. Until fifty years ago the Japanese would not even drink milk, the reason being not simply a lack of good milch cows, but because they truly believed that milk-drinking would transform them into cows.

Japan being a sea-girdled land, it is natural that the fishing industry should flourish. Few nations consume as much fish as do the Japanese. In her surrounding waters are to be found one thousand two hundred varieties of fish. Along her far-flung coastline dwell 550,000 families engaged in fishing, the annual catch being valued at 550,000,000 yen. Of sardines alone 30,000,000 bushels are caught annually. Because they glut the market large quantities are used for fertilization.

As a result of the modern industrial invasion and