

A JAPANESE PANMALAYA SUGGESTED BY LAFCADIO HEARN AND FORMOSA.

BY POULTNEY BIGELOW.

LAFCADIO HEARN, Greek, Irish, Gypsy, Yankee and finally Japanese with offspring, part white, part yellow.

Can we stop for a moment in the rush of million a minute presses of literature that appears to have lost all standards save those of the "Best five Sellers," or similar money standard.

Stop one moment, you money-making scurryer and gaze upon this corpse by the wayside, help me lift him out of the way on the grass under a big tree where the birds of heaven may come to sing with his spirit and give funeral honors to a poet of to-day.

Stop, my scurrying friend, your time to be sure is worth many dollars to the minutes, but what of your everlasting soul, and Lafcadio Hearn sang music for the soul of man.

Stop one moment, you man of murderous competition, bare your head and let your machinery lie idle while you open your heart to an idealist.

Who is Lafcadio Hearn you ask!

Look not for him in the index where shine our plutocrats *et hoc genus omne*; on the contrary, he lived and died a poor man. Dozens of forgotten frivolities sold by the 100,000 copies, while his own matchless works barely brought him a living wage.

Lafcadio Hearn to-day reminds us that times do not change very much in spite of vulgar boasting to the contrary.

The works of Henry George are now in every language, a household word. Yet not a single publisher could be found in his day so bold as to accept his immortal *Progress and Poverty*,—and that happened but thirty years ago.

Ernest Crosby was blackballed at the leading literary club of America because his writings offended the orthodox. Yet your ordinary editor is never weary of lauding the enterprise and intelli-

gence of our contemporary publishers and public. He tells us that we possess superior literary discernment, and then, of course, he grieves over the blackness of other times when Miltons received only a few pounds for poems of priceless import.

It is conceit that writes such stuff, ignorance that reads it and patriotic vanity that calls for more. Could we teach history aright, we should learn that from the days of Homer or Horace to Shakespeare or Lafcadio Hearn, the difference in human nature has not equaled the breadth of a hair.

Lafcadio Hearn to-day suffers, as must always suffer the man who by telling the truth, invites the hostility of those to whom his truth is dangerous. Lafcadio loved Japan, there he spent the last fourteen years of his life, there he received his first recognition as a master mind. Others have lived the Japanese life and many have described it, but no one so beautifully, so sympathetically, so truthfully.

Ah! There's the rub—the truth! Would Lafcadio have told the truth had he known his public?

Lafcadio disapproved of Christian missions to Japan. He saw in the Japanese people, a marvelous growth carefully nurtured during thousands of years, a civilization at once our admiration and despair. What are we to say of a community where crime is apparently unknown, where soldiers commit suicide when prevented from marching up to the firing line? How are we to compare ourselves with a people where poor-houses, jails, slums and filth germs have to be imported from other and quasi Christian communities? The Christian philosopher is puzzled when he finds Japan practicing humane precepts, which we ourselves deem too ideal for our own selves. We Christians who dare not tramp the slums of our own cities for fear of criminals, send missionaries to Japan where human intercourse is the interchange of smiles and sweet scented flowers.

Lafcadio found in Japan many religious creeds, and over all the National Church with its respect for ancestors. Religions must be judged by their fruits, and in Japan the religious spirit produces courtesy, kindness to animals, absence of family quarrels, peace between classes, loyalty to the government. Can we say more for our own religion? Can we read the history of Europe from the days of the Crusades to the Thirty Years War and thence down to our own, without sighing for a bit of Japanese religion?

Lafcadio has lived this life of Japan in native surroundings,

with a loving Japanese wife, in daily intercourse with her family and his academic colleagues.

The result we have in his various books, supplemented by Elizabeth Bisland's admirable *Life and Letters* recently published by Houghton Mifflin of Boston. Lafcadio regards the Christian missionary to Japan not merely as an impertinence, but as a grave political blunder, an insult to the government of a friendly nation, for, whatever Japan has, it owes to that which our missionary most cordially combats, that is, the so-called worship of ancestors.

We are not concerned here whether this worship is a mere ceremony, or how far it resembles the adoration of images and relics in some sections of the Christian Church. For good or ill the creed of ancestor worship is part of Japanese social life and the foreigner who goes to Tokyo and rails against such an institution can be compared only to an Oriental, who might come to us and denounce the forms of our marriage service or our domestic bath tubs.

My friend of Japan knows his history, knows his religion, knows his problems, knows the world at large fairly well. The Christian missionary (with a salary) who comes to him and invites him to change his life, must be in a position to offer him something vastly more inspiring than what appears in contemporary Christian statistics and literature.

Far be it from me to generalize. Let us think only of Japan; let us not question the value of a missionary to Feejee or Basuto Land.

And now, gentle reader, do you realize the millions of my fellow countrymen to whom these words of mine mean nothing save that I am an ignorant, depraved, malicious man? Do you know enough of our own country to know that in every little town of these broad states, the chief center of romance and intellectual intoxication is the belfried building, where the returned missionary holds forth on the wonders of tropic jungles, on crocodiles and cannibals, on heathen rites and darkened understandings and finally on a row of scantily draped natives clamoring for gospel guidance, going to everlasting perdition unless this particular congregation promptly raises ten or twenty dollars towards fitting out a missionary family? Do you, my good reader, appreciate what a power in this country, is the literature provided by missionaries and disseminated by a good-natured press?

The Japan of Lafcadio is in a state of transition. Two great wars have not merely placed the Mikado's empire in the front rank of great powers, but these wars go hand in hand with a vast indus-

trial revolution whose outcome it is not easy to forecast. Lafcadio regards with some alarm a Japan remodeled on "foreign" lines, for in this remodeling he sees the disintegration of many institutions which he regards as pillars of her present power.

To us Americans, one particular result of Japanese reorganization should be followed with particular interest; namely, her expansion as a colonial empire.

Glance at the map of the Far East and note that from Japan to Java are many colonial obstructions, notably the Philippines, Borneo and Formosa. This last obstruction Japan has removed; her next step will be to absorb Manila and so on down until she meets real resistance, which will happen presumably when she reaches the shores of the Australian continent, which by that time may be to the East Indian Antipodes what the United States is to-day in respect to Latin America.

Japan will swallow Manila and Borneo as she has absorbed Formosa, because colonies ultimately pass to the possession of those able to make use of them.

We have been now nearly ten years in the Philippines; we have dosed those wretched Islands with politicians, Christian Catechism and the American Constitution; we have hunted them like wild beasts, persecuted them with ill-fitting navigation laws and equally unwelcome "school marms." The result is a deplorable picture of Malay poverty and discontent which even the reports issued by our Washington authorities cannot wholly conceal from those trained in statistical jugglery.

The Filipinos hate us, and with ample reason. From the moment that Admiral Dewey left Manila Bay, they have been the sport of American politics and our alleged "protectionism." They are of cognate race with the Japanese and the day when the flag of the rising sun shall take the place of the stars and stripes, will be hailed as a day of deliverance throughout that lovely archipelago.

What has Japan done to deserve the Philippines? She has administered three millions of people in Formosa ever since 1894, and so well has she done this, that throughout those years the world was hardly conscious that there was such an Island on the map. "Happy is the country that has no history," can be said of Formosa since the Japanese occupation; for those years have been devoted to building roads, light houses, schools, water works, drains, to works associated with constructive civilization. All of this is set forth in a book just published by Longmans, called *Japanese Rule in Formosa*.

We may make some allowance for patriotic bias and yet pay our tribute of admiration to Japan for the grand colonial work already achieved in an island which a few years ago was the by-word for lawlessness and cruelty. In the Philippines we took over islands that had been under Christian rule some four centuries.

Formosa had for the same number of centuries been a notorious community of pirates and savages, nominally liege of China, but practically repudiated whenever it was question of a claim for compensation. The Formosa population represents centuries of social and political demoralization, hatred not merely of Japanese but all outsiders; yet to this task Japan has brought so much tact, patience, honesty and courage, that we of to-day may travel in Formosa almost as easily as in Jamaica or Singapore.

Am I an alarmist? Not at all, simply a student of history and human nature. My patriotism is hot and voluminous, but it is different from the sort that accepts official reports without criticism. When one man is armed with a rifle and the other only with a club, patriotism will not make me think that the club man will win,—not ordinarily.

And when all the world sees that Japan is organizing her government service with a view to efficiency and economy, when we note that in every detail she works with a thoroughness and intelligence which is only equaled by our own most perfect private commercial enterprises, am I to pretend that she has not in her hands the future of the Far East? There are no surprises to him who studies nature intelligently, particularly human nature.

Of course, in closing this little chat, I ought to warn my readers that many things may happen to modify the tendencies here indicated. Japan may be torn by internal dissension, labor strikes or party passion; the United States may evolve a new type of senator who shall spurn gold and live only for the nation's honor; there may be earthquakes and social upheavals, of which we wot not.

My words refer only to normal human development.