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## JAPAN IN KOREA

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It is said that there is nothing new under the sun, but the demonstration in favor of national independence made by the Korean people last March, and continuing until the present time, exhibits a number of features which are if not new at least extremely unusual in history and are worthy of more than passing attention. To understand the motive power back of this movement it will be necessary to review briefly some of the events of the recent past.

First, of course, is the age-long antipathy that has been mutually active between Japan and Korea. This antipathy takes the form of contempt on the part of Japan because of Korea's military weakness, and hatred on the part of Korea because of the selfish and aggressive nature of the Japanese. This hatred rests upon a basis easily understood. Passing over the various corsair raids and invasions by Japan which have been periodical since the year 600 B.C. and beginning with the opening of Korea about the year 1880 we find the first cause of Korea's enmity against her neighbor in the attempt which Japan made in 1884 to compel Korea to execute the same *volte face* which she herself had made. This was an impossibility because of the entire absence in Korea of any such incentive as that which drove the Japanese to it. In this unwarranted attack upon Korea the king was seized and all the ministers of his cabinet were killed before his eyes. But the attempt proved abortive and the revulsion of feeling on the part of the Koreans was complete. The savagery exhibited by the Japanese in that episode completed the alienation of any Korean sympathy which may have previously existed. So far from inaugurating a period of reform it caused an actual retrogression. This was Japan's first blunder.

The second was in 1895 after the Japan-China war when, in the attempt to secure enormous economic rights in Korea the Japanese were opposed by the queen. They removed this obstacle by assassinating the queen, burning her body and then compelling the king to degrade her officially to the status of a harlot. Besides being one of the most revolting crimes in history it was a blunder, for it forever rendered the Japanese an object of loathing to the Koreans and made it certain that Japan could work henceforth only with the instruments of fear and compulsion.

Third, in 1905 after the Japan-Russia war, Japan ignored her treaty with Korea and began a system of encroachment that eventuated in the annexation of the country to the Empire of Japan. Some people see in this a great triumph for Japan but in fact it was the greatest blunder of all, because it afforded an object-lesson which the Chinese were not slow to learn, which alienated the good-will of China permanently and sowed the seeds of future trouble—seeds that are only now germinating.

It now became Japan's purpose to "absorb" the Korean people, to eradicate every trace of nationalism and individuality from the Peninsula and to make the Koreans Japanese. In this she showed a surprising lack of historic perspicacity. To attempt to destroy a nation of 18,000,000 people short of physical annihilation is certain to prove futile. To seize and destroy all the historical works of a nation in the attempt to make the people forget that they have a past is about the most childish thing conceivable. A Chinese emperor tried it some 300 B.C. and became the laughing-stock of the world. And yet Japan is trying this very thing in Korea. The attempt to make the Korean people set aside their language in favor of that of Japan is equally foredoomed to failure. Russia's failure to do the same thing in Poland should have warned Japan of the absurdity of such an effort.

But there was another form of activity which did even more to exasperate the Koreans. By every trick which ingenuity could devise the Japanese authorities labored to get the best arable land out of the hands of the Koreans

and turn it over to their own nationals. They engineered a severe financial depression which compelled thousands of Korean farmers to sell out at ruinous prices. The Japanese took full advantage of this and alienated from the Koreans thousands of acres of the best land. Another device much favored by the Japanese was to lend some money to a Korean farmer, the bond stipulating that if the money were not paid by a certain day the farm should revert to the Japanese. On the day of payment the Korean would take the money to the house of his creditor in order to settle the bill. The Japanese would be absent and the Korean would be compelled to wait his return. When the Japanese came back he would charge the Korean with having failed to meet the contract and would drive him off the farm and take the land for his own. There was no tribunal where the Korean could get redress. The Americans in Korea are unanimous in their assertion that the Korean has no chance against a Japanese in the courts of Korea. Can the reader imagine a nation of 18,000,000 Koreans in which every case at law must be tried in the Japanese language? It is the same as if every case in America had to be tried in the Russian language. Over 1,500,000 Koreans have gone across the northern border into Siberia and Manchuria rather than longer endure such oppression.

There was just one thing that stood in the way of Japan's evil ambitions. Korea could never be completely cowed and enslaved so long as Christianity flourished as it was doing. Through the efforts of Americans it had been firmly established in that country and it was a type of Christianity which exhibited the most stubborn resistance to the degenerative process introduced by Japan. Korea would long ago have succumbed to the devastating influences of Japanese prostitutes and Japanese morphia had it not been for the deterrent influence of Christianity. Moreover the Christian church stands for education, for enlightenment, for individualism and for personal liberty. In every way Christianity was an obstacle to Japan. This was specially so because of the presence of hundreds of American citizens, scattered all over the country and fully cognizant of Japan's methods.

The matter of education was one of the most scandalous features of Japan's mismanagement of Korea. Over 350 Christian schools were peremptorily closed because they did not conform in every minute particular to Japanese regulations, which were made apparently for this very purpose. In the Government schools of all grades there were enrolled 87,000 students. This was less than one-half of 1 per cent of the population! It is significant to note in this connection that in the Philippine Islands, out of a total of 9,000,000 people, many of whom are savages and therefore almost inaccessible, the United States Government has 610,000 pupils in the schools. This is about 7 per cent of the population. In other words the United States is doing fourteen times as much work in those islands as Japan is doing in Korea.

In 1912 the Japanese administration adopted a policy toward Christianity which was medieval in quality and destructive in intent. Manifestly for the purpose of intimidating and discouraging the Christian church they arrested some 123 of the leading Christian people and under torture compelled them to say that they had been instigated by the American missionaries to the assassination of the Japanese governor general and had been supplied with arms from the same source for that criminal purpose. After a public trial, wherein 157 witnesses for the defense were not allowed to enter the witness box, 109 of these men were condemned to long periods of penal servitude. As soon as Americans got busy in Washington the whole thing was quashed and the men were liberated, but what I wish to show is the animus of the Japanese in Korea toward Americans and American influence. One can but wonder at the mentality of people who could suppose that such an absurd attempt could do otherwise than rebound upon the heads of its prime movers.

At last, when America had thrown her weight into the balances of war and had ended the struggle, when President Wilson had enunciated the noble principle of self-determination of nations, the people of Korea determined that the time had come when they must either declare for inde-

pendence or abandon forever the hope of a renewed national life. The apparent hopelessness of such an act has nothing to do with the question. It was a necessary step in the pleading of Korea's case before the tribunal of the world's opinion. They could do nothing less than show that they had heard the words of President Wilson and were determined to avail themselves of every slightest possible chance to rehabilitate their country's fortunes.

The first notable thing about this demonstration is the astuteness and organizing ability shown by the Koreans, in that the entire nation was organized for this thing without giving the Japanese a single clue. The country swarmed with Japanese spies, many of whom were Korean renegades in Japan's pay. Yet such was the skill and the ability of the Koreans that they successfully organized under the very noses of the Japanese. It is likewise a splendid vindication of Korean patriotism that among the millions who were privy to the plan not one of them disclosed the secret to the Japanese. It may well be doubted whether a movement of this size has ever before been consummated against such odds.

But there is something still more astonishing. When the secret movement began the vast majority of the Koreans, 17,000,000 out of a total of 18,000,000, were in favor of a general uprising and the indiscriminate slaughter of every Japanese civilian in Korea. When we recall that there were some 300,000 Japanese in the peninsula, scattered all over the country, we realize that in spite of Japan's overwhelming military power probably 100,000 of the Japanese would have perished. It would have been one of the most appalling massacres in all history. One has only to recall the hideous wrongs that the Korean people had suffered to realize that they were ready to die if, in dying, they could inflict such punishment upon their oppressors.

At this point we encounter the really astonishing factor in the transaction and the one that constitutes its uniqueness. The Christian leaders came to the front and said "No, we must not attack the Japanese and massacre them. Our national demonstration must derive its strength from

purely moral sources. By imitating the cruelties of the Japanese we will forfeit the goodwill of the world and we will be guilty of national suicide. Let us stand up in the power of sheer righteousness and declare our independence."

It sounds tame enough when put in cold type, but considering the flaming but suppressed passion of the people, such a suggestion was an exhibition of superb bravery. And it won. The Christian leaders dominated the passion of the entire nation, curbed their eagerness for reprisals and inspired them with a lofty determination rather to suffer for the cause of liberty than indulge in a merely temporary orgy of revenge. Christianity never secured a more signal victory in the field of practical politics. For this act of self-repression the Japanese owe the Christian leaders in Korea a heavy debt of gratitude, but they are wholly unconscious of the obligation. It is the kind of thing that the Japanese cannot appreciate or understand. On the contrary they charge Christianity with having instigated the demonstration.

On the first day of March, 1919, the entire nation stood up and declared its independence of Japan. They did it without show of arms and without the exhibition of a particle of hatred or rancor against their oppressors. In every place the Koreans gathered and unitedly chanted their national slogan, the word *Mansei* which is the same as the Japanese word *Banzai*, meaning "Ten Thousand Generations." They spoke no word of anger, they evinced no hatred, they simply said "We must and shall be free."

What followed was a result of panic on the part of the Japanese—a moral panic. They were well aware that the Koreans had abundant reason to hate them to the point of sanguinary revolt, and although the Korean movement was entirely peaceful the Japanese blindly leaped to arms and in a frenzy of terror struck at the Koreans. The police and gendarmes fired wildly at the crowd and charged them with swords and bayonets. Men, women and children were slaughtered in cold blood. The scenes on the streets were too revolting to describe. The prisons were glutted with captured Koreans. Tortures of the most terrible kinds

were inflicted, in the effort to make the Koreans betray each other, but without success. The whole shameful record can be found in the report of the Federal Council of Churches. Details have arrived since then showing that the atrocities perpetrated by the Japanese were even more terrible than were at first reported. Korean women and girls were treated in the most shameful manner, stripped naked, kicked about and addressed in language unbelievably obscene. Some of the girls were repeatedly violated, if the most recent reports can be believed.

The Japanese singled out the Christian people for special attention. In many places they would question people whom they had arrested and find out whether they were Christians or not. If they were not Christians they would be discharged but otherwise they would be severely handled. That Americans were specially marked was shown when a British subject was severely handled but was freed and given an indemnity of several thousand dollars as soon as his nationality was discovered. American missionaries have been seized and subjected to severe penalties, and that without a fair trial.

The question arises as to the attitude which the American people and government should assume in the premises. It is admittedly a delicate matter. On every side we are cautioned that the Japanese are a very sensitive people. This is a favorite method of checking criticisms of Japan but the time must come soon when the excuse wears thin and Japan will have to realize that there are things which the civilized world will not endure without protest. We Americans are not wholly pachydermatous and if our sense of justice is sufficiently abraded we are likely to rise up and say things that will hurt the *amour propre* of Japan. By the investment of millions of dollars and hundred of lives in Korea, before the Japanese took possession, the American people secured prior rights in the premises and the question is whether we ought to be compelled to give up those rights and see our work destroyed. That this work is in direct line with the enlightenment of the Far East is an added argument in the negative.

Japan did everything she could to prevent the publication of the facts in America and other foreign countries but, finding this impossible, she bent before the storm of public denunciation and promised to effect reforms in Korea. Her protestations came rather late in the day. She was in the position of a culprit caught in the act and with the goods in his possession. Promises of reform at this juncture seem to the Korean people to be inadequate. They are convinced that the reform will be merely formal and that the fundamental ambitions of Japan in the peninsula will suffer no change. Any one with the smallest appreciation of Japan's methods and ideals must agree with the Koreans in this. It corresponds with Japan's promises to return to China the sovereignty over Shantung while still retaining all the economic advantages. As if a man should appropriate your house and then promise to let you hold the deed of the house while he retains actual possession.

The Koreans are determined to keep at work until their independence is secured. Only thus, they believe, can the nation be saved from extinction. They are eminently right. The nation might as well die fighting as to disintegrate under Japanese domination. There is no American, conscious of the underlying principles of this Republic, who can do otherwise than applaud the Korean attitude.

But Korea will probably never be independent until Japan enjoys a thoroughgoing revolution. Such an event is not outside the bounds of possibility. She is the last remaining autocracy, a lonely residuum of the feudal idea of the divine right of brute force, an anachronism. The better sense of the Japanese people realizes this and it will not be long before the modern spirit permeates that nation sufficiently to bring about the desired change. Lafcadio Hearn, who knew Japan as few Westerners did, said that "The officials of Japan are restive under the necessity of keeping up the pretense that the Emperor is divine. When the common people begin to doubt it they will stop paying taxes."