

accordingly held a mass-meeting, in which the matter was discussed, and it was decided to inform the speaker that the students did not care to hear any more such lectures. The question then arose as to who would deliver the resolution. There was general hesitancy, and anyone who has seen or known the lecturer, and has heard him speak, can easily understand this feeling; for he is a large man with a most impressive and imperious manner. The young man, however, who had perhaps been most active in agitating the matter, and who had presented the resolution to the meeting, volunteered to go. He is slight and rather small, even for a Japanese. Going to the home of the lecturer, he delivered calmly the resolution of the students. To the demand as to who had drawn up and presented the resolution to the meeting, the reply was: "I, sir." That ended the conversation, but not the matter. From that day the idolized teacher was gradually lowered from his pedestal. But the moral courage of the young man who could say in his enraged presence, "I, sir," has not been forgotten. Neither has that of the young man who had acted as interpreter for the first lecture; not only did he decline to act in that capacity any longer, but, taking the first public opportunity, at the chapel service the following day, which proved to be Sunday, he went to the platform and asked forgiveness of God and of men that he had uttered such language as he had been compelled to use in his translating. Here, too, was moral courage of no mean order.

## XIV

## FICKLENESS—STOLIDITY—STOICISM

**A** FREQUENT criticism of the Japanese is that they are fickle; that they run from one fad to another, from one idea to another, quickly tiring of each in turn. They are said to lack persistence in their amusements no less than in the most serious matters of life.

None will deny the element of truth in this charge. In fact, the Japanese themselves recognize that of late their progress has been by "waves," and not a few lament it. A careful study of school attendance will show that it has been subject to alternate waves of popularity and disfavor. Private schools glorying in their hundreds of pupils have in a short time lost all but a few score. In 1873 there was a passion for rabbits, certain varieties of which were then for the first time introduced into Japan. For a few months these brought fabulous prices, and became a subject of the wildest speculation. In 1874-75 cock-fighting was all the rage. Foreign waltzing and gigantic funerals were the fashion one year, while wrestling was the fad at another time, even the then prime minister, Count Kuroda, taking the lead. But the point of our special interest is as to whether fickleness is an essential element of Japanese character, and so dominant that wherever the people may be and whatever their surroundings, they will always be fickle; or whether this trait is due to the conditions of their recent history. Let us see.

Prof. Basil H. Chamberlain says, "Japan stood still so long that she has to move quickly and often now to make up for lost time." This states the case pretty well. Had we known Japan only through her Tokugawa period, the idea of fickleness would not have occurred to us; on the contrary, the dominant impression would

have been that of the permanence and fixity of her life and customs. This quality or appearance of fickleness is, then, a modern trait, due to the extraordinary circumstances in which Japan finds herself. The occurrence of wave after wave of fresh fashions and fads is neither strange nor indicative of an essentially fickle disposition. Glancing below the surface for a moment, we shall see that there is an earnestness of purpose which is the reverse of fickle.

What nation, for example, ever voluntarily set itself to learn the ways and thoughts and languages of foreign nations as persistently as Japan? That there has been fluctuation of intensity is not so surprising as that, through a period of thirty years, she has kept steadily at it. Tens of thousands of her young men are now able to read the English language with some facility; thousands are also able to read German and French. Foreign languages are compulsory in all the advanced schools. A regulation going into force in September, 1900, requires the study of two foreign languages. This has been done at a cost of many hundred thousands of dollars. There has been a fairly permanent desire and effort to learn all that the West has to teach. The element of fickleness is to be found chiefly in connection with the methods rather than in connection with the ends to be secured. From the moment when Japan discovered that the West had sources of power unknown to herself, and indispensable if she expected to hold her own with the nations of the world, the aim and end of all her efforts has been to master the secrets of that power. She has seen that education is one important means. That she should stumble in the adoption of educational methods is not strange. The necessary experience is being secured. But for a lesson of this sort, more than one generation of experience is required of a nation. For some time to come Japan is sure to give signs of unsteadiness, of lack of perfect balance.

A pitiful sight in Japan is that of boys not more than five or six years of age pushing or pulling with all their might at heavily loaded hand-carts drawn by their parents. Yet this is typical of one aspect of Japanese

civilization. The work is largely done by young people under thirty, and vast multitudes of the workers are under twenty years of age. This is true not only of menial labor, but also in regard to labor involving more or less responsibility. In the post offices, for instance, the great majority of the clerks are mere boys. In the stores one rarely sees a man past middle age conducting the business or acting as clerk. Why are the young so prominent? Partly because of the custom of "abdication." As "family abdication" is frequent, it has a perceptible effect on the general character of the nation, and accounts in part for rash business ventures and other signs of impetuosity and unbalanced judgment. Furthermore, under the new civilization, the older men have become unfitted to do the required work. The younger and more flexible members of the rising generation can quickly adjust themselves to the new conditions, as in the schools, where the older men, who had received only the regular training in Chinese classics, were utterly incompetent as teachers of science. Naturally, therefore, except for instruction in these classics, the common-school teachers, during the earlier decades, were almost wholly young boys. The extreme youthfulness of school-teachers has constantly surprised me. In the various branches of government this same phenomenon is equally common. Young men have been pushed forward into positions with a rapidity and in numbers unknown in the West, and perhaps unknown in any previous age in Japan.

The rise and decline of the Christian Church in Japan has been instanced as a sign of the fickleness of the people. It is a mistaken instance, for there are many other causes quite sufficient to account for the phenomenon in question. Let me illustrate by the experience of an elderly Christian. He had been brought to Christ through the teachings of a young man of great brilliancy, whose zeal was not tempered with full knowledge—which, however, was not strange, in view of his limited opportunities for learning. His instruction was therefore narrow, not to say bigoted. Still the elderly gentleman found the teachings of the young man sufficiently

strong and clear thoroughly to upset all his old ideas of religion, his polytheism, his belief in charms, his worship of ancestors, and all kindred ideas. He accepted the New Testament in simple unquestioning faith. But, after six or eight years, the young instructor began to lose his own primitive and simple faith. He at once proceeded to attack that which before he had been defending and expounding. Soon his whole theological position was changed. Higher criticism and religious philosophy were now the center of his preaching and writing. The result was that this old gentleman was again in danger of being upset in his religious thinking. He felt that his new faith had been received in bulk, so to speak, and if a part of it were false, as his young teacher now asserted, how could he know that any of it was true? Yet his heart's experience told him that he had secured something in this faith that was real; he was loath to lose it; consequently, for some years now, he has systematically stayed away from church services, and refrained from reading magazines in which these new and destructive views have been discussed; he has preferred to read the Bible quietly at home, and to have direct communion with God, even though, in many matters of Biblical or theoretical science, he might hold his mistaken opinions. A surface view of this man's conduct might lead one to think of him as fickle; but a deeper consideration will lead to the opposite conclusion.

The fluctuating condition of the Christian churches is not cause for astonishment, nor is it to be wholly, if at all, attributed to the fickleness of the national character, but rather, in a large degree, to the peculiar conditions of Japanese life. The early Christians had much to learn. They knew, experimentally, but little of Christian truth. The whole course of Christian thought, the historical development of theology, with the various heresies, the recent discussions resting on the so-called "higher criticism" of the Bible, together with the still more recent investigations into the history and philosophy of religion in general, were of course wholly unknown to them. This was inevitable, and they were blameless. All could not be learned at once.

Nor is there any blame attached to the missionaries. It was as impossible for them to impart to young and inexperienced Christians a full knowledge of these matters as it was for the latter to receive such information. The primary interest of the missionaries was in the practical and everyday duties of the Christian life, in the great problem of getting men and women to put away the superstitions and narrowness and sins springing from polytheism or practical atheism, and getting them started in ways of godliness. The training schools for evangelists were designed to raise up practical workers rather than speculative theologians. Missionaries considered it their duty (and they were beyond question right) to teach religion rather than the science and philosophy of religion. When, therefore, the evangelists discovered that they had not been taught these advanced branches of knowledge, it is not strange that some should rush after them, and, in their zeal for that which they supposed to be important, hasten to criticise their former teachers. As a result, they undermined both their own faith and that of many who had become Christians through their teaching.

The dullness of the church life, so conspicuous at present in many of the churches, is only partly due to the fact that the Christians are tired of the services. It is true that these services no longer afford them that mental and spiritual stimulus which they found at the first, and that, lacking this, they find little inducement to attend. But this is only a partial explanation. Looking over the experience of the past twenty-five years, we now see that the intense zeal of the first few years was a natural result of a certain narrowness of view. It is an interesting fact that, during one of the early revivals in the Doshisha, the young men were so intense and excited that the missionaries were compelled to restrain them. These young Christians felt and said that the missionaries were not filled with the Holy Spirit; they accordingly considered it their duty to exhort their foreign leaders, even to chide them for their lack of faith. The extraordinary expectations entertained by the young Japanese workers of those days and shared by the mis-

sionaries, that Japan was to become a Christian nation before the end of the century, was due in large measure to an ignorance alike of Christianity, of human nature, and of heathenism, but, under the peculiar conditions of life, this was well-nigh inevitable. And that great and sudden changes in feeling and thought have come over the infant churches, in consequence of the rapid acquisition of new light and new experience, is equally inevitable. These changes are not primarily attributable to fickleness of nature, but to the extraordinary additions to their knowledge.

There is good reason to think, however, that the period of these rapid fluctuations is passing away. All the various fads, fancies, and follies, together with the sciences, philosophies, ologies, and isms of the Western world, have already come to Japan, and are fairly well known. No essentially new and sudden experiences lie before the people.

Furthermore, the young men are year by year growing older. Experience and age together are giving a soberness and a steadiness otherwise unattainable. In the schools, in the government, in politics, and in the judiciary, and in the churches, men of years and of training in the new order are becoming relatively numerous, and ere long they will be in the majority. We may expect to see Japan gradually settling down to a steadiness and a regularity that have been lacking during the past few decades. The newcomer to Japan is much impressed with the expressionless character of so many Japanese faces. They appear like the images of Buddha, who is supposed to be so absorbed in profound meditation that the events of the passing world make no impression upon him. I have sometimes heard the expression "putty face" used to describe the appearance of the common Japanese face. This immobility of the Oriental is more conspicuous to a newcomer than to one who has seen much of the people and who has learned its significance. But though the "putty" effect wears off, there remains an impression of stoicism that never fades away. These two features, stolidity and stoicism, are so closely allied in appearance that they are easily mistaken, yet they are

really distinct. The one arises from stupidity, from dullness of mind. The other is the product of elaborate education and patient drill. Yet it is often difficult to determine where the one ends and the other begins.

The stolidity of stupidity is, of course, commonest among the peasant class. For centuries they have been in closest contact with the soil; nothing has served to awaken their intellectual faculties. Reading and writing have remained to them profound mysteries. Their lives have been narrow in the extreme. But the Japanese peasant is not peculiar in this respect. Similar conditions in other lands produce similar results, as in France, according to Millet's famous painting, "The Man with the Hoe."

It is an interesting fact, however, that this stolidity of stupidity can be easily removed. I have often heard comments on the marked change in the facial expression of those adults who learn to read the Bible. Their minds are awakened; a new light is seen in their eyes as new ideas are started in their minds.

The impression of stolidity made on the foreigner is due less, however, to stupidity than to a stoical education. For centuries the people have been taught to repress all expression of their emotions. It has been required of the inferior to listen quietly to his superior and to obey implicitly. The relations of superior and inferior have been drilled into the people for ages. The code of a military camp has been taught and enforced in all the homes. Talking in the presence of a superior, or laughter, or curious questions, or expressions of surprise, anything revealing the slightest emotion on the part of the inferior was considered a discourtesy.

Education in these matters was not confined to oral instruction; infringements were punished with great rigor. Whenever a daimyo traveled to Yedo, the capital, he was treated almost as a god by the people. They were required to fall on their knees and bow their faces to the ground, and the death penalty was freely awarded to those who failed to make such expressions of respect.

One source, then, of the systematic repression of emotional expression is the character of the feudal order of

society that so long prevailed. The warrior who had best control of his facial expression, who could least expose to his foe or even to his ordinary friends the real state of his feelings, other things being equal, would come off the victor. In further explanation of this repression is the religion of Buddha. For 1200 years it has helped to mold the middle and the lower classes of the people. According to its doctrine, desire is the great evil; from it all other evils spring. For this reason, the aim of the religious life is to suppress all desire, and the most natural way to accomplish this is to suppress the manifestation of desire; to maintain passive features under all circumstances. The images of Buddha and of Buddhist saints are utterly devoid of expression. They indicate as nearly as possible the attainment of their desire, namely, freedom from all desire. This is the ambition of every earnest Buddhist. Being the ideal and the actual effort of life, it does affect the faces of the people. Lack of expression, however, does not prove absence of desire.

Every foreigner has had amusing proof of this. A common experience is the passing of a group of Japanese who, apparently, give no heed to the stranger. Neither by the turn of the head nor by the movement of a single facial muscle do they betray any curiosity, yet their eyes take in each detail, and involuntarily follow the receding form of the traveler. In the interior, where foreigners are still objects of curiosity, young men have often run up from behind, gone to a distance ahead of me, then turned abruptly, as though remembering something, and walked slowly back again, giving me, apparently, not the slightest attention. The motive was the desire to get a better look at the foreigner. They hoped to conceal it by a ruse, for there must be no manifestation of curiosity.

Phenomena which a foreigner may attribute to a lack of emotion or, at least, to its repression, may be due to some very different cause. Few things, for instance, are more astonishing to the Occidental than the silence on the part of the multitude when the Emperor, whom they all admire and love, appears on the street. Under

circumstances which would call forth the most enthusiastic cheers from Western crowds, a Japanese crowd will maintain absolute silence. Is this from lack of emotion? By no means. Reverence dominates every breast. They would no more think of making noisy demonstrations of joy in the presence of the Emperor than a congregation of devout Christians would think of doing the same during a religious service. This idea of reverence for superiors has pervaded the social order—the intensity of the reverence varying with the rank of the superior. But a change has already begun. Silence is no longer enforced; no profound bowings to the ground are now demanded before the nobility; on at least one occasion during the recent China-Japan war the enthusiasm of the populace found audible expression when the Emperor made a public appearance. Even the stoical appearance of the people is passing away under the influence of the new order of society, with its new, dominant ideas. Education is bringing the nation into a large and throbbing life. Naturalness is taking the place of forced repression. A sense of the essential equality of man is springing up, especially among the young men, and is helping to create a new atmosphere in this land, where, for centuries, one chief effort has been to repress all natural expression of emotion.

While touring in Kyushu several years ago, I had an experience which showed me that the stolidity, or vivacity, of a people is largely dependent on the prevailing social order rather than on inherent nature. Those who have much to do with the Japanese have noted the extreme quiet and reserve of the women. It is a trait that has been lauded by both native and foreign writers. Because of this characteristic it is difficult for a stranger to carry on conversation with them. They usually reply in monosyllables and in low tones. The very expression of their faces indicates a reticence, a calm stolidity, and a lack of response to the stimulus of social intercourse that is striking and oppressive to an Occidental. I have always found it a matter of no little difficulty to become acquainted with the women, and especially with the young women, in the church with which I have been con-

nected. With the older women this reticence is not so marked. Now for my story:

One day I called on a family, expecting to meet the mother, with whom I was well acquainted. She proved to be out; but a daughter of whom I had not before heard was at home, and I began to talk with her. Contrary to all my previous experience, this young girl of less than twenty years looked me straight in the face with perfect composure, replied to my questions with clear voice and complete sentences, and asked questions in her turn without the slightest embarrassment. I was amazed. Here was a Japanese girl acting and talking with the freedom of an American. How was this to be explained? Difficult though it appeared, the problem was easily solved. The young lady had been in America, having spent several years in Radcliffe College. There it was that her Japanese demureness was dropped and the American frankness and vivacity of manner acquired. It was a matter simply of the prevailing social customs, and not of her inherent nature as a Japanese.

And this conclusion is enforced by the further fact that there is a marked increase in vivacity in those who become Christian. The repressive social restraints of the old social order are somewhat removed. A freedom is allowed to individuals of the Christian community, in social life, in conversation between men and women, in the holding of private opinions, which the non-Christian order of society did not permit. Sociability between the sexes was not allowed. The new freedom naturally results in greater vivacity and a far freer play of facial expression than the older order could produce. The vivacity and sociability of the geisha (dancing and singing girls), whose business it is to have social relations with the men, freely conversing with them, still further substantiates the view that the stolid, irrepressive features of the usual Japanese woman are social, not essential, characteristics. The very same girls exhibit alternately stolidity and vivacity according as they are acting as geisha or as respectable members of society.

This completes our direct study of the various elements characterizing the emotional nature of the Japa-

nese. It is universally admitted that the people are conspicuously emotional. We have shown, however, that their feelings are subject to certain remarkable suppressions.

It remains to be asked why the Japanese are more emotional than other races? One reason doubtless is that the social conditions were such as to stimulate their emotional rather than their intellectual powers. The military system upon which the social structure rested kept the nation in its mental infancy. Twenty-eight millions of farmers and a million and a half of soldiers was the proportion during the middle of the nineteenth century. Education was limited to the soldiers. But although they cultivated their minds somewhat, their very occupation as soldiers required them to obey rather than to think; their hand-to-hand conflicts served mightily to stimulate the emotions. The entire feudal order likewise was calculated to have the same effect. The intellectual life being low, its inhibitions were correspondingly weak. When, in the future, the entire population shall have become fairly educated, and taught to think independently; and when government by the people shall have become much more universal, throwing responsibility on the people as never before, and stimulating discussion of the general principles of life, of government, and of law, then must the emotional features of the nation become less conspicuous.

It is a question of relative development. As children run to extremes of thought and action on the slightest occasion, simply because their intellects have not come into full activity, weeping at one moment and laughing at the next, so it is with national life. Where the general intellectual development of a people is retarded, the emotional manifestations are of necessity correspondingly conspicuous.

Even so fundamental a racial trait, then, as the emotional, is seen to be profoundly influenced by the prevailing social order. The emotional characteristics which distinguish the Japanese from other races are due, in the last analysis, to the nature of their social order rather than to their inherent nature or brain structure.