

Many a Christian pastor and evangelist, although not sharing the ambition of Prof. Inouye, nevertheless glows with the confident expectation that Japonicized Christianity will be its most perfect type. "No one need wonder if Japan should be destined to present to the world the best type of Christianity that has yet appeared in history," writes an exponent of this view, at one time a Christian pastor. In this connection the reader may recall what was said in chapter xiv. on Japanese Ambition and Conceit, qualities depending on the power of seeing visions. We note, in passing, the optimistic spirit of New Japan. This is in part due, no doubt, to ignorance of the problems that lie athwart their future progress, but it is also due to the vivid imaginative faculty which pictures for them the glories of the coming decades when they shall lead not only the Orient, but also the Occident, in every line of civilization, material and spiritual, moral and religious. A dull, unimaginative, prosaic nature cannot be exuberantly optimistic. It is evident that writers who proclaim the unimaginative matter-of-factness of the Japanese as universal and absolute, have failed to see a large side of Japanese inner life.

Mr. Percival Lowell states that the root of all the peculiarities of Oriental peoples is their marked lack of imagination. This is the faculty that "may in a certain sense be said to be the creator of the world." The lack of this faculty, according to Mr. Lowell, is the root of the Japanese lack of originality and invention; it gives the whole Oriental civilization its characteristic features. He cites a few words to prove the essentially prosaic character of the Japanese mind, such as "up-down" for "pass" (which word, by the way, is his own invention, and reveals his ignorance of the language), "the being (so) is difficult," in place of "thank you." "A lack of any fanciful ideas," he says, "is one of the most salient traits of all Far Eastern peoples, if indeed a sad dearth can properly be called salient. Indirectly, their want of imagination betrays itself in their everyday sayings and doings, and more directly in every branch of thought." I note, in passing, that Mr. Lowell

does not distinguish between fancy and imagination. Though allied faculties, they are distinct. Mr. Lowell's extreme estimate of the prosaic nature of the Japanese mind I cannot share. Many letters received from Japanese friends refute this view by their fanciful expressions. The Japanese language, too, has many fanciful terms. Why "pass" is any more imaginative than "up-down," to accept Mr. Lowell's etymology, or "the being (so) is difficult" than "thank you," I do not see. To me the reverse proposition would seem the truer. And are not "breaking-horns" for "on purpose," and "breaking-bones" for "with great difficulty," distinctly imaginative terms, more imaginative than the English? In the place of our English term "sun," the Japanese have several alternative terms in common use, such as "hi," "day," "Nichirin," "day-ball," "Ten-to Sama," "the god of heaven's light;" and for "moon," it has "tsuki," "month," "getsu-rin," "month ball." The names given to her men-of-war also indicate a fanciful nature. The torpedo destroyers are named "Dragon-fly," "Full Moon," "The Moon in the Cloud," "Seabeach," "Dawn of Day," "Clustering Clouds," "Break of Day," "Ripples," "Evening Mist," "Dragon's Lamp," "Falcon," "Magpie," "White-naped Crane," and "White Hawk." Surely, it cannot be maintained that the Japanese are utterly lacking in fancy.

Distinguishing between fancy as "the power of forming pleasing, graceful, whimsical, or odd mental images, or of combining them with little regard to rational processes of construction," and imagination, in its more philosophical use, as "the act of constructive intellect in grouping the materials of knowledge or thought into new, original, and rational systems," we assert without fear of successful contradiction, that the Japanese race is not without either of these important mental faculties.

In addition to the preceding illustrations of visionary and fanciful traits, let the reader reflect on the significance of the comic and of caricature in art. Japanese *Netsuke* (tiny carvings of exquisite skill representing comical men, women, and children) are famous the

world over. Surely, the fancy is the most conspicuous mental characteristic revealed in this branch of Japanese art. In Japanese poetry "a vast number of conceits, more or less pretty," are to be found, likewise manifesting the fancy of both the authors who wrote and the people who were pleased with and preserved their writings.* The so-called "impersonal habit of the Japanese mind," with a corresponding "lack of personification of abstract qualities," doubtless prevents Japanese literature from rising to the poetic heights attained by Western nations. But this lack does not prove the Japanese mind incapable of such flights. As describing the actual characteristics of the literature of the past the assertion of "a lack of imaginative power" is doubtless fairly correct. But the inherent nature of the Japanese mind cannot be inferred from the deficiencies of its past literature, without first examining the relation between its characteristic features and the nature of the social order and the social inheritance.

Are the Japanese conspicuously deficient in imagination, in the sense of the definition given above? The constructive imagination is the creator of civilization. Not only art and literature, but, as already noted, science, philosophy, politics, and even the practical arts and prosaic farming are impossible without it. It is the tap-root of invention, of discovery, of originality.

It is needless to repeat what has been said in previous chapters † on Japanese imitation, invention, discovery, and originality. Yet, in consideration of the facts there given, are we justified in counting the Japanese so conspicuously deficient in constructive imagination as to warrant the assertion that such a lack is the fundamental characteristic of the race psychic nature?

As an extreme case, look for a moment at their imitiveness. Although imitation is considered a proof of deficient originality, and thus of imagination, yet reflection shows that this depends on the nature of the imitation. Japanese imitation has not been, except

* Cf. chapter xv. pp. 186, 187.

† Cf. chapters xvi. and xvii.

possibly for short periods, of that slavish nature which excludes the work of the imagination. Indeed, the impulse to imitation rests on the imagination. But for this faculty picturing the state of bliss or power secured in consequence of adopting this or that feature of an alien civilization, the desire to imitate could not arise. In view, moreover, of the selective nature of Japanese imitation, we are further warranted in ascribing to the people no insignificant development of the imagination.

In illustration, consider Japan's educational system. Established no doubt on Occidental models, it is nevertheless a distinctly Japanese institution. Its buildings are as characteristically Japonicized Occidental school buildings as are its methods of instruction. Japanese railroads and steamers, likewise constructed in Japan, are similarly Japonicized—adapted to the needs and conditions of the people. To our eyes this of course signifies no improvement, but assuredly, without such modification, our Western railroads and steamers would be white elephants on their hands, expensive and difficult of operation.

What now is the sociological interpretation of the foregoing facts? How are the fanciful, visionary, and idealistic characteristics, on the one hand, and, on the other, the prosaic, matter-of-fact, and relatively unimaginative characteristics, related to the social order?

It is not difficult to account for the presence of accentuated visionariness in Japan. Indeed, this quality is conspicuous among the descendants of the military and literary classes; and this fact furnishes us the clew. "From time immemorial," to use a phrase common on the lips of Japanese historians, up to the present era, the samurai as a class were quite separated from the practical world; they were comfortably supported by their liege lords; entirely relieved from the necessity of toiling for their daily bread, they busied themselves not only with war and physical training, but with literary accomplishments, that required no less strenuous mental exertions.

Furthermore, in a class thus freed from daily toil,

there was sure to arise a refined system of etiquette and of rank distinctions. Even a few centuries of life would, under such conditions, develop highly nervous individuals in large numbers, hypersensitive in many directions. These men, by the very development of their nervous constitutions, would become the social if not the practical leaders of their class; high-spirited, and with domineering ideas and scheming ambitions, they would set the fashion to all their less nervously developed fellows. Freed from the exacting conditions of a practical life, they would inevitably fly off on tangents more or less impractical, visionary.

If, therefore, this trait is more marked in Japanese character than in that of many other nations, it may be easily traced to the social order that has ruled this land "from time immemorial." More than any other of her mental characteristics, impractical visionariness may be traced to the development of the nervous organization at the expense of the muscular. This characteristic accordingly may be said to be more inherently a race characteristic than many others that have been mentioned. Yet we should remember that the samurai constitute but a small proportion of the people. According to recent statistics (1895) the entire class to-day numbers but 2,050,000, while the common people number over 40,000,000. It is, furthermore, to be remembered that not all the descendants of the samurai are thus nervously organized. Large numbers have a splendid physical endowment, with no trace of abnormal nervous development. While the old feudal order, with its constant carrying of swords, and the giving of honor to the most impetuous, naturally tended to push the most high-strung individuals into the forefront and to set them up as models for the imitation of the young, the social order now regnant in Japan faces in the other direction. Such visionary men are increasingly relegated to the rear. Their approach to insanity is recognized and condemned. Even this trait of character, therefore, which seems to be rooted in brain and nerve structure is, nevertheless, more subject to the prevailing social order than would at first seem possible.

Its rise we have seen was due to that order, and the setting aside of these characteristics as ideals at least, and thus the bringing into prominence of more normal and healthy ideals, is due to the coming in of a new order.

Japanese prosaic matter-of-factness may similarly be shown to have intimate relations to the nature of the social order. Oppressive military feudalism, keeping the vast majority of the people in practical bondage, physical, intellectual, and spiritual, would necessarily render their lives and thoughts narrow in range and spiritless in nature. Such a system crushes out hope. From sunrise to sunset, "*nembyaku nenju*," "for a hundred years and through all the year," the humdrum duties of daily life were the only psychic stimuli of the absolutely uneducated masses. Without ambition, without self-respect, without education or any stimulus for the higher mental life, what possible manifestation of the higher powers of the mind could be expected? Should some "sport" appear by chance, it could not long escape the sword of domineering samurai. Even though originally possessing some degree of imagination, cringing fear of military masters, with the continuous elimination by ruthless slaughter of the more idealizing, less submissive, and more self-assertive individuals of the non-military classes, would finally produce a dull, imitative, unimaginative, and matter-of-fact class such as we find in the hereditary laboring and merchant classes.

Furthermore, Japanese civilization, like that of the entire Orient, with its highly communalized social order, is an expression of passive submission to superior authority. Although an incomplete characterization, there is still much truth in saying that the Orient is an expression of Fate, the Occident of Freedom. We have seen that a better contrasted characterization is found in the terms communal and individual. The Orient has known nothing of individualism. It has not valued the individual nor sought his elevation and freedom. In every way, on the contrary, it has repressed and opposed him. The high development of the individual culminating in powerful personality has been an excep-

tional occurrence, due to special circumstances. A communal social order, often repressing and invariably failing to evoke the higher human faculties, must express its real nature in the language, literature, and customs of the people. Thus in our chapter on the *Æsthetic Characteristics of the Japanese** we saw how the higher forms of literature were dependent on the development of manhood and on a realization of his nature. A communal social order despising, or at least ignoring the individual, cannot produce the highest forms of literature or art, because it does not possess the highest forms of psychic development. Take from Western life all that rests on or springs from the principles of individual worth, freedom, and immortality, and how much of value or sublimity will remain? The absence from Japanese literature and language of the higher forms of fancy, metaphor, and personification on the one hand, and, on the other, the presence of widespread prosaic matter-of-factness, are thus intimately related to the communal nature of Japan's long dominant social order.

Similarly, in regard to the constructive imagination, whose conspicuous lack in Japan is universally asserted by foreign critics, we reply first that the assertion is an exaggeration, and secondly, that so far as it is fact, it is intimately related to the social order. In our discussions concerning Japanese Intellectuality and Philosophical Ability,† we saw how intimate a relation exists between the social order, particularly as expressed in its educational system, and the development of the higher mental faculties. Now a moment's reflection will show how the constructive imagination, belonging as it does to the higher faculties, was suppressed by the system of mechanical and superficial education required by the social order. Religion apotheosized ancestral knowledge and customs, thus effectively condemning all conscious use of this faculty. So far as it was used, it was under the guise of reviving old knowledge or of expounding it more completely.

* Chapter xv.

† Chapters xix. and xx.

This, however, has been the experience of every race in certain stages of its development. Such periods have been conspicuously deficient in powerful literature, progressive science, penetrating philosophy, or developing political life. When a nation has once entered such a social order it becomes stagnant, its further development is arrested. The activity of the higher faculties of the mind are in abeyance, but not destroyed. It needs the electric shock of contact and conflict with foreign races to startle the race out of its fatal repose and start it on new lines of progress by demanding, on pain of death, or at least of racial subordination, the introduction of new elements into its social order by a renewed exercise of the constructive imagination. For without such action of the constructive imagination a radical and voluntary modification of the dominant social order is impossible.

Old Japan experienced this electric shock and New Japan is the result. She is thus a living witness to the inaccuracy of those sweeping generalizations as to her inherent deficiency of constructive imagination.

It is by no means our contention that Japanese imagination is now as widely and profoundly exercised as that of the leading Western nations. We merely contend that the exercise of this mental faculty is intimately related to the nature of the whole social order; that under certain circumstances this important faculty may be so suppressed as to give the impression to superficial observers of entire absence, and that with a new environment necessitating a new social order, this faculty may again be brought into activity.

The inevitable conclusion of the above line of thought is that the activity and the manifestation of the higher faculties is so intimately related to the nature of the social order as to prevent our attributing any particular mental characteristics to a race as its inherent and unchangeable nature. The psychic characteristics of a race at any given time are the product of the inherited social order. To transform those characteristics changes in the social order, introduced either from without, or through individuals within the race, are alone

needful. This completes our specific study of the intellectual characteristics of the Japanese. It may seem, as it undoubtedly is, quite fragmentary. But we have purposely omitted all reference to those characteristics which the Japanese admittedly have in common with other races. We have attempted the consideration of only the more outstanding characteristics by which they seem to be differentiated from other races. We have attempted to show that in so far as they are different, the difference is due not to inherent psychic nature transmitted by organic heredity, but to the nature of the social order, transmitted by social heredity.

XXII

MORAL IDEALS

EVEN a slight study of Japanese history suffices to show that the faculty of moral discrimination was highly developed in certain directions. In what land have the ideal and practice of loyalty been higher? The heroes most lauded by the Japanese to-day are those who have proved their loyalty by the sacrifice of their lives. When Masashige Kusunoki waged a hopeless war on behalf of one branch of the then divided dynasty, and finally preferred to die by his own hand rather than endure the sight of a victorious rebel, he is considered to have exhibited the highest possible evidence of devoted loyalty. One often hears his name in the sermons of Christian preachers as a model worthy of all honor. The patriots of the period immediately preceding the Meiji era, known as the "Kinnoka," some of whom lost their lives because of their devotion to the cause of their then impotent Emperor, are accorded the highest honor the nation can give.

The teachings of the Japanese concerning the relations that should exist between parents and children, and, in multitudes of instances, their actual conduct also, can hardly be excelled. We can assert that they have a keen moral faculty, however further study may compel us to pronounce its development and manifestations to be unbalanced.

Better, however, than generalizations as to the ethical ideals of Japan, past and present, are actual quotations from her moral teachers. The following passages are taken from "A Japanese Philosopher," by Dr. Geo. W. Knox, the larger part of the volume consisting of a translation of one of the works of Muro Kyuso—who lived from 1658 to 1734. It was during his life that