The Honorable Visitors
The plot to assassinate Charlie Chaplin and other great Tokyo welcomes...

Donald Richie
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**Preface**

It is said that familiarity breeds contempt. Regarding Japan, however, this unattractive quality seems bred by strangeness. The West, led by the United States, is at present far from wishing to find reassuring similarity with Japan; it is irritating difference for which it now searches. There are a number of reasons for this; some of them are over a century old and others are quite recent.

This scrutiny of Japan comes, like all the others, after a period when perceptions of the country had become increasingly humanized, land and people being viewed as “just like us” with many an interesting but minor difference. Even the authors of *nihonjinron*, those theoretical works on Japan, the culture, the people, were beginning to notice that those found qualities of the unique, the singular, the difficult, were more apparent than real.

Then, in the past decade, there rose a new need to discover Japan again an alien culture; differences were
now being insisted upon not only by foreign governments and the foreign press, but even by foreign individuals. The need was economic and here Japan is indeed different in that it does not share Western assumptions about politics, economics, trade—things that matter to the greatest number of people. Absolute similarities in feelings, aspirations, appreciations, any number of other human qualities, disappear before the evidence of acute economic dissimilarity.

This most recent discovery that “Japan is not like us” has quite submerged the many and manifest human similarities, and has caused concern, occasioned difficulty, and encouraged a degree of small-mindedness on both sides.

Behind this, however, there extends a long history of mutual misapprehension, and both the West and Japan might learn something from such former assumptions and misinterpretations. While a degree of misapprehension is just what one might expect given cultures with such differing histories, the troubled economic relations between Japan and the Western world must to a degree continue until either Japan has changed as a cultural entity or, less likely, the West grows to tolerate in its midst such a financially able, economically nimble, and politically pragmatic people as the Japanese.

In this book, a number of early encounters between Japan and the West are described. These are offered as examples of how people on both sides behaved or misbehaved themselves, what was discovered and what was not. Though many of the visitors decided that perceived differences were unattractive and disruptive, a large number found that they were not. It is these from whom we may learn.

—DONALD RICHIE
Introduction

To visit Japan ... even now, in the age of jumbo jets and package tours, a faint air of the exotic clings to the project. You are going to a land somehow strange, somehow other. This quality of the different, the unfamiliar, can be an attraction, something to be enjoyed, or it can be a discomfort, something to be complained about. It depends on you.

Japan, however, early learned to accommodate tourists of either persuasion, those who wished to experience strangeness and those who wished to avoid it. Even now—particularly now in a time of mass tourism—Japan gives guided tours to various examples of tamed Japanese ness and, at the same time, offers comforts so Western that the tourist is almost able to convince himself that he never left home.

Almost—for the strangeness lingers. This is because Japan remains itself. It may look like California, or occasionally New Jersey, but rarely acts like either. Japan was brought up, as it were, in such a peculiar
manner that even now signs of its early education are still visible. As a member of what is sometimes known as the family of nations, it sports a singular background.

Japan did not, for one thing, share the history of the Western world. Unlike England, another island nation, it did not engage in any presumed free and reciprocal relations with other countries. Though early influenced by both China and Korea, Japan did not participate in that opening of the world, one country to another, which continues to this very day.

Just the opposite. From the middle of the seventeenth century until well into the nineteenth, Japan was a closed country. No one was allowed in, except for a few traders at a few ports, and no one was allowed out, except for a few Japanese officials. The reasons for this extraordinary seclusion were various, but in the main it represented an effort by the Japanese government, the Tokugawa shogunate, to legitimize and strengthen its authority.

This sakoku policy of national seclusion was first announced in a number of directives which were issued between 1633 and 1639. Among their provisions was that if a Japanese was apprehended attempting either to leave or to return to his country he was to be executed, and that if a foreign ship entered a Japanese port it was to be destroyed and its crew and passengers put to death.

Such severe intentions were shortly demonstrated. A number of unfortunate Japanese were killed, and in 1640, when a Portuguese vessel from Macao landed at Nagasaki hoping to reopen relations, nearly everyone on board was executed.

Thereafter, the shogunate’s wishes were observed. The only ships allowed were a few Dutch, and occasionally Chinese, at the man-made island of Dejima in Nagasaki, and some Korean vessels further south, and even these were kept under strict surveillance. Japan had effectively cut itself off from the outside world.

In 1709, on his way back from Luggnagg, Lemuel Gulliver stopped in Japan. There he was taken to Edo where he was presented to the shogun. The court interpreter “soon conjectured by my countenance that I was a European,” but the English Gulliver craftily insisted that he was a poor, shipwrecked Dutch merchant, for he knew well that other foreigners were not allowed in the country.

The ruse was successful, but Gulliver nearly ruined this opportunity of escape when he said he hoped that the ruler “would condescend to excuse my performing the ceremony imposed on my country of trampling upon the Crucifix...”

When this petition was interpreted, the ruler “seemed a little surprised, and said he believed I was the first of my countrymen who ever made any scruple in this point, and that he began to doubt whether I were a real Hollander or no...”

In many ways, this early encounter with Japan, fictional though it is, remains a paradigm. Swift knew just enough about the country to make his point and to score against fellow Europeans. The Japanese knew much more but were easily taken in.
Governmental reasons for this extraordinary seclusion were indeed largely concerned with the activities of the Christian missionaries, with the regulation of foreign trade, and with what is now called national security.

The stated reason for the strictures against Christianity was that the various missionaries who had earlier entered the country had attempted to proselytize; this was an explicit criticism of the existing social order. In addition—perhaps a more important reason—governmental authorities had come to believe that these same missionaries were in reality agents for their various governments. Since they and those they had converted represented a social danger, all must be eradicated.

Uncontrolled foreign trade, then as now, must likewise be restricted. It also represented a danger in that the shogunate wished to control all aspects of the Japanese economy. And now a few of the daimyo, local lords owing fealty to the shogunate, had taken to foreign trade as a means of increasing their personal wealth. Under sakoku such was expressly forbidden.

Thus, to keep out Christians all foreigners were excluded, and to limit trade all foreign trade was forbidden. As with any such totalitarian policies there were a number of exceptions made, but the penalties were so severe that the closure was considered complete and proved, in the shogunate's view, to be successful.

In the view of the outside world, however, the seclusion was troubling. Here, in an era of expansion and colonization, lay this still closed, but probably quite wealthy, island empire. Excluded, the Portuguese, the Dutch, the British, the Russians, and the Americans prowled around its borders. Their expressed desire was mere free trade, but to Japan, looking beyond its boundaries to what was happening in the rest of Asia, such protestations seemed to cloak more sinister intentions. These were seen as imperialistic and Japan was not going to open itself up to such a danger.

For nearly two centuries the foreign predators, if such they were, had kept their distance, but then occurred a number of incidents. In 1808 a British warship made its way right into Nagasaki harbor and then successfully made its way out again. And in 1853 the American admiral, Matthew C. Perry, sailed into Edo (now Tokyo) harbor, stayed, and made his various demands.

This time, no foreigners were executed. Over the years, the shogunate had much weakened and its seclusion policy had become more of a liability than an asset. It was more and more expensive, more and more difficult to enforce, and a newly important section of the population—the merchants—was ever louder grumbling. Executing foreigners would not at this point be wise. With Perry at the gates, the government was forced to reconsider its policy of sakoku.

It was shortly forced to reconsider even more than that. Weaknesses exposed, the shogunate had to defend itself against antigovernment forces within Japan which wanted a reinstatement of the emperor and a different kind of ruling order. Among these dissenting demands
was one that wanted to know what was to be done about the foreigners at the door.

Sakuma Shozan, a samurai of some standing, held that it would be shameful to agree to the demands for trade. His Confucian training and reverence for the imperial dynasty, he said, had made all thought of commerce with barbarians repugnant to his patriotic feelings. Tadanobu Manabe, had a more modern-sounding idea. He held that they might be easily expelled if Japan so arranged matters that the foreigners could make no profit from their trade. Being greedy, they would leave of their own accord.

An accommodation was eventually reached. The Kanagawa Treaty of 1854 opened up two ports, Shimoda and Hakodate, and the 1858 so-called Harris Treaty allowed trade at both of these ports, plus that of Yokohama. Further accommodations for the ports of Nagasaki, Hyogo (now Kobe), Osaka, and Edo itself were shortly included, as well as important considerations concerning customs rates and extraterritorial protection, and Japan was declared open. Nonetheless, antiforeign feeling for a time remained. As late as 1860, the captain of the Kanrin Maru, just back from a voyage to America, was advised not to carry ashore the Western-style umbrella he had acquired in San Francisco.

The aims of the new Japanese government, officially installed as of 1868, were originally in some ways opposite those of the government it had displaced. The shogunate had been reluctant to allow any change at all; now the government courted the new as though any change would be for the better.

Japan’s concern became to somehow catch up with the West. Having observed that the world was too large to fight, the Japanese now wanted to join this powerful majority. It was also felt that, sakoku having failed, only an extreme openness to Western ways could protect the country. In the face of apparent colonialism, Japan had somehow to protect itself against what it saw as economic and political encroachments. It must fight using the arms of the enemy.

By cultivating democracy, for example. In his autobiography, statesman Yukichi Fukuzawa speaks of meeting a farmer on horseback who, upon meeting his superior, attempted to dismount. The liberated Fukuzawa, holding strong democratic views, was obliged to order him back on his mount with the words, “Now get back onto your horse. If you do not, I will beat you.”

Such modernization then became the professed aim of the new government and of the Meiji era itself, the years of which (1868–1912) corresponded to the reign of the reinstated emperor. This imperial role had formerly been restricted by the shogunate to one of mere ceremony. Now, however, the emperor was to become a rallying point for the forces of freedom within his country.

The aims of the government were announced by the young emperor in a charter oath that called upon his people to give up their old-fashioned ways of thinking.
He told them, among much else, that “knowledge shall be sought throughout the world.”

To this end new slogans were created. One ought learn and adopt from the West and thus build “A Rich Nation and a Strong Army” (Fukoku kyohei); at the same time one must, in the process, “Civilize and Enlighten” (Bunmei kaika).

Meiji leaders believed that the only way to survive was to become as strong as the West. Thus change, even transformation, was necessary. Japan had seen what had happened to other Asian countries—China, India, Indonesia—that had not changed in time. Modernization for Japan became self-defense. Yukichi Fukuzawa went so far as to say that Japan must emulate things Western even if that meant “leaving Asia.”

The country opened up. Westerners began pouring in. Representatives from various reigning governments appeared with full portfolios, traders came to buy and sell at the newly opened ports, the first tentative tourists came to look and to shop. At the same time, the Japanese government began sending envoys abroad and started inviting in educators of various sorts. Soon there were several thousand of those oyatoi gaikokujuin (hired foreigners): teachers, technologists, engineers, all providing various expertise.

Western ideas also flooded the country, often in incongruous combinations. Pilgrim’s Progress ran for three years in installments in a Kobe newspaper at the same time that Herbert Spencer’s philosophy was introduced. Though Bunyan was found educational, Spencer was considered the more practical because, as one commentator has said, “He reduced the universe to a simple system and made a synthesis of all knowledge, which could not but be attractive to a people just emerged from seclusion and faced with an extremely complicated existence.”

This meeting of the nations was not, however, entirely harmonious. In 1861 the British legation was attacked. A year later a British merchant, Charles Richardson, unwisely rode through the procession of an ex-daimyo and was promptly dispatched. In 1863 the British legation’s residence was blown up. American businessman Francis Hall wrote in 1859 that he would “start out for a walk by putting a revolver in one pocket and a copy of Tennyson in the other.” One of the hired foreigners, William Eliot Griffis, said that “going to the turbulent Japan of that day . . . seemed like venturing into Central Africa.”

Indeed, Boissonade de Fontarabie, early legal advisor to the Japanese government at the Ministry of Justice, was working on a draft dealing with civil rights when he was distracted by distant screams. Investigating, he discovered that an unfortunate suspect was being tortured by officers of the law. Complaining, he was eventually given satisfaction when—in 1876—torture was made illegal.

Nonetheless, given the amount of change—from nearly closed to partly open, from truly old to hopefully new—things went surprisingly well. In just a little over a generation, Japan was to change from what was called a “backward, feudal” nation into what was known as a modernized and “democratic” world power.
This modernization, to be sure, was of a special sort. The Reverend Hiromichi Kozaki believed that Japanese Christianity must develop a “superior theology” all on its own, superior to the variety more ordinary. At the same time, Darwin was also embraced. The theory of the survival of the fittest struck a responsive chord, particularly when it was rendered into Japanese as “Superior Wins, Inferior Loses” (*Yusho reppai*).

Further accommodations are perhaps best described by another of the slogans of the period: “Japanese Spirit and Western Culture” (*Wakon yosai*). The national ineffables of Japan were to illuminate Western materialism. In this way, it was hoped, Japan might avail itself of the ways of the modern West and, at the same time, retain a national entity.

Also, as was but natural, something of the Tokugawa suspicions of a rapacious West were retained in this new world of Meiji Japan. The foreign fashion for eating meat was, for example, considered dangerous. It might well offer immunity against cholera (a fancy strongly believed), but it also made for crippled offspring. Equally suspicious were telegraph lines. They were either fraudulent (farmers standing to watch the messages passing by could detect nothing), or they were sinister. In 1872 it was still believed that telegraphy was all a trick of the Christians. Since the wires, to work properly, had to be smeared with the blood of virgins, the recent preparations for a national census were, in reality, a device for finding how many young girls were available for this purpose. As for the new numberings of the houses in Tokyo, this was to show the order in which the unfortunates were to be taken.

Something also remained of the Tokugawa will to control. As Sir George Sansom elegantly observed, “The new leaders had not been able to free themselves from that passion for regulating the life of the citizen which distinguished their feudal predecessors.” The government sought to learn, both through the hired foreigners and through the Japanese now being sent abroad to study, but, at the same time, it regulated that learning. Knowledge was to be transformed as things foreign were fitted to serve needs domestic.

Such, indeed, is the common way of cultural assimilation. The imported is always adapted, and this indicates a change in its nature, always interpreted as beneficial. Even now, Peter Quennell has reported that when Albert Einstein visited Tokyo, journalists solemnly hinted that his lifework might be revolutionized by the contact.

At the same time, the native old is usually kicked out to make way for the foreign new. In Japan, the importation of the novel West was enormous and the consequent damage to traditional Japanese culture huge. Still, so vast is an entire civilization that the renovation was never complete. Even now, in this swift and still continuing “modernization” of Japan, the wonder is not how much is lost, but how much remains.

As Marguerite Yourcenar, in a rare moment of judgment, wrote, “When one thinks of what ‘progress’ was to bring Japan in less than a century, one is no longer
tempted to ridicule those samurai who isolated themselves out of hatred of foreign modernization, covering their heads with their metal fans when passing beneath telegraph wires."

If Japan now regarded the rest of the world with open and acquisitive curiosity, other countries were also much intrigued by Japan. Here was a land that, to the Western eye, had fallen asleep in the reign of Elizabeth and only awakened during that of Victoria. What would these people be like? What would their long-closed land hold?

Surprisingly little was known, though the Jesuits had left a certain amount of information. Francis Xavier (as reported by Michael Cooper) had discovered that "the Japanese have a high opinion of themselves because they think that no other nation can compare with them as regards weapons and valor, and so they look down on all foreigners." And Luis Frois had noted that "we pick our noses with our thumb or index fingers; the Japanese use their little finger because their nostrils are small."

Nineteenth-century travelers, however, knew little of such sixteenth-century sources. Both Admiral Matthew C. Perry and Consul General Townsend Harris were unaware of the emperor in Kyoto and thought that the shogun in Edo controlled things—something the earlier Europeans had known was not true and could have so informed had their writings been consulted.

There was already much other information on Japan: the accounts of William Adams, Englebert Kaempfer, and Carl Peter Thunberg, and the books by Philipp Franz von Seibold, Pierre Xavier de Charlevouc, Thomas Rundall, and Charles MacFarlane, to name only some. But a mercantile expedition backed by the military does not usually avail itself of scholarly sources.

Reports of this unknown land now proved so unlikely that, back in England, Oscar Wilde remarked that "the whole of Japan is a pure invention." To be sure, "the actual people who live in Japan are not unlike the general run of the English people." It was what we might now call the media-picture of the place that made it seem so unlikely, so—well—picturesque.

This was what Japan was discovered to be—picturesque. It was almost impossible that something this old and this distant not be so found. The picturesqueness of the place and its people was much observed and a consequence was the number of vues for things Japanese to be seen in the Western capitals.

There is more to the picturesque than its artistic quality, however. A picturesque people is, by definition, an underdeveloped one, and a picturesque land is also one just lying there awaiting the developer. The picturesque, among its other qualities, offers promise of financial gain.

Newly opened Japan must have had an abundance of this quality because, even now that Japan has been distinctly overdeveloped, one still hears native seller and tourist buyer alike dilating on the picturesque charms of the place.
At the same time that the people were found to be picturesque, they were also discovered to be childlike. This was because the Japanese were so new to the Westerner, all ignorant of their history and their ways, and because they were newly born into the modern world. Consequently, Japan was found to be juvenile and its natives were discovered to be, like delightful children, “quaint” and “droll.”

As with the picturesque, the juvenile indicates not only charm but also promise. These childlike folk should be taught the ways of the adult world. Like infants, they ought be trained for their own good. Like teenagers they must be taught to behave. Colonial control usually finds a need for childlike natives. They make, among other things, good customers.

These the Japanese were proving to be—buying everything necessary for this new country they were creating. And they thankfully had little to sell. Artistic goods, mostly. These had been praised by a few Western authorities, the expatriate American artist James McNeill Whistler among them, but the Japanese did not need to be taken seriously on what really counted—the economic front.

Still, the artistic items sold rather well. And the country was filled with pretty things—bronzes, lacquer, cloisonné, pottery—all waiting to be acquired by the Western tourist for very little. It made for something of a trade imbalance—the Japanese importing steam engines and telegraphic equipment while exporting pots and paper parasols—but no one worried about that back then. That the day would come when Japan would be exporting automobiles and transistors and importing such foreign handicrafts as McDonald’s and Coca-Cola was not envisioned.

And so the great metamorphosis of Japan began, and these earlier visitors to Japan had laid before them one of the most astonishing spectacles in history: one country deliberately changing itself into the semblance of another; a cross-cultural collision the like of which the world had never seen.

After the 1854 treaty ensuring trade with the United States had been wrung from Japan through the fear that Commodore Perry’s heavily armed “Black Ships” had inspired, changes began occurring.

Ports were opened, other treaties with other countries were validated, and further concessions were demanded and obtained—extraterritoriality, for example, which exempted foreigners from the jurisdiction of Japan.

At the same time, great social changes occurred. Consider what happened to the samurai in just half a decade. In 1870 the Tokugawa class system—with the samurai at the top—was abolished. A year later, their carrying two swords ceased to be obligatory. In 1873 conscription was instituted, which meant that the military was no longer a family affair. In the same year the practice of honorable suicide—seppuku or hara-kiri as the foreigners called it—was made illegal, and by 1876, the carrying of two swords was not only not obligatory but forbidden. In addition, the samurai privi-
leges—heraldic devices, family names, permission to ride saddle horses—were thrown open to all, and hereditary salaries paid by clans were turned into government bonds and then abolished altogether.

With the destruction of the class system went most of its outward indications—including clothes. As the poet Onuma Chinzan noted, “Everyone has adopted the barbarian way of dress; only sumo wrestlers and prostitutes wear the old styles.” And Basil Hall Chamberlain was witness to “the years of great foreign fever, when Japanese society was submerged in a flood of European... card-playing, foreign dress for ladies, and dancing.”

Submerged, too, by the various fads and vogues that had long distinguished Japanese society but that now took objects Western. Eighteen seventy-five was the year of the rabbit craze where the rare examples of these exotic beasts brought incredible prices. The following year saw a tax applied to these interesting animals. Demand fell, and a year later bunnies were forgotten in the new passion for cockfighting. In 1886 the craze was for waltzing, and in the following year German measles heralded a consuming interest in the Teutonic.

The fads went on (they continue to this day) and by 1896 it was stamp collecting, by 1898 garden parties “held even in the snow” according to one contemporary account, “with bonfires lit in the faint hope of warming the shivering guests.”

The cultural collision was a tremendous spectacle.

Not many of the early travelers noticed. The diplomats were too busy keeping the works oiled. The merchants, as always, saw the financial view and no other. And the hired foreigners were so close to the process that they could not see its scale.

One of the first accounts was written by Ivan Goncharov in Japan in 1856. As one might expect from the future author of Oblomov, he traveled, as he tells us, to avoid boredom. But, in Japan, he found nothing diverting. He was not of the temperament to go out and interest himself and, besides, he was on a Russian mission, an experience dull enough for anyone.

What he discovered was perhaps typical of the findings of early visitors. He saw nothing he liked and met no one of whom he approved. His one contribution was to write that this meeting of cultures reminded him of La Fontaine’s fable of the heron and the fox, each unable to understand or entertain the other.

Among early travelers, tourists alone were in a position to notice what was going on and some of them—General Grant, Isabella Bird, Rudyard Kipling—did. Most, however, were creatures of their time. To them there was nothing surprising nor interesting about backward heathens attempting to emulate the ways of progress and democracy. Perhaps most saw the destruction of old Japan with something approaching satisfaction. Few indeed (Kipling is the exception) saw the modern mess that Japan was getting itself into.
The ordinary tourist often found traditional Japan wanting. It was not exotic enough. These visitors felt about Japan as Gérard de Nerval felt about Egypt when he wrote Théophile Gautier that it was all a big disappointment and that he now knew of “no place where I can find a refuge for my dreams.” Sometimes, however, it was too exotic. Richard Henry Dana, author of Two Years Before the Mast, came, noticed the mixed bathing, and informed the American public that “all foreigners here agree in their testimony that, in one respect, the Japanese are the most shamelessly immoral people on earth.”

Lewis Wingfield, author of Wanderings of a Globe-trotter in the Far East, said that “a foreigner grows very tired of Japan and its discomforts... he becomes weary of constantly putting on and off his shoes, of sitting on the floor and sweltering in a vapor bath or shivering in draughts. He resents the constant noise, the frequent dripping of rain, gets sick unto death of the wrinkled visage of the unintelligent peasant.” He knew what to do about these various discomforts, however. It is recorded that when he climbed modest Mount Asama, he hired five jinrikisha: one for himself, one for the guide, and three for the luggage, which included the folding bed and the whiskey.

Another early tourist, Margaretha Wepper, opined in her North Star and Southern Cross that the Japanese were “disgusting creatures” who were having a detrimental effect upon the foreign residents. “The life of the European in Japan is, after all, a wretched one. The senses and the animal appetite are abundantly provided for; but the mind, the heart, and the soul are left totally destitute... the perennial monotony of the place and the sensual life led there have reduced many of them to a state bordering on imbecility.” She was answered by Basil Hall Chamberlain, one of the early residents and still one of the best observers of the country, who says of this statement that since he does not wish to make any remark which cannot be verified he “will not say that the author is mad as a March hare.”

Such bad travelers, of course, brought their discomfort upon themselves. But carping dispositions were seen not only among ill-tempered tourists; they were discovered among the residents as well. One of them, an educator, Captain Leroy Lansing Janes, even wrote that Japan’s recent awakening was a myth. “She was never asleep,” writes the captain, “but always stolid, stubborn, doltish in her selfishness and arrogance and has been justly and righteously whipped into her place in the column of progress by the might and onward march of true civilization.” By which he meant that Japan was sending its people abroad to learn and was hiring people like himself to teach.

This kind of visitor continued to appear. Some have been colonials like Captain Janes, or guests like Pierre Loti, or observers like Arthur Koestler. If one now hears less from this variety it is perhaps that its more representative members—the military, the diplomatic corps, businessmen abroad—tend nowadays not to write up their impressions.

More common was—and is—the tourist who really
came to shop. Their cries of triumph or dismay ringing down the decades. Much early correspondence is filled with news of the rising prices and the lowering quality of Old Japan up for sale. Some of these early shoppers (Henry Adams is an example) came to acquire and their letters are mostly filled with details of purchases. Again, if one now hears less of the breed it is perhaps because Japan’s prices are so high as to discourage any shopping at all.

Rare, now as then, is the visitor who sees the spectacle of Japan and then attempts to describe it as it truly is, who sees it whole and does not find it necessary to make models of it or to use it as an illustration of personal prejudices. Among the early travelers there were a number, some of them included here and some not. Percy Lowell came and in his travel book, *Noto*, fairly described what he had seen. Henri Michaux appeared in 1933, and in his *Un barbare en Asie* he may not have liked what he saw, but he showed it as it was. Dennis Enright came to postwar Japanese academe and in *The World of Dew* left a most precise description.

This book covers well over a century of celebrated travelers who came to Japan and wrote about it. Many writers came and did not write, and a great number of nonwriters have written.

The choice of whom among such an honorable company to include was determined by the fact of the writing. Some wrote a book, some wrote only an article or even less. But if, in this account, some image of Japan emerged (whether the writer liked the place or not), one that reflected thought and consideration, one that defined not only the country but also the writer, then he or she was eligible.

This meant, eventually, a very select company, for the criteria (visitors, not residents) stipulated rather rare qualities. These were sometimes found in odd places—General Grant, for example. At the same time, though there are probably some omissions, no one, I feel, has been included who ought not have been.

My concern has been to offer the reader through these twelve visitors an account of what the West has made of Japan—and, reflexively, what Japan has made of the West—using the observation rather than the generalization, persons rather than people. The spontaneous expression, spoken or written, can often tell more of a place (and a person) than the most considered judgment.

In 1936 W. H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood, on their way to report on the Japanese-inspired war in China, leaned over the rail of their ship and regarded Kobe harbor in the cold dark.


It is such expressions that are collected here, to leave some record of what these people thought and said when they were confronted with Japan.
“They expressed their gratification at seeing so ‘honorable’ a traveler. I expressed mine at seeing so much of their ‘honorable’ country. Then we all bowed profoundly.”
—Isabella Bird
Isabella Bird

Forty-seven years old when she visited Japan in 1878, Isabella Lucy Bird was already a well-known author. Her *Six Months in the Sandwich Islands*, published three years earlier, had made her famous, and already at the publisher's was *A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains*. She was a travel writer and a successful one.

She was also something of an explorer. Having discovered in middle age that traveling improved her health, she seems to have felt that the further she went the better she got. Consequently, Isabella Bird contrived to go places where no one else had.

In nineteenth-century Japan, there were still lots of these. Then, as now, the tourist was advised to see Nikko, Kyoto, Kamakura, Hakone, and to neglect the rest. Indeed, only a few years after Bird's visit, enterprising Japanese were already arranging just the kind of tours they wanted foreigners to take. One of them described his wares as follows: "Gentleman Tourists,
do you want a Japanese concoction of a pleasantly
diluted mixture, served hot, not tiring of the mind,
not troublesome for sleep, but still of exotic enough
flavor?"

There were further reasons for restricting the tour-
ist. It had been only twenty-five years since that first
tourist, Commodore Matthew C. Perry, had arrived;
only ten years since the young Mutsuhito had become
the Meiji Emperor; and only one year since the Satsum
Rebellion.

Japan did not want its interior viewed. Much better
that the tourist be content with what had been pre-
pared: famous sights and an amount of English spo-
ken. Further, no one knew what the traveler might not
find straying so far from the newly beaten tourist
track. Indeed, as Isabella later wrote, "If I had kept to
Nikko, Hakone, Miyanosita, and similar places vis-
it by foreigners... I should have formed a very
different impression." And one much less rewarding
both for herself and us, her readers.

Isabella Bird was searching for more than health.
She was looking, like many another sincere traveler,
for authenticity. And she was not finding it at the
tourist sites. Like Pierre Loti, who had first come to
Japan three years earlier, she felt she had somehow
seen big-city Japanese before, "so like are they to their
pictures on trays, fans, and teapots." There was, to
her eyes, something unreal in all this commerciali-
ation. She wanted, like many a later traveler, the real
thing. So—unlike Loti—she decided to do something
about it.
picturesque route up the course of the Kinugawa.” What Isabella found was a quagmire, a stream at once “lavatory and fountain,” and in its environs, “beetles, spiders, woodlice, torrents of rain.” Obviously, the area had not yet been opened up for tourists. She would not be needing her loose wrapper to wear in the evenings.

She also had much to endure from the inns along the muddy way. They were flea-infested, mosquito-haunted, and worse. “There was a hot rain all night,” she wrote. “My wretched room was dirty and stifling, and rats gnawed my boots and ran away with my cucumbers.” And when she found what she thought a better class of establishment (“large gardens, mats fine and white, polished floors, and passages looking like still water.”), she discovered she could not stay because they were, in fact, “teahouses of a disreputable character.”

“A very sad fact,” she states of this particular occurrence, then adds a complaining note: “I was frequently obliged to put up with rough and dirty accommodation because the better sort of houses were of this class. If there are few sights which shock the traveler, there is much... to indicate the vices which degrade and enslave the manhood of Japan.”

Nonetheless, Miss Bird was becoming a bit more knowledgeable than she had been back in Tokyo. There, she passed the Asakusa temple archery galleries and merely noticed that the girls, all smiles and smirks, were “hardly so modest-looking as usual.” She also noticed, with no further comment, that “nearly all the archers are grown-up men, and many of them spend hours at a time in this childish sport.” What she did not know was that Asakusa’s archery girls were infamous, and what she did not observe was that another, more adult sport was taking place just behind the galleries.

Now, injured by travel, she was gradually noticing much more. That young Ito, for example, though nominally well-behaved (“he sends most of his wages to his mother”), was suspiciously addicted to “the luxury of frequent shampooing.” And the more she noticed, the less she felt the need to moralize.

Native nudity, for example. Now, it merely struck her “as incongruous to see telegraph wires above and, below, men whose only clothing consisted of a sunhat and a fan.” Later, just as matter-of-fact, “Probably the inconvenience of the national costume for working men partly accounts for the general practice of getting rid of it.”

Like any good traveler, she was becoming used to traveling and now the inconveniences seemed less. Even that single, but large, inconvenience that travelers to rural Japan still have to endure—staring.

Three hundred years before, the Jesuit João Rodrigues had been so plagued. The Japanese “greatly wonder at big and long noses, thick beards and red or fair hair, and consider all these things as so many defects.” He, having several of these attributes, was stared at intolerably.

Though Miss Bird had neither a long nose nor a full beard, she was still much stared at. Worse, having by now learned a bit of the language, she heard, or thought
she heard, one of her spectators ask another if this was a man or a woman or a monkey.

She was furious and departed. Only then could “work, which had been suspended for two hours to stare at the foreigner, begin again.” Later, she became philosophical. “They are such queer crowds, so silent and gaping, and they remain motionless for hours . . . I should be glad to hear a hearty aggregate laugh, even if I were its object. The great melancholy stare is depressing.”

Later yet, she accepted it. In the small town of Kuramagoe in the wilds of the north she found a thousand people waiting to look at her, but they were so “quiet and gentle and never pressed rudely upon one,” that “I could not find it in my heart to complain of them.”

And as for certain other terrors preying upon ladies traveling alone—well, she now had only contempt for them, and for herself for having initially entertained them. “My fears, though quite natural for a lady alone, had really no justification. I believe there is no country in the world in which a lady can travel with such absolute security from danger and rudeness as in Japan.” Quite so, as true now as then, and for gentlemen as well.

Crossing mountains, fording rivers, eating whatever she could get, often wet, cold, hungry, miserable, Isabella Bird was being honed by experience. And, the old adage about travel being true, she was also being spiritually broadened.

“Can anything be more grotesque and barbarous than our ‘florists’ bouquets’ in which stems, leaves, and even petals are brutally crushed, and the grace and individuality of each flower systematically destroyed?” And later, “The temple at Rokugo was beautiful and, except that its ornaments were superior in solidity and good taste, differed little from a Romish church.” And later yet: “I am anxious to be courteous everywhere in Japanese fashion . . . The people are so kind and courteous that it is truly brutal in foreigners not to be kind and courteous to them.”

And, finally, in a small town in the far north: “I like Kubota better than any other Japanese town, perhaps because it is so completely Japanese and has no air of having seen better days. I no longer care to meet Europeans—indeed I should go far out of my way to avoid them. I have become quite used to Japanese life, and think that I learn more about it in traveling in this solitary way than I should otherwise.”

The Sandwich Islands and the Rocky Mountains had prepared her for nothing like her experiences in Japan. Now a lone foreign lady in the wild north of Japan (riding a cow because there were no more horses), she was jotting her notebook full, noting everything, and understanding much.

It was thus that she crossed, finally, to Hokkaido and met the Ainu. These original folk had been her goal and now she met one and at once fell in love. “I think I never saw a face more completely beautiful in feature and expression, with a lofty, sad, far-off, gentle, intellectual look, rather that of Sir Noel Paton’s ‘Christ’ than of a savage.”
Travel had much humanized the English lady who had originally been disdainful of gentlemen archers and critical of teahouses. Now, in the wilds of far Hokkaido, the handsome savage took her hand to help her across a dangerous, swollen stream, and "then the beautiful Ainu signed for me to come and mount on his shoulders. I endured miseries from dizziness and fear ... great fatigue of both body and mind, hardly mitigated by the enjoyment of the ludicrous in riding a savage." Hardly, perhaps, but, one feels, mitigated nonetheless.

It was, however, one of these "savages" who occasioned a blowup with young Ito who had accompanied her this long distance. He said of the beautiful Ainu that "they're just dogs, not men." Taken aback, Isabella ventured that they were so polite. "Oh," he answered, as for politeness, "they learned it from the Japanese."

This earned Ito some criticism. "He thinks that Japan is right in availing herself of the discoveries made by foreigners ... and that she will outstrip them in the race, because she takes all that is worth having and rejects the incubus of Christianity. Patriotism is, I think, his strongest feeling, and I have never met with such a boastful display of it, except in a Scotchman or an American."

Strong words these. And strong emotions. This forty-seven-year-old English woman and this eighteen-year-old Japanese man had now been in each other's company for some months. They had together endured cold, heat, thirst, and hunger. They knew each other. They had a true relationship.

It was, in its way, the first real relationship between Japan and the West. At least, it is the earliest recorded. Unlike, say, Pierre Loti's with his "Chrysantheme," Isabella's was real. West confronted East and argued much as they still argue. "He is not a good boy," she writes. "He has no moral sense, according to our notions; he dislikes foreigners; his manner is often very disagreeable.

"And yet, I doubt whether I could have obtained a more valuable servant and interpreter." For it was Ito who learned and explained and put up with her complaints. It was he who gathered information for her—even, said foreign officials back in Tokyo, about her, in order to report back to the vigilant Japanese police. One wonders what Isabella would have said of such a rumor. Laughed, perhaps, and found it extremely unlikely that any sane government would appoint an eighteen-year-old spy. One addicted to being shamed at that.

Ito, paid off at the end of his contract, asked if she had any complaints. She found that she could not think of any. Perhaps he could have been a bit more outgoing, was all she could think of replying. He said he would attempt to remedy that defect, then left.

"I miss him already," she wrote, but she had no time for sentimentality and, in any event, little inclination. The adventure was over; she must return. "I was unfit to enter a civilized dwelling; my clothes, besides being
soaked, were coated and splashed with mud up to the
top of my hat; my gloves and boots were finished, my
mud-splashed baggage was soaked. . . but I felt a
somewhat legitimate triumph at having conquered all
obstacles, and at having accomplished more than I had
intended to accomplish when I left.”

Isabella Bird in Japan had been one of its first and
one of its best travelers. Few indeed would ever again
be that intrepid, but then few later travelers to the
country would ever again be so called upon to be.

She was also one of the first to break down the
stereotypes already beginning to disfigure writings on
the country and to write about what she really saw.
This distressed her friend and publisher, John Murray,
who, like most publishers, preferred the expected. He
pleaded with her to somehow render more genteel her
open descriptions of the poverty, ignorance, disease,
the “backwardness” she had discovered. She answered
his complaints with the assertion that she truly in-
tended to “de-cherry-blossom” Japan.

Now, on the packet from Hokkaido to Tokyo,
Isabella again became the person she was expected to
be. There was a storm, but “the captain showed as
much calmness as if he had been a Briton!” In Tokyo,
she availed herself of a number of civilities. “On ac-
count of this lady’s being so learned,” wrote the Yomiuri
Shimbun, “His Excellency, the Governor, was pleased
to see her yesterday and [brought] her in his own
carriage, a mark of attention which is said to have
pleased the lady much.”
Ulysses S. Grant

American general and ex-president of the United States of America Ulysses S. Grant—he and his party, which included his wife Julia and his son Colonel Frederick Grant, steamed into Yokohama on July 3, 1879, aboard the USS Richmond. There they were met by the imperial barge that was to convey the party to the railway and hence to an immediate audience in the capital with His Imperial Majesty, the emperor of Japan.

The imperial dispatch was extraordinary. Other important visitors, Secretary of State William H. Seward among them, had been kept waiting for days. But Japan was going beyond all expectations to be courteous to General Grant. Indeed, the party had already received prior indication of this resolve when, at Nagasaki, the jinrikisha they were to use were sent down on the run all the way from the Tokyo palace.

Japan had its reasons for such courtesy. It needed help. Afraid of Russia, involved with China over the Ryukyu Islands, worried about the so-calledUnequal Treaties imposed on the country by the Western powers, the Japanese government needed a foreign friend.

In Grant, it thought it had found one. While president, he had personally greeted the Iwakura Mission, then in America seeking a way to revise the unwelcome treaties. He had also, in his 1869 message to Congress, said that Japan was one of the markets that should receive “our special attention.”

Consequently, when the friendly, retired president was seen to be coming their way during his grand round-the-world tour, the Japanese at once issued an invitation. Hirobumi Ito, a leading statesman of the era, was particularly persuasive since this would be such a good opportunity to enlist American sympathy for Japan’s problems.

It was an invitation that Grant was happy to accept. The grand tour had actually been undertaken because the ex-president had nothing else to do. Though he was honest enough as a politician, some major scandals (the Crédit Mobilier disclosures, the Whiskey Ring mess) had discredited his administration. He was happy to leave and he wanted to stay away as long as possible. The Japanese invitation was very welcome.

And the reception was most gratifying. After the imperial barge trip, the railway deposited the party at Shimbashi Station where Grant was greeted with a display of hydrangeas formed in the shape of his initials. There was also a band playing Hail Columbia, and everywhere the people were waving Japanese and American flags. The road to the Enryokan where the Grant party was to stay—a Western-style brick “pal-
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ace" adorned with a verandah and real window blinds and located on the grounds of the Hama Palace—was lined with cheering throngs.

The reception was such that an American source maintained that "General Grant has been the recipient of an official and popular welcome unparalleled in the history of Japan." However, as John Russell Young, the "historian" of the party, noted, the initial acclaim was merely popular. "The Japanese, with an almost French refinement of courtesy, were anxious that General Grant should not have any special honors paid to him in Japan until he had met the Emperor."

This meeting, set for two that very afternoon, was the first of the many special honors to follow. The imperial carriage conveyed the Grant party to "the home of the Emperor," which they, used to the ostentatious display of other lands, found commendably modest, "as simple as that of a country gentleman at home." And there, awaiting them, was the imperial party.

The emperor, noted Young, "is a young man with a slender figure . . . he had a striking face, with a mouth and lips that remind you something of the traditional mouth of the Hapsburg family . . . The face expressed no feeling whatever, and but for the dark, glowing eye, which was bent full upon the General, you might have taken the imperial group for statues."

The historian also noted that "the manner of the Emperor was constrained, almost awkward, the manner of a man doing a thing for the first time, and trying to do it as well as possible." Indeed, the emperor might well have felt a bit awkward. Here he was all dressed up in the European fashion and only six years before he had appeared in public with blackened teeth, rouge, and a formal topknot. And now he was truly doing something that had never before been done.

He stepped forward, raised his arm, and shook hands. An emperor of Japan had never before performed this alien action. "Such an incident," says a Japanese account of the meeting, "was not known in the history of Japanese majesty."

Young, too, realized the importance of the act. "We are in the presence of an old and romantic civilization, slowly giving way to the fierce, feverish pressure of European ideas, and you can note the change in those incidents which would be unnoticed in other lands. . . ."

—the handshake, for example.

The gesture indicated Japan's willingness to honor Grant, as did the opening speech of the emperor that began, "Your name has been known to us for a long time, and we are highly gratified to see you."

Grant responded eloquently, as was his habit, and then the empress made a pretty speech to Mrs. Grant that concluded with the words "I hope you will prolong your stay in Japan, and that the present warm days may occasion you no inconvenience." Mrs. Grant graciously replied and the initial meeting was successfully completed. The Grants were carried back to their brick palace where they, after such a filled day, no doubt collapsed.

All their days, however, from then on tended to be filled. And they were, despite the empress's wishes to
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the contrary, much inconvenienced by the continued hot weather. In addition, they were further troubled by an outbreak of cholera that kept them from visiting Kyoto and Nara. There was, however, more than enough for them to do in Tokyo.

On July 4, for example, the day after they arrived, the Grants went to a Fourth of July luncheon with the American community, and then graced an official reception with two thousand in attendance. This was followed by an evening with the Iwakuras, old acquaintances from Washington. The exhausting day was then concluded by the Grants being taken by their hosts to the Noh.

The idea of gruff, cigar-smoking, hard-drinking Ulysses S. Grant sitting through a performance of the Noh drama is appealing in its unlikeliness. The ex-president always spoke his mind and was not to be put upon: what he liked, he liked; what he didn’t, he didn’t.

There had been an initial demonstration of this in Nagasaki, the first Japanese port at which the USS Richmond had docked. There, a banquet on shore had been arranged, and the food was extraordinary. If the reporter is to be trusted, “The first serious dish was composed of crane, seaweed, moss, rice-bread, and potatoes.” This was followed by “skylark prepared with wheat-flour cake,” and the banquet was concluded with “pears prepared with horse-radish.” The ex-president of the United States took a look at the first course, took a bite. Then, to general if muffled consternation, Grant “pushed it aside and lit a cigar.”

Now, however, presented with the Noh, something much stranger than crane with seaweed, Grant did not light a cigar. He even stayed awake, something much commented upon since Japanese themselves often fall asleep at this form of entertainment. It was daring of the Iwakuras to have chosen the Noh for their guests.

There were, however, reasons. Early in his travels, Tomomi Iwakura had noted that in other countries, opera was often shown to visiting dignitaries. Japan, however, had no opera. It did, though, have the Noh. Despite the fact that this ancient entertainment was now plainly on its way out of this new and modern age, it was felt that something theatrically dignified was called upon and the Noh is certainly that. Still, everyone there must have thought that they were seeing the final performance of this venerable theater.

Grant, however, if the report is to be believed, not only paid attention, but was afterwards most enthusiastic. “You must keep this,” he is said to have earnestly told his hosts. We may imagine the assembled company turning to gaze at each other. So this had not, after all, been the final performance of the Noh. And, if this account is true, then Japan’s classical theater owes its present-day existence to the appreciation of America’s hard-bitten eighteenth president.

Grant was popular, but not all was adulation. Due to the cholera outbreak, for example, a series of new isolation hospitals were opened. Rumor, insane as always, had it that these were actually torture chambers where innards were forcibly removed from the otherwise healthy, since the alcohol-ridden general would pay a goodly price for a really healthy liver.
This was, after all, the country where the carelessly worded ketsuzei ("blood tax," meaning that higher taxes were in order, people contributing their metaphoric lifeblood) was interpreted literally. Rumor had it that Japanese blood was being sold to bad foreigners as medicine, even that it was smeread on the new telegraph wires to make the messages move more swiftly. And only a year before, Isabella Bird had recorded a doctor's asking her about Western medicine and whether it was indeed true that chloroform was used in childbirth mainly to keep down the population.

Suspicion of another sort was encountered at one of the dinner parties. The emperor was to escort Mrs. Grant to the table and the general was to accompany the empress. Nothing like this had before occurred in the annals of Japanese history. The court officials were much disturbed—to the point, says one Japanese source, of carrying daggers, ready to stab the general if he so much as laid a single finger on the empress. Grant, however, was "quite circumspect," and walked, to the relief of all, a goodly distance away.

On the morning of July 7, as a further indication of imperial favor (the empress had already sent over from the palace a complete set of lacquered furniture that Mrs. Grant had happened to admire), the emperor invited the general to a review of the troops. Again, this time in the words of Young, "The review of the army by the emperor and the general was an event which had no precedent in Japanese history."

The crowd rejoiced, the troops marched past, the band again played Hail Columbia, and the emperor once more shook hands, this time in front of the entire populace. The two also gave each other presents. The ex-president got a precious sword and he, in turn, having come prepared, gave the emperor a Pratt and Whitney machine gun.

Thus encouraged, suspicions forgot, the populace proceeded to make the Grants their own. Quite suddenly, in the Japanese fashion, Grant was the national rage. His name was on all lips, a number of articles were named after him, and there was an instant plethora of prints. One of the most flattering showed him facing a mirror so that one could "really" see only the back of his head—though the reflection was perfectly visible. This was a graceful compliment: one ought no more look upon his august face than upon the visage of the emperor himself.

The public adulation was such that the British Minister, Sir Harry Parkes, was led to observe that "General Grant is here and is turning the Japanese heads..." And little Clara Whitney confided to her now-famous diary that "General Grant is treated so much like a god here that a temple should be erected immediately."

The most extreme indication of regard occurred when the Tokyo Citizens' Committee, an organization created and run by the self-made financier Eichi Shibusawa, later the Viscount Shibusawa, invited the distinguished couple to the theater. The man behind the Shinbashí Station revels, Shibusawa outdid himself. Carpets and lacquered chairs were carried in from
the Hama Palace since the Shintomi-za was, like most theaters then, still tatami. There, sitting in Western fashion along with a number of royals, Mrs. and General Grant witnessed a play called The Later Three Years in the North. This was about Minamoto Yoshiie, who behaved with true courtesy to a defeated adversary, a most delicate compliment to a victorious Northern general.

The general himself, prompted, had donated a new curtain to the theater and the great actor Danjuro, in full frock coat, stepped forward to thank the distinguished guest for his munificence. Then, as the concluding number, one hundred of the most famous geisha of the land were gathered upon the stage. "It is impossible," wrote Thomas Mendenhall, one of the resident hired foreigners, "to describe this beautiful and graceful dance, but the costuming of the dancers was the unique feature of the thing." Apparently, each was dressed in an American flag, wearing the stripes lengthwise and the stars on the sleeves. In addition, each carried a folding fan on one side of which were the American colors; on the other side, the rising sun.

"During the rather slow but extremely graceful movements of these hundred dancers," continued Mendenhall, "the fans were used most effectively and in perfect unison—now showing the American colors and now the Japanese." Further, these gallant geisha refused any remuneration for their efforts though they did, understandably, ask to retain their unique costumes.

The extreme indication of imperial regard, however, occurred on August 10 when—an unheard-of honor—the emperor of Japan actually came to call on General Grant. They met at a small summer house on the shores of a lake on the grounds of the Hama Palace. Again there was the shaking of hands and then business was begun.

The bothersome treaty question was brought up at once and the emperor was perhaps gratified to hear Grant plainly state, "I have seen things that made my blood boil in the way the European powers attempt to degrade the Asiatic nations." The Japanese had consequently been forced to give up rights "that no European nation, no matter how small, would surrender." The United States, however, was different from its rapacious European cousins. "We have great interests in the Pacific, but we have none that are inconsistent with the independence of these nations."

The Japanese must be treated properly. If not given their rights, then they must stand up for them. Such pleasingly belligerent opinions had been earlier indicated when, asked what ought to have been done when a German ship, ignoring a Japanese refusal, had landed a stricken seaman and thus occasioned the current cholera epidemic, Grant in ringing tones cried, "You ought have fired on the vessel!"

Now the emperor was asking about possible European reactions to Japan’s asserting sovereignty. The advice was again welcome. "If there is one thing more certain than another," said Grant, "it is that England is in no humor to make war on Japan for a tariff."

The question of what to do about Japan’s decided
interest in the Ryukyu Islands was not, however, by its nature to be so equitably disposed of in the course of an afternoon. Though this discussion lasted a further two hours, and though Grant had come carrying greetings from the courteous Prince Kung of China, no accord proved possible and the problem remained.

Also on that afternoon's crowded agenda was the question of the granting of an assembly and a consideration of legislative functions to the people. Grant felt that this was, on one hand, a very good thing. On the other, however, such representation, once given, could not easily be withdrawn. Caution was advised. Such a prescription precisely fitted what the statesmen of Japan intended doing anyway. Though the cause of civil rights had not been in the slightest advanced, a major accord could be announced.

Nevertheless, the infatuation of the populace grew. On Grant's single trip—to Nikko, where the emperor as indication of yet further esteem actually opened up the sacred bridge for the general to trod upon, an honor that the general gracefully declined—people so assembled along the route that sometimes the Grant party—general, wife, and son—had to give up sightseeing and return to their accommodations. Nonetheless, hundreds came to watch through doors and windows, "enjoying a tremendous sensation when they detected Frederick Grant in the act of tying his cravat."

In Nikko, Grant was also met by members of the Japanese government and the Ryukyu question was again discussed. And again, Grant gave good advice. European diplomacy "is always selfish and a quarrel between China and Japan would be regarded by them as a quarrel that might ensure to their own advantage." Sage advice given, the Nikko journey was over, and the Grants went back "home."

Home was still the Enryokan and it must have provided a quiet retreat from the frenzied social life. Young speaks of it as idyllic. "If you sit on this verandah, under the columns where the General sits every evening, you look out upon a ripe and perfect landscape bowered with green."

A possible cause for complaint was the service. Not that it was bad. Rather, it was too good. One was so surrounded by servants and guards that "the sense of being always under observation was at first oppressive." Apparently, however, one got used to it. "If you want to fish, you will find the poetry of fishing in Enryokan, for servants float about you and bait your hook and guard what you catch, and you have no work or trouble or worms to finger, no scales to pick from your hands."

All of this attendance made the general philosophical. Sitting on the verandah of an evening, he looked at a gardener at work and then observed, "There has been work enough on that tree since I have been here to raise all the food a small family would require during the winter."

But now the visit was coming to a close. The final public occasion for Grant and his party, however, was perhaps the most extravagant of all. It was a grand public festival, held at Ueno Park on August 25.

"It was a day of general festivity and rejoicing,"
writes Young. “All work was given up . . . Tokyo fluttered with flags. Every house was decorated with flags and lanterns.” The procession—Grant in full uniform, U.S. naval officers in blue and gold, a large Japanese military escort, and Julia in her finery—inched through the dense crowds.

There was, however, a slight contretemps before this grandest celebration of all. Invitations had been sent out in which it was stated that in honor of General Grant, His Imperial Majesty had kindly consented to honor the occasion by his presence. These were no sooner received than messengers appeared asking for their return, stating as reason a coming cholera epidemic. After a bit, however, the messengers again appeared with new invitations which read that in honor of His Imperial Highness, General Grant had kindly consented to honor the occasion by his presence. The cholera threat had apparently abated.

Other forms of lèse-majesté were also averted. Mrs. Ernest Fenollosa, ensconced in a good seat near the entrance of the pavilion, heard the emperor’s carriage arriving and drew aside the heavy curtain so that she would have a view as he passed only a few feet below. This ambition was thwarted when someone sprang upon the platform and angrily closed the curtain, holding it shut so that her efforts to again open it were hindered, in the meantime telling her, in Japanese, a language she had not learned, that no one must ever look down upon the emperor.

Nonetheless, the band yet once again played *Hail Columbia*, perhaps the only Western tune in its repertoire, and the procession stopped while Ulysses and Julia planted trees: he, a *hinoki*, a kind of cypress, and she, a *gyokuran*, a kind of magnolia. (The trees are still there, large and healthy. In 1929, because, “though the trees have grown thick and tall, few people know their history,” the aged Viscount Shibasawa had a plaque erected, donated by “we who had the privilege of participating in the welcome event fifty years ago.”) Then the procession swept on to a special pavilion and a meeting with the emperor.

Once at the pavilion—where there was waiting, among others, Sir Harry Parkes, his nose still out of joint—they met the emperor, enjoyed a medley of national airs played by the band, and witnessed a sports exhibition that included feats of horsemanship. After dinner, there was a grand fireworks display and then the long drive home.

“I recall this drive as among the most extraordinary phases of our Japanese visit,” Young remembered. “For miles, the General’s carriage slowly moved through a multitude that might have been computed by the hundreds of thousands, the trees and houses dangling with lamps and lanterns, the road spanned with arches of light, the night clear and mild, all forming a scene the like of which I had never witnessed, and which I can never hope to see again. It was the culmination of the General’s visit to Japan, the highest honor that could be paid to him by the Japanese government and people.”

And now it was time to return home—really home, the United States. Time for packing. The party had
done much shopping; there were swords and statues and vases and other things difficult to ship. There was also an accumulation of china, particularly examples of a shade that foreigners called “Old Blue” and became much fond of. Mrs. Grant had bought masses of it, so much that, in the words of Young, the general “has thrown a good deal of suspicion upon one’s enthusiasm for the antique by circumstantial narratives of a certain factory which flourishes in Newark, New Jersey...devoted to the manufacture of curios, especially ‘Old Blue.’”

It was time as well for a few last parties including one given by Prince Date that was most touching. All of a sudden, in the midst of the usual “seaweed jellies and raw fish,” there appeared “a surprise, a special compliment to our nation—a dish of baked pork and beans.” What ingenuity, what agony this must have cost the cooks is not recorded, nor is the taste of this experimental surprise, but it certainly ranks high among the many amenities that Japan extended to Grant.

Actually, the ex-president did not want to return at all. Earlier he had written from Tokyo, “I am both homesick and dread going home.” At home, his reputation was at its lowest and he was returning to public indifference and a failed business venture as well as—though he did not know this—a penniless old age, cancer of the throat, and death six years later. The reception by the Japanese had been an autumnal reprieve, one of the last pleasures of his life.

When Grant met the emperor for the final time just before he left, he did something he himself had never before done. Usually, the general simply spoke off-the-cuff, but now he sat down and wrote in advance just what he wanted to say. One can see him on that late afternoon in his brick palace, pencil stump in hand, brow creased, anxious to do the right thing, to say what he thought, and to show his appreciation.

This speech had the ring of truth. It concluded: “I now take my leave without expectations of ever again having the opportunity of visiting Japan, but with the assurance that pleasant recollections of my present visit will not vanish while my life lasts.”

Then the band played Hail Columbia for one last time and, with flags and bunting and cannon and balloons, Grant’s steamer slowly pulled away from the dock and the historic visit was over.

It had been a success. The Japanese had received an amount of what they thought was high-placed advice and, perhaps more important, they had shown that they knew how to comport themselves properly in this new world. And Grant had responded with dignity and sincerity and been given a memorable reprieve. This much was accomplished and this is much more than is usually accomplished when governments meet.
When he first came to Japan in 1885, Pierre Loti was a thirty-five-year-old French naval officer whose real name was Louis Marie Julien Viaud. After novelistic fame had struck, however, he was generally known by the pseudonym that he took from the eponymous hero of his best-selling *Le mariage de Loti*.

This book, a sensation in France, had chronicled the author’s exotic romance in Tahiti, and an earlier volume, *Azyladé*, also enjoying wide readership, had been about another affair of the heart, this time in Istanbul. Consequently, Loti’s readers had the highest expectations of Japan. His reputation as a lover was almost as great as his fame as a writer and, in addition, Japan was fast becoming the place to have romances.

Indeed, the “immorality” of the Japanese in this regard had long attracted attention. Three hundred years before, Francesco Carletti, speaking of the “rampant immorality,” said that one could get hold of “a pretty little girl” for very little money, and “with no other responsibility beyond that of sending her back home when done with.” In 1860 the Right Reverend Bishop George Smith of Hong Kong was “outraged at how many of the foreign residents live,” referring to domestic arrangements with local women.

The Japanese themselves were aware of the mixed nature of this foreign interest. Writing in *The Tokyo Press* in 1898, Yukichi Fukusawa remembered that the late ex-president Grant had been forced to sit and watch geisha. “It is fortunate that [he] did not know the language and was not well acquainted with Japanese life.” Otherwise, he would have understood that “they performed illicit acts for money...” and “if General Grant had realized that, he would have stood up in the midst of the dancing and walked out.”

Well, perhaps, if Julia had been along. Otherwise, however, he would probably have shared the pleasantly scandalized prurience that contributed so much to the enjoyment of being in Japan. Word had indeed gotten around concerning the excellence of Japanese women. Charles MacFarlane, an otherwise staid Englishman, had said that they “are the most fascinating, elegant ladies that I ever saw in any country in the world.” One may then imagine that Loti, given his lucrative Turkish and Tahitian conquests, was ready to entertain the softest feelings for the women of far Nippon.

Once in Nagasaki, he set about attempting to acquire one. This was, at the time, possible. John Luther Long’s *Madame Butterfly* was obtained as the result of such a business transaction. So was Clive
Holland's. The latter wrote in his once-popular book, *My Japanese Wife*, that his was "a butterfly ... playing at life ... with the dainty grace of Japan ... that idealized doll's-house land." Plainly, if Japan was thought a land of doll houses, then one must have one's own doll.

This Loti attempted, but he initially seems not to have done so properly. His go-between was his laundry man, a part of whose motivation seems to have been his mere desire to launder the dirty linen of Loti and his comrades. In any event, no maiden appeared.

Despite his having initially gone about this the wrong way, a young woman was eventually found for the famous Frenchman. But it was then his turn to be difficult. As Loti later told it, while still on the ship he had said, "Yes, I shall choose a little yellow-skinned woman with black hair and cat's eyes ... not much bigger than a doll." Presented with such, however, he complained that the proffered woman was much too white, "too much like our own women. I wish for a yellow one just for a change." To which the procurer explained: "That is only the paint they put on her, sir. Beneath it, I assure you, she is yellow."

So, the deal was struck. Twenty dollars, a farcical "wedding ceremony" at the local police station, and Loti had his own *musume*, a word that was being picked up by gallivanting foreigners. Though it means merely "daughter" and, by extension, "girl," the new users were giving it any meaning they pleased. Loti was quite taken by it. "It is one of the prettiest in the

Nipponese language ... *mousme* [sic] ... It seems almost as if there were a little *mone* in the sound, as if a pert physiognomy were described by it."

Pleasant as all this sounded, reality was something else. The liaison did not turn into the grand passion that Loti's readers, and maybe even Loti himself, expected. There were, to be sure, some things he liked about her. He liked her name—Okiku-san, Miss Chrysanthemum—and he liked her when she was asleep. He thought she looked like "a dead fairy" with her kimono spread all about. "What a pity," he reflected, "this little chrysanthemum cannot always be asleep; she is really extremely decorative seen in this manner—and like this, at least, she does not bore me."

Otherwise, she did. He did not pause to consider that boredom is an admission of inadequacy in those entertaining this emotion. Rather, he found fault with her and with her country.

She was not fascinating and she was not elegant; rather, she was "a soul which more than ever appears to me of a different species to my own; I feel my thought to be as far removed ... as from the flitting conceptions of a bird." Indeed, [italics his] "... we have absolutely nothing in common with these people."

Given this attitude, it is not surprising that Loti understood little of the country and its inhabitants. Not, to be sure, that he wanted to. Just the opposite. As he had demonstrated in his books on Turkey and Tahiti, he needed a sense of the *ailleurs*, a quality of "otherness," to create the opaque exoticism upon which
his forays into the picturesque depended. And, as he was now going to sit down and write *Madame Chrysanthème*, he had to cultivate this attitude.

But in Turkey and the South Seas, Loti had liked what he had seen and had revelled in his lack of understanding. In Japan, he complained about it. Perhaps the reason was that he himself had changed since the ardent days of earlier years. Lafcadio Hearn noticed the change. Writing to his friend Basil Hall Chamberlain in 1893, he said that the earlier work of Loti might be read in preference to the later since this “was written before his nerves became dull,” though, of course, “as for the moral side, you will find him much worse than in *Madame Chrysanthème*.” And as Leslie Blanch writes in her biography of Loti, “Impatience and an amused detachment sound behind all he wrote [while in Japan].”

Of the country, Loti penned that he “knew it all, long ago, from scenes painted on the bottom of tea cups,” and these standardized views were all he now found to write about. He did not observe, did not look around him. “Some magic had vanished,” says Blanch. “Life as he had once known it, and dreamed it should be—love and the romantic East—was over....”

Perhaps Japan was here a bit at fault, if fault it be. It no longer looked exotic. Gazing out over Nagasaki harbor, Loti turned to a friend and wondered: “Where are we in reality? In the United States?” This familiar initial disappointment, echoing still a century later, was complicated by many further signs of civilization and enlightenment in the capital. Loti found that the all-brick Ginza had about it “une laide américaine,” and that the Rokumeikan, that grand Meiji edifice, resembled a casino at a second-rate French spa.

Invited there to a ball for the emperor’s birthday, he found that the bustled women were correct but wooden. “They dance quite properly, my Japanese in Parisian gowns,” he wrote. “But one senses that it is something drilled into them, that they perform like automatons, without any personal initiative. If by chance they lose the beat, they have to be stopped and started over again. Left on their own, they would never get back in step.”

One wonders what he wanted. When he came upon a sight not yet modernized, he was no more pleased. Of one such he wrote, “Some Japanese Watteau must have mapped [it] out... for it has rather an affected air of rurality, though very pretty.”

Perhaps what he wanted more than anything else was some setting that would show him off to what he considered his advantage, and this was something Japan could not often provide. Jean Cocteau, himself later to make a highly personal appearance in Japan, remembered meeting Loti years later. Apparently, the urge to self-dramatization was still strong. He looked like “a painted china goat. With his tight corsets, his little high-heeled shoes, his little painted face, his large moustache, his staring eyes, I can hardly see him meeting some Aziyadé....”

However, Loti did have at least one experience when he seems to have found himself in properly flattering surroundings. This was his outing with the
they seem the revelation of an unknown art, the subversion of all acquired notions of forms.

The Parisian "Japanese" drawing room was overcrowded with curios and knickknacks, but "the true Japanese manner of understanding luxury consists in a scrupulous and indeed almost excessive cleanliness, white mats and white woodwork; an appearance of extreme simplicity and an incredible nicety in the most infinitesimal details."

"But for all that," he wrote about some large temple he had seen, "let the sanctuary be ever so immense and imposing in its somber gloom, the idols ever so superb, all seems in Japan but a mere semblance of grandeur. A hopeless pettiness..." And so, "it is all very paltry... I feel as if I were acting for my own benefit some wretchedly trivial and third-rate comedy." Expecting grandeur and other bolsterings to l'amour propre, Loti made little attempt to understand anything.

Even when he did, he got it wrong. He noticed that his little Chrysantheme was always arrayed in dark colors. "This," he added hopefully, "is a sign here of aristocratic distinction." No, she had subbed her wardrobe because, unfortunate woman, she thought that she was really married.

But she wasn't, and six months later it was time to part. Loti wrote, "Well, little mousmée [sic], let us part good friends; one last kiss even, if you like. I took you to amuse me; you have not perhaps succeeded very well, but after all you have done what you could... you have been pleasant enough in your Japanese way."
An odiousness this extreme is now apparent, but when Madame Chrysanthème appeared in 1887, few thought any less of the author. Indeed, this book and a later one, fruit of a second trip in 1900, La troisième jeunesse de Madame Prune, were enormously popular and set something of a vogue in regards to Japan and its musumé. After all, as Edward Said has well observed, “oriental women” in the writing of visitors “are usually creatures of a male power-fantasy. They express unlimited sensuality, they are more or less stupid, and above all they are willing.”

They were also there to be deserted. This was the import of not only Loti’s novels, but also Madame Butterfly: the story, the stage play, and the opera; as well as a spate of melodramatic entertainments with titles such as A Japanese Nightingale, The Darling of the Gods, The Lady of the Weeping Willow Tree, and so on.

And what, one wonders, did Okiku think of her little French “husband”? Probably as a way to get by in the brave new world of Meiji. There is small evidence that his leaving unduly upset her. In the celebrated final scene of Madame Chrysanthème, the dashing French officer returns and finds her biting the coins he had left her, testing them. He was shocked by this. I wasn’t. Given his attitude, she would have been a fool to have done anything else. No Mrs. Pinkerton, she would have recognized a bad tourist when she saw one.

And this is what Loti became in Japan. Toward the end of his book he wrote, “The chief occupation in this

Japanese country seems to be a perpetual hunt after curios.” And shopping was what he did. He took back enough to outfit a whole “Japanese” room in his Rochefort mansion. Okiku was just another souvenir d’un voyage, one he did not take home.

The bad tourist, always imperialistic, does not wish to learn or to experience. The aim, rather, is to acquire as much as cheaply as possible, then to return home with the loot. This is what Loti did.

In 1919 Ryunosuke Akutagawa wrote a short story called The Ball. In it, a woman remembered that 1885 Rokumeikan ball and a poetic young Frenchman with whom she spoke. Asked if she recalled the name, she replied, “Indeed, I do. His name was Julien Viaud.” “Then,” said her interlocutor, “he was Loti, the author of Madame Chrysanthème.” “Not at all,” said the woman. “His name was not Loti. It was Julien Viaud.”

But her interlocutor was correct. Whatever the young Viaud was like, all was obscured by the needs of Pierre Loti.
Rudyard Kipling

When he first visited Japan in the spring of 1889, Kipling was a twenty-four-year-old, still-unknown newspaperman, leaving India to go back to England. Since he was going through America, Japan was on the way. He stopped, wrote letters home, and became the first foreign traveler to truly describe it and to frankly recount what was happening.

Before Kipling, those coming to view the country had not been trained observers. It was only later that professional newspaper people—Lafcadio Hearn among them—appeared and very few of them saw the country as whole as did Kipling.

To an attentive reporter coming from India, Japan did not seem strange. There was no need for a Japanese mystique when the rest of Asia did not need one. For Kipling, Japan was another country, interesting because of it, and that was all.

Thus, this first traveler to understand what was happening to Japan did not attempt to “understand” in the painful manner of many later travelers. For him the Japanese were people—ordinary people—and were understandable as such. For this reason, he was not seduced by the picturesque, though he enjoyed the scenery; was not put off by any inscrutable qualities, because he found none; and quite enjoyed himself because he did not believe, as have later commentators, that one is supposed solemnly to search for “unique traits” in the hopes of stumbling across that elusive quality, “the Japanese soul.” Knowing none of this, Kipling left a series of funny, pertinent, perspicacious, and honest letters that still give one of the best views to be had of Meiji-period Japan.

He arrived in Nagasaki on April 15, 1889, aboard the P. and O. steamer Ancona. Accompanying him were his friends, the Hills. Professor S. A. Hill, called Aleck, was “a quiet, burly man, with a bushy dark beard,” who was also a devoted amateur photographer and whose pictorial record of the trip now rests in the vaults of the Library of Congress. His wife, Edmonia—who liked her friends to call her Ted—was an American with “a broad, plump face, a pretty snub nose, and a shock of dark curls.”

They and the young author had met in 1887 at which time Mrs. Hill, much taken with the young man, had written, “He was animation itself, telling his stories admirably, so that those about him were kept in gales of laughter. He fairly scintillated... is certainly worth knowing and we shall ask him to dinner soon.” The friendship deepened, and the voyage ensued.

The three friends also loved travel. They knew well
the joys of "touching a new country, a completely strange race, and manners contrary," and young Rudyard had earlier delivered himself of the aphorism "All things considered, there are only two kinds of men in the world—those who stay at home and those who do not. The second are the more interesting."

It was an interested and interesting trio that disembarked at Nagasaki harbor. And its youngest member wanted to see everything. Kipling had left behind home, family, and India. He was going, on very little money, to make his way in the world, to go everywhere, and to do everything. And he knew that "the knowledge that you may never live to see an especial treasure twice teaches the eyes to see quickly while the light lasts...."

So, from the very first, he saw things. He saw the things that everyone saw, but he recorded them as none before had. From "the three-cornered smiles" of the babies, to the realization that Japan is extraordinarily colorful, to the fact that, context being everything, Japan is not a small country, is not miniature. Consequently, Kipling was precise about size, particularly that of those enormous objects—shrines, trees, temples—that continually surround the traveler but which are usually ignored since they are not we and quaint. At the same time he was honest enough to record that "Japan is a soothing place for a small man."

And from the first step off the boat, he saw the people. This was something few other foreign observers of Japan had done. They saw "natives," or objects of study, but not people. The first sight mentioned from the boat was "an indigo-blue boy with an old ivory face," and the first off it was his rickshaw-puller, "a beautiful apple-cheeked young man with a Basque face."

Since he had no position to defend, no mystique to discover, he could like and dislike as he felt. At the port, he met his first Japanese customs official, a breed as formidable then as now. "I... was told in faultless English by a young gentleman, with a plated chrysanthemum in his forage-cap and a badly fitting German uniform on his limbs, that he did not understand my language... Had our stay been longer, I could have wept over him because he was a hybrid—partly French, partly German, and partly American—a tribute to civilization."

At the same time, he was aware of the irritated mood Japan sometimes fosters in the foreigner. Of a curio shop he wrote, "I tried to console myself with the thought that I could kick the place to pieces; but this only made me feel large and coarse and dirty—a most unfavorable mood for bargaining."

He felt himself a "barbarian," and was aware of the reasons. When his companions professed themselves surprised that the Japanese already knew all about cameras, Kipling said, "It's due to the extraordinary fact that we are not the only people in the world. I began to realize it at Hong Kong. It's getting plainer now."

This was the tone of his first letter and all those that followed during his three weeks in Japan. Being young
and idealistic, he also at once began devising schemes for saving the Japanese from themselves.

"It would pay us . . . to establish an international suzerainty over Japan; to take away any fear of invasion or annexation, and pay the country as much as ever it chose, on condition that it simply sat still and went on making beautiful things . . . It would pay to put the whole empire in a glass case." Asked by his companions just who would do this, he answered, "We—the sahib-log all the world over."

Kipling was a sahib quite accustomed to the title used by Indian natives when addressing or speaking of a European gentleman. Like most European gentlemen, he interpreted it to mean "master," and there is, indeed in most of Kipling's writing a very Victorian assumption of superiority. One of the irritants of being in Japan was that these assumptions were not shared by the Japanese. And while he admired everything about the past, he did not admire the modern Japanese character. And, as David Pollack has noted: "... it occurs to him that what he does not like about it is precisely the way the Japanese have somehow managed to turn the tables on the sahib."

But he was first a writer and only second a sahib. Englishmen had a mission, but this mission was benevolent and it was based upon a shrewd assessment of reality. Thus, along with an appreciation for the country as he found it, he also entertained certain fears for its future in the industrial world.

"In fifty years," he later wrote, "from the time that the intrusive Americans first broke her peace, Japan

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will experience her new birth and, reorganized from sandal to topknot, play the shamisen in the march of modern progress. This is the great advantage of being born into the New Era, when individual and community alike can get something for nothing—pay without work, education without effort, religion without thought, and free government without slow and bitter toil."

Kipling's disdain was reserved for the new era that was threatening Japan; the country and people he admired. "Japan is a great people . . . people that live among flowers and babies . . . Mercifully, she has been denied the last touch of firmness in her character which would enable her to play with the whole round world. We possess that—we, the nation of the glass flower-shade, the pink worsted mat, the red and green china puppy dog, and the poisonous Brussels carpet. It is our compensation."

When his companions complained that "a lot of their art is purely mechanical," Kipling replied, "So's a lot of ours—especially our pictures. Only we can't be spiritedly mechanical...."

What Kipling disliked in Japan (besides Nikko, which was the one thing that Henry Adams rather liked) was the lack of faith that he thought the Japanese showed in themselves. There was the hybrid customs official and now he was being shown a temple by a young priest "who giggled deprecatingly at his own creed every time he was questioned about it." Disgusted, Kipling wrote, "I hate a man who is ashamed of his faith," and, to the priest, said, "You shouldn't
The Honorable Visitors

laugh though, when you show off your creed.' 'Ha, ha!' said the young priest.

Kipling also criticized his fellow tourists. “Rome! Rome!” he remembers one asking, “Wasn't that the place where I got the good cigars?” He went in Tokyo to the “tomb” of the forty-seven ronin and saw that on one of the gold-leaved, lacquered panels “an animal of the name of V. Gay had seen fit to scratch his entirely uninteresting name. . . . Posterity will take note that V. Gay never cut his fingernails and ought not to have been trusted with anything prettier than a hog trough. . . . It is the handwriting upon the wall . . . Presently there will be neither gold nor lacquer—nothing but the finger marks of foreigners. Let us pray for the soul of V. Gay all the same. Perhaps he was a missionary.”

Looking about him attentively, Kipling was able to fix the look, the feel, even the smell of Meiji-period Japan; his letters are so filled with minute and alive descriptions.

On Tokyo: “The place roared with life through all its quarters. Double lines of trams ran down the main streets for mile on mile, rows of omnibuses stood at the principal railway stations . . . All the trams were full, all the private and public omnibuses were full, and the streets were full of ’rickshaws.' From the seashore to the shady green park, from the park to the dim distance, the land pullulated with people.”

He was interested almost entirely in people, and the people of Meiji Japan live again in these letters. Even the children are seen with a just and enthusiastic eye. “A Japanese child never cries, never scuffles, never

Rudyard Kipling

fights, and never makes mud pies, except when it lives on the banks of a canal. Yet, lest it should spread its sash-bow and become a baldheaded angel, ere its time, Providence has decreed that it should never, never blow its little nose.”

He was able, as no one else had been, to capture that sense of sudden strangeness that even now remains— as in his description of 1889 Tokyo after dark.

“Half the town was out for a walk, and all the people's clothes were indigo, and so were the shadows, and most of the paper lanterns were drops of blood red. By the light of smoking oil lamps people were selling flowers and shrubs—wicked little dwarf pines, stunted peach and plum trees, wisteria bushes clipped and twisted out of all likeness to wholesome plants, leaning and leering out of green-glaze pots. In the flickering of the yellow flames, these forced cripples and the yellow faces above them reeled to and fro fantastically all together. As the light steadied, they would return to the pretense of being green things till a puff of the warm night wind among the flares set the whole line off again in a crazy dance . . . their shadows capering on the house fronts behind them.”

Most important of all, the young Kipling discovered “the soul of Japan” (or one of them) and found aesthetic sensibility where it is still to be found—in the people and their work.

“The Japanese play with thatch as men play with modeling clay. . . . A beam . . . is a beam in Japan; anything under a foot thick is a stick . . . Her masons play with stone, her carpenters with wood, her smiths

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with iron, and her artists with life, death, and all the
eye can take in." Of all the early travelers to Japan,
only Kipling saw this.

And so, his three weeks up, he left Japan, a newspa-
er-trained reporter of enormous talent, a professional
observer who recorded with an honest impartiality
and who respected things as they were. And three
years later, he returned.

He was now famous, a "great writer," a married one
as well, and was once more passing through Japan, this
time on his way to India. In the intervening years, he
had been much acclaimed. He had also been criticized.
"Kipling is too clever to live," wrote Robert Louis
Stevenson from far Samoa. In London, observing the
younger author's departure, Henry James said, "The
infant monster of a Kipling has publicly left England
... carrying literary genius out of the country with him
in his pocket."

Kipling had much changed. So had Japan. Both were
much more grown-up, if this means the solemn taking
seriously of oneself. The Japanese government had
obtained a firm control, which it was never to relax,
and was already displaying a belligerence that would
lead to a number of wars. Kipling was now rather
grand, stayed at fine hotels, and swept in and out of
official banquets since Japan now knew who he was:
another of the country's famous friends.

But now, again face to face, Kipling and Japan had
nothing to say to each other. Both had matured. The
dull settled of youth was gone. There seemed little more
to add.

The author and his bride experienced an earth-
quake. "We fled into the garden, where a tall cryptom-
eria waggled its insane head back and forth with an 'I
told you so' expression, though not a breath was
stirring."

He discovered he had made a bad investment when
the troubled Yokohama New Oriental Banking Com-
pany failed. And he wrote a bad poem about the
Kamakura Buddha. He then went home to India.

Later, he was to write another bad poem about East
and West and their twain never meeting, all unmindful
that, back in 1889, they almost had.