

THE BOOKMAN

A REVIEW OF BOOKS AND LIFE

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TO THE AMERICANS

BY YONE NOGUCHI

YOUR romanticism inherited from the pure proud English blood (your ancestors crossed the Atlantic more from romantic impulse than from deliberate calculation, I think) usually innocent, healthy, fostered by geographical insularity, has made you, at least in the past, the incarnation of complacency. When you have misused your optimism, the natural outgrowth of your wealthy resources in substance or spirit, sometimes you have fallen—indeed an extremely engaging and winning sort of degeneration at that—into the assumption of an air of patronage; often you are dreamers, perhaps not very deep, at the same time propagandist perhaps over self-confident. However, it is wonderful to see that you have never, under any circumstances, become a prey to selfish dissipation, as we Japanese are wont in a moment of misused optimism. And again it is wonderful to see with what a grand manner you walk in the life of contradiction you have wilfully created. The best example of your men, to select only one from the poets (what country has more poets than your America?), I see in Walt Whitman, that

extraordinary personage of contradiction, that interesting mixture of dreamer and propagandist, who once sang:

I will make the Continent indissolute,
I will make the most splendid race the sun
ever shone upon,
I will make divine magnetic lands, with the
love of comrades, with the life-long love
of comrades.

Emerson, too, might be a man of Whitman's category, representing Holmes's Bostonians who believed that "the Boston State-House was the hub of the solar system."

This sort of optimism or romanticism, whether in the garb of holiday-making Topsy-turvydom or in the dark robe of a theologian's dignity, is not, like that of us Japanese, merely a simple admiration of your own self and country. I would not call it a lyrical mood, for there is distinctly some epical superstition running through it. (Where is another country, so epic as yours?) I may be wrong to regard your optimism as a superstition, because in so many cases, it has grown under the stimulus of the holy light of realised fact, into a magnificent faith. Like all men of faith you, too, are im-

pulsive. Again let me say that you are never a lyrical nation. A lyrical people like the Japanese are often irresponsible, pleased to misunderstand themselves; an impulsive nation like yours rushes sometimes into taking another's responsibility on her own shoulders, and being given even a superficial reason, will not hesitate to pay its bill and feel happy. Such an act, even though theoretically unwise, is certainly praiseworthy; its weakness is so suggestive. When we Japanese hesitate and are obliged even to act shabbily, since our wings of lyrical mood have been impeded, we cannot help attributing it to the incompleteness or poverty of situation on which we are standing. But you should be thankful for the superstition or faith of optimism that makes you strong, fearless and even foolish. Again be thankful for being able to act foolishness. When you think that you are the best nation of the world, you are assuming an attitude psychologically the same as that of a wealthy heir to whom life's pain and doubt are unknown. How I envy you that you have not been, at least till to-day, so unfortunate as to learn from bitter experience life's reality.

It was Thackeray who understood the word complacency as a master-characteristic of ignorance. When I myself use it, it is not, of course, in any fit of ill humour, but from my desire to reveal the really fortunate fact, that you have found it hardly necessary to study the geography of the rest of the world. In other words, you have found the whole universe in your own selves, although you may not be so narrow-minded to-day as Thoreau, who discovered all the phenomena of the Arctic

regions only in Concord. But where are the people who travel so extensively as you? And again where are the people who return home, like you, without a knowledge of the country or countries where they have travelled? I should say that you go into other countries carrying your own library, dining room and parlour, even with a big stove for your winter use, and when you return home, you carry them back; the chief joy of travelling for you, I dare say, is to find your own America in the other country, I mean, how your civilisation is invading there. It is not only my own opinion that your unreceptive mind (of course I admire its majestic manner almost dominating its environment) will be ever a stranger to the other country's reality. You may not know, on the other hand, how the money you spend so freely—quite natural to you as a wealthy heir—is demoralising a country, for instance, like Japan, whose physical desire is only checked by her unnatural cold asceticism. I heard at Honolulu, in 1885, that an "American tip" (and some American missionaries), had corrupted the whole islands. I heard in London, in 1912, that the "American tip" (and American journalism) had also corrupted England. And I am observing here at Tokyo to-day that this "American tip" (and American chewing gums and moving pictures) is working a speedy corruption on Japanese mind.

I depend on your magnanimity in expressing this candid opinion of mine, believing that it is one of your splendid characteristics. Indeed, I myself have seen many occasions when you diffused that blessing of magnanimity with silent but digni-

fied sense of humour. Again this sense of humour is another of your fine qualities. What a grand manner of yours is that, just like the manner of an elephant whose little eyes beam in humour mingled with sagacity. But I confess that my belief, particularly in this point, became disturbed when I heard from my friend just returned from your country that, since the present war had invited you in (allow me to use this expression), the time-honoured freedom of speech had been greatly impaired. I take it, however, as a proof of your main nature rather impulsive than deliberative.

To return to your ignorance of the geography of other countries. How we tried, I remember, at the time of the China-Japan war to point out to you the difference between Japan and China. Again we were obliged at the time of the Russia-Japan war, when in your country, to mark out our small islands from the world's map. To-day I am wondering what knowledge of Japan and the Japanese you have gained from your long contact (this long contact perhaps, as somebody remarks, was only between the governments of Washington and Tokyo), when my Japanese correspondent in your country often informs of your almost appalling ignorance of our country. The Bostonians were right in the belief that they were holding the golden hub of the world. It is nothing but a fact that it is unnecessary for you to come out into the other countries since the other countries come to you, as if ants swarming round a big lump of sugar; from Europe and Asia, and from every corner of the world, all the people ambitious and young wish to step into your rich domain. Who

will blame you if you feel superior to those poorly dressed immigrants? That you have grown to be innocent optimists is certainly excusable even as a fault. What I admire is to see how lightly you carry this optimism, and with what dignity.

Perhaps you will be displeased when I say that your American civilisation is tinted with a certain provincialism; I mean it in the real and pure sense, because the true essence of provincialism protects you from the degeneration in which your individual personality would lose its royal colour. The *American Scholar* delivered by Emerson as his Phi Beta Kappa address at Harvard in 1837 (perhaps a veritable Independent-Day bell for American scholarship as some critic gladly remarked) should be taken on the light of an exposition of your provincialism; again the European fame of Whitman rests on his universal idealism touched to distinction by his provincialism. The fact that Bret Harte and Henry James lived and died in England should be regarded as a sort of return compliment from your America to her mother-country. What would be left of Mark Twain if his provincialism were taken out? And I think that the true merits of Howells lie more or less in his parochial manifestation. I do not see why San Francisco should be the same as Paris, although I have often heard some people, evidently Californians, talking about them in the one same breath; surely there is no wisdom in the attempt to confound the human nature in Chicago with that of Manchester. If your valiant standard-bearers of new poetry, carelessly called the free-verse writers, go beyond their endorsement of the new

European movement with their enthusiastic provincialism, it means that they are acting blasphemy against their precious birth-right. I believe that the future of your American literature is vast, because, let me say perhaps at the risk of your displeasure, dilettantism there reigns in its real meaning; I should like to know where is a more sad literature than that written by the so-called professional writers? It is a general rule that the real life of authors declines with the passing-away of dilettantism into sad professionalism. Not only in literature, but in every phase of life, your greatness hangs on that one word. It is plain enough to see how your dilettantism works a divine deliverance for the international politics of the world.

I read somewhere as Münsterberg's words that the American education is given into the untrained rough hands of the lowest bidder. It is true that your women even with their brains much injured or weakened by magazine-reading and candy-eating, control the larger part of your educational field, perhaps driving the men away like Bret Harte's heathen Chinese with their cheap labour; still I believe that your educational condition is ten-times better than that of Japan where only tired, spiritless men (the strong-bodied, strong-souled young Japanese, in truth, cultivate their own lives somewhere else) are used to find their safe shelters. For some time past the teachers of Japanese schools, high or low, have been turning to mere phonographs of foreign languages, diffusing other people's ideas, but never their own, of course, naturally enough, for minds wholly subjugated by Western civilisation. Sorry to say I am also one of these

sad specimen. There are, I believe, many faults in your educational system with those half-paid women, one of which would be certainly that it encourages the feminine sort of civilisation (indeed America's is a civilisation feminine and in some sense the highest) and instils the religion of woman-worship, into a tender brain; however, I am not blind to the fact that it was, in a great measure, the very work of American women, generally speaking, that successfully checked the vulgarisation of the country in the hands of men with only monetary aspiration, almost without time for reflection and culture.

I should like to know where is a country where some sort of woman-worship is not practised. The Englishmen worship their women as they do liberty, which some critic calls lockjaw. The Germans worship the women with the cold estimation they have for kitchen utensils which, like German patriotism, are not a luxury but a necessity for existence. And the Frenchmen and Japanese worship the women with a lyrical mood so that to pretend to be brutes to them would be a sign of their courtesy. But none of them, as it seems to me, worship their women with a faith of religion like yourselves; it is interesting to study how this religion, the "Woman-worship," was first inaugurated in America, and how as a useful practice it was respected there. But to-day, as a religion, it has lost its original meaning of existence, sadly degenerating into nothing more than mere habit, perhaps like drinking or smoking or even opium-smoking, from which you will never succeed to keep yourself away. It is really sometimes a pretty habit, this woman-worship,

even when it has none of its former religious dignity, but as with any habit, you will soon become or have already become, dull, senseless and numbed from long contact with it. Perhaps you may not see anything wrong or faulty about it, when, as in truth, this women-worship as a habit or as a religion if you like, is publicly endorsed and greatly encouraged by your journalism, yellow or white or whatever it be. (Where is a country where the papers have such an influence as in yours?) To judge from the face of the papers, your New York is decidedly a great woman-worshipper. Your Chicago is never below New York in this religion. And San Francisco, too, burns incense before its sacred altar; there is, I think, some psychological reason for her becoming a far fiercer woman-worshipper perhaps than any other Eastern city. Of course I am not in the position to advise you to examine your women through the naked eyes of reality, or to put your religion upon a high shelf only to admire it as a precious relic of olden time. But here is your idealism, ignorant of life's pain, innocent and simple, which will surely object to leaving the woman-worship behind. Besides, without it, your female civilisation is soulless, a mere empty shrine from which the golden idol has been stolen. But I am wondering at the present wonderful time when you have stepped into the war (again from your romantic impulse rather than from deliberate calculation) what actual effect this step will have on yourself. Will your civilisation become man-like? If so, it will do you good certainly. The careless extravagant mind of your female civilisation is bound to grow sober, grave and thoughtful, when

the war puts its hand at once on the rearrangement of your own strength. Will your optimism ever become solemn? If so, again it will do you good doubtless. This is the time when you should take off your optimism's powder and paint and become real to steer a wise course amid the grave, confused moral questions. Shortly, this is the time when your optimism needs to be aroused to consciousness of itself. You have to learn the real proposition from the other world.

There was a time in America, for instance, in the early days when you had to struggle against the ever-combative nature and Indians; to be optimistic or even to pretend to be so at such a time, was surely considered a part most courageous, and the play of optimism was the best and most sensible self-protection from moral degeneration. But if I say that your real trouble lies in nothing but your optimism, as I said before, nourished and encouraged by the wealthy resources of your country (and, backed by your hasty belief in humanity and also by your newspapers), I mean that it is a menace, from the reason of its being superficial and slight, to the real development of morality. Indeed, it has acted always, I should say, to weaken your sense of life's conscience and force; I am sure that only when optimism stands on life's inevitable realism, its true value will be revealed. The present war is a great test for your optimism. Will it awaken you to a consciousness of your real selves?

Let me say again that your American civilisation is feminine, although I do not mean that it is weak or epicurean. From the reason that your country is floating comfortably on

the ocean all by itself, as if a well-fed real or lazy iceberg, though you are not, like Japan, situated at the end of the world, this side of nowhere, your civilisation has had but little to do with the world's development till recently. At the outset of the present article, I spoke on your romanticism, well harmonising with your feminine civilisation; as long as your impulsive nature of passion is kept compact, it is natural for you to be unreal and unscientific. I am sure that this definition in calling you unscientific may be criticised and even denied by one who pleases to understand you through the physical phenomena which are on the main your men's creation. But it is my own opinion that your material advancement, probably with little mutual understanding, lives with your spiritually feminine civilisation (highest but weak, till it is tested by diversity and misfortune) under the one same roof, and that makes you a thing of contradiction or incongruity. I do not know any other country where material wealth looks so wonderful and even mysterious when those different two things are mingled together by its powerful breath. Indeed, the most amazing thing with you is that your contradiction, in nine cases out of ten, looks quite natural and even comfortable. But to say that your spiritual civilisation and material advancement do not well harmonise, means after all that between your men and women there is very little understanding. For this matter of understanding between men and women, England, for instance, is far more fortunate. The fact that you have more divorce cases and many more unmarried men and women than any other country would attest the truth

of my assertion in some measure. I will not be far from the truth if I say that the eyes of your men and women are turned on entirely opposite directions; but if they reach the same place as they do reach strangely and surely, that will be nothing but nervous debility.

Your women grow to suffer from it, because their impulsive lives of passion are never fulfilled; and your men will get it as the result of their endless work, always illogical, often absurd, from which as from an octopus, you cannot make yourselves free. Their love of work so conclusive and almost terrible, is a sure sign of their being victims of chronic disease; if they suddenly stop working, they will perhaps find themselves hopelessly crippled and useless for the rest of their lives, like an opium smoker who has suddenly stopped smoking. You will see why I say that the working habit of your men is one of your greatest national problems; in truth, it is a great social problem of your country in the same sense that the lazy life of your women is certainly a menace to the sound health of your country. But your men and women, I dare say, fail to understand what is the real meaning of life; this being the case, there is no time so critical and important for them as to-day.

I have often heard and still am hearing that your wealthy daughters were under the allurements or decoys of European lords or marquises. But the trouble is that the good-hearted mothers of these daughters are always fallen into such a profound admiration of those aristocrats of Europe who possess nothing but rosy delicate figures or beautifully trimmed moustache. Before those mothers your newspapers are

of course mighty eulogists of them. Besides, I think that your fair daughters are far too civilised and, of course, too educated for your own men. Who patronises the art of your country? Your women. Who support your stages? Your women. And who control your literature? Your women. I used to hear, fifteen or twenty years ago, that your women could not keep away from Omar of Persia and chicken salads. They might be to-day cringing round Tagore of India and Chinese vases of jade. So long as things look and sound exotic and mysterious, your women are content with them.

Let me say again that your men are in the same sense hardly equal to

your women spiritually. Your men whose culture is sometimes doubtful, are not conversationalists, though they might become monologists or preachers. As I said, they are not conversationalists in the true meaning; and that is the reason why they fail to become successful lovers in women's eyes. If they fail, as they do in fact, I think and say that it is the fault of their environment and education.

I hope that you will excuse me if I have spoken too honestly and truthfully. If I have not dwelt much on your strong points, it is from my belief that it was unnecessary to speak about them to you whose future is so vast and meaningful.

MY FRIENDSHIP WITH GEORGE MOORE, THREE THOUSAND MILES AWAY

BY THE MARQUISE CLARA LANZA

IN THE late spring of 1888, happening to be in Brentano's, then in Union Square, idly turning over the pages of some periodicals displayed on one of the counters, I was approached by Mr. August Brentano, who handed me a book tastefully bound in olive green and bearing the imprint of a London publisher, with the request that I examine it and advise him as to the desirability of issuing an American edition of the same. I glanced at the title—*Confessions of a Young Man*, by George Moore. Who, I wondered, was George Moore? I had never heard of him. But the word "Confessions" opened up a vista of alluring possibilities, so I willingly enough took the volume home. The first chapter—I had almost written the first paragraph—chained my attention and caught my imagination, and as I read on each succeeding chapter exerted upon me a deeper fascination. Nothing I had read in years had impressed me with so compelling a charm as this chronicle by a totally—to me at least—unknown writer. The fine literary quality of the work, its attractive glimpses of artistic and bohemian Paris, its curious outlook on life, and above all, its amazing candour, delighted me to such an extent that I lost no time in hurrying back to Union Square to beg Mr. Brentano by all means to bring out the contemplated American edition. At that time the International Copyright Law existed solely in the subconscious minds of a few long-suffer-

ing authors and publishers. English and Americans alike stole from one another with an unblushing temerity that would have brought joy to the heart of Captain Kidd himself, but much to my satisfaction and, I must confess, somewhat to my astonishment, Mr. Brentano signified his complete willingness to "do the proper thing" by purchasing the unbound sheets of the *Confessions* from Sonnenschein, the London publisher, and paying Mr. Moore the usual royalty. It was after these preliminaries had been agreed upon that I wrote to the author, informing him of what I had done. This brief letter, which crossed the Atlantic just thirty years ago, was promptly and appreciatively acknowledged and resulted in a correspondence that extended over a period of several years. Despite the fact of our being separated by three thousand miles of water I got to know George Moore as well as if we had long been intimate associates, accustomed to dine and sup together, or chat over the teacups for ages. He seemed to be genuinely touched by my recommendation of his book and before it was published in America asked me to go over the proofs and correct a number of errors that had crept into the text. The French quotations and phrases were notably bungled and I straightened them out also. But no sooner had the *Confessions* been given to the American public than trouble began. Mr. Moore, who never does anything by halves, fell out with Brentano over some