

Opposite: "Waiting for a tram which about 10 per cent. would have a chance of entering"

it in the higher layers of their society; but it is an instinct that millions can't indulge. They smell—as individuals and as multitudes, and their habit of making urinals of public streets and highways does not make the atmosphere any sweeter. But it does not make the people repulsive. Only the senile and depraved are offensive, and not so many of those would be seen if there were houses in which to hide them all. But the fact remains that very many streets in Japan, very many shops and railway stations, smell of water-closets and dried fish. The second no one can complain of: fish are life in Japan—the bridge between health and starvation. The first makes offensive nonsense of guide-books and tourist propaganda.

**CROWDS AND QUEUES**

IN spite of all that, and some worse things, a Japanese crowd is more interesting than any crowd I have ever seen. To begin with, it is a crowd—surging forward at a half trot or queued up and stock still. Where the moving swarms come from and go was never very clear to me, since I saw no great factories operating, no public works, and no warehouses filled with food or clothes. I saw food shops that one hungry labourer would eat out at a sitting, clothes shops that might fit out one family. I saw public markets that were just long lines of farmers and fishermen sitting on the frosty ground behind one little basket. I saw small dribblets of all kinds of things that, added together, would amount to a considerable river, but nothing to explain a stream of people seven or eight deep moving on one side of the street and a reverse stream on the other side. Nor was it ever clear to me why hundreds of people would stand in a silent queue waiting for a tram which about 10 per cent. would have a chance of entering. But they did

stream along the streets, and they did stand and wait, and the longer I looked at them the more they absorbed and amazed me.

**THE PEOPLE ARE PRIMITIVE**

AS everyone knows, the Japanese are small—about six inches shorter than we are, and many pounds lighter. But it is only when you see them in the mass that you detect their anxiety over their size, and the devices they use to hide it—clogs two or three inches high, hats with pushed-up crowns, gowns sweeping in an unbroken line from shoulders to heels. It is then also that you sense the desire of so many of them to be western, to escape from their past, and build a new personality on leather shoes and gilded teeth. I think every Japanese who can get them wears European clothes now and again; but at present about a quarter of the men are wearing uniforms, not because they have been soldiers or sailors, but because the Americans took over all military supplies at the surrender and handed back the food and clothes to the Ministry of Home Supply. So the women use cosmetics when they can get them, and it is clear from the faces in the street that cosmetics have already joined cigarettes as currency in the black market.

But all that is sophistication. A majority of Japanese men, and an overwhelming majority of Japanese women, are not merely conservative still, but primitive. The men neither evade nor seek notice when they get rid of body waste in public places, and a woman will suckle a baby on a doorstep, or sitting on a barrow in the street, with as little embarrassment as it gives a New Zealand girl to apply lipstick in a restaurant.

**I WONDERED** before I reached Japan what the attitude of the people would actually prove to be. I was not afraid that they would express hostility, but had difficulty in believing that they

would not feel it. I have difficulty still, but have almost persuaded myself that the optimists are nearer the truth than the pessimists. I base this remark not so much on my own observations, which were hurried and brief, as on the opinions of other people whose opportunities for finding out have been unusual: for example, an American colonel who arrived immediately after the surrender and has been working with and through Japanese labourers and contractors in restoring public services; a widely experienced Sydney journalist who has been four or five months in Tokyo, a scholarly naval officer who reads Japanese and has friends among the Japanese liberals. None of these would go so far as to say that he felt sure of his ground, but there was something like agreement among them on these points:

- (1) That there has not been a single attack on any member of the force of occupation. (There may have been drunken brawls or quarrels over women which have not been reported.)
- (2) That there has been no sabotage of transport or other essential services.
- (3) That tasks given to the Japanese to do—road-making, carpentering, airfield construction, and so on—are being faithfully, if not always efficiently, carried through.
- (4) That although minority groups had planned to wage guerrilla war on the Americans, the public had not supported them, and they had now disintegrated and disappeared.
- (5) That many Japanese—it is impossible to say how many—feel the occupation as a relief (a) from repression of thought and speech, (b) from the ruthless demands of war.
- (6) That private families seem honoured by a visit from Americans or British.

## Snapshot

### Face

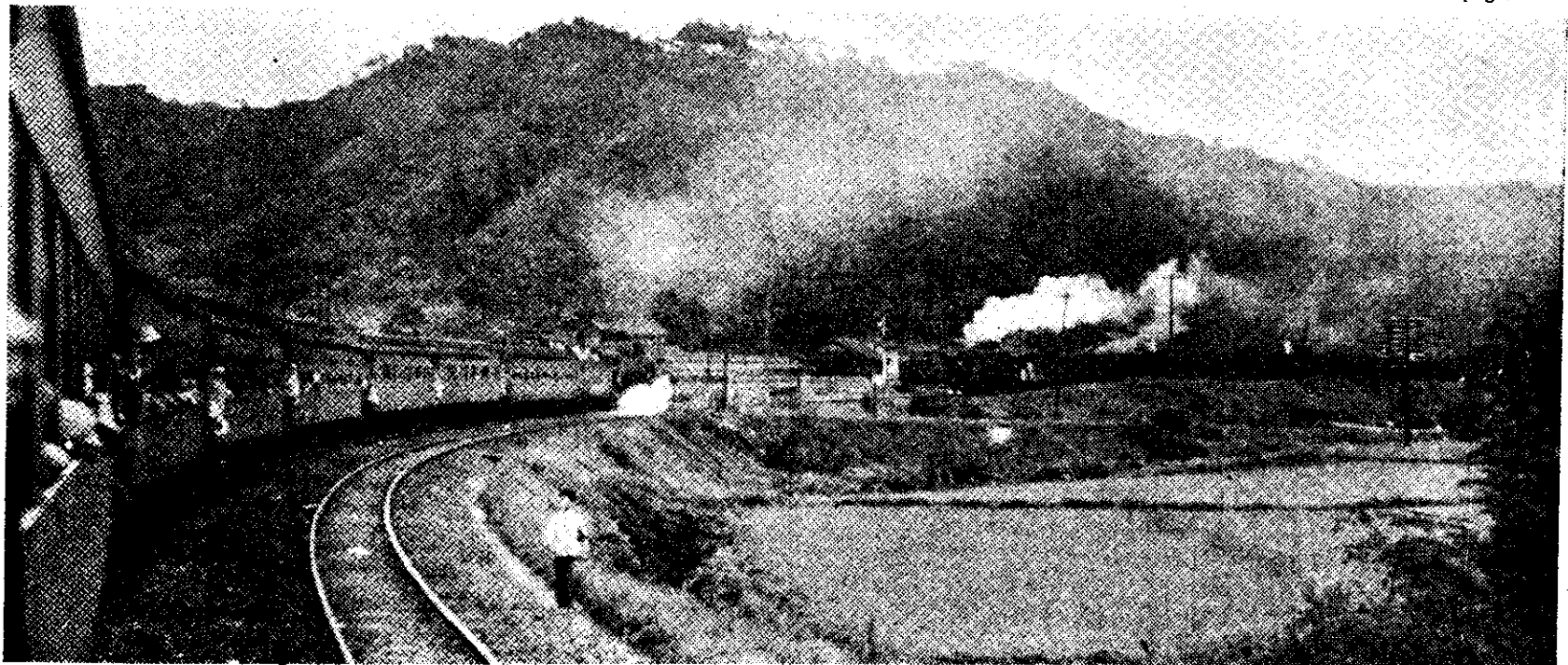
A RAILWAY station crowded with people waiting for a train from a branch line. A slight stir at one end of the platform, and then a barefooted boy of 10 or 12 tearing past us in panic for the gateway. As he reaches it the gate closes, and at the same moment a lump of coal weighing at least half-a-pound crashes against the boards near his head. Hard on the coal comes a boy half as big again, with rage on his face and another lump in his hand, and at once there is a circle of spectators.

But no one does anything. The big boy seems about to commit murder, the small boy is cornered and helpless, and then the sensation comes. Pulling himself suddenly together the little one looks straight into the eyes of the big one for about ten seconds, and the big one crumples. He not only drops the coal. He gropes his way tearfully through a side door, then races madly up a lane. Everybody but the small boy laughs.

- (7) That democracy is a long way off, but not impossible if the seeds are sown now in the right places.

**REDUCED** like that to their bare bones, these agreements may not seem encouraging, but it is better not to shout while we are still in the wood. If it were certain that the occupying forces would remain for two generations it could, I think, be said now that Japan would then be **CONQUERED BY CANDY** completely changed; but it would require as much boldness to say how long her conquerors will stay as to say how soon, if they go, their work will be undone. The signs at present are that the occupation will be continued for several years at least, and

(continued on next page)



BETWEEN Fukuyama and Hiroshima—a view that will suggest Ngaruawahia to many North Island travellers. But the field on the right grows rice, and cedars and pines clothe the hillsides