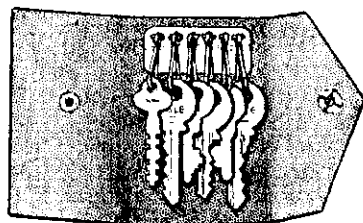


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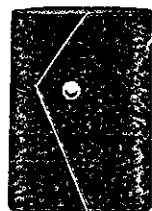


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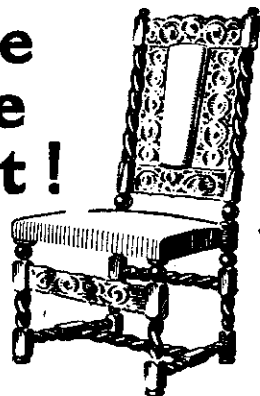
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JOURNEY TO TOKIO

(Written for "The Listener" by
the Official New Zealand Correspondent with J Force)

(By Airmail)

IN the carriage with the three New Zealanders were 40 or so Americans; among them were Chinese, a Negro, four Japanese, another who could have come straight from the plaudits of a Spanish bullfight crowd. But all of them were American born; they were citizens of that nation and on the collars of their neatly-pressed uniform shirts were two letters cut from brass—U.S. In the carriage too, with the cards flicking on the pillow held on their knees, were Australians—and even without spotting their slouch hats you would have marked them as from that country, a country, you had already decided, which is now old enough and sufficiently developed to have national characteristics of its own.

Behind the Australians, handsomely turbaned and with beards almost the size of wheat sheafs, were two Indians. Later, in the diner, an exacting religion forbade so much of the menu that they were left only with pickled cabbage and a slice of bread. The diner steward looked a little embarrassed when he offered them a slice of bread more than the ordinary ration.

In front of two English officers with Grenadiers picked in silk on their shoulders and stamped on their bearing, were two Japanese nationals. Travel on this American military train, the "Yankee Flier" is forbidden to Japanese, but these two were Catholic Jesuit priests and exception to the rule had been made. But, compromising approval and disapproval, the authority responsible for allowing the Japanese priests to travel had not given them permission to use the dining car. Their journey was to last 24 hours and they had brought no food with them. An example of a New Zealand trait which has been apparent right through the war was the result.

Fraternisation

One of the three New Zealanders, a six-foot Kiwi private, returning from the dining car to find the two priests alone in the carriage, sat beside them and began a conversation, at first in pidgin Japanese and then, when he found they could speak perfect English, in English. In three minutes he had learnt where they were educated, where they were from and where they were going, their names, their work, and "what do you think of the occupation?" He had wiped a soot smut from the robes of the younger man, and wondered, offering a battered tobacco tin, if they would "like a roll"; he had told them about the Maoris in New Zealand and "reckoned" that, although the Japanese knew how to use every inch of the soil they did not have a "clue" about mechanical efficiency.



"This uninhibited, unembarrassed, uncomplicated interest in the people"

Suddenly the Kiwi realised the two priests had not been in to breakfast. "Why?" "What, no munga?" "Really? . . . We'll soon fix that." And he did. From his haversack in the rack he produced two tins, of bacon and steak and kidney pudding. In a minute the tins were opened; and for the next ten minutes in that crowded carriage two Japanese Jesuit priests with shaved heads and dressed in their church robes and one six-foot Kiwi (still hungry), ate bacon and steak and kidney, passing the tins from one to the other, the blade of one pocketknife combining the uses of knife and fork.

Wherever they have lived overseas, New Zealanders have become known for their genuine, unstumbling friendliness to local populations of whatever nationality or country, whatever the circumstances. It was apparent in Italy, Trieste in particular. It has been proved again in Japan. And in a country that has been defeated, with a nation that is unsteady and confused but sharply aware of the attitude of the troops who are in occupation, this uninhibited, unembarrassed, uncomplicated interest in the people and friendliness towards them is more valuable than any directive ever could be. As with other peoples, the Japanese do not think in the abstract; it is the individual that they are concerned with and by him they will judge democracy.

The priests and the soldier parted with handshaking and an assurance from the Kiwi that if he ever had the chance he would visit his new acquaintances and have his hospitality returned. He would be no less at ease at a sukiaki party or a Japanese tea ceremony than he was in the railway carriage; the chopsticks he would have to use would be no more difficult to handle than the tin opener with which he opened the tins of bacon and steak and kidney pudding.

By the Inland Sea

From Shimonoseki, the railway terminus in the New Zealand area, to Tokio is 600 miles. But the journey which takes 25 hours is not as weary as might be imagined; there are three excellent

meals served in the dining car, the sleepers are comfortable, and those wishing to change from carriage seats may spend an hour or so in the club car which is fitted with armchairs and tables, where books, magazines, and games are available.

The first of the journey is along the Inland Sea. There are the famous cities of Hiroshima, Okayama, Osaka, Kyoto, and Yokohama. Between them is all the beauty of rural Japan; the wooded hills, the unending terraced paddy-fields enlivened by quaintly-dressed workers (most of whom are women), by scarecrows that are curiously artistic (each year a competition is held with a prize for the most attractive creation), and the primitive farm machinery—the hand ploughs, the threshing machines worked by foot, the stone crushing mills, the carts drawn by oxen which look so dispirited and weary that you wonder if perhaps they have taken the defeat of their country even more to heart than their owners. A journey that is never without interest, through a countryside that at present is harvest-yellow with the ripe rice crop, with scenes of changing colour and beauty, of nature working with man. Looking at peace, ironically prosperous, you are tempted to risk precious film by chancing shots from the swiftly-moving train.

Three hours after lunch (pork chops and ice-cream) and an hour before dinner (chicken and tinned cherries—you are in luck) you look suddenly from the window and there it is, there across the wide plain with small villages neatly breaking the yellow harvest like chocolate splashes—there is something of the Japanese mind and character, a part of their worship, a piece of themselves—there is what, perhaps, Rugby football is to New Zealand, what, they say, the dollar is to the United States, what, you imagine, the olive is to the Italian. There, glorious, is Fujiyama.

Smoothly symmetrical, snowcapped peak rising 5,000 feet above cloud, and caught in the sun, Fuji is even more breathtaking than you had imagined. Mt.

(continued on next page)