



WHAT TO DO WITH THE JAPANESE?

"First catch your hare—but study Mrs. Beeton, too, to know what to turn him into when you catch him." So counsels A.M.R. in this article for "The Listener."



GUADALCANAL . . . New Georgia . . . Vella Lavella . . . Tarawa . . . Makin . . . we are on the way to Tokio. But when we arrive what shall we do with the Japanese? Europe's post-surrender needs, psychological and economic, we can, in the main, understand: first food, then freedom to the local democratic forces to reconstruct their various national lives within some federal frame. But Japan we do not understand at all. Precisely the same facts about it mean one thing to one "authority," the direct opposite to another. "The Japanese will crack under bombing," declares A emphatically, "since their cities are so flimsy that every earthquake-eruption fires them and knocks them flat." "The Japanese will not crack under bombing," asseverates B, "since their cities are so flimsy that every earthquake-eruption bombards them worse than we ever could—and yet they carry on!" In short, to win the Pacific peace we need to start studying now the set-up and psychology of those eighty million folk whose future the Pacific victory will cast upon

our unskilled hands. If the Japanese do not behave like human beings (not like the ones we know, that is) and if their political, economic and social organisation remains to us mysterious and bizarre (as it certainly does), we shall have to take a course in understanding them if we want to get them to co-operate in their own re-organisation.

What Makes Japan Japanese

The ingredients that make Japan are Poverty, Isolation, Shinto, Feudalism, Humiliation, Aggression, and Desperation.

But the poverty that has made Japan Japanese is not simply the lack of physical resources. It is that lack accepted and made the basis of a civilisation. Land crops were not sufficient. Therefore, the people grew seaweeds also. Home fires or public-house parlours were too expensive. Therefore, they made clubs of community bath-houses and went to bed warm after an hour's soak and gossip with 20 neighbours in a scalding wooden vat.

Compare the stone palace of Versailles, rich in painted ceilings, carpeted floors, walls of mirrors and windows, furnishings carved and upholstered, with the Imperial Palace at Kyoto built simply of paper and unpainted wood. Compare with the two worlds of rich and poor elsewhere the God-Emperor squatting on the same cushion as his subjects in the same bamboo-and-paper room eating from the same bowl the same raw fish and rice. (Only *quality* is better). Then think of the attitudes that this single-standard, poverty-based civilisation would engender — independ-

ence of material conditions, sense of togetherness, lack of personalism, and so on.

Tribal Isolation

The extent of Japan's tribal isolation from the main stream of humanity is hardly realised by those who know how many decades and centuries she has rotated on her own axis, self-sealed away from humanity until forcibly dragged into world trade in 1853. While most of mankind's cultures have tended right through history to flow together, the Japanese civilisation has canalised itself away from the broadening river, and has tended to accentuate its own special features. We see this charmingly in dress and manners. We meet it bafflingly in thought and language. How can a man think *with* the rest of the world who all his life has spoken like this:

"This period at having-arrived, Buddhism that say thing as-for, merely low-class people's believing place that having-become, middle-class thence-upwards in as-for, its reason discerning-are people being-few, religion that if-one-says, funeral-rite's time only in employ thing's manner in think."

That is the literal translation of a Japanese sentence of which the English meaning is:

"At the present day, Buddhism has sunk into being the belief of the lower classes only. Few people in the middle and upper classes understand its *raison d'être*, most of them fancying that religion is a thing which comes into play only at funeral services."

Not the least of official Japan's grievances against China is the Chinese ability to present their case before the world with disarming ease and lucidity, while Japanese specialists in English stumble over simple sentences and give their thoughts clean away when they attempt any fine nuance of meaning (e.g., "China incident"). But then the Chinese *think* like other peoples. After centuries of self-elaborating isolation, the Japanese do not.

The Shinto Outlook

The third ingredient in Japanese life is Shinto. We Westerners think of Shinto in its political aspects, and marvel how professors of history and

(continued on next page)



"The third ingredient in Japanese life is Shinto." Above: Shinto priests in ceremonial robes

Whether they have adopted Western dress or adhered to their traditional costume, Japanese are united in their national traditions. Right: a scene in the streets of Tokio when pedestrians joined in prayer to observe the 2600th anniversary of the founding of the Empire

