

SNAPSHOTS OF JAPANESE LIFE AND PHILOSOPHY.

(Continued from page 741.)

seem ludicrous, but when you come to your hotel dining-room, and the inexpressibly dainty little Japanese girls, moving almost noiselessly on their sandaled feet (no getas indoors) welcome each guest with smiling bows, happy, refined and graceful, a very different impression of Japanese courtesy comes over you. In America, unfortunately, the like courteous attention under such circumstances might be misinterpreted, but not so here: you are only reminded of how a thousand years of courtesy and gentle manners have given the women of Japan—pretty though they are not, judged by our Western standards—an unsurpassed grace of manner and happiness of disposition together with Shakespeare's well-praised "voice, soft and low, an excellent thing in woman." And here and everywhere, as in the old fable of the man with the overcoat, must not such sun-like gentleness be more powerful in compelling deference than all the stormy strength of the "new woman"?

Which reminds me that however much the social, political and economic revolution of the last forty years may have changed the national character—and upon this point I shall not speak till later—it is certain that Old Japan and the Old South were distinguished for not a few characteristics in common. Thus when Will Adams, the English navigator, came to this country 300 years ago, he wrote that the people were "good of nature, courteous out of measure, and valiant in war," qualities for which the Old South, along with the graciousness of its women, was famous, as indeed I hope our section will always be. Moreover, we are further reminded of the South's own ante-bellum civilization when we learn that in Old Japan "the business of money-making was held in contempt by the superior classes," and of all forms of business, agriculture was held in highest esteem. Next to the nobility stood the Samurai or soldier class, the social rank of all other persons then being as follows: (1) Farmers, (2) Artisans, (3) Merchants; and farming was thus not only regarded as the most honorable of all occupations, but farmers in the early ages were privileged to wear swords, the emblem of rank next to the nobility. Below the farmers ranked the mechanic element, while as Lafacadia Hearn tells us:

"The commercial class (A Kindo) including bankers, merchants, shopkeepers, and traders of all kinds, was the lowest officially recognized. The business of money-making was held in contempt by the superior classes; and all methods of profiting by the purchase and resale of the produce of labor were regarded as dishonorable. . . . There is generally, in militant society, small respect for the common forms of labor. But in Old Japan the occupations of the farmer and the artisan were not despised; trade alone appears to have been considered degrading, and the distinction may have been partly a moral one."


I wonder if there is not really a great deal in what Hearn here suggests as to the soundness and essential morality of the Japanese plan of ranking farming and manufacturing above trade as occupations? Certainly I have been much impressed by the evils into which the South is now running as a result of the sentiment of the opposite sort. Morally and economically, the men who produce wealth deserve most honor—

serve the world best; the men who trade or barter in the products of other men's labor are, in limited numbers, necessary and useful servants of those who do produce, but the strength of a State, manifestly, lies in the classes who are really creators of values. The man who produces Southern meat and not the man who sells Western meat, for example, the man who manufactures Southern goods, not the man who traffics in Northern goods—he is the one who is going to make the South great; and even if we in the South were not importers, to a shameful extent, of a thousand things we might make at home in farms, factories or workshops, it would still be true that we have too many who are mere traffickers in other men's produce instead of being actual producers themselves.

It seems to me, indeed, that there are few things of which the South stands in sorer need right now than the revival of just this old Japanese "moral distinction" as to the relative worth of the producing and non-producing classes. The ambitious young man in the North and West is likely to take up farming, stock-raising or manufacturing: productive lines which positively add something to the world's and the State's stock of wealth; an ambitious young Southerner, on the other hand, is too likely to start a store in a place where there are already twice as many as the community requires from an economic standpoint, or a bank in a town that may already have four where it only needs one, or else he may hang out a lawyer's shingle where the legal fraternity are already fighting the Torrens System in order to keep business enough for them to live on.

It is not that these non-producing businesses are not just as honorable, to the extent—and only to the extent—that they may be needed for the service of the producing and consuming classes, but the trouble in the South is that there in these lines just twice as many men as are needed, economically considered, and our section can never develop as it should until it is the ambition of young men to turn into lines that actually produce wealth and power—until, in short, we revive and emphasize the classic Japanese "moral distinction" as to the greater fundamental importance of the classes and the men who are actual creators of values.

In the next place, in Old Japan there was no room for the wanton display of wealth: and it is to be hoped that neither in New Japan nor in the twentieth century South will there will there be any change in the requirement of simple living as a mark of good breeding—although there are occasional discouraging symptoms, and at Nikko only this week my Southern pride was somewhat hurt when I discovered that the gorgeously arrayed, cigarette-smoking Miss (or Mrs.?) Moneybags, fresh from Reno to get a fashionable divorce, was the daughter of a Southern man who has made a fortune and lost something better: the old-fashioned standards that would have saved any Southern woman from either a Reno divorce or a reputation as a gambler. Especially in this era of American development and mushroom wealth, is there not need for all of us to preach as never before both the essential immorality of waste and the essential vulgarity of ostentation? The sentiment of the Old South upon these points was also the sentiment of Old Japan, and I am sending with this article an extract from Lafacadio Hearn's "Kokoro," in which he presents the Japanese viewpoint with striking force, illustrating it by two sayings of Iyeyasu—Iyeyasu, whom I regard as perhaps the greatest soldier and states-



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man in Japanese history, of whose world-renowned tomb at Nikko, with its 25-mile avenue of giant cryptomerias I shall have more to say in a later letter.

FARMERS' NATIONAL CONGRESS.

The Farmers' National Convention, in session at Omaha, Neb., Oct. 5 to 12, elected Joshua Strange, of Indiana, President; Geo. M. Whitakers, Washington, D. C., Secretary, and John M. Stahl, of Illinois, Legislative Agent.

The meeting was reported a success, although the attendance was scarcely so large as usual.

Resolutions were adopted as follows:

1. Re-affirming position on immigration.
2. Urging more liberal appropriations for agricultural colleges and experiment stations.
3. Favoring conservation of forests and minerals.
4. Favoring an amendment to the Constitution which will prohibit the introduction into any State of an article whose sale there is forbidden.
5. Favoring National and State control of public service corporations, especially railroads and express companies.
6. Favoring laws for a Federal valuation of railroads.
7. Favoring legislation that will make it impossible to sell oleomargarine as butter.
8. Favoring a law forbidding interstate common carriers taking intoxicating liquors into dry territory.
9. Indorsing the tariff commission idea.
10. Affirming position in favor of conservation.
11. Favoring a National and State soil survey.
12. Favoring the establishment of State conservation commissions.
13. Favoring legislation for the protection of travelers on railways.
14. Favoring an experimental parcels post and urging members to write Congressmen in favor of it.

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