North of SINGAPORE

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Illustrated

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"YOU LOOK AS IF YOU WERE GOING SOMEWHERE!" REMARKED A New York traffic cop as we waited for the light. Our old Buick, which had already carried us over seventy thousand miles, was piled high with all kinds of paraphernalia for our expedition. "We're on our way to Singapore!" I grinned. "We're trying to catch a ship in San Francisco." It was quite evident that the policeman didn't believe me.

For twenty years I had waited for an opportunity to revisit the Malay jungle, but I must admit that I had practically given up hope of ever making another expedition. My last had been to Panama and Mexico in 1935, but since that time war crisis had followed so close on war crisis that it seemed utterly impossible to organise an expedition. But by dogged persistence and ceaseless telephoning, my wife eventually interested several organizations and we started out under the auspices of the National Travel Club and the Geographic Society of Chicago. With her usual foresight she arranged to have sums of money sent ahead to different ports of call, such as Tokyo and Singapore, thus providing an incentive to keep going, but I could not help comparing her system with that of coaxing along a donkey by means of a carrot held in front of his nose.

We left New York on June 28th and rolled into San Fran-
cisco on the morning of July 5th. It had been very hot in New York but in California people were wearing fur coats; the weather was cold, damp and foggy. When I drove the car into a garage, I did not say that I had no intention of coming back for it, and I have often wondered what the garage man thought when he received a letter from me six months later, informing him that I had kept on going around the world and requesting him to hand the car over to a friend who would drive it back to New York.

We sailed on the *Asama Maru* on July 10th with a full cargo of scrap iron, lead, rubber and other munitions of war destined for use against the Chinese. The scrap iron had been compressed into bales the size of a cotton bale, the rubber was in the form of old tires. To judge from the remarks of the men who were loading the ship it was apparent that this supplying of war materials to Japan was by no means popular.

The *Asama Maru* is one of the finest liners in the Japanese mercantile marine, but we felt as if we were on a small pleasure boat as we passed beneath the bridge that now spans the Golden Gate. The last time I had sailed through the Golden Gate was in 1918, when such a gigantic undertaking as this, the largest suspension bridge in the world, had been merely a matter for speculation and dreaming. But here it was completed, and I began to wonder what other changes I would find as I made my way around the world after a lapse of more than twenty years.

When we entered our stateroom, instead of finding it piled high with baggage and packages, everything was neatly stowed away. An immense basket of fruit and other California delicacies was on the table and, spread on each bed, was a freshly
laundered cotton kimono. At the door, conspicuously placed, were two new pairs of Japanese grass slippers.

Our steward must have been on the look-out for our coming, because he was waiting for us, smiling and bowing, smiling and bowing, audibly drawing in his breath through his teeth and saying “Konnichi wa!” (Good afternoon) “What time you take bath?” Until I travelled in Japan, I used to think that the cleanest and most polite people in the world were the Swedes, but, compared with the Japanese, not only in personal cleanliness but also in manners, the Swedes are almost barbarians. If this be true, then where do we Americans stand, with our world-famous bathroom fixtures? We fill our baths with hot water, sit in them, soap and scrub ourselves until the water shows how badly we needed it. Then we get out, dry ourselves and consider ourselves clean. Swedes do the same thing except that they engage a girl to scrub their backs while they sit in the soapy water. No Japanese would dream of soaping himself inside the bath or soaking himself in dirty water. The universal way of taking a bath in Japan, whether publicly or in the privacy of a small bathroom, is to scrub oneself thoroughly outside the bath and rinse off every trace of soap before entering the tub of clean hot water. Japanese bath water is as clean after use as it was before.

As for politeness, the Japanese have developed special muscles as a result of their habit of repeatedly bowing to one another. Both men and women, boys and girls, when they meet, bow until their bodies form a right angle. Common courtesy demands that the younger person continue to bow until the older person stops. This necessitates standing almost side by side but still facing, so the younger person can watch when the older one finally stands erect. Three bows is the
least permissible number, and it is not unusual to see people bowing six or seven times.

The Japanese never enter a room without first removing their outdoor shoes and either wearing slippers or walking about in their socks or bare feet. They love personal comfort and lose no time in discarding their outdoor clothes, whether Western or Japanese, and donning clean kimonos. Our steward showed his pleasure when we removed our shoes and clothes and put on the kimonos he had prepared for us. For the next two months a great proportion of our time was devoted to dressing and undressing, bowing and bathing.

"Have you any rawndry (laundry)?" the steward enquired.

After a lifetime of travelling, I had become suspicious of ship's laundries. I had visions of my clothes being ruined or badly washed at sky high prices. I also remembered many ships that had no laundry at all; the only washing that could be done was by some sailor who made extra pocket money by turning one's clothes a dirty brown color.

"Our rawndry very good," urged the steward, as he handed me a printed list with prices marked in Japanese and American money. In America I usually pay thirty cents for a dress shirt and could scarcely believe my eyes when I saw that only three cents was charged. Handkerchiefs were only one cent; a complete white duck suit was washed and pressed for thirty cents. There was a twelve-hour dry cleaning service at about one quarter the cost of similar articles in America. With such conveniences, it was not surprising to find that the passengers got out their best clothes, and life on board ship became as gay and smart as at Palm Beach.

Most of the passengers were Japanese and these were divided into those who habitually wore Western clothing and those
who still dressed in Japanese style. Among the latter was Miss Dorothy Akki Tsukimoto, who, as Miss Japan, had brought to the New York World's Fair the sacred flame of friendship. She was a very pretty girl twenty-three years old, the daughter of a wealthy Japanese whose business was vitamins. Travelling with her as a chaperone was a Japanese of the old school, who had been brought up after the manner of the majority of Japanese women, without any particular attention to the vitamin content of her food. She also had been accustomed since babyhood to sitting on her feet with her legs doubled up beneath her. Like most Japanese women, she had legs too short in proportion to her body. Most Japanese women are "pigeon-toed" as a result of sitting on their doubled up legs.

One afternoon, when Miss Japan appeared in a striking kimono, my wife asked if she might accompany her to her stateroom and learn the proper way to dress in Japanese style. There she discovered that Miss Japan wore several kimonos, one on top of the other, and that she not only had very beautiful legs but showed no sign of being "pigeon-toed." She was five feet, four inches in height, which is remarkable for a Japanese woman. The chaperone told my wife that when her daughter was a small baby Miss Japan's mother had determined to bring her up on Western food, with special attention to vitamins. She never allowed the child to sit on her feet, but taught her to use chairs. The result was an increase of several inches in height and complete absence of "pigeon-toe." This was accomplished in one generation and, in all probability, when the day comes for the emancipation of Japanese women, their average height will show a similar increase.

The mixture of Oriental and Western habits was well illustrated when we had dinner. Menus were not only printed in
Japanese and English, but there were two entirely different menus. If Japanese food was chosen the waiter removed all knives, forks and spoons and substituted chop sticks. I estimated that about half the passengers were eating in Western style, although, of course, all were seated at tables. For the extremely conservative there was a special Japanese dining room where they could sit on the floor and be really comfortable.

At first glance we thought we were the only Americans in the main dining room, but suddenly we noticed a gentleman, sitting alone, whose face seemed familiar. Recognition was mutual. It was Dale Carnegie, on his way to the Orient, presumably to tell the Japanese how to "Win Friends and Influence People." Gradually others drifted in, but I doubt whether there were more than a dozen Americans in the first class, although we discovered others travelling second where, as usual, they seemed to be having a gayer time than we.

Apparently there was not a tourist on the boat. Everyone was travelling on business. One couple, with a pretty little girl, were on their way to Tientsin where they were in private business. They had lived in China for many years but left no doubt that they were pro-Japanese. Tientsin was then going through the "stripping and slapping" stage but when I asked these Tientsin residents whether they were not afraid of returning there, they laughed. "Certainly not!" they said. "We would rather do business with the Japanese than the Chinese." Then referring to the invasion of China by Japan they remarked with considerable energy:

"You talk about safety. For the first time in many years, North China is safe. No matter what you may think about
Japanese aggression you must admit that wherever the Japanese penetrate, they bring with them law and order.”

When I repeated this conversation to the missionaries in the second class they simply blew up:

“Law and order!” they scoffed. “If you call organized raping parties law and order; then we agree with you. The massacres of Genghis Khan are nothing to those perpetrated on the defenseless Chinese by the Japanese.”

It was evident that there were two diametrically opposed opinions of the Japanese, and the easiest way to start an argument that developed into a row, was to discuss the war in China.

“We have no quarrel with the Chinese people,” remarked a Japanese who was wearing in the lapel of his coat the emblem of the Rotary Club. “We admit that we owe our national culture to the Chinese. We admit that we have borrowed from China’s ancient civilization in order to build our own. We are the true friends of the Chinese people but the enemy of Chiang Kai-shek and his communist followers.”

“Good Lord!” I remarked in amazement. “I thought Chiang Kai-shek was the national hero of the Chinese people.”

A sneer came over the face of the Japanese as he said feelingly, “That is communist propaganda. Fifty percent of the power and authority of the Chinese government is in the hands of the Communists. Ninety per cent of China’s four hundred millions are unbelievably poor and are suffering great want. All they desire is peace, law and order, so that they can reap the fruits of their labors instead of being pillaged by the communist war lords.”