

LEAGUE OF NATIONS

COMMITTEE ON INTELLECTUAL CO-OPERATION

ENQUIRY

INTO

THE CONDITIONS OF INTELLECTUAL WORK

Second Series

INTELLECTUAL LIFE

IN

VARIOUS COUNTRIES

JAPAN

The Use and Study of Foreign Languages in Japan

by

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NOTE

The sole object of the Committee on Intellectual Co-operation in publishing these reports is to draw attention to the questions of organisation and intellectual co-operation which arise in relation to each of the subjects dealt with. The Committee does not propose to treat these subjects exhaustively, but merely to draw the reader's attention to them and to provide an opening for fresh suggestions.

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THE USE AND STUDY OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN JAPAN

A STUDY IN CULTURAL INTERNATIONALISM

by

Inazo Nitobé.

PART I.

THE INTRODUCTION OF CHINESE WORDS IN ANCIENT TIMES.

I. *The Isolated Position of the Japanese Language.*

The Japanese language has as yet found no kinship with any known linguistic system, not even with that of its immediate neighbours — Chinese, Manchurians or Koreans. Ever since Klaproth first advanced the idea in 1820, many philologists have placed it in the somewhat inchoate group variously known as Scythian, Turanian or Ural-Altai; but even with this classification scientists are not all agreed. Or are the Japanese descendants of Malay immigrants? Some customs and racial traits make such a theory plausible, but no linguistic connection is discernible. Whatever similarities one may observe between the Japanese on the one side and the Hellenic, Persian or Hittite language on the other, their affinities are by no means sufficiently established to warrant the assumption of a definite relationship. Indeed, the rational and scientific search for the ancestry of the Japanese language and race is only just beginning.

Emerson called language “fossil poetry”, but, like paleontological specimens, very few languages have come down to us intact, either in form or in constitution. A large number have but the barest outlines or fragmentary parts preserved, giving only the faintest clue to their original forms or to the catastrophes they have undergone. Japanese seems at present to be an example of poetry so badly petrified as to be unclassifiable in the general order of linguistic sciences. Moreover, no fossil remains can, from the very nature of their formation, be pure. Since petrification means the deposit of foreign bodies in the cavities of organisms, all existing languages, except perhaps the most primitive, are infiltrated with alien materials.

When the Japanese came to their present islands — whence they came being a question reserved for future investigation — they found a number of aboriginal tribes, some of whom welcomed, while others opposed, their settlement. How much the Japanese language was affected by contact and conflict with the autochthons, we have as yet no means of ascertaining. Only one race, the Ainu, whom some scholars identify as Caucasian, survives in small numbers in the north. Did other tribes, Kuma-so (Cave Bears), Tsuchi-kumo (Earth Spiders) and others, belong to the same race? Hypothesis has thrown no convincing light on this problem. We can trace, as Professors Chamberlain and Nagata have done, a number of geographical names to Ainu etymology, but otherwise the Ainu is silent in Japanese speech. What original Japanese was like is an enquiry which has only lately been started in a truly objective method. A huge quantity of rubbish, accumulated for centuries by prejudice, pride, chauvinism and delight in paronomasia, has only obscured the question. Possibly some light may be acquired from the study of the hitherto neglected dialect spoken by the Loochoo islanders. Not improbably the search for primitive Japanese may end in the discovery of multifarious branches of linguistic genealogy, no less complex than that of the English language, whose ancestry seems to be

branching wider and wider as paleolinguistic researches extend. If the Japanese race is very mixed in its origin, as anthropologists and craniologists assure us, their language could hardly remain pure.

When we speak in these pages of the Japanese language, we shall not go beyond the form of which we have examples in writing, dating back to the early part of the eighth century. This is certainly not very old, being only contemporaneous with the Venerable Bede.

II. *The Introduction of Chinese Words.*

Very early in their history and, indeed, before history came to be recorded, the intercourse between China, Korea and Japan had begun, the triangular relations reminding us of those of Egypt, Crete and Greece. China had the oldest and the most advanced civilisation, and Korea throve under her intellectual and political guidance. Later, Korea passed on its imported arts and sciences to Japan, when she was just emerging from the bronze age.

The cultural penetration of China — for of other kinds of penetration in any period of Japanese history we have no trace — was in full swing as early as the fourth century A.D., China being then under the rule of the famous Tang dynasty. In art and literature, in philosophy and law, in administration and handicrafts, Chinese lessons and precepts proved to be the most powerful moulding influences. These were exercised without compulsion of any kind. It was an instance of an intrinsically higher culture benignly and automatically flowing into the needy lower levels.

The first dawn of Japanese literature is therefore strongly tinged with Sinicism. Japanese writers adopted and imbibed Chinese ideographs and phrases without much modification. To a large extent the Chinese loan words were indispensable, as there were no Japanese equivalents; but it was not always necessity that actuated the borrowing. Pedantry not infrequently acted as a motive. Whoever examines the early literature of Japan will be struck at the abject intellectual thralldom of the Japanese writers. This is most conspicuous from the middle of the eighth to the beginning of the tenth century A.D. — a period during which whatever remained of native literature was “banished from the court” and “exposed to the fashionable rivalry of Chinese scholars”¹. The loan words greatly enriched Japan's verbal stock, but affected little the structure of her native language. There came into use practically two linguistic systems — the vernacular, which we shall call *Yamato* (ancient name for Japan), and the Chinese — the latter erudite. This linguistic mixture has continued until the present day and is comparable to the mixture of classical words in a modern European tongue. But in the case of Japanese there has been this disadvantage — that the introduction of Chinese words was effected by the use of Chinese pictographs and ideographs, instead of a simpler phonetic system. A Chinese priest, Shen Kung, of the third century A.D., invented an alphabet of sixteen letters in order to transcribe Buddhist scriptures from Sanskrit, though later in the sixth century, under the Liang dynasty, the number was increased to thirty-six. This system did not come into general use in China itself, neither was it introduced into Japan.

It is a characteristic feature of Japanese imitation, perhaps no more so than of the old Hellenic, that any idea introduced from abroad is in a short course of time so adapted to native taste and sense of propriety that it assumes a new form, and that any imported alien material is soon so re-modelled as to obscure its origin. How did Japan react against the introduction of Chinese learning? In the beginning the island nation was bewildered by the countless host of invading letters, swarming like locusts from the Continent, and its genius seemed crushed under the ponderous weight of unfamiliar words from over the sea.

In speaking of the Chinese sources of Japanese culture, high tribute must be paid to the part

¹ The fate of the Japanese tongue and literature finds a parallel in that of the English after the Norman Conquest, of course with this difference — that there was no Chinese conquest in Japan. See GREEN'S *History of the English People*, Ch. III.

played by Korea as an intermediary in this civilising process. Indeed, not a few phases of the Continental culture had undergone modifications in the peninsula before they were transplanted to the Island Realm; so that one finds among special terms connected with administration and arts no small number of words of Korean origin. It is to be regretted that the Aramean syllabary (*En-mun*), then in vogue in Korea, did not simultaneously find its way further east.

That a large number of Koreans had reached Japan in pre-historic times is quite patent to ethnologists — even the earliest historical documents make mention of their immigration. From time to time they sought refuge in Japan or were transported under compulsion and were often settled in segregated communities to pursue their special crafts and ways of living. Largely consisting of artisans, and because of their segregation, their influence on Japanese language must have been small and local. The better educated were drafted for clerical work into the services of the court and of the nobility, and of such the linguistic qualification demanded was Chinese. Whenever ancient chronicles speak of the introduction of Chinese books or characters, they relate that some Korean dignitaries brought these as gifts to the Japanese court. When it is said that the part played by Korea in the history of Far Eastern civilisation is very much like that of Crete in the dawn of European culture, the incalculable importance of its mission may be easily surmised.

III. *The Adoption of Chinese Loan Words.*

The relations between Japan and China were almost exclusively cultural, and only slightly commercial or political; hence there was little actual contact between the two peoples in early historical times. The Chinese or Koreans who came to Japan were comparatively few in number and they were priests, savants or political refugees or parties of artisans, and living among our people. Even though they were sometimes segregated, they were soon merged with the native population. The few Japanese who went to the Asiatic continent were students. Thus Chinese influences were exerted almost exclusively through books, that is, through the written language, and hence there was little or no occasion for the colloquial, but a thorough mastery of ideographs was required. It was an education through the eyes and not through the ears.

In the face of this overwhelming legion of Chinese word-characters, what could the Japanese do? These ingenious devices, used and polished by centuries of learning and endowed with mysterious powers, could well overawe a small people lacking in literary tradition or a strong national solidarity.

And yet not entirely did the Japanese succumb to the literary onslaught — else their native language would have been swept into eternal silence. They made an effort to utilise the imported article as a vehicle for their own tongue. There were two ways of accomplishing this: (1) One was to employ Chinese characters for the conveyance of the different sounds used in Japanese speech, *i.e.*, to convert a limited number of ideographs into phonograms; (2) the other was to read the characters *à la japonaise*, *i.e.*, as symbols for Japanese words, ignoring their Chinese pronunciation.

The achievement of the first task was indeed onerous and perplexing, for it meant the selection out of a vast mass of Chinese sounds of about 3,867¹, only 109 of which could satisfy the phonetic need of Old Japanese. There were always half-a-dozen, and sometimes two or three dozen, ideographs that could severally be chosen to convey a single Japanese sound. The first literary works of the eighth century were written in these phonograms, and as different characters are employed in different places for the same sound their perusal requires the patience and ingenuity of a Champollion or a de Rouge. It is edifying to notice that the same experiment was made elsewhere. Dr. Taylor gives the following instance: "The Pehlevi (the central

¹ This is the number given by Dr. MARSHMAN, cited by Taylor. *The Alphabet*, Vol. I, p. 32.

stem of the Iranian alphabet) proves to be not a mixed language but only a mixed script. We have already seen how the Semitic Assyrians, adopting the cuneiform characters invented by the primitive Turanian people of Babylonia, used them partly as phonograms or symbols of sounds, and also as signs of thoughts or ideograms, which developed into logograms or symbols of words. A somewhat similar process occurred when the Aryan Persians adopted a Semitic alphabet. When Persian was written by the Aramean scribes, they employed the Semitic letters to spell the Persian words, and also optionally used the accustomed graphic representation of Semitic words as logograms to denote the equivalent Persian words¹.

If the Nordic peoples found the Roman alphabet unsatisfactory, as it has "at no time represented any European language with much precision, because it was an importation adapted in a somewhat rough and ready fashion to represent sounds different from those which it represented outside Europe"², the Japanese found the Chinese language bewildering in the abundance of its sounds which only trained ears could distinguish.

To make "confusion worse confounded" in the selection of appropriate sound-signs, Chinese phonetics had changed in the course of their history and differed also in different parts of China, so that a letter might be pronounced in several ways — and who was to judge which was correct? When we consider that a large part of Chinese learning came to us through Korean teachers, we find another cause for phonetic variation and for Japanese embarrassment. It was like learning French from a German who had studied it in Spain!

How to bring out of this chaos of words and sounds any order was the immediate task to undertake in adapting Chinese symbols to the requirements of the Japanese language. The first step in this enterprise was to standardise the sound-signs, and this was accomplished sometime about the eighth century by the device of a syllabary. This syllabary, called *I-ro-ha*, from its first three letters, contains forty-seven in all, five of which are vowels and the rest consonantal digraphs or syllables. The arrangement of letters is unique. Other alphabets and syllabaries are classified in one of four orders — phonologic, morphologic, ideologic or chronologic³; but the *I-ro-ha* is a sort of acrostic composition using the forty-seven characters. Read in combinations of seven and five syllables, it constitutes a poem.

For memorising the *I-ro-ha*, the syllables are put in sets of sevens except the last, the seventh, which consists of five. The following lines give the original poetical form (with slight modifications made by diacritical signs) with a literal translation :

<i>Iro wa nihohedo</i>	Colours, gleam as they may,
<i>Chiri nuru wo !</i>	How they blow away !
<i>Waga yo tare zo</i>	Who in this world of ours
<i>Tune naran ?</i>	Lasts for aye ?
<i>Wuwi no oku-yama</i>	The deep mountains of phenomenal being
<i>Kyo koete,</i>	We've crossed this day.
<i>Asaki yume miji</i>	No more shallow dreams we see
<i>Ehi mo sezu.</i>	Nor shall we inebriate be.

Though it is attributed to a priest, Kukai, posthumously named Kobo, it seems more probable that it is a production gradually worked out by many minds. We see in the *I-ro-ha* an illustration of the conjoint work, the international intellectual co-operation, as it were, of three nationalities — a Japanese poem written in Chinese characters expressing sentiments instilled by Hindoo Buddhism.

The *I-ro-ha* does not by any means completely exhaust the phonetic resources of our people. By resorting to diacritical signs we can increase our consonants. For example, by using certain signs surds can be changed into sonants — *ka* into *ga*, *ta* into *da*, *sa* into *za*. The phonograms

¹ *The Alphabet*, Vol. II. p. 239.

² PETER GILES, *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Art. "Alphabet".

³ TAYLOR: *The Alphabet*, Vol. I, p. 188.

being selected, the next step was to abbreviate them for purposes of writing. This process consisted in merely picking out the least complex component of phonograms, and, thanks to the monosyllabic character of the Chinese words, the selection of right symbols was comparatively an easy matter.

If the invention of the Phoenician alphabet was the *deformation*, as a recent writer called it¹, of Egyptian hieroglyphics, the letters of our syllabary, of which there are two forms, the *Katakana* and the *Hira-kana*, are most truly the deformation of, rather than the derivation from or simplification of, Chinese phonograms. Not content with the invention of *Kana* letters, a number of ideographs for genuinely native expression were also coined. This was the equivalent of the North-European device of diacritical symbols to extend the scope of the Roman alphabet.

As to the second purpose, namely, that of utilising ideographs for the representation of Japanese words, it was accomplished by giving them the sound of Japanese words. It is like writing “*i.e.*” (*id est*) and reading it “that is”. An ideograph representing *man* is pronounced in Chinese “*lung*”, but the Japanese read it “*hito*”. If the adoption of Chinese characters had ended here, it would not have been an unhappy solution of the language problem; but it went much further. Besides giving to ideographs the sound of Japanese words, we retained or tried to retain the Chinese pronunciation of each character; but, failing in tonic mimicry, we followed the pronunciation in our own way, after two or three (Han, Wu or Korean) models. The result is that we read Chinese in a manner resembling the reading of Greek or Latin according to the English, the Continental or any other method advanced by classical scholars — any one of these ways probably unintelligible to Sophocles or Virgil. One can easily distinguish *Kango*, Chinese words pronounced according to the usage of the Han dynasty, from the native Japanese; for the former are almost invariably monosyllabic, while the latter are rarely so. I dare say that the economy of expressing an idea by a single sound was to the Japanese a strong temptation to use the *Kango* without taking the trouble of translation. We are doing the same thing now by culling a large number of short words from European sources — *e.g.*, ink, match, pen, stick, *pain*, *chapeau*, etc. In pronouncing Chinese ideographs there are no hard-and-fast rules. Usually, when two or three are connected together they are pronounced *à la chinoise*, while, when a single character is used, it is read *à la japonaise*. Take the term *Kokka* (the *State*), which consists of two Chinese characters *koku* (country) and *ka* (house): but when these components are used separately they are respectively read in Japanese *kuni* and *iye*.

But why words of strictly national origin — words for which the Chinese afford no exact equivalence — when written in ideographs should be given *Kango* pronunciation instead of retaining their archaic sounds, is not even asked by the curious. I refer particularly to such words as Emperor, “*Mikado*” in old Japanese, which nowadays is read *à la chinoise*, “*Tenno*”; or “*Kashiko-dokoro*”, the ancestral shrine in the Emperor’s court, designated “*Kensho*” in *Kango*. To take but one more example — to the legendary foundress of our reigning dynasty, “*Ama-terasu*”, the Heaven-shining, is more commonly given the name “*Tensho*”. Sinification carried out to such an extent may serve as a proof of the complete domiciliation of Chinese words: for even a chauvinistic ear fails to detect anything offensive in *Kango* sounds. Will ever the time come when Old Japanese will fly its colours in revolt against Chinese dominance? We shall come back to this question later on.

One must acknowledge as a positive gain in the use of *Kango* that, by stringing a number of words together, one can coin any new term, especially as Chinese words can be changed in intention and extension by the usual process of generalisation or specialisation; hence an entirely new life can be infused into them by fresh combinations. In this respect Chinese is as convenient and effective as German. Such a formidable word as *Schulkindergesundheitsuntersuchungskommission* can be most faithfully rendered by *Gakudo-eisei-chosa-itn*!

¹ VENDRYES : *Le Langage*, p. 381.

IV. *The Assimilation of Chinese Words.*

After what has been stated, it might seem that the Japanese could have adopted to better advantage the whole Chinese language without modification. The reason why this could not be done lies in the fact of the totally different construction of the two languages. In Chinese grammar there are no inflections or particles to show the relations of two or more words, whereas in Japanese there are a number of copulative syllables, known as *le-ni-o-ha*, which serve the object of what Vendryes calls "morphème"¹. We therefore helped ourselves most freely to Chinese words, but retained our own grammar. Hence the usual method in Japanese writing is to employ Chinese for the principal words of the sentence, and to link these by Japanese particles which indicate cases and tenses. The more difficult of the Chinese letters in a sentence have their Japanese equivalents in sound or meaning put by their side in small *Kana*. So thoroughly, however, have Chinese letters (words) been assimilated and their meaning absorbed by us, that poems written in them under strict rules of rhyme and numbers could be sung with Japanese intonation — an intonation which took no notice of their original euphony. So close is the parallel between this and the case of "the restorers of Grecian learning in the fifteenth century" in Italy, as described by a master hand, that I am tempted to cite the following quotation :

"Of the power of the Greek accents they were ignorant ; and those musical notes which, from an Attic tongue and to an Attic ear, must have been the secret soul of harmony, were to their eyes, as to our own, no more than mute or unmeaning marks, in prose superfluous and troublesome in verse."²

Can one imagine a greater outrage to a language than that its best songs should be shorn of their cadence and harmony, and that their words should be uttered in notes discordant to the authors' ear ? This is what has actually been done by the Japanese to the Celestial tongue. To the ideograph itself, held sacred by the Chinese, we have not always shown respect. We have mutilated some for brevity's sake and added to their category as convenience demanded. The late Mr. Fukusawa, in translating "steam" could not find an exact Chinese equivalent in one short word, whereupon he invented a character now used in China as in Japan. It is a letter made up of two Chinese signs, "water" and "spirit," and pronounced by us "ki". Thus "steamship" is *ki-sen*, railway is *ki-sha*.

It is evident, however, that the apparent desecration was really homage paid to its genius, like the mutilation exercised by devotees to the remains of their object of adoration. The Chinese language, unlike the Latin, suffered nothing at home on this account. On the contrary, Japanese, after centuries of borrowing, is now paying at least the interest of its linguistic debt. The modern ideas of the West, its nomenclature of science, its technical terms of law, its set phrases of politics, have all been rendered in Japanese neologisms, and as these are in *Kango*, they are now adopted by the Chinese themselves with little alteration. It is true that the *Kango* are foreign in Japan only in the sense that words of classical origin are foreign in a modern European vocabulary. It is roughly calculated that, out of some 300,000 words in the English dictionary, only one-tenth is of real English origin, the rest being taken from different languages. Though I have seen no estimate made of the number of Chineseloan words, their proportion cannot be less, since there are not many genuine Japanese words which have no equivalents in *Kango*, whereas many *Kango* have no counterparts in Japanese.

It is strange that, in spite of the national consciousness which has steadily marked the development of the Japanese people, we rarely hear of any attempt at linguistic purification, like Degallicisation or Verdeutschung. It was as late as 1867, soon after the country was opened to foreign trade, that a certain Baron Mayejima addressed a memorial to the Government,

¹ *Le Langage*, p. 86.

² GIBBON : *Decline and Fall*, Ch. LXVI.

recommending the abolition of the use of ideographs. A few years later an astounding idea was suggested in the form of a modest question sent by Arinori Mori, then Minister in Washington, to the famous philologist Dr. Whitney, in which the writer naively asked whether it would be feasible for his country to do away with its language and to adopt English in its place! Nobody took the idea seriously. But he who would mount a hill must aim at the sky, and Mori's query stirred no small interest in the language question. Societies for the exclusive use of the *Kana* were formed in 1883, followed the next year by those for the adoption of the Roman alphabet. The National Education Society took up the question of the extensive use of *Kana*. The Department of Education nominated a committee to study the *modus operandi* of Roman transliteration. Educators, literati, philologists, nationalists and cosmopolites found in this question ample field for airing their views and sentiments.

The Japanese have thus arrived at a stage of national consciousness where they can calmly and objectively survey the effect of Chinese learning on their mind. From the time when they were dazzled by Chinese letters, they passed through a period of blind worship and then of laborious adaptation and of complete assimilation. "The greatest lesson which the philosophical analysis of language teaches us", says Jowett, "is that we should be above language, making words our servants and not allowing them to be our masters."¹ They have reached the stage in the use of Chinese language, or rather words, where, by naturalising them, they have brought them under their complete control. They can now use them as they will. They can restrict their activity to certain fields of work. They can play with them for purposes of art. They can keep their number within rational bounds. What is the future of Chinese in the linguistic system of Japan? A bird's-eye view of the past will help us in forming an opinion; but, before doing so, let us pause for a few minutes to consider the spread in Japan of another Asiatic language, which, though very different in construction, came into Japan in the wake of Chinese letters.

V. Words of Hindu Origin in Japanese Vocabulary.

With the introduction of Buddhism in the sixth century, a large number of words of Hindu origin, especially of Sanskrit, filtered into the Japanese vocabulary; but these are by no means proportionate to the extent to which that religion has spread, because it was through the medium of Chinese translation and Chinese priests that its diffusion was accomplished. As in other countries, so in Japan: it was the priests that were the torch-bearers of learning, and, in the spread of Sanskrit, the Buddhist priests were naturally pioneers. We have seen that the *I-ro-ha* was attributed to a priest. This had little to do with Sanskrit, but, almost simultaneously with it, there was invented a phonetic schema called "the Table of Fifty Sounds."

Really there were but forty-seven. This is so like the Devanagārī, the "Divine Town Writing" of Ancient India, that some see in it a Sanskrit influence. But whoever will compare the two systems may easily detect several radical differences. The *Nagari* has thirteen vowels and

¹ *Dialogues of Plato*, Vol. I, p. 285.

thirty-three consonants, while the *I-ro-ha* has five and forty-two respectively. The *Nagar* has apparently sounds of *l, v, lh, ph* and many others which are wanting in the *I-ro-ha*. On the other hand, the Japanese Table contains many sounds absent in the *Nagari*. If the framers of the Table were influenced by the Sanskrit, it was in this — that they got the idea of schematisation, and such a process is in perfect accord with the general trend of Japanese mentality. Openness to suggestion with originality in application is eminently characteristic of Japanese psychology.

We are told of several celebrated priests of the ninth century, who studied in China, and, after their return home, wrote on Sanskrit grammar. One noticeable fact about the scientific activity of the priesthood is, that, as they studied Sanskrit through the medium of Chinese, they developed the sense of philological research and of the principles of phonetics. Their contributions, therefore, helped greatly in understanding the various phonetic systems employed in China in different provinces and at different periods; but their partisan zeal contributed in no small measure to the confusion in selecting a system for the pronunciation of *Kango*. We may make this point clearer to European readers by citing, for instance, the way in which the Japanese read geographical names. Those who have studied English call Spain *Spain*; but German students will insist on *Spanien*, and French scholars on *Espagne*, while those who know of the old-time relations with that country continue to call it *Hispania*.

A perplexing feature in phonating the Chinese loan words when they are used in Buddhist literature is that they usually follow the *Wu* sound (in Japanese *Go-on*), a system of pronunciation in vogue in China in the *Wu* period; whereas ordinarily Chinese words are pronounced, as has already been explained, according to the usage of the Han (Japanese *Kan*) period.

VI. *The Effect of the Introduction of Chinese Language.*

The penetration of the Chinese language throughout Japan has been compared rightly with that of Latin in Europe. In many respects the parallelism will hold true, and its study may throw light on the larger aspects of the international and inter-racial exchange of culture. I shall hazard for the present a few observations, confining them to the question of language.

1. The Latin tongue was disseminated in Europe by Roman troops and merchants from camps and marts. The Roman colonies of Marseilles, Narbonne, Lyons, Toulouse were centres of propagation. Gibbon tells us that the Romans made it their "most serious care to extend, with the progress of their arms, the use of the Latin tongue".¹ It was far otherwise with the Chinese language, which found lodgment in Japan through the influence of priests and literati, and from temples and schools, which were maintained by the Japanese.

2. If, in the diffusion of Latin, the Romans maintained its exclusive use in the administration of civil and military government, no constraint of any sort was brought to bear by China on the Japanese to induce them to adopt her letters. The adoption of Chinese was an entirely free and voluntary act on the part of the Japanese.

3. In Europe, Latin passed from Roman lips to Barbarian ears, and then it was repeated by Barbarian lips into Roman ears. It circulated orally, through personal contact. In the Far East, the Chinese language was transmitted in black and white to Japanese eyes — in visible forms instead of in sounds.

4. From the preceding remarks, it follows that while Latin, be it in a vulgar form, filtered quickly into the lower strata of society; for a long time Chinese remained in Japan the language of the *élite*.

5. In consequence of the personal contact between the Barbarians and the Romans, there ensued the lowering of Roman culture and language². But China lost nothing by giving its light to Japan; perhaps she gained by the law that to him who gives more shall be given, as well as by the unstinted admiration she won from her willing pupil.

¹ *Decline and Fall*, Ch. II.

² See VINAGRADOFF: "Social and Economic Conditions of the Roman Empire in the Fourth Century", in *Cambridge Mediæval History*, Vol. I, Ch. XIX.

Though, thus, linguistic penetration in Western Europe and in Eastern Asia was carried on in widely divergent manners, it brought about very much the same results, which for Japan may be summarised as follows :

- (1) Vast additions to the Japanese vocabulary and corresponding expansion of ideas ;
- (2) The retention of Chinese sounds with some slight modifications in pronouncing words of Chinese origin ;
- (3) The general adoption of Chinese script with very small changes and additions ;
- (4) The sinification of native names and words ;
- (5) The study of Sanskrit by means of Chinese ;
- (6) The knowledge of Chinese philosophy and literature, and of Hindu religion through Chinese channels.

These, then, the Japanese race owes to China as the reward of centuries of unswerving imitation, ambitious emulation, laborious application and intense assiduity. Japan should be grateful, but not in the ordinary sense of gratitude. The Filipinos may well be grateful to America for teaching them English and for instituting a common means of inter-communication among themselves. It is the greatest of American gifts, barring national independence, which may yet come. But the introduction of the Chinese language was neither a gift nor a favour from China to Japan. If it was a gift, it was a gift without a giver. We know of no policy formulated by China to aid Japan in its struggle for progress. It was not that China taught, but that Japan learned. Japan ought to be thankful — but to whom ? To her geographical contiguity ; to an all-wise Providence ? But in the dispensations of Providence, man never obtains unalloyed blessing nor unmitigated evil. In drawing up the debit and credit account of what Japan borrowed from China, it is only fair to count the cost — the price she paid. The price was not paid to China, but Japan paid it all the same, even though it may have been sunk in the sea or disappeared in the air. To throw off metaphors — what were the sacrifices that Japan made in adopting the Chinese language so liberally and so deliberately ? Has the domination which Japan assigned in the hour of thoughtless youth to the Chinese language weakened her native initiative or destroyed any native ideal ? Has its study “given fetters rather than wings” to her mind ? We may profitably calculate the cost and, in doing so, I shall call to witness an unbiassed third party instead of Chinese or Japanese advocates. Dr. William D. Whitney, one of the greatest pioneers of linguistic science, thought “it was unfortunate for an inflected tongue like the Japanese to be obliged to resort to China for an alphabet”, and bewailed the introduction of ideographs, which he called “the most detestable mode of writing in the world, and the greatest existing obstacle to the acquirement of the language”¹.

An eminent English scholar, Dickens, speaks of the immense superiority of ancient Japanese to Chinese as a means of expression. He calls Chinese “a skeletal tongue, a staccato sequence of formless vocables, etc.” According to the same writer, ancient Japanese “might have become a vehicle of literary expression not much less inferior to Greek than, in many respects, such a language as French is to the tongue of Homer and Sophocles, though it might never have attained the extreme of personification...”².

If by the appropriation of Chinese Japan has, as it were, committed linguistic infanticide, nipping in the unformed bud a language that might have proved a contribution to human progress, it may still not be too late to undo the past. In these recent times we are witnessing the recrudescence of tongues that have lain dormant for centuries. Nor is the resurrection of an apparently dead language a phenomenon of the twentieth century. Gibbon gives instances of several. Should Old Japanese be brought back to life ? Not the most patriotic will advocate so radical a measure as this. “Let the dead bury its dead !” With or without Chinese influence, Yamato, like Anglo-Saxon, would have gone with the progress of the nation. It will be as useless and impossible a task to resuscitate Yamato in its purity as to revive old

¹ *Language and the Study of Language*, 3rd Ed. p. 329.

² *Primitive and Mediæval Japanese Texts*, Vol. I, p. xxvii. See also Vol. II, p. xii.

English¹. But just as the English tongue, after a neglect of three hundred years (1066-1385) came into its own, with the rise of national consciousness and popular rights, so there has of late been fostered in Japan a strong tendency to do away with the ostentation and pedantry of Chinese learning. We shall speak of this further on.

VII. *The Use of Ideographs.*

As I have intimated further back, I shall call upon a third party to give its verdict on this question. The jury will be sharply divided in its opinion and we shall have to wait a long time yet for a final judgment.

In speaking of this subject, Dr. Williams says: "The effects of a course of study like this, in which the powers of the tender mind are not developed by proper nourishment of truthful knowledge, can hardly be otherwise than to stunt the genius and drill the faculties of the mind into a slavish adherence to venerated usage and dictation, making the intellects of Chinese students like the trees which their gardeners so toilsomely dwarf into pots and jars — plants, whose unnaturalness is congruous to the insipidity of their fruit²."

The same view is expressed by Dr. Taylor, another of the foremost authorities on linguistic studies, who, writing in the same year with Dr. Williams but in a different country and on a different topic, expressed himself as follows:

"It is plain that to acquire an exhaustive knowledge of such a cumbrous system of writing would be a very formidable task... The result is that at the age of twenty-five a diligent Chinese student has barely acquired the same amount of facility in reading and writing which is usually attained by a child in an English village school at the age of ten. It may fairly be said that with the Chinese method it takes twenty years instead of five to learn to read and write³."

Dr. Williams' observation has been more than confirmed by one of the foremost writers of the present age. Says Mr. H. G. Wells: "Their necessary concentration upon words and classical forms, rather than upon ideas and realities, seems, in spite of her comparative peacefulness and the very high individual intellectual quality of her people, to have greatly hampered the social and economic development of China. Probably it is the complexity of her speech and writing, more than any other imaginable cause, that has made China to-day politically, socially and individually a vast pool of backward people rather than the foremost Power in the whole world⁴."

This challenge has been denied by many who have studied the question, and among others by an eminent scholar of Japanology, Professor B. H. Chamberlain. He makes the following pregnant observations: "The Japanese lad of fifteen is abreast of his English contemporary in every way... The fact seems to be that at a certain age, the mind will absorb any system of written symbols equally well. A large number can, practically, be learnt in the same time as a small number, just as a net with many meshes can be taken in by the eye as easily as a net with few. The same holds good of spoken symbols⁵." Some recent experiments in pedagogy have more or less substantiated Chamberlain's remarks; but the facility of acquiring and memorising seems to be confined to a *certain age* and that only a comparatively short period. What waste of mental energy is entailed by the present mode of teaching ideographs is shown in an illuminating study made of the language instruction as given in Japanese and European, especially Bavarian, schools.

During the six years of the primary school course, eleven and one-third hours weekly are devoted to the study of Japanese, whereas in Europe and America only about eight hours are devoted to the native language. Japanese children spend 44 % of their school days in learning

¹ Compare *Cambridge History of English Literature*, Ch. VIII, particularly pp. 401-404. Also GREEN'S *History of the English People*, Vol. I, p. 415.

² *The Middle Kingdom*, Vol. I, p. 541.

³ *The Alphabet*, Vol. I, pp. 32, 33.

⁴ *The Outline of History*, First Ed. Vol. I, p. 132.

⁵ *Things Japanese*, 5th Ed., revised, p. 519.

their mother tongue as against 31 % by Europeans. During their school years Japanese children learn 9,900 words, while German children master 48,000. That is to say, it takes Japanese children 4 hours 20 minutes to learn one hundred words, while German children require only 38 minutes. The result of investigation seems to show that the vocabulary and the reading capacity of an ordinary Japanese youth at the age of fifteen is about on a level with the average German child of eight.

A curious corroboration of this statement is furnished by observation of the blind, who learn to read by the Braille system only the 47 characters of the *Kana* and who are not taught Chinese ideographs. It has been repeatedly proved that the blind acquire, in the same length of time, more solid knowledge than ordinary children — be it of history, geography or literature.

This instance of the blind has been held to be conclusive evidence against the use of ideographs: but the inference does not take into due consideration many advantages that the ideographs afford to those who can see — particularly their artistic value and their wide currency.

Schopenhauer once remarked that "one exceedingly conspicuous advantage of Chinese characters" is that "we can use them without understanding Chinese"; because they are signs of things or ideas. As Vendryes observes, they reproduce not a spoken but a thought language. They are a graphic language speaking to the eye. Whether a certain sign is pronounced or called one way by the Chinese, another by the Japanese, and still another by an Annamite, it will convey the same meaning to them all. The Arabic numeral "5" may be pronounced "fem" or "fünf", "cinque" or "cinco", "pet" or "piatz", etc.; but it remains five, no more and no less. Only, a Japanese boy must be able to give two very different pronunciations to each Chinese character, one in genuine Japanese and the other in *Kango*, so that if he learns 3,000 words, he must be able to pronounce double the number.

One who had more experience than Schopenhauer in this matter, Professor Chamberlain, says that "ideographic writing apparently possesses inherent strength that makes it tend to triumph over (without entirely supplanting) phonetic writing, whenever the two are brought into competition in the same arena", and then gives examples of different systems of notation and abbreviations of currency denomination.

Never, perhaps, has Chinese calligraphy received from a European scholar such panegyric for its sematological and artistic significance as it did recently from Keyserling. Enthused over it, he exclaims: "O, if I only knew how to write Chinese! I would willingly give up all other modes of expression. When all words are blown away, the enlightened spirits will still be able to see truth in the fragments of Chinese writings."¹ Lafcadio Hearn has often extolled the artistic beauty of Chinese letters.

VIII. *Restrictions on the Use of Ideographs.*

Quotations might be multiplied about the merits and demerits, the blessings and the evils of Chinese ideography. But they will only involve us in flagrant contradictions, for opinions vary according to personal experience and observation, according to individual temperaments and humours. A thoroughly objective judgment is still to come.

As is usual in all questions of such far-reaching range and with such a long history, there is much to be said on either side — and the wisest conclusion is likely to be in the golden mean. Idle for us, who have inherited the system, to denounce it *in toto*. Foolish, likewise, to endure a yoke when its weight hangs heavy. So intricately is a language, vocal or graphic, bound up with the social, political and intellectual life and development of a race that the least interference requires delicate manipulation, and the slightest amputation particular skill. We admire the courage of the Bulgarian Government when, in July 1921, it struck out from the alphabet three letters practically never used — reducing it to twenty-eight. China and Japan

¹ *Reiselage Buch eines Philosophen*, p. 440.

have certainly reason enough to emulate and chances enough to excel Bulgaria. There is a decided limit to the power of youthful brains to absorb ideographs. Even supposing the absorbing capacity great, are there not other things better worth while than the mastering of innumerable written characters? Every child, as he grows up, will admit that he quickly forgets a large part of the 2,600 letters he was taught in the primary school. "Lightly come, lightly go." Above the adolescent age, the retention of the characters becomes a continual strain. A middle-school lad is burdened with some 5,000 ideographs. There was a time when a letter was considered "worth a thousand, nay two thousand pieces of gold", but the present age evaluates knowledge differently. The intellectual resources of the nation ought not to be squandered on acquiring or retaining these complicated symbols, especially when they can be conveniently supplanted by simpler signs. An old-fashioned erudite Chinese scholar would know some 20,000 characters, and a complete lexicon may contain no less than 53,000. A small pocket Japanese-French dictionary¹, compiled by M. Dautremer, has over 7,500 letters. It has been calculated that 4,000 are required by a Japanese of ordinary education, and that 2,000 are sufficient for reporting speeches in the Imperial Diet. With less than 2,000 a daily newspaper is difficult to follow.

A glimpse at these figures gives us a hint as to the course to pursue in economising national energy. First of all, do away with the superfluous. The 53,000 characters include hundreds — some say 12,000 — which scholars may use once in a century, thousands which ordinary mortals may use once in a lifetime. As to the rest, if one has a couple of thousand at command, these suffice for everyday need. If more are called for, resort can be had to the *Kana*.

A beautiful metaphor of Coleridge applies to Chinese ideography with peculiar appropriateness: "Language is the armoury of the human mind, and at once contains the trophies of its past and the weapons of its future conquests." We may safely say that nine-tenths of the contents of the Chinese armoury are "trophies of the past" — once used by poets and emperors, but now condemned to eternal disuse!

The first practical step taken in the restriction of the use of ideographs taught in primary and secondary schools was to limit the number to 1,961. When this decision of the Department of Education was made public in the spring of 1923, the representatives of the Press endorsed the plan by passing a resolution to the effect that they would banish from their printers' cases all other characters than the 1,961. Such a selection means a great intellectual saving to the nation, as well as steering a middle course between the two extremes of conservation and abolition of ideographs.

¹ *Dictionnaire Japonais-Français des caractères chinois*, Librairie Garnier Frères.

PART II.

THE STUDY AND USE OF WESTERN LANGUAGES IN MODERN TIMES.

IX. *The Dutch Advance in the Sixteenth Century.*

As early as the sixteenth century, repeated efforts were made by European nations — Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch and English to obtain a commercial and religious foothold in Japan ; but none of them succeeded in keeping up diplomatic relations for any length of time. The Dutch only established a trading-post early in the seventeenth century ; but even in their case a factory on the small island of Deshima, near Nagasaki, was the only agency at their command.

The study of any Western language was prohibited under pain of death, and only a few interpreters were allowed to know Dutch. Even these interpreters were not free to read Dutch books. A curious system was adopted of enabling the interpreters to understand and speak Dutch ; but they could have no recourse to any foreign printed matter. The presence of a Dutch physician in Deshima and his surgical feats had strongly impressed the Japanese doctors and it did not take long for them to follow his operations and learn the manipulation of his instruments. There was thus formed a group of physicians who professed a knowledge of Dutch medicine, and they were called later, as they enlarged their practice, the Dutch school, in contra-distinction to the old Chinese school of practitioners. Debarred from literature they could not make much progress. They might watch an operation performed by Dutch surgeons or hear them explain it by every other means than books ! Early in the eighteenth century, however, interpreters as a body made a petition to the authorities, saying that in their conversation with the "South Barbarians" (so called because the Dutch came to Japan from Java and Sumatra) they found it exceedingly inconvenient and disgraceful not to be able to read their "crab" writings (*i.e.* horizontal in contrast to the vertical Japanese methods of writing). They were therefore compelled to beg for the privilege of learning the written language of the West. This petition being granted, the limited number of interpreters and of physicians began to have access to the scanty number of books brought from Batavia. One surgeon, Yoshio by name, made himself a benefactor to his country by translating Dr. Blenk's work on surgery and distributing it among his six hundred pupils. About the middle of the same century (1744) Aoki, as a result of years of endeavour, succeeded in learning from a Dutchman about five hundred words for common use. These he compiled into a rudimentary dictionary. He was followed by a physician who enlarged his lexicon in 1770 by adding two hundred words.

It is touching to see that this meagre vocabulary was for several decades the mainstay of the Japanese students of the Dutch language. We can scarcely conceive how, with only this scanty vocabulary, they could make any headway in their study of medicine. Could they really understand works like Lorenz Heister's *Compendium Medicinæ Practicæ*, full of Latin terms ? They could manage *Tafel Anatomia* better, as it consists largely of illustrations ; but it took years to translate even that.¹

¹ In memory of those pioneers of Dutch learning, let a paragraph be quoted from Sugita's autobiographical account of the "Beginnings of the Study of Dutch in Japan". In relating his experiences in 1771, he writes : — "When we gathered together the following day at Maéno's house and faced the 'Tafel Anatomia', we felt as if we had launched on a wide sea in a rudderless boat. We were at a loss how to steer our course, and remained dumfounded. The difficulty was enormous. For instance, in reading such an easy sentence as "The eyebrow is the arch of hair over the eye", a long spring day's labour barely enabled us to understand even a word of the line. One day, as we read about the nose, we came to a full stop where the word 'verheffend' occurred. There was no complete 'woordenboek' then ; we had only a small one which Maéno had brought from Nagasaki. Consulting it, we found as explanation that when a branch of a tree is cut, the wood will *verheffend* at the place, and that when a garden is swept, the dust will gather and *verheffend*. So we tried to guess what the word meant. It occurred to me that when a branch of a tree is cut, the wood will rise at the place after a while, and that when the dust is swept, it will rise too. Now as the nose is a prominent feature of the face it might be said to *verheffend*, to rise from the face. The other two approved my interpretation, and so we settled its meaning. I was as pleased at my success as if I had found a gem of the first water." (*Fifty Years of New Japan*, COUNT OKUMA, 1909, Vol. II, p. 140.)

The knowledge of the Dutch tongue was for a long time identified with, and confined to, the medical profession. But as the fear of foreign invasion lessened with time, the laws regulating the acquisition of European tongues lost somewhat of their severity. In consequence, in 1811, a Translation Bureau was officially established, and curiously enough it was domiciled in the same building with the Astronomical Observatory! Under the more liberal régime, many thousands of ambitious aspirants to fame or to philanthropy (in the Far East, the medical profession used to be classified with charity) took up Dutch, and even schools where that language was taught were tolerated.

The bolder spirits availed themselves of this lenient administration of Draconic laws quietly to stalk out of their prescribed bounds and indulge in excursions into wider fields of study.

Let it be remembered that in its last analysis, the motive for the study of a foreign language in Japan was to make practical use of it, be this in science or politics. Among the students of Dutch were not a few who were drawn to it in order to get acquainted with the policy of the Government of the Netherlands in the East Indies. When it became evident that the Dutch were not aggressive, but that other nations were encroaching upon the Far East, students turned their eyes to other languages than Dutch and to other branches of knowledge than medicine. One man compiled a geography of the world, another wrote on the state of Europe, a third on Germany, a fourth on Atmospheric Phenomena, a fifth on Chemistry — all on the strength of their knowledge of Dutch.

When Japan was opened to trade in 1854, the country found itself greatly hampered in diplomatic and commercial negotiations on account of linguistic ignorance. The Translation Bureau could not easily descend from its perch in the Astronomical Observatory to meet the sudden demands of the market and the counter. A government school was therefore established under the name of "Institute for the Examination of Barbarian Books" (*Bansho Shirabejo*). The change in the mental attitude towards Western science is well shown in that of the title of this Academy, which was soon afterwards known as the "Institute for the Examination of Western Books" (*Yosho-Shirabejo*), and some months later (1862) altered again to the "Institute of Progress" (*Kaiseijo*).

To sum up — Dutch was thus the first European tongue taught in Japan. Its primary importance was for trade. Later it served as a channel through which modern science (medicine in particular) was introduced, and, during the last phase of its popularity, it was converted into a vehicle for the larger languages of Europe. Its impress on our language was feeble. A few nouns — *flesch, doek, matroos, zondag, vlag, etc.* — were added to our vocabulary. It is curious that the influence of Dutch pronunciation still lingers among some scholars.

The contribution of Holland to the progress of Japan is not to be measured in terms of linguistics. It was of higher import. No higher praise than this can be bestowed on a nation — that by peaceful means it prepared another nation to be born anew.

X. *The Increasing Demand for Western Languages.*

Now at the time of the opening of the country for foreign trade in 1854, Japan found herself without a single citizen who could interpret English. There were a few men who had accidentally picked up some English, but none who could speak it with any degree of fluency. In the negotiations between the Americans in 1852-4, the interpretation was of an exceedingly inadequate kind. A shipwrecked man whom an auspicious wind had carried to the Californian coast and who learned to speak some English acted as interpreter. Besides Dr. Williams, the famous Sinologist, who came to our aid with his knowledge of Chinese, Dutch interpreters were called into service.

The Government was forcibly convinced of the necessity of providing itself with a duly trained interpretation service. The new order consequent upon the opening of the country to foreign trade created a sudden demand for the knowledge of Western languages — particularly of English, as the *lingua franca* of commerce in the East, and then of Russian, because of

Russia's ominous approach, of French, because of the great military strength of France (remember it was in the days of Louis Napoleon) as well as of her famous *Code Napoléon*, and, to a lesser degree, of German, as being nearest to Dutch and therefore most convenient for medical students.

It was at this time that a smattering of the knowledge of English or French was a qualification for high posts in civil service, and hence every bright youth rushed into language schools, and, to meet these demands, schools of every grade and variety were soon started ; but by far the most popular among them were those where English was taught — largely because America was the first to open commercial relations with us ; secondly, because the political and commercial power of England was most felt in the Orient ; thirdly, because it was Anglo-Saxon countries that sent out most missionaries and travellers to the Far East. Ever since 1870 there has scarcely been a school of any pretensions which has not included English in its curriculum. But, notwithstanding this fact, students have flocked to them not so much to learn colloquial English as to get a reading knowledge of it.

Because the study of foreign languages was pursued as a means to other studies, it was naturally relegated to secondary courses of education, and only lately has it found a place in the Universities and in special schools devoted to it. During a decade — or two — say, roughly, 1865-1885 — all higher instruction was imparted in English, French or German. Even Japanese professors lectured in a Western tongue ; technical terms had not been translated into Japanese. Scientific research is not yet sufficiently developed in Japan to be self-sustaining. It may be said that no country is entirely independent in the domain of science. In the case of Japan this dependence is felt with peculiar force, since, on account of distance in space and in language, she feels herself very much isolated. Research of any kind — even of Japanese philology and history — must call to its aid Western sciences, for comparison and verification.

The choice of a language by a student depended much on that of his profession. For a medical career, he almost invariably chose German ; for a diplomatic, legal or military training, French ; for political, naval, business or general service, English. It would seem that among the students of forty and fifty years ago there was apparent a reciprocal relation between their temperament and the language they chose. This was particularly noticeable among the French-studying youths. It was no affectation on their part. If individual temperament was drawn to certain languages, the kind of books read in them accentuated its idiosyncrasies. The active and pliable mind that has "fed of the dainties that are bred in a book", that has eaten paper, as it were, and drunk the ink, could not resist showing the diet that nourished it. The gods whose oracles the books were surely worked in the heart of the devotees in different ways. No gods drew more worshippers among the English-reading public than Bentham, Austin, Mill, while the French-reading youths fondly clung to their idols — Voltaire, Rousseau. The temperamental divergences of students according to the languages elected are nowadays not so perceptible as formerly, perhaps because their adoration is shared by a larger number of gods.

There is more or less fluctuation in the popularity of a foreign tongue. French was quite popular in the military circle until 1871, when it began to wane in prestige. During the years preceding the proclamation of our Civil Code, French was the chief language in which law was studied. In the early 'eighties of the last century, at the time of the nation's preparation for a constitution, there came a sudden change, officially encouraged, in favour of German, and German still continues to be the chief medium for scientific purposes. This tendency has somewhat lessened since the Great War and French is again gaining ground, partly due to the presence of M. Paul Claudel in Tokyo as French Ambassador.

The Russian language used to be studied for diplomatic and commercial purposes. Until quite recently it did not receive the attention it deserves for the wealth of its literature. It has had for decades most worthy representatives in the person of the emissaries of the Greek Church ; but their method of propaganda has been very different from that of the Protestants, which is largely educational. By far the most widespread foreign language in Japan continues to be

English, and though for a time it was in danger of being neglected for purposes of higher studies, the rise of American sciences has checked this danger. Most of what we have to say regarding the diffusion and teaching of foreign languages in Japan relates, therefore, to English.

XI. *Two Methods of Teaching a Foreign Language.*

In studying English, there are two methods in vogue, known as *Seisoku* (the Regular) and *Hensoku* (the Irregular). The Regular method, which in its main conception is identical with the so-called "Direct" or "Reformed" method in the English system of teaching modern studies¹, teaches the correct reading of English words with proper accents, emphasis, etc., and so leads a pupil to understand them without translating them into Japanese. The "Berlitz" method may be taken as the type, and this statement will give a sufficient notion of the so-called Regular method. But the Irregular method will require a longer explanation.

Its sole object is to get the sense of a sentence and therefore it gives no heed whatever how a word sounds. If it is necessary to pronounce an English word (this holds good of any other Western language), as little respect is paid to the pronunciation of the original as in the case of *Kango*. I am given a sentence — "Love your neighbour". As long as I understand what each of these words means, and grasp the idea of the whole sentence, what should I care how it sounds in my own or others' ears — provided I am not expected to make or hear a speech. The nearest approach to the spoken-English pronunciation is, "*Ra-buyu-ru nee-bo-ru*". Even this much reading is not required in the Irregular method. If the word spelt l-o-v-e means *ai-suru* in Japanese, and y-o-u-r is the possessive case of *nanji* (you) and n-e-i-g-h-b-o-u-r is clearly *rinjin* — I have the exact idea of the commandment. I look at these words with the same complacency and comprehension as at three Chinese ideographs standing for them. This is quite legitimate and all-sufficient for one studying in silence. When one has to teach or explain to others what the sentence means, one has to begin with "your" (a particle showing the possessive case), follow it with "neighbour" (adding objective particle) and end with "love" (with suffix showing the imperative mood). For a longer sentence, say, *e. g.* : "Do unto others as ye would that they should do unto you", the Japanese translation will run with appropriate particles thus : "Others you-to do-would that you others-to do", and the Irregular method is entirely satisfied with this process of rendering a foreign language intelligible. It must be said to its praise that students who are trained in this way have usually much more accurate and precise comprehension of what they read than those who are taught to read parrot-like one sentence after another without thinking fully of the meaning. Not unusually does the Regular method turn out "a reading machine, always wound 'up' and going", and emitting correct English sounds, but mastering nothing worth the knowing.

We must remember that in the early days of Modern Japan, the 'sixties and the 'seventies of the last century, when the study of Western languages was most eagerly sought after and there were very few foreigners resident in Japan, the Irregular method was the only one possible. Pioneer students had to make some sense out of Western books, with an exceedingly limited vocabulary ; for, as we have seen, dictionaries were few in number, meagre in their contents, and inexact in their definition. The spread and refinement of this method is chiefly due to Mr. Fukuzawa.

XII. *Schools for Foreign Languages.*

Among those who studied the Dutch language, ostensibly to acquire medical knowledge but really to get first-hand information regarding the West, was Fukuzawa, the outstanding figure in the intellectual history of Modern Japan. Seeing that the old order was vanishing and that

¹ See for comparison the very interesting Report of the Committee appointed to Enquire into the Position of Modern Languages in the Educational System of Great Britain, 1918, pp. 54, 55.

the new order was at hand, not only in Japan but throughout the world, he quickly abandoned the volume of a Dutch book on Physics which he had assiduously copied word by word, and betook himself to the study of English. This he learned by the sole aid of a Dutch-English dictionary. In his school, founded in 1858 for the study of Dutch, he introduced English as early as 1862. As far as priority goes, the Institute of Progress had two years previously enlarged the scope of its instruction so as to include English, French, German and Russian ; but during the war of Restoration the Institute was practically closed. Fukuzawa took no part in the politics of his day but taught his pupils to build for the future, and their tool was the English tongue. The school he started, Keio (now elevated to the University grade), is still one of our greatest institutions of learning, where instruction in English, albeit according to the Irregular method, has consistently been carried on ; whereas our Government foundations have at times shown a leaning towards the German language and system of education.

As soon as the war of Restoration ended in 1868, with the introduction of the new régime, education was one of the first subjects seriously taken up by the Government. The year 1869 saw the creation of the Department of Instruction and the year 1872 the promulgation of an Educational Law. Though in the framing of the Law the educational systems of European countries were largely taken into consideration, in its execution American influence was paramount. American educationists of experience were invited by the Government to set the machinery in motion. Some of the textbooks in the secondary schools of those early days were English books, either in translation or in the original. Even arithmetic, history, geography — not to speak of special branches of study — were all taught in English, and usually by English or American teachers. There was even some danger lest the study of Japanese classics and history might be swamped by Western jargon. In the University and technical institutions of higher grade, until about 1880, all the lectures, even those given by Japanese professors, were in a European tongue (chiefly English) and only in 1882 were Japanese classics introduced into the University course.

The preparatory schools were naturally turned into language schools. In spite of repeated efforts to make the so-called Higher Schools or Colleges more like the upper grades of the German gymnasium, American college or French *lycée*, in the wider scope of their course, they still remain very much the preparatory schools for the University ; hence the teaching of languages occupies the largest number of hours. As fixed by Government regulations, students in the higher schools are required to take two of the three languages, — English, French and German — according to which faculty they wish to enter at the University. Whichever they may choose, they devote fully one-third of the weekly total of thirty-two hours to language studies.

Passing on to the University, the two Faculties of Law and Literature make particular demands on the linguistic qualifications of students. In the Law Faculty, besides Roman law, there are special courses in French, English and German law. Though the lectures are given in Japanese, constant references to the laws of these countries necessitate as fair a knowledge of their languages as the amount of "Law Latin" requires. In the Faculty of Literature in the Imperial Universities of Tokyo and Kyoto, special courses are given in the following languages and literatures : English, French, German, Chinese and Sanskrit. The Faculty of Economics gives more practical instruction in Commercial English. The Imperial University of Tokyo has been making public under different names the results of the research made by its members, — *e. g.*, Journal, Memoirs, Bulletin, Reports, Annals. Of these only the publication by the Medical Faculty has been printed in German, all the rest being in English, with occasional exceptions in German and French.

Mention has been made above of Fukuzawa and of his pronounced proclivity toward English thought and institutions. His influence is still strong — notwithstanding that he died in 1901 — and the school he founded, now known as the Keio University, is a powerful agent in the dissemination of English.

No less powerful in moulding the mind of young Japan is another large foundation, established by Count Okuma in 1882. The Waseda University has always stood for advanced ideas,

strongly inclined to Anglo-Saxonism. Another institution which was of much smaller scale, but which exerted a lasting influence on the progress of our country, was the Doninsha, a school opened by Dr. Keiwi Nakamura, an erudite Chinese scholar, who became a staunch admirer of European civilisation. He is best known as the translator of Mill's "Liberty", Smiles' "Self-Help" and "Character". His English school proved of invaluable service to New Japan in showing that the West is not altogether wanting in moral ideals. The same service was, however, rendered in a more positive way by still another school, which, if it had been established in Tokyo instead of in the old conservative city of Kyoto, would have been much more influential. A distinctly Christian College, started by Dr. Niishima in 1875, the Doshisha was supported for a long time by the Congregational Church of America and was naturally staffed by American teachers. Good teaching of English has been one of its distinguished features.

The diffusion of the English language by means of these popular private schools was nationwide. The Keio spirit is felt most among business men, that of Waseda in the Press, and Doshisha among the leaders of religious opinion — all primarily due to the influence of the English tongue.

Technical schools of higher grade all require the knowledge of a foreign tongue for admission; but, after entering them, scant use is made of it, except in reading reference books, and but little oral progress is made except in the Commercial College. Perhaps this last-mentioned institution provides the best instruction obtainable in practical English. The Naval Academy is also far from neglecting the teaching of English, while the Military Academy trains the cadets in French or German.

The foundations which we have been considering are not exclusively devoted to the teaching of English. As to schools specially organised with that object, the most important is the Government institution called "The Tokyo Foreign Language School", which provides instruction in the following twelve courses, — seven Occidental and five Oriental: English, German, French, Italian, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Chinese, Hindustani, Korean, Malayan, Mongolian. To these languages will now be added Siamese and Tamil. Students pursuing any of these courses may matriculate in Law and Literature, Trade or Colonisation, according to the object to which they wish to put their studies into practical use. The language lessons proper are given 15 to 20 hours a week, but, besides these, students must attend lectures on the history, geography, customs, religion and social and political organisation of the people whose languages they learn. This Tokyo Foreign Language School has now a roll-call of about one thousand students and a large staff of foreign professors. A similar institution was started in Osaka in 1922.

These Government institutions, by their strict rules and by setting higher standards for admission, do not meet all the demands of the public. Hence, innumerable schools — some of doubtful competence — have come into existence in all the towns of the country. The best among them are the People's English Association (*Kokumin Eigaku Kai*) under the direction of Professor Isobé, and the English Language School by Regular System (*Seisoku Eigo Gakko*) under Professor Saito. Ever since they were opened, the former in 1888 and the latter in 1896, they have been crowded with eager students of all classes and ages.

Whoever studies the progress of foreign languages in Japan must acknowledge the invaluable service rendered by private organisations started under foreign auspices. They have made good the deficiencies from which public schools have suffered. The Roman Catholic missions have contributed an enormous amount in this respect. It must be granted that their ultimate object is proselytising, but to all appearance they have carried on an educational work detached from the religious. One of their schools, the *Gyosei* (Morning Star) Lyceum, opened in 1888, has been steadily growing, so that at the present time it is not only the best French-teaching institution, but is in many ways a model school. Similarly, the Catholics have established a fine institute, the *Seishin* (Sacred Heart) for Girls, where, too, the chief foreign language is French. The German Jesuits have started a theological seminary of high standing, Jochi

University, where instruction is mainly carried on in German. A school begun in 1877 by a Japanese organisation, called the German Association, maintains a high reputation for its German lessons.

As to institutions where the English language is the chief aim, they are of all grades. Worthy of special notice are those established and maintained by different mission boards — such as the *Doshisha* (Congregational), the *Aoyama Gakuin* (Methodist), the *Meiji Gakuin* (Presbyterian), the *Rikkyo* (Episcopal); — all these in Tokyo; then the *Kansai* (Southern Methodist) in Kobe, the *Toboku* (Methodist) in Sendai, the *To-o* (Methodist) in Hirosaki, the *Kassui* (Methodist) in Nagasaki. Different missionary boards have developed girls' schools of high standing, e.g., the *Jo-Gakuin* (Congregational) in Kobe, the *Doshisha Girls' School* (Congregational) in Kyoto, the *Sanyo Jo-Gakko* in Okayama, the *I-ai* (Methodist) in Hakodate, the *Eiwa* (Canadian Methodist), the *Joshi-Gakuin* (Presbyterian), the *Aoyama Gakuin* (Methodist) — the last three in Tokyo. There are about fifty schools for girls and eighty for boys under the management of different Christian missions, besides evening classes and lectures under the direction of the Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations. Under the conjoint auspices of eight mission boards, the so-called Women's Christian College of Tokyo was formed in 1918. Among its various departments, the English is likely to be strongest and most popular. The Japanese University for Women, founded by the late Mr. Naruse, has an English Department almost as good as its Japanese. An institution started and managed by a Japanese lady, Miss Tsuda, with the collaboration of an American, Miss Hartshorne, has more than justified, by the thoroughness of its instruction, both its object and its name of "English School for Women".

In a short walk through the streets of Tokyo, especially in the student quarters, one can easily count a dozen signs attracting the attention of the passer-by to the unpretentious premises where rudimentary lessons in a foreign language are given. They are numerous and the contributions of these humble teachers, like drops of water, help to swell the tide of European influence.

XIII. *The Place of Foreign Languages in Secondary Education.*

From the very object of acquiring foreign languages, viz., in order to study special sciences, it is clear that they occupy a paramount place in the system of secondary education. This does not apply to the secondary education of girls; but here, too, some knowledge of a foreign tongue is deemed a necessary part of general culture. Before proceeding further, let me add that the Educational Law, which regulates the general scheme of instruction in all grades of schools, provides that even in a primary school, in places where such a course is advisable, a foreign tongue may be taught in the higher grade, as, for instance, in commercial ports where foreign trade plays an exceptionally important role.

To return to secondary education, there are at this present time some 350 so-called Middle, i.e., secondary schools for boys and 460 for girls, though in the latter case the object of one-third of these is more practical than cultural.

In the regulations relating to the curriculum of the Middle schools and of the high schools for girls (the latter correspond to boys' Middle schools), it is provided for the former that one of the three languages, English, French or German, is obligatory. In the girls' schools, although no foreign tongue is compulsory, where choice is made it must be between English and French. It must at first sight strike an outsider as passing strange that German is not recommended for girls' schools, seeing that their aim is so evidently to train women of the type of the Teutonic *Hausfrau*, "*Ryo-sai Ken-bo*" (Good wife, wise mother). This apparent inconsistency is due to the notion that German is pre-eminently the language of science and philosophy, both of which are perhaps deemed superfluous in the kitchen and the nursery! The provisions further state that girls' schools where a foreign language is taught should devote three hours a week throughout the whole course of five years. In the boys' schools the number of hours allotted to a foreign language varies as follows; and we shall put for comparison the number of

hours given to Japanese (including *Kango*) studies :

		English	Japanese
1st year	6 hours	8 hours
2nd »	7 »	8 »
3rd »	7 »	6 »
4th »	5 »	5 »
5th »	5 »	5 »

The Middle Schools range in size from a few hundred to a thousand pupils, usually 500 to 800 being quite common. As they cover five years there are, let us say, 100 boys taken annually in each school. They are placed in two or more divisions, say, of 30 each, though usually the number is smaller. Many boys come with some idea of ABC and of spelling. Ordinarily, they begin at the very beginning. The teachers are mostly Japanese, with a sprinkling of foreigners — a total of 70 or 80 of the latter being engaged in the Middle Schools. Altogether there are some 320 foreigners employed in educational institutions of all grades in the country more than half of whom are language teachers. The native teachers are themselves as a rule graduates of Japanese Universities, higher normal schools or special language schools. In order to teach, they must be possessed of certificates of fitness. These may be obtained by a course of study already pursued or by special examination. By far the largest number of them have never been abroad. They have little idea of actual life in Europe or America. Their eyes have never seen a foreign home or town; their tongue has never succeeded (in a large majority of cases) in distinguishing “*l*” from “*r*”, “*v*” from “*b*” or “*th*” from “*z*” — but all the same they amass a surprising amount of knowledge of foreign idioms, ways, manners, literature, history and, above all, ideas. They make no secret of their utter incompetence for verbal intercourse; it is not expected of them. In fact, there is a deplorable propensity to boast of colloquial ignorance, as though a vague belief existed that the less one can talk the more one knows! I am inclined to attribute this to the traditional belief that language is a medium for conveying knowledge, and that it is not speech, still less a phonation. A foreign language is thus made an exercise of the eyes and not of the ears, and least of all of the tongue. Its conquests are intellectual and not social. Its best helps are books and worst trials conversation. We treat modern European languages with as much respect and profit as Europeans treat classical languages. The serious consequence in our case, however, is that the languages we study are not yet dead!

XIV. *General Diffusion of Foreign Languages.*

Let us now examine the spread of foreign languages so far as this can be numerically expressed, and take a cursory glance at the Esperanto movement in Japan.

There are studying every year, in round numbers, 165,000 boys in 343 Middle schools, and some 130,000 girls in 467 girls' higher schools¹. In the 93 normal schools of the country there are always about 25,000 students of both sexes. Besides this, about 80,000 lads in different professional schools have regular English lessons. In the last two decades or so, there have been graduated year after year, from schools of intermediate grade, an average of 22,000 boys and perhaps a larger number of girls — not to speak of pupils educated in professional schools. Recently, the number of pupils graduating from schools of secondary grade (where English is obligatory) approximates 75,000 a year. If we take into further calculation the number of those who, in the last sixty years, have passed through the portals of institutions where English or some other Western language is taught, the sum total of those who have gained knowledge of a European tongue will easily reach a couple of millions. This is an enormous proportion in a country which lies at the edge of the so-called “Extreme Orient”, distant from Anglo-Saxon countries by one-third of the earth's circumference, eastward or westward. As an instance of

¹ We have entirely ignored primary schools, though in some of them a foreign language is taught.

what this means, I may state that there are about 400 magazines published in Japan which are devoted to the interest of foreign tongues.

Another index to the spread of foreign languages may be obtained from the number of Western (European and American) books in our public libraries. To give a few of the more prominent examples :

	Total No. Vols.	Western Books	Percentage
Imperial Library (1921)	348,052	82,608	23.7
University of Tokyo ¹	695,219	310,356	44.6
University of Kyoto	417,428	189,800	45.5
University of Tohoku	111,686	29,621	26.2
University of Hokkaido	54,143	27,624	51
Keio University	94,270	33,400	31.1

The proportion here given is by no means typical for all libraries, especially those in the provinces. Among these, really good libraries may contain perhaps no more than 5 per cent. of foreign books.

The demand for foreign books is so great that reprints, particularly of schoolbooks, are made in large numbers. Periodicals for the purpose of aiding self-study in English and German are issued in various forms and grades. During 1918 there were published in the country 359 books on foreign languages and 524 magazines ; and in 1919, 277 books and 398 magazines.

As to the volume of foreign publications imported into the country, the following approximate figures furnished to the author by the largest book-importing firm, Maruzen, will give some idea :

	1921 Yen	1920 Yen	1919 Yen
Printed books, copy-books, drawing-books and periodicals	2,298,000	1,832,000	980,000
China	72,000	19,000	11,000
Kwantung Province... ..	10,000	8,000	5,000
British India	*4,000	*1,000	*3,000
The Straits Settlements	1,000	2,000	—
Asiatic Russia	2,000	—	—
Philippine Islands	—	1,000	—
Great Britain	*691,000	*660,000	*545,000
France	77,000	40,000	30,000
Germany	711,000	353,000	19,000
Belgium	15,000	5,000	1,000
Italy	2,000	7,000	—
Holland	26,000	9,000	28,000
Sweden	1,000	2,000	1,000
United States of America	*638,000	709,000	*322,000
Canada	*33,000	*2,000	*8,000
Argentina	—	1,000	—
Hawaii	—	*1,000	—
*Publications in the English Language	1,367,000	1,376,000	878,000
	59.5%	75.1%	80.9%

Another fact, small in itself, will complement the statement made above. Among the buyers of the publications of the League of Nations, which are issued in French and English, England heads the list as the largest purchaser. Closely following her is the United States, though she is not a Member. Japan comes third, notwithstanding that no official document of

¹ The recent earthquake destroyed some 700,000 books.

* Publications in the English language.

the League is printed in her tongue. Then follow the continental nations of Europe and South America.

The popularity of foreign languages, especially of English, is indicated by their frequent use for sign-boards and advertisements, in public lectures and private conversations. Some of the larger dailies in Osaka and Tokyo issue a regular English edition.

As the need for European languages was increasingly felt, the question of a universal medium of intercourse naturally followed in its train. Volapük was discussed at one time, but did not find a large following. Its place was taken by Esperanto. In 1906, the year following the first Universal Esperanto Congress in Boulogne, its cause was espoused by an astronomer, a historian and a well-known literary man. It had made but little headway before the Great War, when the general interest of the nation was seriously awakened to international affairs. Since 1918 the Esperanto Association has been growing rapidly. It has at present about 2,500 members, most of whom are students in all parts of the country. Periodicals, dictionaries, grammars have been published. Esperanto books printed in Europe have been imported in great numbers. Some popular magazines regularly devote a certain amount of space to its propaganda. Educationists have shown a lively interest in it and the Imperial Diet transmitted to the Government for its favourable consideration a petition presented for the encouragement of Esperanto. Painfully aware of their own linguistic incapacity, of the handicap under which they labour in international intercourse, the Japanese are turning to Esperanto with great hopes. The simplicity of its grammar, the ease with which it is pronounced, the consistency of its orthography appeal to them with peculiar force. Whatever prejudice and hostility it may encounter in Europe, Esperanto has met with an open mind in the Far East. It has been indicted as being a channel of radical thought: but it is well known that more propaganda literature of "dangerous ideas" exists in other languages.

Frequently the question is asked: Why not take up some great living language — albeit a little more difficult — with a history and literature? Esperanto does not claim to be adapted to the study of history or literature. Its main usefulness lies in the lower and wider region of practicality for trade, commerce and tourism. For these purposes no national tongue will be grateful to be selected. Suppose French or English were proposed as a world tongue, its most zealous advocate would pause in pressing its acceptance if once he heard Pidgin English as spoken in China, or French used in Cambodia or Haiti. Esperanto will escape this mutilation because of its simplicity. Furthermore, the psychological consideration must not be neglected that an Oriental feels himself less handicapped and therefore bolder in the neutral ground of Esperanto than in the territory of a national language. He feels freer and less afraid to make mistakes when there are only sixteen rules to break!

The stereotyped objection that an artificial tongue can never take the place of a natural or national language is altogether away from the mark, inasmuch as no Esperantist advocates substituting it for the other. Neither can its artificiality be objected to if Esperanto proves itself practical as a means of intercourse, any more than can an automobile be rejected because it is not a horse. Moreover, to an Oriental, English or French is as non-natural as Esperanto or Ido. Esperanto may even serve as a connecting link between an Oriental and an Occidental language. According to a notable experiment made in a school at Eccles, England, children who were taught Esperanto for one year and then took two years in French or German, outranked at the end of three years those who devoted the entire three years to one of these languages.

It is not unlikely that Esperanto will steadily gain ground in the East, both for its intrinsic worth and its practical utility, as well as for the *interna ideo* which it inculcates.

XV. *The Linguistic Inaptitude of the Race.*

The fact that a living language is used in Japan mainly for purposes of academic study, as an intellectual tool, prevents her from exploiting, so to speak, its full value for practical purposes. As I have said before, there is an unfortunate idea among Japanese scholars that the

use of a language for practical affairs argues a low grade of intellectual pursuit. Volubility of any sort commands no respect, and facility of speech in an unfamiliar tongue is rather looked upon with suspicion. Excuses were made to make virtue of the defect. It has been said that only a decadent people acquires a foreign tongue quickly, as an unconscious preparation for losing its own. Colloquialism is required of shopkeepers and tourists' guides and, at best, of language teachers.

Samuel Butler's satire on the abuse of linguistic talent is more than endorsed by the Japanese :

“He that is but able to express
No sense at all in several languages,
Will pass for learned than he that's known
To speak the strongest reason in his own.”

Such disparagement and derision of linguistic talent may, however, be considered as an unwilling confession of the general linguistic incapacity of the race. Perhaps no people in the Far East is so little gifted with speech as the Japanese. Is it due to the stoical training of which silence is one of the principal injunctions ? Is it due to the tradition, engendered by long isolation from the rest of the world, which regarded all alien tongues as barbarous ? Is it due to the mental insularity induced by geographical position ? Is it due to the general social aloofness inherited from feudal times ? Any or all of these reasons may explain the aversion of the Japanese to a foreign speech. There is lacking among them that debonair deportment which draws out and trains conversational powers. Thus a Japanese has not the makings of a linguist in him. There are also other and perhaps more cogent reasons for his inaptitude.

The native speech of the Japanese is rich in vowels and the pronunciation of words so easy that any other speech is jaw-breaking to them. This difficulty, added to the entirely different structure of a Western language, with its genders, cases and conjugations, enhances their incompetence and affords a real discouragement to any attempt at its mastery. Moreover, in acquiring a foreign colloquialism, the ear plays as important a role as the tongue, but the Japanese sense of sound and tone has been comparatively little developed. Take, for instance, Japanese music, where the quarter tones prevail and other tones are less significant than in European. It is a great pity that they did not enrich the phonetics of their language more at the time they borrowed so freely of Chinese vocabulary. Compare their syllabary, which contains only fifty standard sounds, with the wealth of Chinese phonetics. Morrison gives 411 syllables as forming their court dialect, and if those which are aspirated are separately enumerated, 533. The Cantonese dialect has 707. In the dialect of Amoy there are 900 and in that of Fuchau 928.¹ Besides, every Chinese word has a tone of its own, which distinguishes it from its homonyms. Japanese phonetics disregard a number of foreign sounds, *e.g.*, denti-labials (especially *v*), the denti-linguals (*l*, *th*, *dh*), the English *á* or *à*, the guttural fricative sound of Northern Europe, the German *u* or *o*, with *umlaut*, etc. It is impossible to put into *Kana* the English *á* or *à* or the German *ö* or French *eu*. The utter disuse of the muscles called into action in emitting these sounds must have atrophied them. All these real objections and difficulties, both “organic” and “acoustic”, discomfit the Japanese and embarrass them with treble force, because of their fear of committing mistakes and discourtesies when associating with Westerners.

Signs of their linguistic weakness show themselves in the mental tests of Japanese children. According to Professor Darsie's report on the mental test of Japanese children in California, they are noticeably less apt in this respect than American children. He says that in other tests, the Japanese children are equal to and even superior to the American children. Among the tests which require no language are those which measure the reasoning and the memorising power ; he found that Japanese children are superior to American in the latter and equal to them in the former. Points of equality and of superiority naturally bring that of inferiority

¹ WILLIAMS : *The Middle Kingdom*, Vol. I, p. 611.

into prominence. The same report gives the consensus of the opinions of 400 American teachers, according to which, while the Japanese child is above the average of his fellow-pupils in drawing, music (!), writing, spelling, arithmetic and gymnastics, he falls below them in history, geography, the natural sciences, and in reading and languages.

I have tried to explain (with no effort at justification or defence) why the Japanese people are such poor linguists. They have to pay a high price for this defect. Indeed, if one wished to, the price might be calculated in dollars and pounds. Put on the debit side all the salaries that are paid to language teachers, all the numbers of hours in money-units spent by the boys and girls to learn English (or French or German for that matter), all that the nation pays for grammars and elementary reading-books and for the services of interpreters — and note the smattering of Pidgin English or doubtful French which, with the exception of a few notably good students, is all that the credit side has shown! What does the country gain by spending so much on foreign languages? We shall answer this question later. Nevertheless, it must not be forgotten that the nation incurs an immeasurable loss by its lack of proficiency in speech. Whoever has watched an international meeting of any kind will not fail to see Japan represented by larger numbers than any other country. Why? Because, whereas it is quite easy in other countries to get a man who can wield two or three linguistic weapons, it is rarely that a Japanese can command more than one foreign language, and when a two-edged sword or a trident is found, it not seldom happens that it is only a sword and not a swordsman! This explains why the Japanese attend international meetings “in rows and rows”, as a witty writer has said, “for the Japanese are no good in ones”.

XVI. *The Effect of the Study of Western Languages.*

1. Among the diverse effects of the spread of foreign languages, the most obvious is the addition to, or rather the expansion of, the vocabulary of the country. Addition means accretion, but expansion means the enlargement of the body of words in national use. The latter suggests an organic growth, whereas the former implies physical adhesion. Until foreign words became part and parcel of the native tongue, it is premature to speak of the influence of one language upon another.

A number of words — perhaps five hundred or so — have dribbled through commercial and learned channels into the vernacular. Most of the *Yogo* (Western words) are adopted on account of brevity (*e.g.*, pen, ink, match, lamp, coat, *savon*, *chapeau*, etc.); others for the nuance which can be expressed in Japanese only by circumlocution (*e.g.*, delicate, inspiration, romantic, sentimental, democracy, business-like, etc.), and still others for their technical precision. Of the last, scientific terms are usually translated, except, of course, those of Latin nomenclature; but terms used in sports or in navigation are very often used in the original, which in most cases is English. This is also true of some financial terms, *e.g.*, call-money, moratorium, etc. These Western words are subjected to the same process of selection as were the *Kango* in former times. As they are usually monosyllables, no serious phonetic violence is committed, except when the inevitable change is made of substituting “*b*” for “*v*”, or “*r*” for “*l*”. Merely to enlarge its vocabulary does not, however, add a cubit to the stature of a nation. Of what profit was the refinement of her speech to Arabia, when it “could diversify the fourscore names of honey, the two hundred of a snake, the five hundred of a lion, the thousand of a sword at a time when this copious dictionary was entrusted to the memory of an illiterate people?”¹

2. Far more important than the loan words are those which, though used in translated forms, are nevertheless of Western introduction. Simply as words they are *Kango*, but the ideas conveyed betray an Occidental source. Words of this character are exceedingly numerous, and are used to such an extent in the newspapers and books that a man of two genera-

¹ GIBBON: *Decline and Fall*, Ch. L.

tions ago — could he see them — would not understand half of what is printed. It affords no small amusement to read a translation of John Stuart Mill's Essay on Liberty, made in 1858 by Professor Nakamura. Erudite Chinese scholar as he was, he encountered insurmountable difficulties in finding suitable equivalents for many words in that work. Interspersed here and there throughout the book are parenthetical apologies, such as "This sentence awaits a future translator for elucidation", "A right word must be left for the future", etc. In the present day a schoolboy will find no difficulty in translating, with the aid of an ordinary dictionary, every single word (I say expressly "single word" and not sentence) that Mill has employed in this Essay. There has recently been published a Lexicon of New Terms from Western Sources, and it is remarkable into what varied and unexpected quarters these have penetrated.

In the expansion of Japanese vocabulary, it is the significance of words that is of consequence, and their pronunciation plays an entirely subordinate role. This disregard of phonetics is carried to such an extent as to affect even the pronunciation of proper names. Does it matter if Lincoln's name is pronounced "Rinkorun" or "Rinkan", as long as we know who he was and what he stood for? Does it matter if Alexander is called "Rekišan-O", or by any other epithet, as long as one's biographical knowledge is sure? Hence Bi-ko (Prince Bi) or Gu-shi (Mr. Gu) are appellations by which Bismarck and Gladstone are usually identified. At first sight this mutilation of great names strikes one as an offence; but second thought will recall the general practice of calling men by names to which, perhaps, they themselves would not have responded. The same person may be known in one country as Charles the Great, in another as Charlemagne, in the third as Carlomagno, in the fourth as Karl der Grosse, in the fifth as Karol Wielki, and so on.

3. The advantages of an alphabetic over a syllabic system of writing, especially when the latter is combined with the ideographic, are so apparent that one of the earliest effects of the introduction of Western knowledge was the plan of transliteration or of the so-called Romanisation; that is, of displacing the ideographs and the *Kana* by roman type. Associations have been formed for the propoganda of this idea, and though, on the whole, the movement does not make rapid progress, it is a cause that is sustained by some of the most influential and thoughtful people.¹

4. Among the many results of the study of foreign languages, there is one which, though it is gained as a by-product, is too valuable to be omitted. It is the intelligent study, leading to research, of the native language itself. The acquisition of a foreign language furnishes a good working knowledge of language in general, and opens for the student a portal, hitherto unsuspected, which may lead to the treasure-house of his own mother-tongue. As the study of Japanese art by an American, Professor Fenelossa, aroused an intelligent interest among the Japanese themselves, so has the scientific study of the Japanese language by an Englishman, H. B. Chamberlain, and by a German, Dr. Florenz, stimulated many a young Japanese to take up the philology and phonetics of his own people. In fact, Chamberlain was the first man to occupy the chair of Japanese philology in the Imperial University in Tokyo. We are strongly reminded of the truth of Goethe's saying: "A man who is ignorant of foreign languages is also ignorant of his own language".

5. When once a stone is set rolling, it sets other stones in motion. As the question of transliteration was discussed, and the conservatives objected to it, a middle course was suggested — the exclusive use of *Kana* — and this proposal raised the query: "Cannot the *Kana* itself be improved?" Yes, such sounds as "p" and "l" can be added by diacritical signs. Yes, even the form of *Kana* characters can be changed in such a manner as to make writing easier. Yes,

¹ TAYLOR says; — "If this attempt succeeds, as may not improbably be the case, we shall have under our own eyes an illustration of the process by which the Egyptian hieroglyphics and the Babylonian cuneiform were replaced, some two thousand years ago, by characters ultimately derived from the great Semitic alphabet." In the footnote he adds: "This process is now going on in Annam, where a modification of the Roman alphabet is used by the French missionaries to replace the local Annamese syllabary, whose history is similar to that of Japan: having been derived from the Chinese writing by the selection and adaptation of a certain number of characters which are used phonetically." *The Alphabet*, 1883, Vol. I, p. 37. See also TANAKADATE, *Japanese Writing and the Romaji Movement*, 1920.

they can be so combined as to facilitate their perusal without going to the trouble of changing their form. As the use of the pen instead of the brush becomes more general, a new calligraphy may come into vogue. The invention of the fountain-pen may yet cause a revolution in the Far Eastern world of letters.

6. In recounting the benefits derived from the study of foreign languages, we must mention its pedagogic value as a disciplinary agency. The perusal of Chinese classics by means of *Kango* was a valuable asset in this respect, affording as much mental discipline to the Japanese youths as did Greek and Latin to the European. There are not a few educationists who would revive Chinese studies for that purpose alone. The age of Chinese classics is gone, and with them the severe disciplinarian. Its place is now taken by the English grammar, which, with its manifold rules and exceptions to rules, with its mysterious orthography and esoteric idioms, exacts of its neophyte the most strenuous use of his reason and memory.

7. Admiration for the West, brought about by the study of its tongues, has exerted a potent psychological influence in fostering the international mind, by which I here mean that attitude of mind which enables one to see things from the world point of view. On larger issues the Japanese think and speak in terms of the West. They can also objectify and project themselves among the nations of the world and see clearly where they stand. It is not too much to state that perhaps no nation, despite youthful jingoism and occasional reactionary outbursts, is more conscious of her position in the world than Japan, no nation is more introspective or more objectively self-critical. If in occidentalising her institutions and customs, and in her diplomacy, Japan may have committed comparatively few errors, it is, I believe, chiefly due to the fact that Western culture has become most accessible through the instrumentality of its letters. It is the cream of the West that flowed through them into the country. Just here is good reason for it to be truly grateful that oral language was not the chief channel of communication with the West. It is a fact not to be denied that, in the first days of her foreign intercourse, the Europeans who found their way to the Far East were not exactly the finest of their race. If their written languages introduced the cream, the verbal only would have brought the scum! One can imagine the disastrous effect on the Renaissance if its Florentine promoters had obtained their knowledge of Hellenic culture by actual contact with the Greeks, rather than by reading their ancient classics.

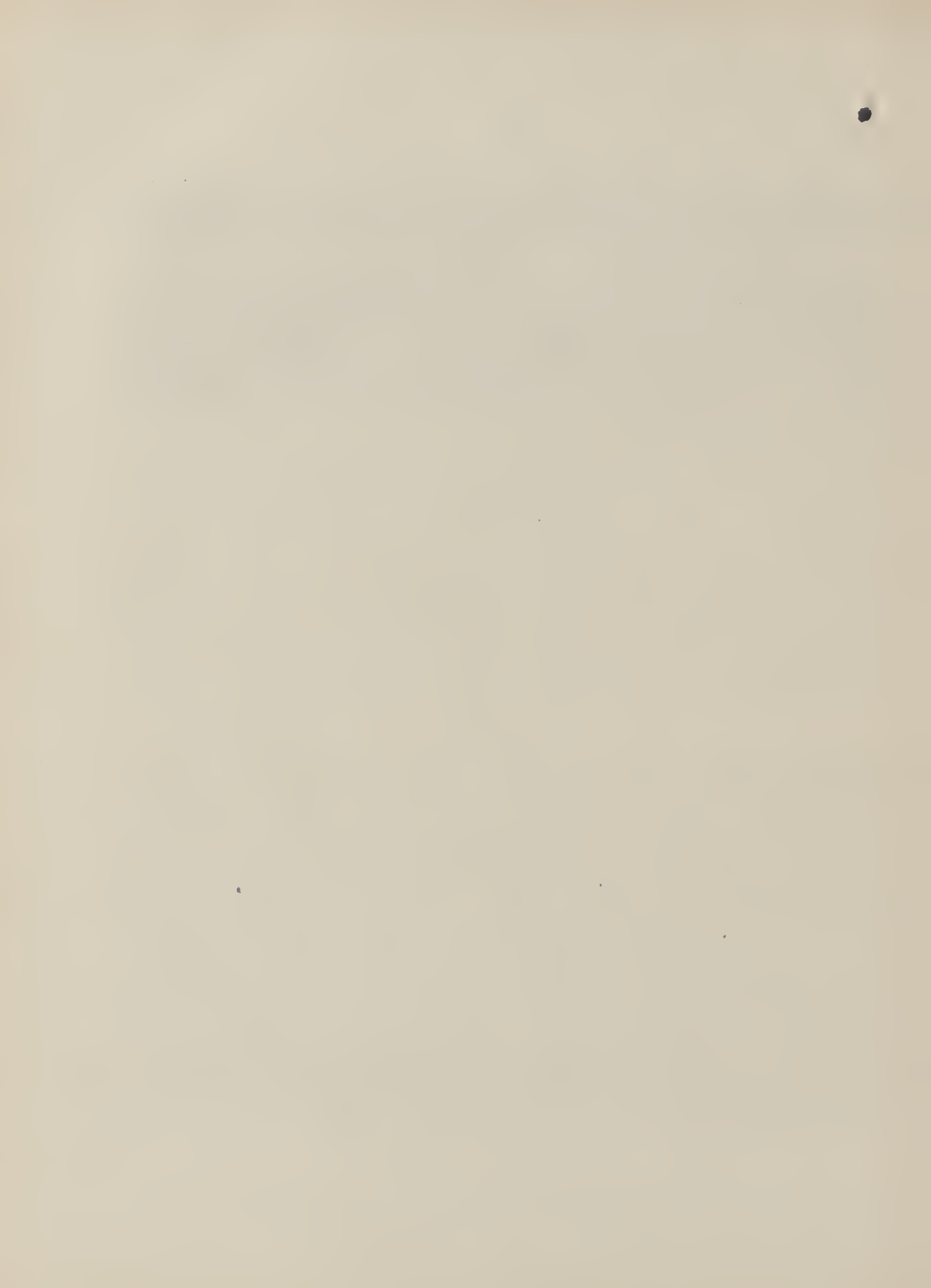
8. By far the most important influence of the study of a foreign language is its effect on the ideas, moral and political, of the student. Here I mean not mere intellectual acquiescence and acquisition but spiritual conviction. Language is a power, not only subtle but formidable. Frederick the Great might kick out the "ape" Voltaire, but as long as he used French, he could not escape the philosopher's influence. As by introducing *Kango* Japan came under the spell of Chinese mentality in the dawn of her history, so is she now drawn to the West through its literature. No remedy is so surely antidotal to xenophobia as a foreign tongue. We shudder to think what might have been the reaction in Japan to the anti-Japanese agitation of American politicians, if she had not had Anglo-Saxon predilections, fostered by language teaching. But this is only one side of the picture, albeit a very important side. Of far more lasting importance is the cultural value of a foreign tongue. In Japan, it is largely by virtue of the English language that her people are introduced into the thought of Western — and to some extent Eastern — peoples. We get acquainted with the great French writers — Taine, Guizot, Dumas, Daudet, Flaubert, Maupassant, Zola, Romain Rolland, Anatole France, Bergson — mostly through English translations. The same holds true with both Slavic and Scandinavian literatures, which are very popular in Japan. The names of Turgenieff, Tolstoi, Dostoievski, Gorki, Sologub, Sienkewicz, are as familiar as most eminent English and American authors. So, too, are the writings of Ibsen, Björnson, Hamsun, Strindberg. It is by no means infrequent that Buddhist scriptures are studied in English translations.

Think of this wide diffusion of Western thought as it affects not only the present but the future of the Eastern people. By innumerable avenues of influence, juvenile publications

and kindergarten stories — those of Grimm and Andersen, for instance — are changing the mental outlook of the coming generation. The English, the Italian, the Belgian and the Finn are all directing, if not moulding, the mind of the Far East through *Robinson Crusoe*, *Cuore*, the *Blue Bird* and the *Surgeon's Stories*.

With all this array of brilliant names before them — and I have not given a long list of English, American and German writers — is it any wonder that the youth of Japan should be overwhelmed by the feast which familiarity with a foreign language puts within their reach ?

Foreign languages, if they did not untie the tongue, certainly opened the eyes of the Japanese nation. Western ideas, coming in the form of literature, deeply stir the Eastern mind and impress it with the superiority of the Occident. 'Tis distance, be it in time or space, "lends enchantment to the view." The distant Past of China, with its great poets and philosophers, has a charm of its own, and the world may one day see the renaissance of her culture ; but for the immediate future the East must, as at summer eve, turn "the musing eye" to the West for light and hope.



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