

BUSINESS WAYS IN JAPAN

The following interesting letter, dealing with business methods in Japan, was received by Mr. D. S. Perrin, and was written by Mr. Wm. D. Loch, formerly of Hamilton, who went to Japan with Mr. Perrin on his recent trip to that country.

As regards the circumstances which determine a man's chance of success or failure in business life, Japan is perhaps a country which forms the nearest opposite to America. In the latter country it is more or less a competitive race, resulting in the majority of cases in the more capable man's capturing the laurels, while, on the contrary, in Japan the man of genuine ability, on account of the prevailing fetters placed on him, can scarcely hope to make headway commensurate with his just merits. That is, in the land of the rising sun, success or failure are the creatures of the prevailing way of social standing or family connection, rather than of capacity on the part of the individual.

Like the military officials in China, a practical, wide-awake man is looked upon with some contempt in this country, and through circumstances peculiar to Japan of today, he is very often the object of jealousy and suspicion, and finds it in consequence most difficult to obtain a prominent position in business circles. In fact, the average individual, one who either, on the one hand, purposely sets loose from all the high positions, or on the other, for any reason, is in a position to obtain to obtain that formal assistance and advice, his chances for receiving a suitable support at the hands of his bankers, or any great magnitude or patronage from or through other houses, are very remote. As an employee it is all but impossible to get an appointment to a responsible or remunerative post.

BACK NUMBERS IN CONTROL

The all but universal prevalence of this undesirable state of affairs is largely, if not altogether, accounted for by the fact that those who are taking the leading part in commercial and financial affairs are nearly all back numbers, out of date men (often discarded government officials or politicians), with no business capacity or knowledge, and perhaps, more often, and more regrettable, with very little common sense. As such, they are obviously, they are naturally more or less, if not utterly incapable, yet these men are fairly successful in avoiding those who are most penetrating, and possessed of more practical knowledge than themselves. The simple standard which the employer makes use of in deciding as to the merits of favor or promotion, by his respective men, is the degree in which each imitates his own (i.e., the employer's) ideas and methods. In fact, the man who has intimate or frequent business connection with anyone who does not so imitate him. Further, it might be stated that profound respect for his own ideas, even in connection with matters with which he has little or no experience and irrespective of whose interests are involved, is a marked attribute of the average Japanese. Of stores of advice for, and plans for carrying out each and every scheme of others, he is a most resourceful, and only bends to another mind when self economic interest compels it.

In which case he is capable of retaining his own opinions with the firm grace and self-abnegation which any Japanese can affect. These suggestions, freely tendered the writer, as to how his affairs could best be conducted, would, if set down in writing, make extensive and perhaps not uninteresting reading to the foreigner. However, the shrewdest and best educated of those aspiring young men who are fortunate enough to secure a position, soon come to recognize that it will be to their all round advantage to discard independent thinking and acting, and to execute their office in accordance with the stilted ideas of their unworthy superiors. Thus, true merit and ability rarely, if ever, flourish, but rather, he who is best qualified in most cases cannot or will not follow the dictates of one for whose judgment he has no respect, and consequently, by permitting his own personality to shine forth, he is very often regarded as a "person grata" with his employer or associates, and indeed, in most cases, forfeits his position altogether to one weaker and more pliant, or exchange it for one less important. This feature of the situation is the more lamentable, since for the more or less immediate future, it is quite actually day after day, even remedy, those of the rising generations of greatest worth finding it most difficult to gain favor with the employer, and in consequence to avoid the jealousy and suspicion of weak, irresponsible associate employees.

To this fact, perhaps, more than to any other, viz., that with very few and insignificant exceptions, the leading business houses of Japan are under the management of these unbusiness-like personages, above referred to, each surrounded by equally incapable associates, advisers and assistants (in many cases relatives), can be attributed the many objectionable features that characterize almost all business proceedings.

SYSTEM IS UNKNOWN

One arising directly from it is that no such thing as a system or proper division of labor is known in connection with a Japanese firm. Every transaction seems to be everybody's business, the subordinate clerks often attending to such duties as should be looked after personally by the superior or even by the head of the firm himself, which latter individual sometimes happens to have a great deal to say about the details of the waste paper or the economy of charcoal. Not ten days since the writer personally saw a junior, aged not more than 15, bring into the reception room of the institution a stack of bank notes aggregating several thousand yen, and himself, unaided and unattended, count out and deliver the whole to the clerk of another bank in exchange for a draft. Imagine a room containing an army of clerks, each doing his own duty, and a correspondingly large business, each and all, for the most part unaided, and having no set duties to perform, many of them smoking cigarettes, and one has a fair picture of a Japanese office.

Turning to the matter of the different parts of the same room, can't be most amusing to an uninitiated visitor. Why such confusion and annoyance, as this naturally gives rise to, is tolerated, is not for any foreigner to explain. The tardiness, indefiniteness and love of red-tape again are directly attributable to this lack of a far-seeing and all-round competent executive. These most undesirable attributes characterizing every institution from the central government down to the most petty business firm, it often costs a considerable time, and involves heavy expenses, to gain to conference with the Japanese, but when once admittance to his presence is gained, he is willing to listen, apparently quite contentedly, until the finish, even though one holds forth for hours. If a business transaction, of importance or otherwise, is being discussed, he has no cause for feeling annoyed, if after a score or more of conferences, the deal is no nearer a close than at the beginning. Indeed, such treacherous and nerve-rasping indefiniteness; this lack of inability or of willingness to decide is the rule, not the exception, and consequently the American man of enterprise, the lever of dispatch in all things, finds this system most trying, and altogether incompatible with his nature.

Indefiniteness, or perhaps better, indirectness, is one of their universally recognized and much cherished characteristics. It is being plainly visible in their economic fabric. A typical instance of this is seen in the method of distributing salaries. In fact, the clerks and officials are paid wages to laborers of every class. Instead of distributing the entire salary or wage over the whole year, paying it in regular and definitely fixed amounts, it is the universal practice to hold back a large percentage until the end of the year, then to render it as a bonus addition. While a certain amount is paid weekly or monthly, these amounts being in most cases definitely fixed, and while the bonus at the end of the year is counted upon, yet its amount is never known to the employee until he gets it, whether it is large or small, being entirely at the discretion of the employer. The tip and bonus system flourish as in no other country, every service, however trivial, meriting some reward. Perhaps the most peculiar instance of tipping is that in common practice, of tendering an amount to the proprietor of an hotel or tea-house, asking for one's bill. This is over and above the amount given servants, and from a moneyed or

otherwise distinguished guest, it is expected to equal or even exceed in amount the total amount afterwards presented him.

TIPPING IS PREVALENT

Again, in other connections, these tips often take the form of a commission, this, too, being very variable in application. In counting up the number of Japanese principals, bantos, and other subordinates, who receive a greater or less commission on the cases on the whole, is others on part of the contract price) for various direct and indirect services rendered, in closing up a certain government contract, while a foreign firm had in hand, a short time since, it was found that no fewer than 27 first and last participated, this number being exclusive of various tips given for less important services. If one tells a clerk or servant to call a karuma-ya (a rikisha boy), the probability that at the end of the ride the latter will demand five or ten sen extra, claiming, and in most cases with truthfulness, that he owes the money to the said clerk or servant as a commission for calling him. The household cooks receive a similar income from the grocery man and other merchants, from the curio and art dealers, to whom they direct purchasing tourists, etc. Settling bills direct, accurate, checking very rarely furnishes a remedy, as this by no means destroys the quiet and mutual understanding between one's subordinates and the supply houses.

To red-tape they are slaves; the letter, not the spirit of any rule or law, being almost always most scrupulously observed, and having no set duties to perform, many of them smoking cigarettes, and one has a fair picture of a Japanese office. As an instance it might be cited that very recently at Kobe port two bales of cotton were finally released from the custom house, having been detained over three months, they being destined to another port and put ashore at Kobe by mistake. The fact of this delay, this detention, might be reasonably overlooked, but every day furnishes additional and striking examples of its far-reaching effect. As an instance it might be cited that very recently at Kobe port two bales of cotton were finally released from the custom house, having been detained over three months, they being destined to another port and put ashore at Kobe by mistake. The fact of this delay, this detention, might be reasonably overlooked, but every day furnishes additional and striking examples of its far-reaching effect.

While, as has been stated, most of the so-called commercial and financial magnates are decidedly incapable, and short-sighted, the other hand, are both most diplomatic and formally self-important. If Japan is a land of petty, superficial, and shallow diplomacy, it is a country above all others where artificial gravity and veneered dignity, on the part of each in correspondence to his position in life, is affected to the advantage. By long and constant practice, many of them are very clever at this mental maneuvering, and so as to turn them to their own way of thinking and acting; while the young men coming up such up to acquire this coveted accomplishment, of being able to bring more or less superficial personal diplomacy to bear on their business relations. While the older men assume an outwardly important dignified personal air, the younger men are superficially quite contentedly, until the finish, even though one holds forth for hours. If a business transaction, of importance or otherwise, is being discussed, he has no cause for feeling annoyed, if after a score or more of conferences, the deal is no nearer a close than at the beginning. Indeed, such treacherous and nerve-rasping indefiniteness; this lack of inability or of willingness to decide is the rule, not the exception, and consequently the American man of enterprise, the lever of dispatch in all things, finds this system most trying, and altogether incompatible with his nature.

INSINCERITY IS GENERAL

Perhaps the most lamentable feature of Japanese commercial intercourse is the decided lack of reliability and sincerity in regular and definitely fixed amounts, it is the universal practice to hold back a large percentage until the end of the year, then to render it as a bonus addition. While a certain amount is paid weekly or monthly, these amounts being in most cases definitely fixed, and while the bonus at the end of the year is counted upon, yet its amount is never known to the employee until he gets it, whether it is large or small, being entirely at the discretion of the employer. The tip and bonus system flourish as in no other country, every service, however trivial, meriting some reward. Perhaps the most peculiar instance of tipping is that in common practice, of tendering an amount to the proprietor of an hotel or tea-house, asking for one's bill. This is over and above the amount given servants, and from a moneyed or

No foreigner ever enters into an extensive contract with a Japanese firm without first having every particular of the contract carefully stipulated, a good percentage of the contract price advanced on ordering the goods shipped, and the balance was paid for. Even with these precautions, cases of short payment or other difficulties in connection with the deal are frequent enough. In fact, a foreigner, who is not a Japanese, is never trusted a Japanese, of whatsoever rank or in any capacity, out of his sight, and very few are able to have them or sight any longer than possible. If one did not at all times discount their representations and statements, by half or more, he would be dealing constantly with moneyed potentates, with men of untold influence and importance, and of unquestionably upright principles. A race containing a large proportion of extravagant bluffers and of cool deceptions, has yet to be found.

The preceding, necessarily, more or less general character, and may be considered by the reader unfamiliar with Japan, somewhat harsh, and as by no means setting forth the Japanese man of business on his better side. The writer appreciates this fact, but regrets to add that in as far as he has been able to learn, there is very little in the way of redeeming features to give account of.

WONDERFUL PROGRESS

It must be admitted, however, that during the last few decades the Japanese nation has made wonderful progress. In the main, if not altogether, attributable to their coming in contact more and more with foreign ideas. While they have little or no originality in any line, they are yet wonderfully skillful at imitating, and the rapidly with which they have turned, and are continuing to turn, to their own advantage, foreign methods and inventions, is truly marvellous. Surely the outside world has made modern, industrial Ja-

pan what she is, nearly everything that the people have in the economic sphere, that is, worth knowing or having, having been borrowed from the more progressive European or American. Further, it is the well-grounded conviction of all foreigners who have been long in the country, that their presence, while not desired, is yet tolerated on account of their superior knowledge, and on account of the capital which they bring with them and cause to be circulated. The natives love and covet the foreigner's resources, both in the matter of mind and material things, but do not favor or suffer foreign control, except in so far as they are helpless to avoid it. In this, as in all things, they are purely selfish, never for a moment suspecting or recognizing the rights of others, or appreciating that there is any such thing as acquiring a bad name or reputation for themselves. In fact, crookedness seems to be reckoned common and even commendable, the remark often being passed, even among themselves, that such a man is too successful, to be honest.

Still, there is hope for the Japanese. With the diffusion of ideas, along industrial and commercial lines, let us hope that at the same time there may appear to them a clearer and clearer vision of the primary importance for developing and holding together a sound economic fabric, and in turn being true to that confidence reposed in them. Without the latter the former cannot be maintained, and the growth, in all truly progressive countries, the future for the Japanese cannot be what it otherwise might until they are able to stand on their own feet.

(Signed), W. M. D. LOCHHEAD,
No. 10 Kawaguchi-cho, Osaka, Japan.

IS BEELZEBUB A LIVING PERSON?

Have the Cohorts of Evil Actual Existence.

Chicago Doctor of Divinity Discusses An Absorbing Theological Question.

The question, What is the truth about Satan and demons? may, perhaps, be better answered otherwise than by comparing the views of so-called liberalism on the one hand with those of orthodoxy on the other, says Rev. Luther T. Townsend, D.D., (author of "Credo," "Bible Theology and Modern Thought"), in the Chicago Record-Herald's series of "Answers by Experts."

The truth according to liberalism is that the orthodox belief in Satan and demons has for its only basis either incredible Bible statements or erroneous interpretations of those statements.

On the other hand, the truth, according to the orthodox belief, is that Satan and demons are as really personal agencies as are any other beings in either the visible or invisible universe; that the Bible writers firmly believed them to be such; that they were created, but became sinners, as human beings do, by yielding to temptation; that a tendency to sin was thus established, which, having been followed for a long time, has become, according to a law of nature, a fixed habit, and therefore at this time that fixed habit has become an unalterable destiny; that they are now too firmly fixed in their power to do evil; that though they can move from place to place with the rapidity of spiritual entities, they are not omnipresent, and that through Satan's kingdom consists of innumerable hosts, it is a confederacy of anarchists, in which the ruling purpose of all is the overthrow of the kingdom of right, and the ruin of human souls; that Satan and demons will meet defeat after defeat, move on down to a place of imprisonment and punishment called hell; and that when all the necessities of the case are taken into account, the suffering of the damned will not disturb the serenity of God's boundless empire any more than a distant earthquake or volcanic eruption disturbs the serenity of the earth.

It is, therefore, the use of natural history, as Emerson says, is to aid in the interpretation of spiritual history, and if, as the apostle says, the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are perceived through the things that are made, then natural history is of profound aid in support of the orthodox belief concerning Satan and demons as is the Bible, and the orthodox belief is not only scriptural, but strictly scientific.

And, more than this, orthodoxy claims that the revelations of the Bible have strong support in the nature of things; that, for instance, the vegetable kingdom is crowded with grubs, moths, worms, and other insects and parasites that prey upon tree, plant, shrub and flower; that the animal kingdom is in a similar plight, and that the bodies and homes of the human family are no better off, being invaded by multitudes of disease and death-producing bacteria and microbes that have to be overcome by a daily resistance.

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