

America, Japan and the Pacific

JAPAN asks for nothing better than this:

That the United States should "arm" the Pacific—fortify Pearl Harbor in Hawaii ("the most wonderful and most vital sheet of water in the world"—so pronounced by an American naval officer, an expert and who has made a special study of the Pacific situation) fortify it adequately, dredge its entrance, defend it on the land side with adequate fortifications, etc.; also that she should make an up-to-date naval station of Subig Bay in the Philippines in whose possibilities almost all the American officers from Admiral Dewey down have confidence; and maintain on the Pacific a navy good enough to look anything afloat in that part of the world square in the eye and tell it to go home and be good.

The simple fact is that if all the American possessions in the Pacific were well fortified and defended and if the American Pacific fleet were twice as strong as that of Nippon, then Japan can build an additional battleship or two without furnishing a highly noticed feature to the Sunday newspaper. She can then protest against whatever there is to protest without fear of giving oravical market (California) a draught of eloquence. Then America would look upon the actions of Japan calmly and judge them sanely. In a free country like the United States where majority is the sovereign, what Japan is afraid of is excitement. She has seen the birth of the Spanish War. Japan was not afraid of the superb battleship fleet which America sent to our shores in 1908; we welcomed it, feasted our eyes on it; lantern-paraded through the streets of Tokyo in honor of its coming; feted its officers and men beyond our poverty-stricken means and sent them on with "Dodo mata o-ide kudasa!" Yes, if America had, right now, the whole strength of the British navy on the Pacific, no one could be more highly pleased than Japan.

What Japan is afraid of is the utter unpreparedness of the United States on the Pacific. Rather, the knowledge of the bad condition among the people of the United States. The consciousness of power might have motivated a war in the past. But certainly not one-tenth as often as the pany excitement which is ever the logical companion of the unprepared. And for the life of her, Japan can not see why or how it is that America does not at once create a big enough navy for the Pacific. The historic chip-on-the-shoulder Monroe doctrine is certainly no shy violet of a pretension. It is pretty big—as big as the two Americas. And a nation's armad strength looks becoming on her only when it is nicely tailored to its pretensions and dignity. The United States is amply able to have a formidable navy on the Pacific. Such a luxury might be expensive of course. It can not be a whit more so than the Philippines, though. And it is infinitely more vital to the peace of her national mind than that thankless white elephant in the South Seas. America needs a great Pacific fleet based at Pearl Harbor, Subig Bay, Puget Sound, San Francisco, San Diego. She is amply able to create and maintain it. Why not have it then and at once? Only Japan feels that it is not quite fair to drag her into the thing every time an American patriot gets up in Congress for the aforesaid noble course—and faces the press gallery. As a matter of simple and everyday fact, Japan has little to do with the American scheme of defense on the Pacific. It is none of her concern—for this all important reason: Unlike Russia, unlike Germany, the United States is not looking for a new empire in the Far East. Therefore, Japan has never worried about America. But America has about Japan—all along. For example this: You read it some years ago: It was the Friday morning, the seventeenth of March, 1911.

"Every nation on earth except our own believes that Japan is preparing—and has already prepared—for a war with the United States. Leading Japanese statesmen now believe and say that JAPAN as a great world power CANNOT CONTINUE TO EXIST UNTIL SHE POSSESSES NAVAL SUPREMACY IN THE PACIFIC. . . . JAPAN CAN NOT HAVE that supremacy in the Pacific without FIGHTING THE UNITED STATES. Therefore JAPAN WILL FIGHT (I presume that I need not say that capitals are not mine.) Japan knows that she is better able to fight now than she has ever been. . . . She knows that the United States will never be so ill prepared to fight as now. . . . Japan knows that when the Panama Canal is completed and fortified the great navy of the United

States will be double in value. . . . And therefore Japan knows that she must fight, if at all, before 1915 when the canal is to be finished."

Well, the great Panama Canal is finished. The kid year of 1915 is piping lustily in the cradle. And the Japanese war—the vile heathen attack on the domains of the peace-loving United States—is. . . oh, yes, it is right there, still flaming in all the colors of volcanic rainbow in the prophetic vision of the able and above all very logical editorial writer.

Years before the above quoted editorial was published; that is to say, in October, 1907, an American patriot sounded a warning saying:

"Japan must now regard the time as ripe. . . . It is not necessary to bring up the report, undenied, that Japan was negotiating for the purchase of an island of the Dutch East Indies abreast of Manila; that Japanese engineers were found locating bases in the highlands of Luzon from which to signal to Formosa, and the Japanese inspectors have swarmed over all the defenses of the island. . . . That a party of Japanese from Formosa have taken Parau, one of the small uninhabited northern islands of the Philippine group. It is clear that Japan has made all her preparations for invading the Philippines. . . . For the immediate future, therefore, our motto must be: "Build ships and eat dirt."

On the heel of such an array of evidences, thoroughly established and authenticated as facts over seven long years ago, it might be a bit of monumental impertinence on the part of Nippon to say anything at all on her own behalf. Still, this is as good a time as any for her to make some sort of statement. And no answer will be half as good as to point to the completed Canal, to the utter minus of a Japanese attack, and to ask the gentleman from Alabama just what came out of all the formidable array of Japanese activities against the Philippines. And after that assure her American friends that the cup she drained at San Francisco over immigration, landownership et al was the bitterest that her national pride has ever quaffed. She might add, too, that she is not so particular as to what sort of "dirt" she might be made to eat at the hands of California, now that she is getting used to it.

The editorial writer of the New York "American" was right in saying that Japan will strike—if at all—before the Panama Canal will have been completed. Mr. Hobson was right in saying, 1907, that Japan must regard "the time as ripe." The trouble was that both of these gentlemen were wrong on one little point—Japan has or has had no such fancy idea as committing a national harakiri by attacking the United States at any time.

Not, mind you, that Japan thinks that America will blow her off the map before breakfast if war should come. Not that she thinks it impossible for her to get Hawaii. Japan indeed thinks that she could get the Hawaiian and the Philippines, the Samoan and other islands of the Pacific belonging to the United States and that rather easily. Indeed, she does not quite see the American occupation of Hondo, Shikoku, Kyushu, Hokkaido, etc., she has never yet lost a single moment of sleep. Japan knows that she can take Hawaii—unless things change radically. She knows the American temperament; how impatient, it is in matters of national honor. Or all that Japan has to do is to take Hawaii; fortify it fortifiably, garrison it with ample force; leave the Philippines as a bait and then sit down in her well sheltered and gun-fenced waters, become a trifle more extravagant in mines and submarines and watch what miracles the American fleet would be capable of in operating six thousand miles from the home base. That is, if America be the only power to reckon with. But it isn't. There is the rub.

The fact is Japan could never see the United States in the light of a menace. She has always looked upon the American-Japanese war talk as something rather useful to professional newspaper humorists when they get very hard up for jokes to fill up his column. It is not difficult to take this view of the thing when we are told that Japan is actually trying to fight her best friend she has ever had, international-politically speaking and by far the best customer she has, for the sole ecstasy of hoisting another white elephant into her almost broken back. (In the September 12th issue of the "Weekly," this aspect of the situation has been covered somewhat at length.) This explains the opening paragraph of the editorial leader of the "Yorozu Cho" (very modest both in size and price, but nevertheless commands perhaps the

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ablest editorial pen among all the dailies of Tokyo) in the issue for the 24th of May, 1911:

"We have always thought that the America-Japanese war is a curio only to be found in America, England, Germany, France and other European states. Is it possible that it is going to make its appearance in Nippon also?"

That is to say, some four years after Captain Hobson's stirring series of articles had made their appearance through American dailies, the editor of one of the liveliest metropolitan newspapers in Japan, is shocked to find that any of his countrymen should put on a bluff of taking an old chestnut as that seriously, even for election purposes.

The above may strike an American as something new, although it is three and a half years old: cable tolls between America and Japan is still expensive—except for a circulation-boosting sensation beat of a war rumor. Moreover the above news would appear to him as a puzzle. He would ask the most natural of questions:

"If the American-Japanese war talk is a mere joke with you, what about your feverish war preparations? Against whom are you arming—again

what possible eventualities? After the war with Russia, when the one fleet to be feared by Japan had been destroyed, when the vessels captured in the war constituted a substantial increase in the Japanese navy, when the heavy burdens laid upon the people by the war called for economies, especially in view of the fact that by the treaty of Portsmouth the expected war indemnity was denied to the victors it would have been natural for you to take a little rest. Did you give your tax-burdened people a breathing spell? Why, you increased your naval and army appropriations more than ever before. Just what was and is your idea?"

The answer—very simple and equally apparent—is Russia. Of course there are people who say that the Russo-Nippon war ended with the Portsmouth Treaty—some American newspapers and the gentlemen of peace societies among others. Russia evidently does not take this view. Before the war (which she could not see how it could possibly come) she used to throw five hundred ruble cement blocks into the waters of Dalny Bay joshing herself with the fine idea that she was laying the foundation of a new Empire in the East. To-day—in fact immediately after the war, she

changed all that. She has been (or was in the years following the cessation of the war) sending out to Siberia, settlers at the rate of 50,000 a month according to the "Novoe Vremya," giving them one hundred rubles in cash, freeing them from taxes and military services for a specific period of time, furnishing them agricultural implements free of charge and a cheap railway transportation out to the East. Now this is a fairly thick handwriting on the wall for any one to read. And Japan is not the most careless of readers of this sort of messages.

Naturally enough, there is not a single optimist in Japan who is optimistic enough to think that Russia is through with us. Now to fight Russia at the end of six-thousand mile single track railway is one thing. To fight her with the thoroughly double-tracked trans-Siberian service and with the few millions of her well-seasoned pioneers planted on the spit, rooted and acclaimed in the very theatre of operations, is quite another matter. Japan knows it. She has been acting rather naturally—in the light of this knowledge. This is the reason why no one—not even as clever a man as the editorial writer of the Hearst papers, can ever trans-

late her actions in terms of horse sense logic; they do not tune with the fancy fandango of an American Japanese war.

But what of our naval expansion? The above stated reasons might explain the army expansion of Japan, but her navy, is she really afraid of the Russian navy? Not exactly. The Japanese impatience for a large navy (and this article was written on the very day when the Imperial Diet of Nippon was dissolved over the question of the military increases in the 1915 budget) is cradled and has its being in the following considerations:

The command of the Japan and the China seas is vital to the life of the empire—just on general principles. Her wealth in coast line—including those of Sawhalin, Formosa, Korea, etc.—is absurdly embarrassing. The number of the ships in her present navy is equally embarrassing in its poverty, in times of need. Moreover, bringing this generality (which does not glitter at all in the haunted vision of the Japanese) to a particular and practical possibility, Japan had not and has not lost sight of the German navy. She has watched the melodramatic role of the Kaiser all through the trying days of the Russian war. She

knew that he was playing politics with Russia. She knew also that the German emperor did not dislike to see Russia crippled at the hand and expense of Japan. With all that, she knew also and moreover that the Kaiser would much rather talk the real business, namely the partition of the Chinese empire—so dear to his Germanic Majesty's heart—with his brother the Tsar than with a lot of heathens like the Japanese. Between the two—that is to say between the Japanese and the Russian—the Kaiser would not hesitate a minute to take his choice. This also Japan knew. And she thought this—does to-day think so—very natural on the part of the Kaiser. It is pleasant to dream of dwelling in friendly tune with one's neighbour. And the present war affords nothing, to the Japanese way of thinking, that would alter her opinion on this point. Perhaps something like this might have been lurking behind the gorgeous lantern parade through the streets of Tokyo the other day in celebration of the fall of Kiau-chau.

NOW that the one formidable German naval base in the Far East is in the hands of Japan, what is she worrying about?

He—especially a power which is ticketed as ambitious by its brother powers—who puts his trust in what to-morrow might or might not bring forth, is a sadder gambler than a Wall Street plunger on one point margin. Japan knows his and knows also that a radical shift in the grouping of powers might come like a thief in the night and with the suddenness of a turn of a kaleidoscope in the hands of a capricious child. We know that to-day Great Britain is our ally. "Alas we must remember," said our Premier, Count Okuma, in urging the military expansion of the empire at this time, "that the solidarity of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance depends upon the strength of this Empire." We have already had a poignant hint in the peace rumor between Germany and Russia which was published a few days ago. There are people in Japan—be they right or they wrong—who hold that the party with whom Europe has to settle up her books in the end is neither the Kaiser nor Austria. And even if Germany and Austria be present on the judgment day, the White Master of the North,

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Every nation on earth except our own believes that Japan is preparing—and has already prepared—for a war with the United States. Leading Japanese statesmen now believe and say that JAPAN as a great world power CANNOT CONTINUE TO EXIST UNTIL SHE POSSESSES NAVAL SUPREMACY IN THE PACIFIC.

JAPAN CAN NOT HAVE that supremacy in the Pacific without FIGHTING THE UNITED STATES. Therefore JAPAN WILL FIGHT (I presume that I need not say that capitals are not mine.) Japan knows that she is better able to fight now than she has ever been. . . . She knows that the United States will never be so ill prepared to fight as now. . . . Japan knows that when the Panama Canal is completed and fortified the great navy of the United

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