AMERICA SIXTY YEARS AGO

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(MR. OTOBA ACCOMPANIED THE FIRST JAPANESE EMBASSY TO THE UNITED STATES OVER SIXTY YEARS AGO)

FROM:

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MARCH 13.--Envoy Shimmi Buzen and two others returned from San Francisco and reported that the Americans did not expect a visit from the Japanese warship Kanrin Maru, expecting only the Powhattan which brought the Japanese envoy to America. As the Japanese ship arrived, however, before the return of the Powhattan all were very much delighted. The Americans were astonished at the progress made in seamanship by the Japanese, only Japanese being on the warship, with the exception of the American officer, named "Fruke," the latter expressing admiration at the art of navigation displayed by the Japanese captain, Katsu Rintaro. (Subsequently he became the famous Katsu Awa and was made a Count:--Ed.)

March 18.--Left that place. On March 5th of our old calendar we arrived at Panama and on March 6th proceeded to Aspinwall by train from Panama, going on board the "Ronok" (Rowanoke) by small boat from the shore. A ship was awaiting us by Government order. March 7th we
sailed.

March 20.--(Old calendar now onwards) A very misty day and cold. One American visited our ship in a sail boat, showing us a newspaper reporting the death of Townsend Harris and inquiring as to the truth of it. It was said to have happened just before or after we left Japan. But we knew nothing of the matter. That evening our ship anchored off "Lonilan" (Long Island), the mouth of New York. That night an American visited our ship and talked with the captain as to whether the Japanese should land or be escorted at once to "Hasington" (Washington).

March 21.--Stopped on board. No decision yet as to our landing.

March 22.--Rain. In the afternoon we left. It was very cold and the Americans brought us woolen clothes and advised us to wear them, as our sleeves were so open. They told us that the cold would pierce the skin and then we should be ill, so we had better wear closesleeved garments. They were as kind to us as brothers. But we had reluctantly to decline their offers, as we were forbidden by law to wear foreign garments.

March 24.--Clear weather. The "Philtolpia" (Philadelphia) came to receive us, and we embarked on her and changed our dress. The ship is indescribably fine. Eighty Americans have been charged with the duty of arranging our reception.
They wear black clothes, gold tassels and a sword. The musicians have uniforms bearing some 38 crests. They play flutes, blow trumpets and beat drums. On going on board the Captain brought us into his reception hall. There we were soon entertained with delicacies of numerous kinds, including beef, fowl or pork. Very few of us ate any of them as each delicacy had a very peculiar smell never before experienced by us.

March 25.—Weather clear. We went very fast up the river, "Potmoc" (Potomac) and arrived at "Hasington" (Washington), in the afternoon. It is over 90 days since we left Japan. We congratulated ourselves on our safe arrival without any accident after so long a journey. When our ship reached land a salute was fired and then we landed. An American high official led Envoy Lord Shimmi Buzen by the hand. A company of infantry stood guard on both sides of the road. There were also cavalry men and some sixty or seventy musicians. The soldiers carried muskets and the musicians played. The citizens flocked to see us, climbing on trees and roofs. The scene was very bustling and much confusion reigned. After we had advanced a short distance the guards divided, some proceeding before us and the rest behind. After proceeding a distance we took carriages, which were escorted by troops. The spectators cried loudly and greeted us by waving their hats. The flags of America and Japan were hoisted over the doors. Some waved them in token of congratulation and welcome, and others waved white pieces of cotton. Whenever our
carriages stopped men, women and children approached us wishing to shake our hands, which we understand to be a sign of courtesy. After going about two miles through streets we came to our hotel, which is three times as big as the one we, stopped at in San Francisco. As we entered the hotel there were hundreds of spectators lined along the corridors to get a sight of us. "Hashinton" (Washington) has a population of about 80,700. is a place of good feeling and no one has ever jeered at us as foreigners!

March 26.--Cloudy. Hundreds of men and women visited the hotel to see us Japanese. Many people assembled under the windows of the hotel. They much value Japanese porcelain or dishes. We threw some one sen coppers to them and they struggled for them like hungry dogs scrambling for a scrap of meat. As we passed from our rooms to go to the Envoy’s apartments hundreds of people in the corridors struggled to shake bands with us and salute us. Some invited us to their rooms but we declined, as we were strictly forbidden to go. The whole day we spent in the hotel.

The American President is selected by ballot and holds office for four years. His yearly salary is said to be 60,000 dollars by some, but other assert it to be only 40,000 dollars. I do not know which is true. The Americans are generous and honest. They never jeer at foreigners or insult them. They are very deliberate in all they do. They seem like the Japanese rural folk who are yet ignorant of city life.
Englishmen are sharp, often ridicule us and sometimes insult us. Apparently they are jealous of our visit to America and would like to create bad feelings between Japan and the United States. One of the illustrated papers in "Hashinton" (Washington) represents a Japanese and an American walking together hand in hand and an Englishman crying beside them. The American people behave in Christianity and listen to sermons every Sunday. They are forbidden to drink intoxicants or to be drunken, except on the day next to Sunday.

March 28.--Cloudy again. We proceeded to the mansion of the President to see him. A company of infantry with woolen uniforms decorated in yellow cord, came to escort us from the hotel, together with 25 musicians. Lord Shimmi Busen and the two officials next in rank to him wore the *kariginu* and other officials the *suo* or *noshime-asa-kamiskimo*, and the petty attendants wore the *fumikomi marubaori*. Mr. Naruse Zenshiro, chief of our Foreign section, advanced in a carriage, followed by a lancer. Then came the Chief of the embassy and vice chiefs, other officials and attendants in carriages. The crowds were very great, people climbing trees to get a sight of us. The guards kept step while marching. After proceeding several *cho* we reached the mansion of the President. It was surrounded with iron tailings with iron gateposts at the entrance. Here the guards and musicians remained and did not enter, but our carriages entered the ground. On either side of the
passage way were green lawns, and the porch extended out some 20 ken. There we got out, and high officials welcomed us and led the Chief Envoy and his two vice-chiefs into a grand hall, we following behind. On both sides of the hall were stone images, small. Outside the hall was a corridor some 20 ken long, which had a fancy carpet. We attendants waited there, and the envoy and suite were in a room near by, seated on chairs and resting. Soon afterwards the President appeared on the left side of the hall opposite the corridor (verandah). He was followed by high officials with ladies and their children. The officials in charge of the reception led the three envoys to meet the President. The three bowed twice as he entered and then proceeded towards him and saluted after the Japanese manner, the President returning the salutation by bowing. Then there was conversation for a while, after which the envoys retired a little from the President and renewed conversation with others. The President looked to be a man of about 52 or 53 years of age. He is tall and has grey hair, and is apparently a little shortsighted. He is gentle in countenance, always smiling. His dress was like that of others. We left the President's mansion at half past twelve. Then the Chief Envoy and his suite visited the Ministers of Great Britain and France.

March 29.--The Dutch Minister called on our Envoy, and in the afternoon our Envoy visited the Russian Minister. The presents set by the Shogun to the President were on view in the hotel room. They included two swords, folding
screens, a bookcase, twenty rolls of silk brocade, three *kakemono*, one damask silk curtain and a set of harness. The high Government officials and their families came to see the presents; and photographers came to take pictures of them. That evening the envoys were invited to a reception by the Secretary of State.

March 30.--Clear weather. We all went to the mansion of the President on his invitation. Arriving at the house we were led by officials into a room overlooking a garden, and we sat in chairs. In the garden were many trees in full bloom, presenting a scene like unto snow or haze. The garden gate opened and hundreds of men and women came in to look at us. We were probably invited for exhibition. Some of us thought this quite ridiculous and complained of it.

April 5.--Weather clear. We attendants were allowed to take a walk, and passed along the streets with a guide. After a distance of 15 *cho* or so we came to a field where were many fine trees and plants, and many Americans came around us. Some of them presented paper and pencil and requested us to give them our autographs. Some of them brought their infants and caused them to salute us. Others touched our clothes, and asked us to draw our swords to show them. These were persons not permitted to see us at the hotel, and so they gathered in hundreds when we went outside, wishing to shake hands
with us or salute us. They respect us, as Japan and America are quite friendly, and their people have the same mind, so that they cannot be loyal Americans unless they are friendly with the Japanese. So we are obliged to endure the noise made by the Americans. The sailors of the "Ronok" (Rowanoke) salute us when meeting us on the streets and we salute them, being acquainted with them. The other citizens are envious of them. Every day men and women gather under our hotel windows, when we throw them coins and they vie with one another in securing them. Those who are successful show them to their friends and go away thanking us. Wealthy people came to the hotel in carriages and ask us to give them even small pieces of paper or some article, the request coming through the reception committee; and when we give them anything they thank us cordially and go off. Some want our visiting cards, which they carefully put in a bag.

As we walk along the streets citizens beseech us to come to their houses, and if we call without invitation they are all the more rejoiced. When we call they entertain us with tea, and even call together their neighbours. Their humanity is admirable, and it is most pleasant to note their respect for the Japanese. Even the more respectable Americans do not treat the Chinese with similar cordiality. China is looked down upon as barbarous by foreign countries. At the time of the Opium War ten years ago China was defeated by England, and when the British peace commissioners were on their way to Pekin the Chinese lay in ambush to kill
them, the heads of the foreigners being exposed as a
warning. Thus acting with such rude unfaithfulness to those
who trade in foreign lands, the Chinese are despised as
barbarians. Most Japanese dislike Europeans and
Americans and some even killed them, though we are not
so anti-foreign as the Chinese. Yet the Japanese fear that
they may be treated with the contempt shown to China and
so are now more careful in their conduct toward foreigners.
The western people are not like us in any way, yet they
favour foreigners like brothers. Above all, the Americans,
whose country is new and whose sentiment is good, love
the Japanese as above described. How can we ever
entertain any malicious intent in regard to honest and good
Americans! In America even high officials do not scold their
subordinates and the latter yet do not flatter their superiors.
The country is rich and peaceful. No Japanese who sees
this can fail to admire it. We Japanese visitors numbering
77 had been accustomed for the most part to despise
foreigners and show them no good will. But on coming here
and seeing personally their conduct we have repented our
former misunderstanding. Those who despise foreigners
must be called rude and inhuman. It is our duty to learn their
real character and return their kindness justly, without
coming unduly under their fascination. In this way we shall
keep their respect for us for ever.
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