

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

In adding this slim volume to the steadily accumulating mass of books about the Orient, a word of explanation is desirable.

To many Americans the Orient is still a country of strange sights and sounds, a curious unreal dreamland of temple bells and opium dens, of *geisha* girls and mandarins, of lotus blooms and cherry blossoms. Somehow it is not often emphasized that Orientals are men and women like ourselves, stirred by the same emotions, influenced by the same needs, faced with the same problems. There is, of course, an element of truth in the belief that there are immutable differences between East and West; but that is no reason why so much of our literature on the subject should be long on the side of fantasy, short on the side of fact.

To many more Americans the countries of China and Japan, even our own great Asiatic possession, the Philippines, are countries where the inhabitants refuse to behave with the same good sense that is shown in Switzerland, Ecuador, or Bermuda. China, to this school, is a vast and teeming territory where war lords with incomprehensible names are always fighting, and always making life objectionable for long-suffering foreigners. Japan is synonymous with the "yellow peril," agog to seize the Philippines or otherwise force war upon America. As for the Filipinos, they are a trying people, strangely subservient to the wiles of unscrupulous "politicians," who circumvent our every effort to be nice. For all such exaggerations another sort of Oriental writ-

ing would seem responsible—that produced by the subtle propagandist. It is a game which Asiatics also play.

Between the romanticist and the propagandist, between the total ignorance of Asia encouraged in our schools and colleges and the prohibitive cable tolls which still keep news dispatches from that continent at a minimum, there is room—ample room—for more writing which concerns itself with evidence impartially selected. Even the ignoramus, when he tells without bias just what he himself has seen, may often be the all-important figure in a court of law. Regarding my shortcomings as an “authority” on the Far East I have no illusions; but I have found through personal acquaintance in the Orient that many of the “authorities” have some particular cause to serve, some special thesis not unconnected with their living to expound. In our current literature on the East we need more testimony from impartial witnesses, fewer fairy tales—and fewer diatribes from prosecuting attorneys with fat retaining fees.

If this book contains any special pleading, it is only where I am convinced that the clear evidence justifies such treatment. If there is anything in the rather prosaic subjects treated which can be characterized as sentiment, it is because sentiment, as distinct from sentimentality, is a factor demanding consideration in any study of human affairs. What follows is the work of a newspaper man, with a taste for, and some training in, the studies of politics and economics. Its guiding theme has been the fair selection, from the vast mass of material available, of such subjects as the writer considers essential to a better and more intelligent understanding of the Orient by America.

In the late autumn of 1925 the Baltimore *Sun* assigned to me, as a member of its editorial staff, the pleasant task of visiting Japan, China, and the Philippines, there to investigate at first hand, political, social, and eco-

conomic conditions and tendencies. When I departed on this adventure, consuming five months of time and 25,000 miles of traveling, nothing was further from my intentions than the little book which here eventuates. I only regretted, as gradually I overcame an abysmal ignorance of the Orient, that in my undergraduate days the Far East found no place in any phase of the curriculum. It was this deficiency, I think, which fostered the idea that an unpretentious volume along the lines followed herein might be of interest and value to American students in and out of college.

As time went on, and I observed on every hand the reciprocal interest and growing importance of America to the East and the East to America, it slowly dawned on me that my assignment was *in parvo* that of the American people at this stage of our development as a world power. So, when in Manila the suggestion reached me that I put my articles in permanent form, the title at least was written. To the material originally printed in *The Sun* much has been added, including expressions of personal opinion for which that journal cannot be held responsible.

Needless to say my thanks are due and heartily given to the A. S. Abell Company, publishers of the *Baltimore Sun*, not merely for permitting republication of correspondence sent them, but even more for splendid journalistic ideals, of which my tour of inquiry in the Orient is but a single expression. To the *American Review*, also, is due appreciation for permission to reprint much of an article written for that magazine. For the host of individuals who, mostly unwittingly, have made this study possible, a general expression of gratitude, though inadequate, must suffice. The maps and photographs are my own.

Where so much of importance and interest had perforce to be omitted, a difference in treatment between

the Japanese, Chinese, and Philippine sections of the book became inevitable. The guiding rule in every case of selection was what the author, from his own education in the Orient, considers basic to a more profitable understanding of the Far East by America. If "Our Far Eastern Assignment" serves as an introduction to more comprehensive study of the problems treated, it will have served its purpose.

FELIX MORLEY.

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