

## XIX

### JAPAN

ONE day in 1920 I had received a visit from a beautiful, intelligent young Japanese woman, the Baroness Shidzue Ishimoto, wife of Baron Keikichi Ishimoto, whose father had been Minister of War during the Russo Japanese conflict. I gave a tea for the Baroness, and naturally the talk came of a visit to the Orient. It seemed at that time a remote possibility but before the end of the year an invitation had come from the *Kaizo* group. This group of liberal intellectuals, representing young Japan, published a radical monthly called *Reconstruction* in which four of my articles on birth control had appeared. It aimed to bring to the attention of the young generation in Japan the most challenging, significant thought of our Occidental world.

The *Kaizo* organization had planned to have four representatives of European and American thought lecture to their countrymen. The first was Bertrand Russell, who delivered a series of lectures on reconstruction from the philosophical angle. The second, I am proud to say, was myself, the third,

Albert Einstein and the fourth H G Wells, who unfortunately did not make the trip

Japan's interest in birth control was based on more powerful factors than curiosity. The problem of overpopulation was yearly becoming more acute. The older, conservative, militaristic, nationalist group advocated a larger population. The younger, liberal, educated group, many of whom had traveled and attended Occidental universities, expounded a cultured, peaceful future for Japan. The subject of birth control was grasped at as one very potent means of solving the population problem of the future. My articles in the Japanese monthly, *Reconstruction* had aroused intense interest and discussion on the subject in radical as well as liberal circles.

It had been arranged that I should go to the Orient in March, 1922. It was not an easy thing for me to leave the battleground of my country, where the Town Hall episode was still in the air, to take the subject to the Orient. If all the arrangements for my going had not been made long before, I should have postponed the trip to another year. This was not now possible.

Owing to the excitement caused by the various reactions to the Town Hall raid, I neglected to apply early enough for my passport. Accordingly, at the last minute, so to speak, I sent in my application. I was told in New York that it had best be sent directly to me in San Francisco.

Besides the Ishimotos there were many leaders of thought and public opinion in the Japanese Empire already seeking facts and statistics as proving arguments in defense of their stand for birth control. Mr. Suzuki, a prominent labor leader, Professor Isa Abe, a sociologist of Tokyo University, Dr. Kato, head of the Department of Medical Affairs, who came to this country to study the birth control movement, were only a few of those who were convinced that the government must solve her population problem through general practice and properly directed means of birth control.

The month of January, 1922, preceding my departure for the Orient was one of almost hectic excitement. As I look

back over those years and see my almost single handed work and activities it seems simply phenomenal. The Town Hall hearings were being arranged and postponed, newspaper interviews had to be granted almost daily, thousands of letters had to be replied to, and besides these activities my departure for Japan was the means of gathering together new people at farewell dinners and luncheons and capturing their interest.

At last we arrived in San Francisco, with a happy heart but humble spirit, for I felt that the task before me was stupendous, and, as always, I was torn with doubts and misgivings as to my ability to do it well. To take the message of Birth Control to Japan was a great honor, but it was also a tremendous responsibility.

Then came the shock. Much to my surprise, when, with my thirteen year-old son Grant, I applied for a visa to the Japanese Consul, we were told, with many apologies, that the Imperial Government had cabled directions to refuse me admission.

I felt the exhilarating flush that the prospect of a battle always starts in me. I asked the consul to ascertain the government's stand on my coming to Japan, not to lecture on birth control, but as an individual. The answer came back. It was the polysyllabic Japanese equivalent for our abrupt no. Even a promise of public silence on the dread doctrines was not sufficient to satisfy the authorities.

Past experience had taught me that when there is an autocratic and arbitrary screen placed between birth control and the people there is a keen interest and desire for knowledge behind it.

I knew that official opposition was the greatest stimulus to popular interest. I knew also, from the scores of Japanese friends with whom I had spoken, that the people of Japan were vitally interested in the idea. I resented this peremptory and baseless interference. I decided to fight this battle with the Imperial Government with the most subtle of all weapons, diplomacy.

The steamship company cancelled my passage because my

passport had not been visaed by the Japanese Consul I went to the office of the Chinese consul and applied for a visa to Shanghai. It was granted without any hesitation. I returned to the steamship company, secured passage for Shanghai, obtained the same stateroom I had previously booked, and sailed from San Francisco on the day I had originally planned. The steamer was to stop at Japan on the way.

Aboard the boat, the *Taiyo Maru* I discovered as fellow passengers more than 150 Japanese returning from the Washington Peace Conference, including the two delegates, Admiral Baron Kato, later Prime Minister of Japan, and Mr Masanao Hanihara, who at that time was vice minister of foreign affairs. These distinguished Japanese were ever friendly and helpful, as people of sincerity and wide culture always are.

Mr Ulrich Thompson had arranged a meeting in Honolulu. We landed there at one in the afternoon, and were to sail at five. The lecture had been arranged for two. I was met at the dock by Mr and Mrs Dillingham and taken to their Waikiki home—of magic beauty—for a hurried lunch. Immediately afterwards we drove over to the Lester Dancing Academy, where five hundred chairs had been placed to accommodate the audience. We arrived to find every bit of space filled by the crowd, and the windows crowded with interesting, alert faces. Judge Sanford B. Dole, known as the good old man of the Blessed Isles, took the chair and introduced me to the enthusiastic, picturesque audience. I spoke for an hour and was received with great enthusiasm, which was as keen among the Japanese as among the American residents. Then we were rushed out to the Country Club for tea, and I was questioned further. Two Japanese editors carried on their questioning as we sped back to the boat. During my few hours stay the nucleus of a Hawaiian Birth Control League was formed.

This warm-hearted demonstration in Honolulu reacted favorably upon the passengers on the *Taiyo Maru*. During the next two weeks everyone seemed to be discussing the question of birth control. They crowded into my cabin to ask questions

Finally, I was invited to address the Japanese delegation. Admiral Kato and Mr Hanihara attended. The feelings of my own countrymen were hurt because they were not invited, so I had to speak to them also.

My arguments fell on fertile soil. Mr Hanihara sent a radiogram to his government stating that, in his opinion, the subject of birth control, as he had heard it expounded, was in no way offensive to public morals. He recommended that his government lift the ban, permit me to enter Japan, and allow the free discussion of this problem.

To the observer of the trend of affairs in Japan perhaps the most significant phase of the dispute over my admission was the number of times official decisions concerning it were reversed. It is probable that if I had essayed to make speeches on birth control ten years before this time the announcement would simply have been that I could not enter and that there the matter would have ended.

Now the procedure was a little different. Days before my arrival it was announced in Japan that I could not land. Immediately, like a deluge of hornets, came pouring down on the heads of the officials the protests of the younger men in the Home and Foreign offices. Editorials appeared regretting the high handed procedure. Foreign papers were frankly critical.

The storm continued to brew, and it was finally announced unofficially that I might land if I would promise to conduct myself with proper dignity and not to talk while I was in Japan. Still further protests!

Oh, very well then, I might talk, but not publicly, and under no conditions concerning birth control. Continued derision on the part of the press was added to the vociferous objections of Young Japan.

All right! I might speak publicly if I wished, but not on the subject of birth control. One report one day, and another the next. There was nothing to do but to have patience and wait.

Two days before landing I began to receive radio messages

from Japan. One read 'Thousands disciples welcome you', another 'Possible land Yokohama, welcome discourse'. The following day, however, this was amended to 'Possible land Yokohama, impossible discourse'. Radio messages from all kinds of organizations asked me to lecture from the medical associations of Kyoto, the Cultural Society of Kobe, a commercial group in Tokyo, and an industrial group of Yokohama. I received an aerial greeting from the doctors of Nagoya and another from the Young Men's Christian Association of Tokyo. And still I had not been definitely assured that I would be permitted to land! At any rate, it was some satisfaction to know that the opposition of the government had aroused the Japanese press and public to a discussion of birth control. For experience had taught me that once people begin to discuss birth control seriously the battle is half won.

That was how things stood when we arrived at Yokohama harbor on the tenth of March. As the *Taiyo Maru* entered the bay, she was surrounded by a fleet of small craft. Government officials, health officials, representatives of the police department, and a large number of newspaper men and cameramen flocked on board. I learned later that no less than seventy permits to board the *Taiyo Maru* had been issued to the representatives of the press to interview me on birth control. Then I had to submit to the severest test and strain of my journey.

For three hours I was closeted with a government official, an interpreter, and a stenographer. At the end of that time the official agreed to remove the ban if the American consulate general in Japan would make a formal request to permit me to land.

I had sent already, by radio, a message to the American consul asking him, as an American, to use his power in this direction. I told him that I wished to visit Japan, if not as a propagandist, at least as a private citizen. Now, after this conference, I rushed off another cable telling him how he could aid me.

I waited for the reply of our American consul. It did not

come Not only did the representative of my government refuse to make a formal request for my admission, but he did not even show me the courtesy of a reply to either of my messages He was in a blue funk all the time I was in Japan—that silent, unhelpful, fearful, ungracious, representative of our democracy!

At seven thirty that evening, without the sponsorship of the agitated American consul, but due to great popular pressure and protest, it was as an individual that the Imperial Government at last opened its gates to me

The final ordeal was to undergo the inspection of the customs officials After having most of my books confiscated, I was allowed to land A graphic description of that victory was given in the *Japan Times* the following day

Mrs Sanger was allowed to land in this country last night after a series of negotiations that made the diplomacy of the Washington Conference look like child's play She will remain here for some time, and hopes to have an opportunity of discussing, with doctors at least, her theories on birth control But she has promised the police that she will be good' and make no attempt to deliver any public addresses on the subject

When the *Taiyo* arrived at quarantine, she was surrounded by a fleet of small craft police launches tenders of the *Toyo Kisen Kaisha* service, health officers boats, government vessels, mail tenders and press dispatch carriers After the police and health officers had finished their official duties, the reporters were allowed to board the ship

An army of star writers from Tokyo—the authorities said that they issued seventy passes to these men alone—a dozen regular waterfront reporters, and a few foreign correspondents swarmed up the gangway of the ship, which bore nearly three hundred distinguished persons as first cabin passengers, including two Japanese delegates

to the Washington Conference and members of their suite

The eager news men rushed up the gangway and scurried about in search of a notable news story. Was it Admiral Baron Kato they sought? It was not. A dozen disgruntled shorthand men dropped out of the herd to take notes on the Envoy's address in the dining room, but the others flocked onward until they found the modest quarters wherein abode a modest little American woman and her handsome young son. Mrs Sanger and the Cause of Birth Control were what the press of Japan was interested in—the Peace Conference was an old story.

Mrs Sanger was surprised and pleased by the intelligent questions that were asked about her mission. She answered each interrogator simply, comprehensively and with admirable patience.

Free at last from the customs inquisitor, I was approached by several rickshaw men who had come as representatives of the Rickshaw Men's Union to welcome me to Japan. One, who spoke a little English, courteously apologized for the unwarranted action of the Home Office. "You do not mind," he said. "Sometime Japanese Government he little autocratic. I did not mind. In fact, I almost felt at home. Comstock, though dead, maintains an equally autocratic rule in America to which the public bows and grovels. We dare not lift our heads at home, so it befits us to take orders abroad humbly."

If it had been the object of the Imperial Japanese Government to focus interest upon birth control and to give world wide publicity to my activities, it could have chosen no more effective tactics. First it had refused to visa my passport, then it had permitted me to come to Japan on the condition of my refraining from speaking on birth control. Each step of my visit was followed by the American and the Oriental press. The newspapers of Great Britain carried the news. The action of the Japanese government was to whet interest in the forbid-



den doctrine throughout the world. It was another case of successful dramatization, and in this I had not been the instigator. I had had no publicity expert, but the results were far more gratifying.

The next five days were filled with breathless activity. Five days after landing I wrote home. March 10, Yokohama. Allowed to land in Japan. Hundreds crowded to welcome the birth control advocate. Beautiful and fascinating women, a different people, a strange language, a new world! I love it! I am just as busy here as I was in New York. Japan is full to overflowing with interest in birth control. The protests against the authorities for trying to keep me out were so serious that they had to let me enter. The common people were as vigorous in their protests as some of the delegates on the boat. I have spent many hours discussing the subject with police officials and government authorities (tea is always served), and yesterday I gave a public lecture here in the Y M C A hall. My days and evenings are crowded with lecture and reception dates. Every evening, afternoon, dinner, lunch and morning taken until I leave Tokyo! I am now beginning to fill breakfast engagements. Japan has been put over, there is no doubt. Now for China!

The lecture at the Y M C A was on 'War and Population'. The audience was made up of prosperous looking business men, well groomed women, a Buddhist priest or two, a number of foreigners, and a battery of camera men, not to mention a liberal sprinkling of plain-clothes men of the Metropolitan Police, who were sent to see that I did not overstep the permitted bounds, birth control being a subject dangerous to Japanese morals.

No more interesting—nor interested—audience could I have hoped for. Most of those present understood English, as was shown by their enthusiastic response and their ability to understand the tacit implications of my point of view. They were silently expectant. A strange experience truly, to find myself here in the heart of the Orient expressing my innermost thoughts to a group of Orientals as responsive, as sensitive

to my reasoning as members of my own family. The usual stir came as the interpreter started to translate each paragraph of my discourse, and gazing out at the audience I discovered that most of them had understood my own words. Out of that vast audience my interest was arrested by two pathetic women of the poorer class, aged beyond their years by the bearing and rearing of many children. Each was compelled to pace the aisles and to croon to a fretful baby on her back.

But I was soon to discover that, among the lower classes at any rate, it was apparently an old Nipponese custom to carry a baby on the back. Throughout Japan I was amazed at the thousands of children I saw,—children carrying children on their backs, most of the women doing likewise, and men, old and young, doing the same thing. Everyone carried these happy, smiling youngsters—though few, I must admit, took the trouble to wipe their little noses! I never saw any of them strike or slap a child. Seldom did one hear a child weeping. The young boys carried the babies, even in their play the infants stayed on their backs, and in any traffic danger the baby was always the first concern. I found that the children of Kyoto were noticeably happier and freer than those of Tokyo. They waved and called out to us foreigners and in no way were they self-conscious or spoiled. All day, I noticed, they played in the streets.

Baron and Baroness Ishimoto had arranged a welcome dinner and reception for me at the Imperial Hotel, constructed, if I have not been misinformed, by that great American architect, Frank Lloyd Wright. The dinner was attended by approximately one hundred and fifty representative Japanese, the majority of them men. They came from the Home Office, the welfare departments, the hospitals. Physicians, specialists, journalists and writers attended. The proprietor of the hotel donated a half of the proceeds for the support of the movement in Japan. A study group was formed as the result of the enthusiasm there manifest.

Baron Ishimoto interpreted. The translation of my remarks on the morality of birth control seemed to take a very long

time, and I was soon fatigued by the necessity of remaining on my feet for so long. Most of those present understood English. They laughed at the proper places! Strangely enough, it is the moral aspect of contraception that concerns the Japanese, though we all know that their *mores* have been very different from ours of the Occidental world. Would not birth control corrupt the morals of the young? This was the question most often repeated.

That question re-echoed in my mind in visiting the famous Yoshiwara whither I was escorted by the Baron and Mr and Mrs Coleman. First we visited the so-called unlicensed quarters. It consists of avenues of small two-story houses. There are alcoves where the girls sit behind a screen with only a slit for their eyes to be seen. There seem to be literally thousands of these girls in the unlicensed quarter. The streets were filled with men walking up and down, occasionally stopping to scrutinize the price of the girl, which was posted before the door like a restaurant menu—the price per hour per night!

After walking for half an hour in this quarter we crossed a bridge to the licensed quarter. There we seemed to enter another world. The houses were like large hotels. Their electrically lighted lanterns sent out a soft, glamorous glow. The wide thoroughfares were clean and inviting. There was an air of spaciousness, of luxury about the amply built houses. There were courts with carefully cultivated gardens, a profusion of flowers. Through entrances as spacious as driveways the men, far better dressed than in the poor, unlicensed quarter, strolled up to the entrances of the houses to view the photographs of the inmates, framed and not unlike those in the lobby of a Broadway theatre. In some frames there were no pictures—only the announcement. Just arrived—No time for photograph—tempting bait for those seeking their illicit pleasure. The new girl, I was told, was most in favor with the clients, most of whom did a good deal of what we would call window shopping. It seems that the new girl, freshly arrived from the country, might have eight or nine visitors an evening, while the older ones would receive but two or three

At twenty the Geisha girls are already veterans, ready to retire from active service in their strange profession

I was amazed that the Yoshiwara seemed the most up to-date and attractive section I had seen. Small wonder that the girls preferred to live there rather than to seek a living in the dismal factories or to endure the squalor, poverty and hunger of the poorer quarters

There were fewer men wandering silently about than in the unlicensed quarter. To me it was a depressing spectacle despite all its artificial glamor. It made me think deeply. It made me feel almost helpless against that crowd of men swarming almost like insects automatically reacting to the stimulus of instinct. They least of all want conditions to be changed. Physical pleasure is relieved of responsibility. My Japanese friends told me that the women of the Yoshiwara seldom if ever have children. It is said that there is a hospital conducted in connection with the quarter where an occasional child is born but I was unable to substantiate that report.

The enduring impression I carried away from Japan was that the old order had been swept away by modern industrialism. The cherry blossom fairyland of the familiar Japanese print has been destroyed by the advent of industrial machinery. In Yokohama and Kobe one hears factory whistles and sees the tall smokestacks of industrial plants. There are tall cranes in new shipyards.

The industrial revolution, which began about sixty years before, has penetrated even into the smaller villages. The World War quickened this transformation of Japanese society and is making great changes in the lives of the working millions.

This industrial change has not been a gradual one. It has come suddenly. Without warning, Japan was thrust from a feudal system into an industrial system not unlike our own. The Japanese people have had no background of understanding or experience upon which to meet the new conditions. The factory system has been imposed on a complete feudal society unprepared to accept it. The masses of the people,

mostly peasants, have been ruled by feudal loyalty, by clan and guild orders, by a religion of personal submission, by century-old superstitions, and by racial prejudice. Under the old order the power of money played an inconsequential part in the scheme of society. When money triumphs, beauty fades away.

There is evident everywhere the increasing social unrest that goes with the machine age. From seventy to seventy five percent of the factory workers are women. These women factory workers are sent out of the rural districts and contracted—that is, practically sold—for two or three years.

All factory laws were thrown into abeyance by the abnormal conditions resulting from the World War. I visited a plant at Nagoya where I found over seven hundred young girls working. Tragedy was stamped on many of their faces. I was told that during the rush season their work began at five in the morning and did not end until half past seven in the evening. I went through a silk spinning mill and saw many little girls, some no more than ten years of age, swiftly twirling off the slender threads from the cocoons and catching them on the spindles. They were pathetic, gentle, hopeless, little things, doomed to a life of toil. From six in the morning until five at night, with all windows closed to keep the room moist and hot, they worked, and then—dinner, a bath, and bed, to get up for the next day's grinding toil. They got two Sundays a month off, and received about seven dollars a month compensation, of which one and a half went for board.

In the cotton mills conditions were even worse. I was invited to visit the Kanegafuchi plant, the largest cotton mill in the Empire. I spent half a day there as guest of the directors. There I found beautiful gardens, playgrounds, an emergency hospital, rest rooms, baths, and the most advanced sanitation. This type of paternalistic welfare work, splendid as it appears to the casual visitor, who might be disarmed by the extreme courtesy of his hosts, is at best a palliative, a compensatory effort to divert attention from those

young women and girls who, with weary manner and sleepy eyes, toil at the spindles, many of them far into the night. In the average Japanese cotton mill the working shift was twelve hours. Dust and fine particles of fabric fall like minute snowflakes upon the toilers while the machines roar their monotonous accompaniment, taking their dreadful toll of health and happiness everywhere.

Modern Japanese industrialism has been able to take advantage of an ancient habit of thought which places little value on the girl child. Nevertheless, today, as their economic value increases, these girls and women are undergoing the cruel education of modern industry. They are no longer slaves to custom and tradition. They are learning to look squarely at the problems of readjustment.

While the actual density of population is no higher in Japan than in other countries, the density in tillable areas averages two thousand human beings to the square mile. Every available square inch of the country is under the most intense cultivation. There are few playgrounds, no lawns and fields in which children can properly play. I never saw so many children in any country. While you see a country of one story houses, you also see a country of *two-story children*.

Such is the situation in Japan—a rapidly increasing population and a dearth of tillable land. The percentage of land under cultivation to the entire area in Japan is 13.2, compared to over 50% in Germany and France. She is dependent more and more upon imports for food and clothing. She may increase her shipping and foreign trade, but without birth control she cannot keep pace with her growing population.

With a surplus population daily growing more pressing, the great popular interest among the Japanese in birth control is not to be wondered at. By questioning my Japanese friends I found out that the news of my coming had divided opinions into two main currents. A bill had been introduced in Parliament called Dangerous Thought Bill. It was presented by a group of reactionaries, called Thought Controllers.

They aimed to exclude from the country all thoughts and ideas which did not conform to ancient Japanese tradition

Then I found out that a rumor had spread throughout the country that I was a secret agent of the American nation sent by the United States Government to deplete the population of Japan and to prepare the way for an American invasion!

It is amusing to observe the similarity between the opposition in Japan and America. In the papers and magazines of Japan were the same attacks and objections which had been agitated in America for the past ten years. One maiden lady in a Japanese Sunday supplement wrote: The birth control propaganda is liable to kill the continence which is necessary for spiritual advancement. In short, the theory of birth control treats mankind like animals. It disregards the fact that the value of human beings is that the spirit can control the body, and it is an attempt to make man surrender to the sexual desire.

I was at first indignant when the police governor refused me permission to speak in public, and I resolved to find out the real source of opposition. Accordingly, I arranged on the second day after my arrival to call on that high dignitary of Japan at Tokyo. The quiet courtesy with which I was received soon calmed my ruffled spirits. Although it was only ten o'clock in the morning, tea was served, and current topics, with the exception of birth control, were politely discussed. Through an interpreter I was told that my name caused considerable amusement and confusion because of the similarity between Sanger and Sangai San, which means destructive to production. The chief of police and many of his assistants had read my book. It had been translated into Japanese and published without my permission, and was already making converts, even in the police department. The outcome of this interview was that I was permitted to speak in public, not on birth control but on population problems, to private groups and clubs without police interference. Thus I had jumped another hurdle!

As a result I was able, during my brief stay, to make thirteen

addresses in the various cities of Japan. The extent of the interest that had been aroused in the subject was indicated by the fact that out of one hundred and one monthly magazines published in Japan no less than eighty one carried feature articles on the subject of birth control the following month.

Of the many meetings held in Japan none was more impressive to me than the one held at the Peers Club before twenty five of the country's most eminent men.

I have never spoken with greater freedom, I have never had a more comprehending, appreciative audience. I have never felt such a complete rapprochement with my listeners. I could not help comparing the breadth of thought of these Oriental officers with the unspeakable vulgarity and leering crudity with which the politicians of New York had greeted our attempts to bring the problem of birth control to the attention of the state legislature at Albany.

In Japan I was able to keep in close touch with Japanese life because of the hospitality of Baron and Baroness Ishimoto, at whose home my son and I were entertained. In Korea and China it was different. Although I was invited to the homes of many prominent people in Korea and China, they were all either American or English residents. Then again, in Japan most of the women are free from foreign influence. In China, on the contrary practically all the women who are in any way advanced or who speak English are dominated by missionaries or other Christian officials. This influence shows in their lives—not always to the credit of Christianity.

One interesting result of my sojourn in Japan was the interest of the Tokyo Association of graduates of the Imperial University Medical College. At the twenty ninth annual meeting held in the Uyeno restaurant, they passed a resolution organizing a committee to study birth control from the medical point of view.

Since that day, the movement in Japan has progressed steadily, the matter even being taken up by the Government. They have sent an official delegate to Europe to present a report



on every aspect of contraception as a social and national method of dealing with population pressure

From Japan I went to Korea where I addressed a group at Seoul, consisting of bankers, missionaries, physicians, and business men. To them birth control came as a sparkling new theory, unfettered by the rags of religious prejudice and misunderstanding. When they opposed some of my ideas, it was with sane, objective arguments and not with the scattered darts of fanatical invective.

In all the Orient I was able to discuss birth control as a social measure for the betterment of mankind with an assurance of respectful attention. No matter how greatly my theory was opposed, there was none of the ranting bitterness I found so frequently in my own country—no priests denouncing me as an advocate of unbridled sex lust, no celibate clergy assailing me as the arch apostle of immorality. Decency and consideration were shown to me instead of bigotry, abuse and hypocrisy.

From Korea we crossed the Yellow Sea to China. All during this time my young son was receiving much attention