

FACING TWO WAYS

The Story of My Life

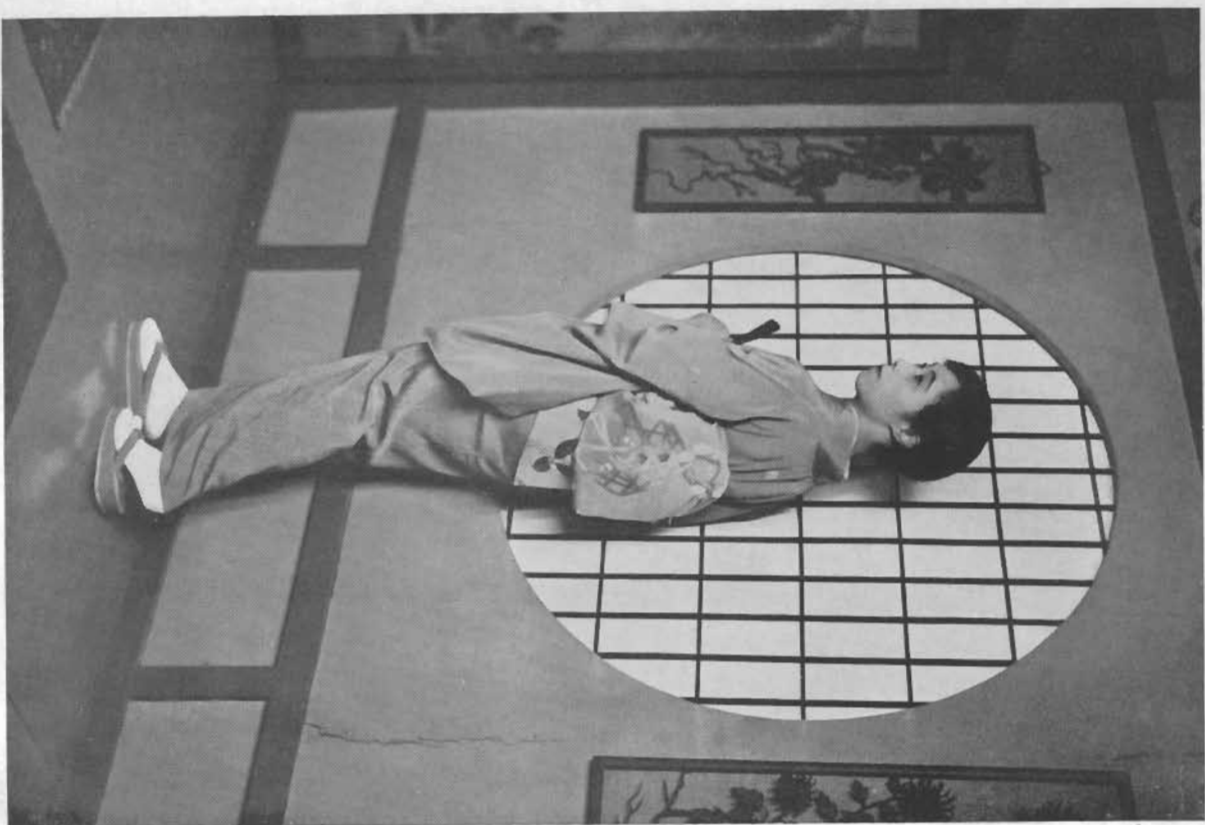
BY

BARONESS SHIDZUÉ ISHIMOTO

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Mama with one brother and twin sisters in the clothes the father brought back from London

three layers and placed on a lacquer stand. Each cup bore the family coat of arms in gold.

On the second day of January my father invited the staff of his company to our house for a feast. The two big rooms on the upper story were given over to the banquet, and the gentlemen, gay with New Year wines, laughed and sang. But no lady was included in the party. In those days ladies paid a New Year's visit to one another after the fifteenth of January, but they were allowed to wish one another "A Happy New Year" at any first meeting throughout the month of January. The New Year meant a long observance and celebration in those slow, leisurely days! Now that has all been changed.

My mother was often ill during the strenuous New Year's season, but the children had only fun. They played all day long in the garden with battledores and shuttlecocks or a game played with thirty-one syllable poem cards. We often said, "We wish the New Year would stay longer." But among my mother's burdens were the presents to be sent out to all our relatives and friends during this season. Moreover, there were the Seventh Day Festival, the Fifteenth Day Festival, and the days for the servants' holidays, to mention only a few matters to which she must attend. We never dined out, for it was considered undignified except when formally invited. Later, when I spent a New Year's Eve in New York, watching the bustle on Broadway, the gay restaurants where men and women dined together cheerfully, I was struck by the sharp contrast between the domestic burdens put on the shoulders of the housewives in Japan and the freedom of women in New York. Though it has been much simplified recently, the Japanese New Year is still the most festive time for the nation and the most torturous for wives and mothers.

In the list of the social festivities the second in importance is O-bon, the Feast of Lanterns. It turns suddenly warm after our spring-long rainy season is over, but a busy

cleaned. Big bunches of pine and bamboo boughs were brought to decorate the gate and the same decoration was placed at every entrance of the house, to welcome the good fortune which the coming year was to bring. My mother arranged pine branches and plum flowers in the big bronze vase and put them into the alcove of the room where guests were received. Special dishes, enough to last three days for the family and its guests, were carefully prepared in the kitchen. Daintily cut vegetables, cooked chicken, meat and fish were assembled in piles upon piles in the square black lacquer-and-gold boxes strictly prescribed for this occasion.

At the time fixed for the pounding of rice cakes, which came a few days in advance of New Year, the children got up about four o'clock in the cold winter morning, as soon as they heard the familiar sound in the back yard, under the shining stars. Its sound was like an announcement of festivities. The servants had already steamed rice on the stove temporarily set up in the yard, and Katsu and Toki pounded the steamed rice in a big wooden mortar. Then they kneaded it on a board into big square or small round cakes, smiling all the while.

Kimonos and obis, snow-white socks, lacquer clogs, red underwear, silver flowers for the hair with long red tassels, were all new for the holiday. Only the brocade sashes might be old. They were handed down from mother to daughter for several generations. So much had to be finished by New Year's Eve that my mother and all the servants went to bed very late that night, often after they had heard the first cock proclaiming the New Year's dawn. On the morning of the great day the family got up early to watch the sunrise and to bow in honour of the Sun Goddess. Then all the members gathered together in the grand sitting-room and passed round the sake cups, bowing and wishing each other "A Happy New Year!" These sake cups were of lacquer and gold, piled one upon the other in



My mother



My father in his villa overlooking
Kamakura beach

through Musashino Plain, enjoying the everlasting panorama of distant hills and the succession of peaks which drew an irregular sky-line at the rear of the immense green land of rice fields and mulberry plantations.

When we arrived at Nasu Plain in the afternoon, a cool mountain breeze was blowing, crossing over miles of a wilderness of pampas grass as if it had come to greet our company. We hired an old-fashioned horse wagon and travelled ten miles on a white, straight country road across the plain between narrow streams of crystal water, westward to the foot of the Shiobara mountains. It was a surprise for city children to come to a place where there were few people, to see colts that had been playing and eating grass along the road or in the bush run to their dams, astonished by the approach of our wagon.

All the while, Uncle Yusuke never ceased his pleasant conversation, telling us legends—which we enjoyed with fear and awe—of nine-tailed foxes who appeared in this region, of will-o'-the-wisps and bewitched travellers, of the evil stone which killed anybody who touched it.

As we approached the mountain, the driver changed his horse, to make ready for another four or five miles of hard climbing. "Kana-kana, Kanakana, Kanakanakana . . ." the autumn cicadas were singing in the coolness of the mysterious cryptomeria forest. Our wagon was advancing up and up between the hills into the very bosom of forest-covered mountains by a series of steep hairpin curves. Then suddenly we emerged from the cliffs and the Broom River came into sight, like a belt of deep cobalt blue with little white waves breaking on the surface. It is a rapid stream winding along the bottom of the narrow valley, gathering waters from more than seventy cascades which pour into it from both sides of the ravine. Along its banks are some ten large and small villages with hot mineral springs.

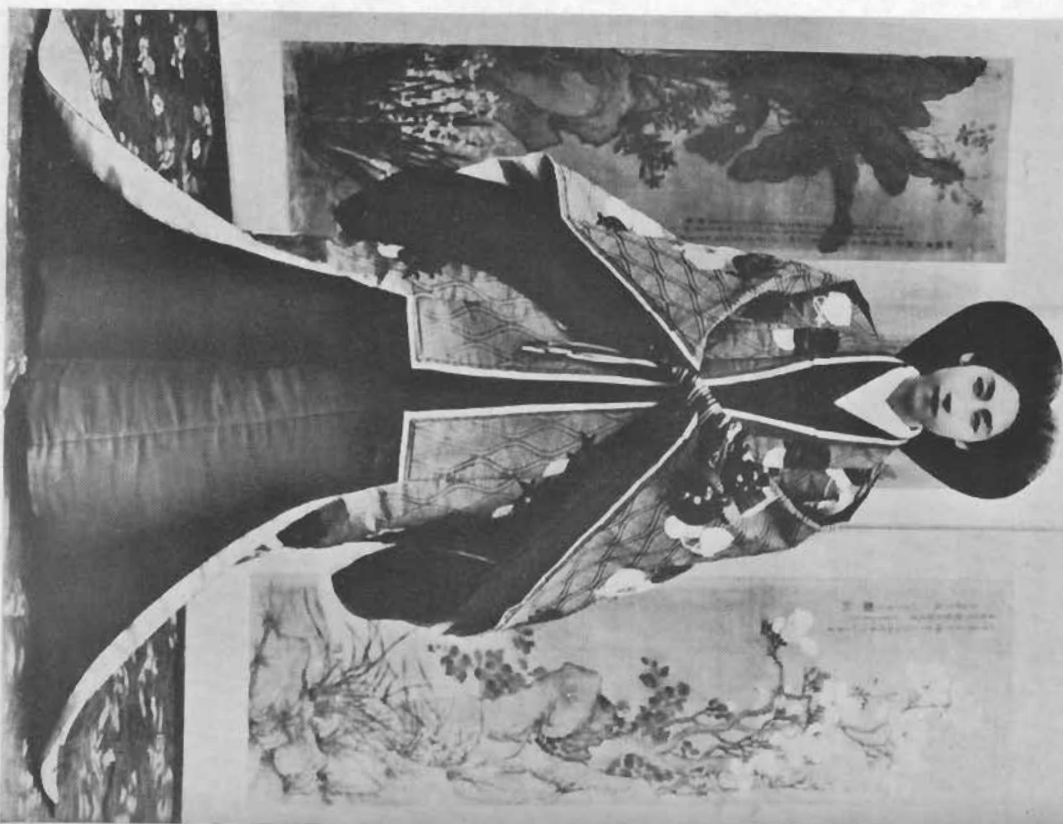
The driver's horn echoed in the distant mountains and



Myself at the age of fifteen, in full Japanese costume

the stamping of the horse's feet continued like the boom of a drum. We wound along the narrow path in the midst of nature's delicate cabinet-work, uprising peaks on the right, and the swift river, with its constant murmuring beneath the cliff, visible suddenly as we advanced, then receding again in the shadow of the green maple bushes, in a game of hide-and-seek. We were thrilled every time our wagon dashed into a dark tunnel of mountain rocks, to emerge again directly in front of a mountain cascade falling down from the edge of a pine-covered peak, as if we were to be dashed into the jade-green basin of the waterfall. Uncle Yusuke explained to us that this narrow path of beauty became famous after the celebrated author Koyo Sanjin described the charm of the place.

It was after sunset when we ended the day's trip with its excitement and joy. Old-fashioned kerosene lamps lighted the mountain inns along the river. Soft dreamy vapour rose here and there from the widely opened windows of bath-houses as our company arrived safely at one of the inns. It was the first time we had ever stayed in a country resort, and we were much bewildered when the host, hostess, clerks, bath clerks, clog-keeper, and numbers of young maids all came to the entrance-hall kneeling and bowing to us with words of welcome. This much exaggerated form of bowing him in and out makes the traveller tip heavily on the day of departure; otherwise he would be uncomfortable ever again to cross the threshold of this elaborately repeated etiquette. However, my mother found herself overwhelmed by heaps of presents—souvenir towels, wooden clogs, chopsticks, spoons, postcards, all stamped with a maple pattern for remembrance of the place—given in return for the generous tip which she bestowed upon the host. After the excessive greeting ceremony, we were led upstairs to a quiet suite of mat rooms where we washed off our fatigue in the big natural stone bath-tub filled with the hot mineral water which spouted between the rocks.



Princess Aya Tokugawa in her ancient court noble's costume of scarlet brocade. The princess married Marquis Yasumasa Matsudaira

with a title, many decorations, and great honours. Lieutenant-General Ishimoto was dead. He had passed away two years before, while in Prince Saionji's cabinet as the Minister of War. The services for the third anniversary of his death had just been held by his widow and his six sons and daughter. The young Baron Ishimoto was now a student in the Imperial University of Tokyo and would finish the mining engineering course there in the coming summer. A position had been promised him by the Mitsui Mining Company, the largest of the kind in the country, and he was to enter upon his duties as soon as he graduated from the university. Dr. Wataru Watanabe, the head of the Engineering Department of the university, as well as certain close friends of my father, had given the most favourable recommendations for the young baron as one of the brightest and most serious-minded students in the senior class. Father closed his exposition of the suitor's merits by saying, "Think it over quietly, for your parents desire your happiness. But they are not forcing you against your will."

I did not answer, but burst into tears and covered my face with the long sleeves of my wisteria kimono. "Do you hate to marry, Shidzue?" father inquired gently, patting my shaking shoulders. "No, father, I . . . I just feel like crying." Father and mother did not seem quite to understand what caused their daughter to behave like this, for I was normally an exuberant child. They left me alone and I continued to wet my kimono sleeves.

A proposal by a young man of a prominent family did sound agreeable, but how could a young girl of seventeen, who had not quite outgrown her world of dreams, arrive at a decision on such an important matter in her life? One thing, however, was clear to my mind. "An ambitious statesman" was my ideal for a husband. I did not like the idea of marrying an engineer. Another anxiety was felt on account of my father's description of the baron's character; he sounded so serious that I feared he would be as upright and



Baron Keikichi Ishimoto and myself before going to
our wedding reception



My father's family with my husband and myself shortly after our marriage

sober as a "bronze Buddha." I preferred a character, human and even a little faulty. But these were not the reasons which led me to weep. My tears came from sweet regret at the dropping of curtains over my girlhood so soon. Girls like freedom to meditate and dream without obligations. To be confronted with such a responsibility just three weeks after my actual graduation from high school! Why not wait a year or two? Happy girlhood never comes back! That was my sorrow.

On the same evening Uncle Yusuke, who had just been married and had established a new home, was asked to come and talk about this family affair with me. Training in our home forbade children to contradict their parents in any matter; so we young people never discussed, never argued about things in their presence. But to talk to Uncle Yusuke was quite different. I could argue, if I wanted to. I asked for his opinion about the problem of my marriage, trusting him to give a good judgment based on his liberal way of thinking.

"What a lucky child you are! You would be the most fortunate woman in Japan if you were to marry the young baron!" I was quite amazed. "Why is that, uncle?" I asked. "How could you see through my future like a prophet?" My uncle did not hesitate. "Because," he said, "Baron Ishimoto is one of the brightest disciples of Dr. Nitobe and I have known him quite a while." Then he told me more about this young man, relieving my anxieties, and his eloquence persuaded me even to begin to like the baron. Uncle Yusuke's explanation of why the young suitor had selected engineering for his profession moved me more than anything else.

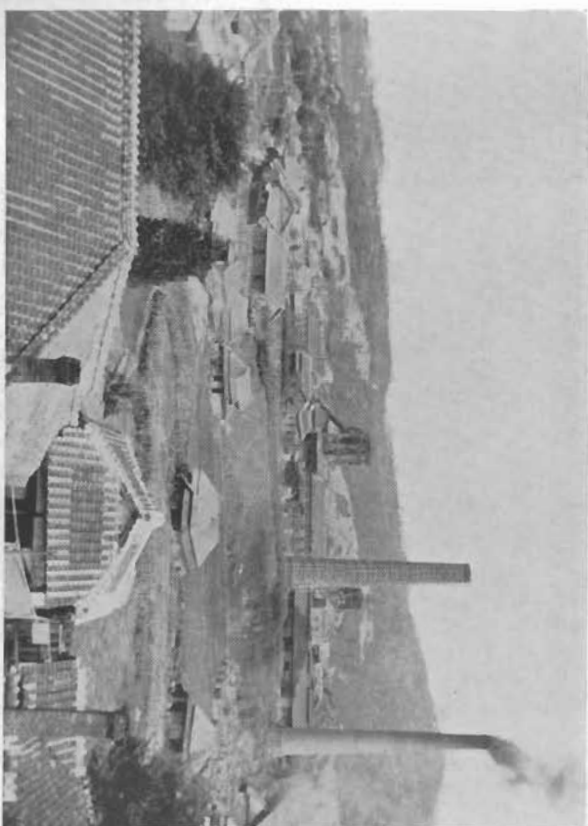
Although Baron Keikichi Ishimoto was born in a family of wealth and honour, he was a humble student of Christian humanism. He was very gifted and was one of the students granted the privilege of studying without having to pay university dues. With his mother's consent, however, he

for which my husband hungered. The company did not set any definite holidays for its employees. They had to take a day off, however, when their strength was exhausted, and my husband took his about twice a month. Sunlight is supposed to be equally distributed by the god of nature, but there is at least one exception. Those who work underground for long hours seldom have a chance to see the sun. The miners needed fresh air and so did my engineer. When he took a holiday he absorbed as much fresh air and sunlight as he could. We would walk miles and miles through green wheat fields, breathing in the fresh fragrance of the black earth. We climbed hills to hunt for wild azaleas. We lay down in the daisy fields in the sunshine as in a deep bath. During the heat of summer, we took our lunch boxes into a pine grove and after we had eaten, with the cicadas singing round us, we slept.

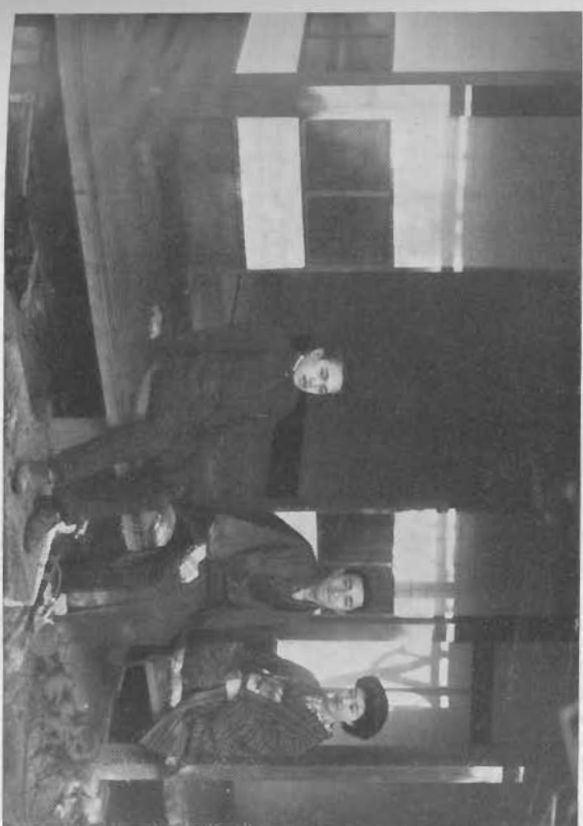
Our life in the Milke mines lasted from the beginning of 1915 to the autumn of 1917—until our family doctor advised my husband to take a long rest on account of his failing health caused by hard labour.

During these three years I had several appalling experiences. One day a man who had been a mine "boss" called on my husband at our house to ask for a special favour, promising a small commission in return. My husband refused to co-operate. The same man called again the next evening with a dagger in his pocket and threatened the young engineer of the company.

My husband told this man that he would not engage in any unfair practice in any circumstances. He also told him that we had practised ju-jitsu for many years in Tokyo—this was true of my husband, but not of me—so that neither of us was afraid of his dull dagger. Intimidated, the rascal went away without harming us; but a few days later, we were awakened by a sudden fire alarm and saw a house, about five minutes' distance from ours on fire. It was a quiet night with no wind. The flame shot up straight,



General view of Mitsui's Milke Colliery in Kyushu



My husband and myself on the porch of our house in the colliery
with my brother, Yoji Hirota



A paper carp flying on the flagpole celebrates the birth of our first son
(An old Japanese custom still prevailing)

burnt one house down and stopped. In the morning the wife of the engineer living in that house was found dead in the ruins. Her husband had been down in the pit for his night shift during the fire. The village policeman examined the woman's body carefully, and discovered that she had been killed by a dagger and that someone had set fire to the house to pretend that she died that way. Suspicion was directed to the rascal who had threatened us, but he was nowhere to be found. The poor man whose wife was taken away by such cruelty left this place of woe soon afterwards and my husband had to take his place at night. My maid Matsu and I were dreadfully frightened at living in such an unprotected house; indeed, we scarcely slept at all.

Another terrifying experience was a gas explosion in the mine. All the factory whistles blew long, almost like panting demons. "Emergency!" "Fire!" People ran towards the entrance of the pit. Some of the wives and children of the miners were already there weeping and screaming when I arrived. I did not cry, of course, but could not stand quietly; so I walked round the house and up and down the front passage. The six o'clock whistle had blown a long time before, but my husband had not come home. In the evening a woman labourer came to me to collect an extra lunch box to be sent down. Impatiently I asked the woman if she knew anything about my husband.

"No, madam, nobody knows who is living or who was killed in the confusion of poisoned gas!" she said. "I have only the order to collect all the lunch boxes in the village. That's all, madam!"

She left me in a hurry. The night seemed endless. Neither Matsu nor I went to bed. I was brought up on the principle that "a good wife" should not lie down while her husband is at his work. Yet when dawn approached, I seem to have fallen asleep unconsciously, worn out by the shock and worry, and I dreamed that God appeared to me in a white robe saying, "I have called your good husband."

motor-car that happened to pass, to express their antagonism towards the well-to-do. In those days taxis and other cheap cars were few in Japan, and our imported motors were all luxurious ones, seeming to the poor symbols of wealth, exploitation, and selfishness.

The Mitsui Company had offered my husband a position in its Tokyo chemical laboratory to study coal washing. He had accepted and at that time he went to this laboratory every day from Kamakura. All his free time was devoted to studying labour problems and their relation to the national wealth. Since he approached the problems on the basis of his actual research work at the Milke mines, the capitalistic organization of society became more and more questionable in his mind, and he began to desire to go abroad to learn more about the issues involved as they were unfolding in Western countries.

In the meanwhile my mother-in-law became very sick and we were called back to Tokyo to look after her. She had been much pleased with the fact that a grandson and heir had been born to the family, and now that her daughter-in-law was expecting the second child soon, she was quite satisfied and passed away quietly.

Our second son was born in the grand house of Baron Ishimoto, an interesting contrast to the birthplace of his brother in the small cabinlike room at the mines. My husband named our second son Tamio, using the first of the Chinese characters standing for Democracy, as he wished his son to grow up in a democratic way.

My husband was not satisfied with his career in the chemical laboratory. He thought the work too easy. He reminded me of an untamed horse, chafing with nerves. He wanted to go back to the mining field to expose his precious life again to the dangers of accident and disease. But instead, as soon as his strength returned, he decided to go abroad to study and he began to prepare for the trip, while I was quite absorbed in maternal love and the care of my



My husband's mother and brother with us and our son at Kyushu



In the garden at Marquis Kido's mansion. All those present were my classmates at the Peeresses' School

two babies. At the mines, the moment I knew I was to be a mother, I began to practise spiritual pre-natal care, to read good books and to think about aesthetic surroundings. After the children were born I nursed them both, weighed them from time to time and kept a diary of their growth as Western mothers do. While I spent my days utterly submerged in motherhood, my husband's plan to travel abroad matured, and it was decided that he was to visit America, Mexico, and Europe for the observation of industrial as well as general social conditions. The scheme was arranged half officially in the interests of the company and half privately for his own enlightenment.

Knowing well enough his great interest in social problems, I yet could not avoid a certain feeling of anxiety about this trip. I firmly believed in his love for me, but I had a premonition that some unknown power was luring my husband from me, and his going abroad might, I thought, be the first break. My reason approved of his journey to the Occidental countries, but my heart always tried to hold him back. My husband, on the contrary, enthusiastically progressive, told me that he had no desire to make a great gap in the knowledge of husband and wife, and wanted me to join him as soon as the nursing period for the second baby was over. So he sailed from Yokohama for Seattle on February 13, 1919.

The postcards and letters he sent from the new places were always interesting to me. He wrote that the English which he had acquired in Japan was quite different from that spoken in America. When he tried to express his opinion to an American he was told that it sounded as though he were reading an essay. He was finding it difficult to pick up colloquialisms after learning only book English, through Shakespeare, Carlyle, and other classical writers. Finally he wrote: "Don't come abroad if you seek pleasure and new fashions in clothes or are planning to spend your time only at the theatres or motoring like other 'bourgeoises mesdames.'"

offered to accompany me, as she was herself genuinely sympathetic with the birth control movement. Mrs. Coleman and I took an early train to Nikko, where we changed to a local train which climbed Ashio mountain at the rate of thirteen miles an hour. Mrs. Coleman cheating me during the journey with a cup of American cocoa and a lump of cheese, partly because I had a lump of lead somewhere in my throat at the thought of the obligation I had assumed.

It was twilight when we arrived at Ashio. To my surprise and embarrassment, this little country station was filled with men and women, each with a lantern in the hand. I heard them say: "Let's see the Lady of the Peerage." When I walked out on the platform, the crowd followed, drawing near, holding their lanterns close, and scrutinizing my face as if they wanted to ascertain whether a person with a title belonged to the same or to a different genus in the animal kingdom. The meeting had already been going on a long time before I arrived. The only building large enough to house an audience of two thousand miners and their wives, carrying babies on their back and in both arms, was the local theatre. To make the miners feel that they were getting the full value of the precious twenty sen which they had paid for their tickets, the length of the meeting was a matter of consideration. Four hours it lasted, with an army of speakers appearing on the platform one after another. The chairman of the meeting asked me to talk for two hours so that the audience would be thoroughly grateful. I did my best to meet the requirement but my poor throat had not been trained for roaring to a crowd in the proletarian fashion. However, I managed to keep on speaking for at least one hour and a quarter. I, too, wished to be courteous.

I began my speech with a statement of the birth control movement and went on to discuss the ideal of a planned population for the betterment of the human race, voluntary



Miss Anna Birdsall, hostess secretary of the Y.W.C.A. in Tokio, and myself in Dr. Inazo Nitobe's garden

motherhood in its relation to the elevation of women, the necessity for birth control as a means of abolishing injurious abortion, infanticide, and everlasting poverty, the connection between birth control and labour problems; and I closed with the moral aspects of the question. My speech was interrupted several times by the magnesium flashlights of the country Press, accompanied by the sound of explosions and frightful odours. But I survived everything.

The police inspectors in grand uniforms—there were three of them—who gravely sat on the platform behind me twice corrected me for using the word "infanticide," saying it sounded too harsh for this occasion. I knew their interference was one of the formalities in a proletarian meeting, and that it was natural for the inspectors to want their presence acknowledged. Occasionally cheers came from the miners and their wives, who approved what I said. The wives were as attentive as they could be amid the duties of feeding their babies and changing their napkins. For the first time in their lives they were hearing a speech about the slavery of excessive childbearing and its relation to industry. A mixture of deep curiosity and blank amazement shone in their eyes as I gazed down upon them.

The meeting ended with little of the uproar which usually accompanied a proletarian meeting, the greater part of the audience as a rule coming to enjoy a fight between speakers and policemen. The popular proletarian speakers were those who could outwit the policemen skilfully enough to hold the platform without breaking the regulations with respect to free speech and at the same time deliver "hot shots." It was a fine art. But policemen, trained in this game of valour on their side, seemed unprepared for a new competitor like me. I got off without a scuffle.

The following day the same sort of meeting was held in another mining district about five miles away, to which place the miners who had heard me the night before paraded with their union flags in their hands, singing the "song of



Mrs. Margaret Sanger and myself at the time of her visit in 1922

time when hundreds of thousands of human lives are being injured or destroyed is unworthy of man or woman. Certainly I was grateful for the safety of my relatives. Yet I worried over the possible loss of works of art which could never be replaced. And on the second day of the earthquake I learned that the bank was completely gone. My grief rested on something more than personal deprivation. Such art! The effect of this grief was to make me resolve to save at least the collection of old paintings, picture scrolls and screens which my husband had collected himself and stored in my father's go-down. The picture scrolls were rolled up in their narrow, long wooden boxes, and some of the boxes were quite heavy, but I carefully and tenderly carried hundreds of them, one by one, to a place which I thought would be secure from fire.

The horrible second evening passed and the third morning came. The fire had almost lapped our garden wall when it veered in the opposite direction, to our unexpected relief. Only then, worn out with the hard labour of moving furniture and other objects round about, did we all take some rest. But first we had to appease our hunger a little somewhat.

The end of our woe was not yet on the calendar. On the evening of the third day the fire consumed all the small houses which surrounded ours. Foreseeing our doom, we carried chairs and other prime comforts to the street running near the outer moat of the Imperial Palace—to the fire barrier. Sadly we bade farewell to the dwelling enjoyed for so many years. As we sat down on our chairs by the moat, my mother and I looked back—to see, as we thought, our house turn into flames! My mother uttered no word. She gave forth no cry. She was the daughter of a samurai. But I was less repressed. "Ahl everything is gone, our house, our treasures, all our material possessions!" I exclaimed. In that instant I knew the futility of large material possessions. A whole city, amazingly beautiful, built by



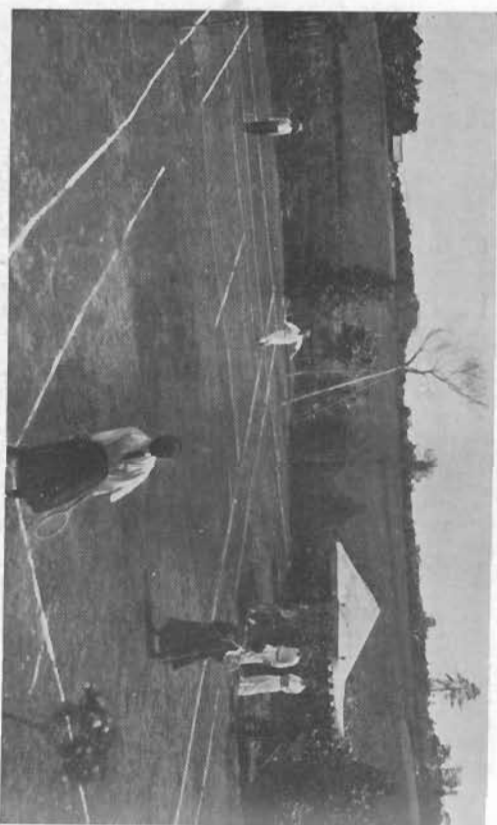
My two sons, Arata and Tamio, in their kindergarten days

hundreds of years of toil, representing incalculable wealth, was destroyed by a single act of nature!

Having nothing to do, our group sat on the street packed with people who, like us, had come away from fallen houses or from the fire which had consumed them. A few pieces of the small Japanese furniture and apparel wrapped in handkerchiefs and carried on their backs were now their total property. But our eyes were busy, if our hands were idle, as we watched the swarm of men, women, big children and crying babies passing to and fro or squatting beside us exhausted, some even sobbing on account of weariness and defeat, one occasionally screaming out in pain. There were those who had left behind, in the crushed houses, their dear relatives, having been unable to rescue them from the weight of the fallen roof or the fast-pursuing fire. Some had already walked and walked for three days without a cup of water to drink or a grain of rice to eat. They had still to walk on and on—to what destination they did not know. I gave away the biscuits and the water I had brought with me.

Quickly I learned a new lesson—the anti-social effects of the rivalry for material possessions and the brotherly love inherent in economic equality. Here we were—we Japanese—from every class and every grade of income. Once competitors and enemies, now on a common level of no possessions, we were friends and co-operators in a trice. My entire family spent that night on the sidewalk of the dusty street sinking to the ground for a little sleep among the piled-up furniture. Amid the noise of destruction and the cries of the refugees who streamed by me endlessly, exhausted in mind and body, I took my meed of sleep.

My father must have been born under a very lucky star. Swept by a crashing chimney into its heap of ruins, he got up only somewhat bruised. His house, which the flames had apparently chosen for their prey on the third day of the



A tennis match at my father's farm



The ruins of my father's home after the earthquake in 1923

and wait for his direction in everything of which she is not sure. If the husband puts a question to her, she should answer in the correct manner. An incomplete answer is a piece of incivility not to be excused. If the husband gets angry and acts accordingly, she should fear and be ruled by him; never contradict him. The husband is Heaven to the wife. Disobeying Heaven only incurs righteous punishment.

"The common evil natures of woman are: (a) to be wilful, (b) to be offended easily and be reproached, (c) to be inclined to abuse others, (d) to be jealous, (e) to be shallow-witted. Seven or eight out of every ten women have all these five sins. This is what makes woman inferior to man. She should know herself and conquer her weaknesses. Above all, shallowness of mind is her worst fault and is the cause of all the other evils. Woman is the negative principle, like night and darkness. Therefore woman is ignorant and does not foresee anything; does not know what is despicable in the eye of others; what is a hindrance to her husband and her children. Her ignorance is even such that she reproves and bears ill-will towards those who have no cause for being reproached, and cannot tell her who are her true enemies. In bringing up her children, she merely follows instinct and not reason; so she cannot educate them properly. Utterly devoid of wisdom, she should humbly follow her husband in everything."

"In the ancient teachings, it is said that when a girl baby is born she should be laid for three days under the house floor. This is because man symbolizes Heaven and woman, Earth. Therefore woman should follow man always with humility. Even when she has done something laudable, she should never be proud of it. If she has her faults pointed out by others, she should acknowledge them at once and make amends with humbleness of heart, in order never again to be put in the same disgrace. Even if she is scorned, she should not be offended but be patient and prudent. If she follows these teachings, there will be harmony between man and wife, peace in the family, and a long conjugal honour to the woman."

"Woman should always be careful to keep herself blameless. She should get up early and retire late, never lie down during the day, keep busy, not neglecting spinning, weaving, and sewing. She should not drink much of such things as tea and sake wine; should never see and hear such lewd drama as that at the Kabuki theatre, popular songs, and Joruri music. Also she should refrain from going to shrines, temples, and other crowded places, before she is forty years old."

Reviewing these teachings, we now understand how negative our feudal education was. The author of the book



Working with yarn at my home



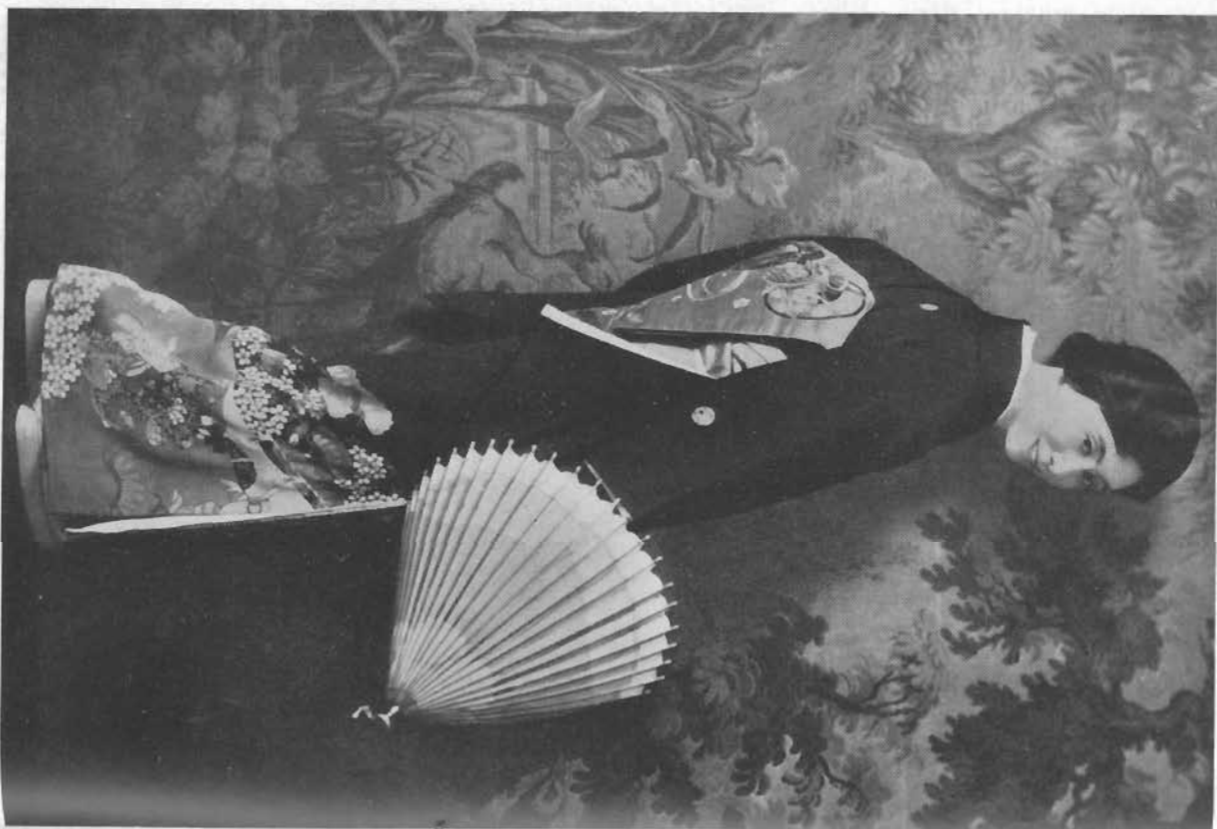
At the Minerva Yarn Shop in Kyobashi, Tokio

was not particularly hard on women considering the tendency of the age, and yet he never thought of elevating or even improving a sex held in ignorance from which all these feminine evils could not but spring, and for which the only cure was, in his opinion, "earthly" humility. In truth the teacher may be called fairly reasonable, when we remember that the perfection of the family system was the aim of every woman's education. For the tyranny of the family system, women had to be mentally killed—deprived of the strength with which to ward off the disgraces heaped upon them. The last of the "Seven Rules for Putting Away a Woman" says: "Put away a woman who steals things." This emphasis on stealing indicates that the married woman, who is necessarily propertyless except for her clothes given to her by her parents at her wedding, is sometimes tempted to use for herself or pass on to others the family properties without her husband's permission. It is a sin which she cannot avoid sometimes and yet it is so fatal to her honour! What Western woman of the twentieth century can imagine the position into which some of her Eastern sisters are still driven?

My father has been progressive enough not to force this moral standard unconditionally on his daughter, but I have watched my mother conduct herself all through her life in a literal following of what is written in this great book of morals. A new social system and a new social consciousness in harmony with it seem to me never to arrive together. People's ideas always lag behind economic events, even though they live to all appearances in a changed age.

Although those Japanese women who are working in their own retail shops with their husbands, those girls who have entered the army of factory workers, those women who work in the fields side by side with their men are still bound by feudal notions of good and evil inherited from their mothers, in reality their lives are not confined as rigidly to feudalism as those of upper-class women.

Myself in New York in 1924



her husband for idling in the gay quarter, for she knows well how the pressure of the family system kills every bud of human pleasure and causes the reactionary outbursts in the geisha quarters. She is sorry for him and in order to shield him from the strict father, she often pawns a precious kimono to settle his debts. It is not servility, but the purely unselfish love of a good wife. There is something in this play everlastingly appealing to the Japanese mind long nurtured in a feudal society, and this one of the Kabuki plays I never weary of seeing.

I think that the geisha have never, since of old, been happy in their profession; that they have not lured men, of their own free will, into dissipation. On the contrary, they are pitifully ashamed of their position and almost unduly conscious of their sinfulness in stealing the money and attention that husbands owe their wives. I am sorry for those who are forced by our singular social circumstances to take up such a calling, to be gaily dressed but terribly exploited workers. I grieve over their misunderstanding of the meaning of our traditional "filial piety," which persuades them to be geisha in order to relieve temporarily with their own persons some family distress. It is a too near-sighted view to regard them as the direct enemy of the oppressed wives. It is our society that not only tolerates but in fact sponsors the existence of such a profession. Men should be ashamed of taking advantage of it. Awakened women cannot but feel it their duty to work towards the removal of this horrible disgrace imposed on their sex.

Only where security is assured to those who work can love and marriage properly exist. Conversely, only where love and marriage are both enlightened and possible to all can prostitution disappear. The welfare of the state is intimately bound up with this issue.



My uncle, Mr. Yusuke Tsurumi, and myself on Long Island



Mrs. Hiroshi Saito, wife of the Japanese Ambassador, and myself

A JAPANESE HUSBAND

AS I look back even over my short life I see there repeated challenges of the new against the old, the perfect feminine in the old sense trying to put down the struggles of the new feminine aspiring to express itself in a progressive world. It was my own mother who regarded it as her great work to cast her daughter into the mould deemed so admirable by Occidental and Oriental "philosophers." When my mother bought a kimono or an obi for me, she was always particular to select one elegantly quiet in colour and design. I was not to look younger than I was actually; nor was I to be the focus of all eyes by reason of some splashing decoration in my apparel. If my garments were costly, the fact was not to be blatant. My manner she hoped to make accord with the refined modesty of my dress. A naïve grace was the desired effect. Even my speech was to be free of such assertions as "I think," "I like," "I want," "I, I, I . . ." the I never coming first, unlike the style of the Western girls. My mother warned me that I must listen to others always, smile at whatever they said, and express as little as possible of myself.

While my mother was eager to make a dainty bride of me, the man I married was writing in his diary: "O God! bless my heart! If Thy will is to make me Thy faithful servant and let me work to bring Thy Kingdom on earth, then select for me a wife with whom I shall work to bring glory to Thy Name!" Again he wrote: "I am not hoping that my wife, Shidzue, will be a baroness of the sort depicted in fiction or drama, leading an elaborate life amid luxurious surroundings; what I really hope for her future is that she



Addressing the miners at a country theatre at Ashio. The posters in the background carry slogans: "Prepare for May Day!" "Birth Control for Working Women!" etc.

students. Though my uncle had desired that the clouds of mystery and divinity surrounding the dead be dispersed by his attitude, his wife sorrowfully complains to us that she has no temple or graveyard to which she can take flowers in memory of her husband. She is released, however, from the trouble of repeating the complicated anniversary memorial service for the dead! I did not approve my uncle's revolutionary funeral arrangement, for I felt sympathetic with his wife who was denied the opportunity of experiencing the spiritual significance of his death while the aeroplane roared his farewell.

Too swift a modernization of Japan and the Japanese may be a danger. In planning modern cities, for instance, there is the temptation to abhor avenues of fine old cherry and pine trees and destroy the arch-shaped classical bridges—simply to do something new. The beauty of many old things would be charming even in modernized towns.

Viewing religion from this angle, though there are many aspects of Buddhism with which I am not sympathetic, it has an appeal for me, just as one loves to keep an old and cherished habit even though it may be a useless one. My husband taught me to read the Bible of the Christians in the early days of our married life, but it gave me the feeling of reading a book of alien sentiments and I always missed something there.

My uncles seemed to make a great point of their funerals. Another and younger one had a Christian burial. He had been consul-general in one of the cities of the United States. Called back from this post, he was ill in bed for a whole year. While he was prostrate at Kamakura, his wife succeeded in converting her dying husband to Christianity, and a minister was asked to baptize him shortly before his death. So my uncle's spirit found a place in the Christian heaven. His funeral took place in a church so simple as to resemble a barracks; a young minister presided over the ceremony, reciting prayers in the modern Japanese language, the words



My sisters and myself at our father's home in 1927.
Kiyō (centre) is wearing her wedding robe

sounding uncouth in their direct transliteration from the English Christian vocabulary. A harsh air reigned in the crude church. Such imagery as the "Good Shepherd," "lamb" and "green pastures" were utterly incomprehensible to the Japanese mourners who had never seen sheep except in the zoo. There was no sweet and solemn emotion such as springs from ceremonies in our historical temples of Buddha or in the Christian cathedrals of the West.

This miserable service made me realize the weakness of words. I recalled the high solemnity of my grandfather's funeral, which was performed in an old Zen-sect temple in Tokyo. How impressed I was by the sight of the noble-looking priests in their robes of gorgeous silk brocade indicating high ecclesiastical dignity, followed by rows and rows of other priests in purples, greens, browns, and yellows, each in a different costume glittering with silver and gold, advancing slowly and softly in snow-white tabi-socks over the tan mat floor of the temple hall! They moved with measured steps, according to the formalities of the rite, reciting numbers of Sanskrit sutras in unison to the accompaniment of various holy instruments. I looked once more at my grandfather's coffin at the north side centre of the hall, decorated with numerous artificial lotus blossoms of gold, silver, and white, all enveloped in thick vapours of burning incense. The tall gilt image of Shakyamuni on the dark altar gazed down benignly on the coffin and with magnificent gestures the priests handed over the dead to the merciful Buddha. The sutra chanting lasted long and no lay person understood what it meant at all, but I never tired of this grand performance which certainly elevated the mind and soul as one knelt in silent prayer for the friendly acceptance of the departed spirit into Buddha's Land.

In his book, *The Pilgrimage of Buddhism*, J. B. Pratt discusses the mysterious power of language, pointing out that one's speech may obstruct the meaning of one's own soul.



Myself in the fifteenth-century dance costume of the famous Kabuki theatre

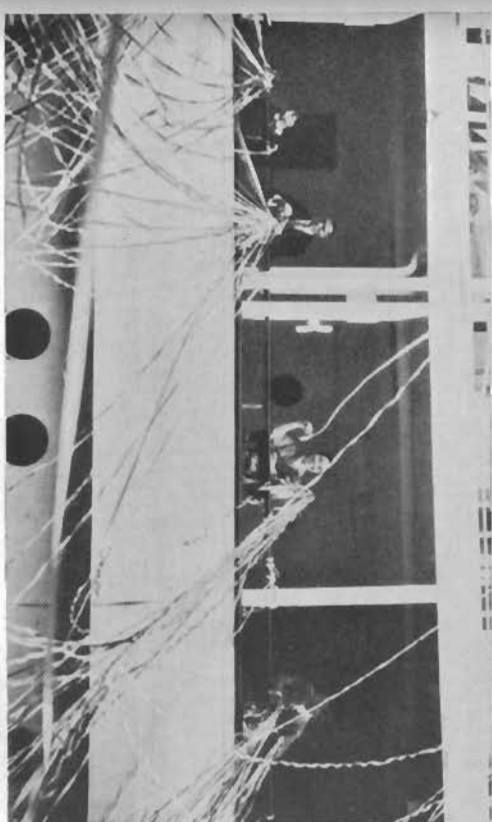
confirmed in his own conviction by their response to his preaching.

After he was recalled to Kamakura from his exile, he wrote his famous *Discourse on Social Righteousness and National Defence*, and dedicated it to the shogunate. He denounced the shogunate's policy and prophesied the foreign invasion which occurred a few years later when Kubla Khan, the great chief of the Mongols and the Emperor of all China, sent his fleet to conquer this little island empire at the end of the thirteenth century. At that time Japan was in a state of economic and social confusion, distraught by frequent earthquakes and famines. And to the shogunate this accurate forecast by Nichiren was but an added insult, making Nichiren a super-nuisance. Accepting his enemy's accusation of him, the government imprisoned this Lotus Sutra prophet and finally sentenced him to death on the charge of treason.

His reply was: "Nichiren, being born on this land, shall obey its law physically, but shall never succumb to this command spiritually." He then turned to his followers and commanded them as follows: "Do not any of you be coward enough to deny that he is a disciple of Nichiren! Do not be drawn back from your faith for the sake of your estate or family! In the infinite space of time in the past, the number of those who dedicated their lives for the sake of the feudal lord, or of the family, has been innumerable like the sands on the shore, but a single life has not yet been dedicated to the honour of Lotus Sutra! Do not hesitate to be the honourable soldier for this Holy Gospel! To dedicate our humble lives for the sake of Lotus Sutra is like exchanging a stone for a mass of gold, dung for rice! If you fear the threat of the mere master of this small island state, how can you prepare yourself to stand in the presence of Great Emma, the mighty lord of hell! Having sworn to serve Buddha, timid servants are worthless! What is the significance of life and death to you? There is only life and



Reading a prospectus to a group which met to establish a branch office for the birth control movement in Osaka in 1932



Leaving Yokohama on the S.S. *Chichibu Maru* for my lecture tour in the United States, October 13, 1932

death in the truth of the Holy Sutra of Lotus!" What spiritual force! What conviction! Sneering at earthly power, which ordered him to die, he described his persecutor as a mere master of little islands!

Nichiren faced death as calmly as if he were facing home. With a volume of the Lotus Sutra in his hand, he was led to the place of execution on the sandy Kamakura shore. The brave preacher chanted the Sutra loudly as he sat on the seat of death. He was fifty years old at the time. The autumn moon was casting her pale light on the silently grieving disciples who had assembled for the last earthly look at their great teacher. But Nichiren's chanting voice alone echoed in the whole place against the silver tide flowing and ebbing.

The warriors whose duty it was to cut off this holy prophet's head were almost paralysed by the sight of their undaunted victim, whose spiritual force so inspired them that it was scarcely possible for them to raise their swords against him. After having struggled in vain to do so, they finally knelt down before Nichiren and confessed how deeply they were impressed. Just then a horseman arrived to deliver a message from the authorities announcing the release of Nichiren from the penalty of death. He was again exiled, however, to a remote island in the rough Sea of Japan far north of Japan proper. It was like deportation to the icy wilderness of Siberia.

The snowy winter had already come to this northern island of Sado when Nichiren arrived. The shogunate authorities, who were afraid of killing this prophet with their own hands, planned to let him die alone in the cold of the northern snow and the bitterness of hunger. A wretched hut six feet square in the Tsukahara valley was his only permitted shelter. In this tiny hut he lifted a small image of Buddha from the bosom of his torn robe and began his holy chanting of "Nam-Myo-Ho-Ren-Gekyo, Nam Holy Lotus Sutra." The snowflakes fell on the



Returning to my work in Japan