

# Japan's Big Man in the United States

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**A** YANKEE of the Orient and looks like Rudyard Kipling; this is Kogoro Takahira, the Japanese minister at Washington. This description may not appear complimentary, but first observation would suggest it. In progress, pluck and energy the Yankee predominates in the Japanese's character. The stocky frame, well-knit figure, strong, black eyebrows at first glance are reminiscent of the English author and poet. A close analysis of the minister's features, however, will not sustain the comparison.

As punctilious as the strictest rules of diplomacy require, the Japanese minister at the same time is the typical, common sense, twentieth century business man in his legation home. He goes about the modern American house in a business suit coat and striped trousers; runs up and downstairs in the most unconventional way and interests himself with every detail of legation work.

"How do you do? What can I do for you?" is his greeting, as he meets the visitor in his parlors downstairs, suggesting a banker ready to talk finance and investments. Only a slight accent in speech distinguishes this quick, alert little man from an up-to-date, hustling American business man.

"What are the latest developments in the far east?"

At that question the business man disappears and the cautious, trained diplomat appears. He is all courtesy, but by adroit questions informs himself of his visitor's object. His answers are given with all frankness, apparently, but upon analysis reveal nothing that could be construed into the divulgence of a state secret liable in the least to injure his home government.

"He has not one confidant in the diplomatic corps," is the verdict of his fellow diplomats. This does not mean that Kogoro Takahira is repellant or unpopular, but merely exhibits his confidence in his own judgment and policies. Close as Great Britain is to Japan in the game of world diplomacy, Minister Takahira never confides in the British ambassador in Washington or seeks the latter's advice. His only communications are such as must, in the ordinary course of diplomacy, be made between embassies. Mr. Takahira does his own thinking, makes his own plans and follows his own policies.

The Japanese legation has the name of being the most exclusive in Washington. This means greater secrecy in its conduct of intricate diplomatic communications and negotiations. It means at the same time a happy escape from a mass of diplomatic gossip and criticism for which members of the corps are as noted as Dorcas sewing circles. If you want the latest bit of scandal affecting prominent diplomats, do not seek it at 1310 N street, where the Japanese legation is located. Frivolous gossip is not indulged in by the minister, nor does he countenance it among his legation staff.

It must not be surmised from this that Minister Takahira is a stern, austere man without human curiosity and feelings. He is a very sociable creature, and no one enjoys a story or joke more thoroughly than he, although he is not noted as a raconteur himself. He can appreciate, however, wit and humor, and is sufficiently expert in the English language to enjoy puns and plays on words. Ordinarily the minister has little to say and has the reputation of being a very quiet man, but when interested in any subject and in his visitor he becomes a charming conversationalist.

In another way Minister Takahira resembles the Yankee and the Occidental type of man. This is in his intense love for out of door life, especially hunting. He has in his legation a collection of choke bore guns and other sporting firearms that would make ex-President Cleveland fairly jealous. He has an enviable record for bringing in strings of mallard and canvas back ducks from the waters along the lower Virginia shores. His many friends in Washington have reason to know that when the minister goes after ducks he gets them, for, with characteristic generosity, he sends hampers of the birds that fall before his gun to his acquaintances. He is an excellent shot and has all the patience necessary to sit in a blind half a day in sleet, snow or chilling rain waiting for the erratic ducks. When the birds appear he seldom misses if they come within range of his gun, and he frequently drops one with each barrel.

In the autumn Mr. Takahira always enjoys several weeks of quail shooting in the Virginia stubble fields. He has passed one or two summers in Virginia occupying an old colonial mansion, and has become thoroughly acquainted with the best territory for quail. At first he kept a pair of fine hunting dogs, but the restrictions of the legation yards and kennels proved unhealthful and they died. He now depends on the dogs of local hunters and the gentlemen whose guest he is in the "Old Dominion."

Hunting is the nearest approach to a sport that the minister possesses. He cares nothing



MINISTER TAKAHIRA.

for such American games as base ball and foot ball.

Minister Takahira is an indefatigable worker. He can be found at his desk late at night, and is always ready to attend to business at an early hour in the morning. When he returns from a dinner party he will throw aside his evening coat and, putting on a comfortable smoking jacket, enter upon several hours' labor at his desk. He works in his library upstairs and consumes innumerable cigarettes while engaged with his correspondence. He always has at hand on his desk hot water and a supply of the finest tea grown in the Orient, with which he compounds numerous cups of that beverage that cheers him in his labor without clouding his brain.

Despite their reputed exclusiveness, Minister Takahira and his suite are extremely popular in Washington society. They have adopted western ways and a function at the Japanese legation is much like that in the best appointed American home. The minister is an excellent host and invitations to his dinners and receptions are prized by Washington society.

While his legation is not so gorgeous as others and cannot compare with the Elizabethan palace that shelters Sir Liang Cheng and his Chinese suite, it is capacious enough for refined entertaining. It is a modern American home, with large double parlors, high ceilings and a spacious dining room on the first floor. The furniture and decorations of the legation are a mixture of American and Oriental. Japanese curtains hang at the doors, while the floors of the parlors are covered with a warm crimson American carpet. Teakwood cabinets, Oriental stands and tables mingle with upholstered chairs and sofas that probably came from a Michigan factory. An immense tiger skin ornaments the floor of the front parlor. In the living rooms upstairs the same conglomerate furniture is found. There are office desks of American manufacture mixed with Japanese tables and spindly, frail-looking Oriental chairs.

Minister Takahira is a great reader and has a choice selection of the books of his own country and also of China, being equally familiar with the latter. In these busy times, however, he gets little opportunity to wander in the enchanting fields of Oriental literature.

"What's the news this morning?" is his first inquiry as he reaches the breakfast table.

At his plate he finds the Washington and Baltimore morning papers and an hour or two later he receives those of Philadelphia and New York. He is an omnivorous newspaper reader. He skims through dozens every day. Every "extra" cried on the street must be bought and brought to him. He catches at a glance the most important items and he runs through the papers with the instinct and trained sight of a veteran exchange editor. He studies them with

especial view to catch public sentiment, especially that on the eastern situation. He believes in the newspaper as the popular educator of the day and as a diplomatist he recognizes its value in disseminating his side of any issue. Newspaper correspondent are welcomed at his legation.

Minister Takahira and his staff have not abandoned all their Oriental customs, but retain with great reverence some of the ceremonies so popular in their Fatherland. On the emperor's birthday pictures of the emperor and empress of Japan are placed in a conspicuous manner in the parlor and the minister, his household and suite pass before them, bowing low and according them the same courtesy and reverence they would were their sovereigns there in person. This custom having been observed, a legation dinner follows, in which Japanese dishes predominate, and the emperor and empress are toasted and patriotic speeches and sentiments are indulged.

The Japanese minister is a diplomat by profession, having entered the imperial service in 1876. He was trained in the Foreign office at home and his career illustrates the success of his teaching. During the twenty-eight years he has been in the diplomatic service he has held posts of high honor in China, Corea, Holland, Italy, Austria and the United States. He is a graduate of the best Japanese colleges at Tokio and is a man of intellectuality and culture. He is learned in Chinese philosophy and language, as well as in that of his own country. He speaks and writes fluently in several European languages and is an able English scholar.

This is not his first service in Washington, as he was appointed attache to the Japanese legation in this country in 1879 and became its secretary in 1881. A brief review of his career illustrates the success that he has met with in the diplomatic service. He became secretary of the foreign office in 1883; was made charge d'affaires in Corea in 1885; acting consul general at Shanghai in 1887; chief of political bureau of the foreign office in 1890; consul general at New York in 1891; minister resident to Holland in 1892; envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary to Italy in 1894; envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary to Austria in 1896; vice minister for foreign affairs in 1898, and appointed envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary to the United States in 1900.

Minister Takahira, soon after his appearance in Washington as representative of Japan, frankly stated the great object of Japanese diplomacy, for the accomplishment of which he was to work industriously.

"We want the power that flows from a great trade and a great prosperity at home. The efforts now making by Japan to increase the commerce between herself and the United States and the rest of the world are, in themselves, a guarantee of long peace. The two countries are seeking the

same object, but each can obtain it best and quickest through the peaceful competition of trade, which will bring about closer relations of friendship and commercial interest between the two people.

"Japan feels very near to the United States. This feeling of friendliness began with the visit of Commodore Perry to our shores, which let in a great flood of new life from the west, and it has increased as American ingenuity has shortened the distance, measured in hours of travel, between the two countries.

"It has also been very greatly increased and deepened, I am sure, by the association of the armies of the empire and of the republic in the movement to safeguard the highest interest of civilization in the east. This association revealed in a striking way the fact that the United States is now an eastern power, and that the interests of America are very closely related to those of Japan. It was the beginning, I believe, of a new impulse in the development of a far greater trade in the Pacific and of warmer feelings of friendship."

"The Japanese minister has been absolutely truthful and straightforward in all this controversy," was the unusual comment of a high State department official a few days before hostilities broke out between Russia and Japan.

In such a delicate situation, where the favor of the United States was so sincerely desired by both parties, this compliment is unusually significant and represents the Japanese diplomat in an unusually favorable light. All negotiations that have taken place at the State department in which Oriental questions were involved have hitherto been characterized by ambiguity and in some cases by downright duplicity. It was refreshing to the department officials to do business with a diplomat and with a government whose representations were found to be true and accurate.

EDWIN A. DOUGLAS.

## Salt Lake Drying Up

That the Great Salt lake is certain in the near future to disappear from the map has long been the belief of scientists. That its disappearance will come much sooner than has been expected, and possibly within a quarter of a century, is the conclusion that has been reached by certain investigators who have recently made careful studies of its fluctuations.

In an article in a recent number of the Scientific American an account is given of some of these investigations. One calculation is made from an examination of the surface level of the lake, which for thirty years has been steadily lowering, with only a single period of rising tendency. In the last sixteen years the net fall has been eleven and a half feet, and in the last three years it has been three feet. Inasmuch as the rate of fall is increasing, and as the deepest part of the lake has only forty feet of water, this form of calculation indicates that the lake will be dry within forty years at the outside.

Another calculation is based on the cubic contents of the lake at the present time as compared with the contents in 1886, when adequate measurements on which to base an estimate were made. By this method the disappearance of the lake is scheduled to occur within twenty-five years.

Three theories have been suggested to account for this tendency. One is evaporation, another irrigation, and the third that there exists a subterranean outlet. The last mentioned theory is little better than a guess, but the first theory is unquestionably true to a certain extent, though whether it will account for the rapidity with which the level has been lowered in recent years is doubtful. As for irrigation more evidence can be produced to show its effects in decreasing the water supply of the lake. Irrigation was commenced by Brigham Young in the forties, but it was not till 1880 that it was adopted on a large scale, and it is within the period since then that the lowering of the level has been most swift.

There are indications on the mountain sides, and also on the nine mountainous islands in the lake, that the depth of the water was once 600 feet greater than at present. We are therefore witnessing now the speedy completion of a physical change that has been in progress for many centuries. Most great physical transformations of the surface of the globe move so slowly that they will give evidence of themselves on the map only after many generations. This one bids fair to make a material difference in the geographies which our children's children will study.—Chicago Record-Herald.

## Picnic Horror

"Oh, I'm so tired!" panted the girl in the pink shirt waist, flopping down on the grass. "And I've lost all my handkerchiefs."

"Will a handkerchief rest you?" asked the young man with the tennis shoes, extending his own.

"No, but a nap kin," she said, closing her eyes sleepily.

At which the ants attacked the lunch basket even more savagely than before.—Chicago Tribune.