

# Talk With Japan's Greatest General on the Subject of War and Peace



MR. CARPENTER AND PRINCE YAMAGATA IN THE LATTER'S GARDEN.



PRINCE YAMAGATA.

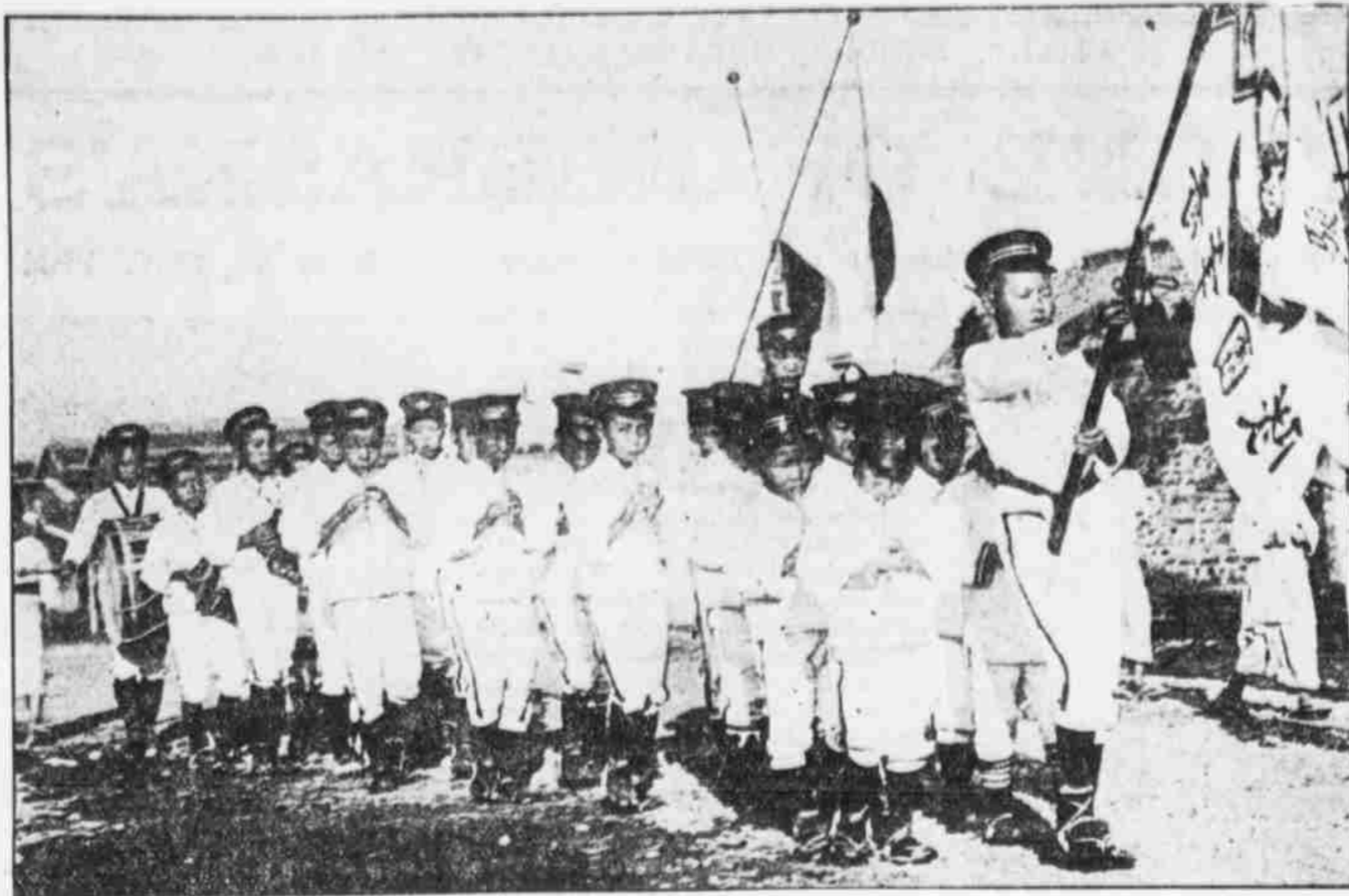
(Copyrighted, 1909, by Frank G. Carpenter.)  
OKIO, Japan.—(Special Correspondence of The Bee.)—Have just returned from an interview with Prince Yamagata, one of the greatest generals and statesmen of the last half century. What Von Moltke was to Germany and Grant to the United States, Prince Yamagata has been to Japan. In many respects he has been even more. He was practically the originator of the Japanese army, the man whose organizing military ability has made it one of the most formidable fighting machines of the world. The story of his life has been wrapped up in the new Japan, and he and Prince Ito and one or two others are all that now remain of the links which bind the old feudal times to the up-to-date live activities of our western civilization.

### Prince Yamagata in 1909.

It was at his home in the suburbs overlooking Tokio that I met General Yamagata by appointment this morning. My audience had been arranged through letters of introduction from Baron Takahira, the Japanese ambassador at Washington, and his highness was ready to receive me. His son-in-law, Mr. Shutei Hagiwara, acted as interpreter, and for an hour the famous general talked most interestingly about army matters and of the position which Japan now holds as to the rest of the world.

But before I give you the interview let me tell you something about how this great Japanese general looks, and a bit as to his history. He is now 70 years of age, but is as straight as an arrow, and his mind is as clear as it was when, as captain of the Choshu clan, he fought against the Shogun invasion more than forty years ago. He is tall for a Japanese, is slender and wiry, and so gentle and quiet in his manner and conversation that one would never imagine that his life had been that of a minister of war, an organizer of armies and a general in command.

Prince Yamagata was born at just about the time Andrew Jackson left the presidency of the United States. He was 15 years old when Commodore Perry presented the letters he brought here from President Fillmore, and made the treaty which opened Japan to the world, and he was a man of thirty at the time the emperor was brought out of his seclusion to be the ruler of the new Japan. At that time he had already made a military reputation and soon thereafter he was appointed major general and then minister of war. He was acting as the war minister at about the time that General Grant ended his term as president of the United States, and after that held many posts as well as military positions. He aided in organizing the government, and has several times been at the head of it as premier. He attended the coronation of the czar in 1881, and then brought back the treaty with Russia, which goes by his name. He was for a time commander-in-chief of the army of Japan in his war with



JAPANESE SCHOOL BOY SOLDIERS.

said to be now introducing our modern civilization." "I do not know. It will probably change in time. If it should have a strong emperor, who would take the reins of government into his own hands, it would be as easy to change it as it was to change Japan. The system of laws is similar throughout the country. The emperor is supreme and theoretically he controls everything in his empire. The military system might be centralized and the taxes reorganized so as to give the country a revenue. If properly trained the Chinese might become excellent soldiers, and with almost infinite resources of men and treasury a strong emperor could create a most powerful army. In such a case China itself might become what you call a yellow peril. At present, however, there is no danger of such a possibility, although China in the past has had two rulers of the present dynasty who have governed the people with a firm and capable hand."

**How Japan's Army Was Created.**  
The conversation here turned to the organization of the Japanese army, which was largely performed by Prince Yamagata, and I asked him to tell me something as to how it was done. He replied: "In the feudal times the imperial army consisted of about 400,000 families of Silla, or the followers of the daimyos, who were the feudal lords. Each daimyo kept as many retainers as his finances would permit, and allowing two or three men to the family, the army of that day had possibly as many as 1,000,000 men. This included not only the soldiers, but the surgeons, treasurers and other officials. It was in 1871 that the system of conscription was introduced and the reorganization of the army began. It was first started in a few provinces and thence extended throughout the empire. The imperial scheme was to organize a standing army of 400,000 men, comprising six army corps. This was found impossible at the start and a small army of 60,000 was created. That was about 1873. At that time French officers were brought in to train the soldiers and for several years they were our chief instructors along the lines of modern warfare."

**Nation of Peace.**  
"Besides," continued his highness, "Japan is not anxious to be considered a warlike nation. Our military establishment was created for defense and not for conquest. We hope to continue our national life along the lines of peace, not of war." "But your military establishment is so large that other nations fear that you may need to make war to occupy it. Do you think a big army a necessity in these modern times?" "As your president has said, the best guarantee of any nation against war is the fact that that nation is prepared for war if it should come. This we believe to be the case and I see the United States believes likewise, for it is now talking of increasing its army and navy."

**Flying Machines in War.**  
"How about these new inventions in modern warfare? May they not be so terrible that a small nation might destroy a great one?" "Yes, I can imagine inventions which would make warfare mean annihilation. Some of the new explosives are terribly destructive. Take the balloons and the flying machines in which your people are now so wildly experimenting. If they should be successful they would change the conditions of battle and fighting. A few such machines and some bushels of dynamite might wipe out an army. There might be charges from the clouds which the forces on the ground, however great, could not resist. Inventions of that kind would very likely put an end to war."

**Yellow Peril.**  
"How about the yellow peril, your highness? Is there no danger that the Chinese may become a great fighting nation, and that by combining with the yellow races may conquer the world?" "There is no such thing as a yellow peril," replied Prince Yamagata, "and no reason why Japan should be associated with China in the minds of the west. The chief difference between the nations of the west and ours is that of color. We have the same ambitions along the lines of civilization, and the same desire toward the betterment of mankind and of the world. There is no reason why we should be set aside by ourselves."

**German System.**  
"What does your highness think of the German system of military training?" "I consider it superior to any other," replied Prince Yamagata. "It seems to me perfect and I do not see how it could be improved upon." "But does not that system turn the man into a machine which makes him useless in times of emergency, where he has to act for himself? I have always thought that so of the German soldier?" "The German is a very able soldier," replied Marshal Yamagata, "and the German army, though not as good, perhaps, as it would be had it had practice in actual warfare, is a very well trained and efficient one."

**Schoolboy Soldiers.**  
Since this talk with Prince Yamagata I have visited many of the schools to see the material which Japan is now working up into her soldiers of the future. Every boy in the empire is now undergoing military drill. The law provides that all the schools shall be equipped with guns and knapsacks, and the pupils are regularly trained by an army officer. Every school has its drill hall and exercising grounds; and rain or shine the boys go through their marching. I see them in the streets, tramping along with their guns on their shoulders and their knapsacks on their backs. They are taken to see the army maneuvers, and officers are especially appointed to explain what is going on. The children are taught that it is their duty to fight and die for their country, and they have school songs in honor of the heroes of Japan. Almost every school teacher has been in the army at one time or another, and there is a six-week service which has been especially created for the teachers of the primary schools. During this time they are made to go through the regular training of the ordinary soldiers and are then discharged.

As an instance of the patriotism of the school children, during the war with Russia subscriptions were gotten up by them to purchase a warship for the emperor. Every little one gave his pennies, denying himself candy and toys, and the whole amounted to many thousand yen.

**Every Japanese a Soldier.**  
As it is now every Japanese is a soldier. Service in the army is universal and compulsory. Every boy is expected to enter the army at 17, although he is not required to perform active service until he is 20. He then serves off and on until he is 40. At the emperor's call the whole nation might be put into the field, although there are some exemptions. The only son of an indigent parent over 60 years of age may stay at home, and there are certain exceptions as to Japanese living in foreign countries. There are a few young men of the higher circles who have to serve only one year in the ranks, after which they may be enrolled as noncommissioned officers. Such men, however, must possess an education equal to that of the graduates of the middle schools.

The service expected of every man is at regular intervals from the ages of 20 to 40, and this service is such that the greater body of the people may be made ready for active war at any time. The number of trained and partially trained men available at the beginning of the Russian war was about 600,000. This was added to as the struggle went on, and when the war closed, notwithstanding the heavy losses, Japan had more than 500,000 men in the field. I am told that 600,000 men could now be massed without trouble, and that within a short time an army of not less than 1,000,000 could be called forth.

In addition to the many soldiers here there is now a garrison in Formosa, and there are 30,000 or 40,000 men in Korea, constituting a permanent force of occupation for that country.

**Nation of Fighters.**  
From this it will be seen that the Japanese are a nation of fighters, and that in a war with them the whole people must be taken into account. Every man, woman and child is a patriot, and every one esteems it a glory to die for his country. During the war with Russia the women worked almost day and night to add to

the army funds and they frequently expressed their regret that they could not go to the field. I had a talk the other day with an American professor who has been teaching in the Japanese schools at Shizuoka, one of the largest cities between Tokio and Osaka. During which he gave me an instance illustrating the war spirit among the school girls. Said he: "It was in one of our girls' schools. The American teacher was discussing the war situation. Some had news had arrived that morning and the teacher said she feared Japan would finally be defeated. Upon this one little Japanese girl burst out: 'Oh, no, Japan will never be defeated, for when the men are all killed we girls will take the guns and fight for the emperor.'"

**Japan's War Fund.**  
"At the time of the war Japan had a serious problem to face," continued the professor. "It had its standing army of 600,000 men, who were all sent to the field. Then the reserves were called out, numbering hundreds of thousands more. All of these came from the ranks of industry. They were taken from the farms and factories, from the workshops and gardens. The population here is comparatively small, and it was a question how the war could go on and the factories not stop and the fields not be uncultivated. This question was solved by the people jumping in and sacrificing themselves without pay. The men in the mills worked overtime to make up the loss of the force which had been called off to war. In many cases their overtime wages were given to the families of the soldiers. The farmers, clerks and mechanics combined together to till the lands left vacant. Often they worked at night and sometimes together in gangs. The children worked after school hours to help the families of soldiers, and in some places farms

were let out free to soldiers' families and village was subscribed for them. In one of the villages the families of the men about the war were given the monopoly of selling matches and soap, and in others they had like privileges. Many landlords remitted rent to such people, and the doctors treated their sick without charge. A relief association with a capital of \$100,000 was then formed to support the widows and orphans of soldiers. The Red Cross society, which was so efficient in the hospitals and on the field, was supported by all the people. That society has 1,000,000 members, and one in every forty-five of the Japanese population belongs to it and has pledged himself to pay \$1.50 for ten years toward its maintenance. The Japanese Red Cross society was organized with the idea of paying the country's debt by helping its soldiers, and it has done an enormous good."

**Small Bonds Owned in Japan.**  
The money raised for the war, while some of it came from abroad, was largely supplied at home. The action of the people in this regard shows that the emperor can call on his subjects for the last yen in their pockets at the time of any national struggle. Everyone subscribed to the bonds, and they were made of such small denominations, with the payments so graduated that the poorest man could invest. One could take a bond on the payment of \$2.50 of our money. When they were offered the people rushed by the thousands to buy them. Jurikisha men and factory hands carried them to the bank, and men and women were working for 20 cents a day out all their little hoards into government securities, and that largely from patriotism and their reverence and love for the emperor.



PRINCE YAMAGATA'S HOME NEAR TOKIO.

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FRANK G. CARPENTER.

## Opening of Parliament an Historic Day in Turkey

**C**ONSTANTINOPLE, Dec. 18.—Thursday, December 17, will long be remembered in Turkey as the day when Turks and Christians assembled on an equal footing for the first time, this achievement a great event in Turkish history—the opening of the first Parliament in thirty-one years.

For weeks past there has been intense excitement as day by day the various ballot boxes, little oblong tin traveling trunks gaily decorated with flowers and ribbons of red and white—the constitutional colors—were carried in state to the Sublime Porte, accompanied by regiments of soldiers, bands and an enormous crowd. But the opening day, originally fixed for November 14, had to be postponed as all was not in readiness; the members could not be elected in a hurry, as many of the voters knew nothing of elections.

Yesterday long before 7 a. m. we were awakened by the sound of many trumpets and the tramp, tramp, tramp of soldiers' feet. Every one was up early and we found a gloriously bright, crisp day awaiting us, instead of the snow and rain we expected. We had taken the precaution to secure a card signed by the prefect of police so we were able to drive along the whole route, only having to show our permit occasionally. Once an officer stopped us; we showed him the card, written in Turkish, but he shook his head, puzzled over it and was about to turn us off the route when another and younger officer came forward and, reading the card immediately, he saluted and allowed us to pass the barrier.

There was a very marked difference in the arrangement of the soldiers. In Pera, the European quarter, from Yildiz to the bridge the men were placed in two several yards apart; in Stamboul, the Turkish quarter, soldiers lined the whole route, in some parts two rows deep. Outside the British embassy were men from Salonica, Tripoli, and Albania, standing in rows, smart looking fellows and seemingly well pleased with their new uniforms and bright red fezzes. As a company of soldiers was marched up the two end men were ordered to fall out and take up their position in a vacant place, then the rest marched on a short distance and another couple of them fell behind. The Orthodox lancers, dirty and splashed with mud, were stationed outside the ministry of war, while further on came the fire brigade in shabby blue uniforms and tattered red helmets, all looking in need of a wash and many officers unshaved.

at night half a dozen lamps were fastened to short poles on either side of the bridge. The enormous crowd now assembled in the streets was composed of ragged, patched, rough-looking fellows, all intent on making their way to the house of Parliament, but moving along without any enthusiasm, shouting or noise. We came upon a long procession of students from the military college, young men and boys from 10 to 20, slouching slowly along with heads bent, looking like a gang of criminals, rough-looking fellows, all intent on making their way to the house of Parliament, but moving along without any enthusiasm, shouting or noise. We came upon a long procession of students from the military college, young men and boys from 10 to 20, slouching slowly along with heads bent, looking like a gang of criminals, rough-looking fellows, all intent on making their way to the house of Parliament, but moving along without any enthusiasm, shouting or noise. 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