

BOMBARDMENT WITH A MOTIVE

It is with some misgivings that I set myself the task of dredging my mind for the facts, and I have no doubt fancies, which shroud my first attempt at social contact with a member of the opposite sex. The past has not yet dimmed sufficiently for me to be unable to discern myself clearly on the memorable night, and it is with mixed emotions that I bare these hitherto unknown happenings for all to muse and speculate upon.

I had passed several stages regarding girls that are normal for a boy to go through, and I think it best for me to begin my narrative at the end of my "girl-hating" and the beginning of what I will call my "appreciation" stage. I had been a firm "hater" for several years, but now to my astonishment I found myself regarding a certain girl, a year my junior, and a reasonably close neighbour, with a new and better light. After deep and sad contemplation, I admitted I found her not at all unattractive, and decided to show my affection by requesting the honor of her company to the local movie theater.

But a direct approach and invitation was out of the question, and I had to first let her know in some subtle fashion what my intentions were, and then gradually work around to the actual asking. I was aided in this by the fact that it was the season of Winter, and when, on four successive afternoons I lurked in a suitable alley and bombarded my choice with vigorously and accurately thrown snowballs, I believed her to be ready for the all-important question. I would have preferred a fifth afternoon in the alley, but as Friday evening was fast approaching I deemed it wise to make my request without further delay. And so on Thursday afternoon I abruptly confronted her, noting with satisfaction her hurried glance towards my hands, to see no doubt if I was in the possession of any snowballs, and manfully suppressing a slight but rather embarrassing squeak in my voice, I made my request. To this day I don't know if it was surprise, fear of another bombardment, or a genuine desire for my company, which influenced her affirmative reply, but I elected to believe the last, and with a smug smile, I departed to await the hour of 7:00 P.M. Friday.

Wearing that shiny look which can only be captured by much application of soap to a beardless face, and arrayed in the choicest of a non too bountiful wardrobe, I made my punctual appearance, and with what I hoped was a debonair manner took my date's arm in mine and proceeded in the direction of the movie. This journey was by no means long, and as I strutted along I noted with pleasure the surprised looks of two elderly spinsters who were also residents of my neighbourhood, and who were advancing, I believe, in the direction of the Church. The trip held one very bad moment for me, and that was when I observed a group of my friends, out for no good I was sure, and only in search of such a victim as myself to hurl innumerable taunts and jeers at, walking in front of us. No doubt my companion noted my momentary pause in stride and loss of voice, but with the wisdom that is inbred to women, wisely kept her silence, and I breathed a silent sigh of relief when my friends filed into a store, allowing us time to pass unnoticed. I resumed the conversation concerning the relative merits of the actors we were soon to gaze upon, and in short order we arrived at the ticket office.

The show is itself, I believe, of secondary importance here, and as the title eludes me I think it will be sufficient to say that it was of the suspense type. My escort showed

the proper amount of terror at the appropriate times, and I showed my bravery by chuckling at her displays. After some two hours of this the movie concluded and we again found ourselves on the sidewalk, preparing for the return journey.

We did not go directly to my date's home, but deviated to the extent of entering an ice-cream parlor, where the traditional sodas were duly consumed. From there we continued our return with, I must confess, the conversation again being non too enlightening, and in fact consisting to such an extent on my companions side of replies such as "yes", "surely", "I agree", etc, that I suspected the recent bombardments were still very fresh in her mind. In a few short minutes we reached her door, and here the scene which is most vivid to my mind took place. I had been giving serious thought to whether or not it would be proper, and to some extent safe, for me to attempt a good night kiss, and lacking the wisdom of past experience, and possessing the cockiness of youth, I decided an attempt was in order. But as the inevitable moment approached my determination wavered, and for a frantic second I feared all to be lost. Then, motivated by an impulsive urge, and with eyes tightly shut, I made a hasty lunge in her direction. I believe I came in contact with the point of her nose, but, considering that it was my first attempt, I deemed I had conducted myself admirably and without further ado, I turned on my heel and left.

—MARTIN F. J. CLOONEY

BELOW MOUNT FUJI

Everything was out of sight now except the pale blue sky with the blazing sun up above and the mysterious dark blue sea down below. Our ship was headed for Japan, and this was the first part of our journey across the Pacific.

Shipboard life is a lazy life. Every day we sat on the deck and watched those silly flying-fish, dashing away from the sides of the ship five or six inches above the water through a distance of about ten feet or more, and then exhausted, disappearing into the sea again. At night, blessed were those who went to bed early.

There were only eight passengers on board ship; two couples, three old ladies, and myself. All were Americans except myself. Very soon, we got acquainted with each other, and we were looking forward to the fascinating experience of visiting Japan. Four days was not a very long time, after all. Finally, we were inside our first port of call, Kobe.

Japan is a small yet very strong country to the northeast of China and just opposite Korea. The most famous landscape of this country is Mount Fuji. Japan—the land of romance!

Kobe is one of the great ports in southern Japan, and was a chief naval base during World War II. As a result, it was utterly destroyed by the Allies. The Kobe that I saw had been rebuilt after the war, so the buildings were modern and westernized. If you want to see Japan, Kobe is not the place to go. One amazing thing about this place was that there was an excessive number of banks (money banks), thirty or more on one single street. Some of them even stood side by side in a row of ten. The total number of them, I think, was more than sixty. I imagine the people there are rather rich.

Thirty-six hours later, we came to Nagoya. Since the ship moored at a spot far from town, we had to take a taxicab to go to town. Here I must stop and advise you that if you have heart trouble, please do not ride in a Japanese taxi. The taxi drivers there are really crazy. You can imagine what it would be like to drive at a speed of sixty mile per hour in downtown districts where the traffic is heavy and the roads are wide enough for only two cars to go through! There is a joke about the cab drivers in Japan. It says that before you hire the cab, ask the driver first whether he has a family or not. If he has not, you had better look for another one, or just walk instead. I am sorry that is all I can tell you about Nagoya, for most of the time of my sightseeing trip was spent in the taxi—praying.

The next stop was Shimizu. As I had not yet recovered from the excitement of the taxi ride in Nagoya, I preferred to stay on board ship. Anyway, the ship's Captain told us there was not much to be seen there. Finally, we came to the most famous seaport of Japan, Yokohama. I enjoyed myself very much here because we did not need to take a taxi downtown. In addition, I had the courage to go ashore alone now. Yokohama is very beautiful and possesses all the trade-marks of a great commercial seaport. But happy hours go by easily and swiftly; soon we were on the open sea again.

Here is a final point about Japan, something special for the gentlemen. The typical Japanese costume is called a "kimono". The design is always the same for men, but for the ladies, you must pay attention. If you find at the back of her dress an attachment in the form of a bow-tie, you still have a chance. But, if the attachment is in the form of a bag, I'm sorry, you are a bit late.

—ALFRED TSANG

LIFE OF A SHOE-SHINE BOY IN HONG KONG

It is a blustery winter dawn breaking. On yonder mountain top the glimmer of the early rising sun can be seen in the skies. Another day has arrived. Out in the harbour there is a fleet of fishing junks just returning after an abundant harvest. You can hear the morning song composed by the even sounds of the oars. In the big factories busy workers have started their new day at the usual time. Smoke is coming out through the tall chimneys, trying to infuse the pleasant atmosphere. On the streets, hawkers and newspaper boys are seen rushing everywhere to try their luck.

In a small wooden cabin a little boy has just finished his simple breakfast and is ready to go out to work. "Good-bye, Ma," says Ah Ming to his mother, "I'll be back back before supper. While uttering this, he leaves their simple cabin with a wooden box in his hand and begins his daily work. "Take care of yourself, son," says his mother reluctantly behind him. Tears have already found their way into her eyes. She seems very unwilling to let her eight-year-old son be a shoe-shine boy. But they have to eat in order to live, and to live, they have to work. Emotion at length gives way to reason; she tries to suppress her feeling.

Ah Ming loiters on the street, and as he approaches the toy-shop which he passes by every morning, he stares at the beautiful toys very fondly; and in his mind is this childish thought:—every child of a well-to-do family can afford these and he cannot! It is his habit to gloat on those

things for a short while. When he regains his wits he starts off. His first stop is in a crowded tea-house where he may get some business. On arriving at the familiar tea-house, he can see there on the counter sits a kind old man who is the owner of the place. He always bears a friendly smile on his face when he sees Ah Ming coming in. In return, Ah Ming greets him, "Hi, Mr. Chan." This morning there were quite a few customers. "Sir, do you want to have your shoes shined?" Ah Ming remarks to a young gentleman at his right. "No," says the young man, who seems to be offended by the interruption. Ignoring him, he falls into another conversation with his friend.

After several attempts, he becomes rather disappointed. With a heavy heart he begins to depart. As he comes to the doorway he hears a voice shouting behind him. "Sonny, how much for shining a pair of shoes?" says a fat man. Seeing the opportunity, Ah Ming rushes back immediately and says, "Just twenty cents, mister. "But he insists that the charge should be a dime. After some argument the little boy has to give way. Despite the little reward, Ah Ming is quite happy because he has secured his first job this morning. He does a pretty good job too!

Before long, the young lad is already trying his luck in another part of the town. Here he meets some of his fellow shoe-shine boys. Greeting one another, they sit down to take a rest. Some of them begin to smoke while some of them start to gamble. They also encourage Ah Ming to join them, but the young lad realizes that none of these things are good for him. Even though he is so young he fully understands what is good. Just as he is about to leave from them, he finds that the dime in his pocket has disappeared. He turns around and asks the other boys if they have seen it, but none of them admit. Ah Ming is so full of grief that he bursts into tears, because it means he has lost the price of his dinner. With tears still in his eyes, he takes his leave. Presently, he approaches a restaurant hoping to find one or two customers. Finally, after several tries he is lucky to obtain two dimes. He goes off happily to a nearby food-stall where he gets a bowl of porridge and two pieces of cake.

The worst is to come; just as he comes out of the food-stall he sees a policeman approaching. He wants to run but it is too late—according to the law, he has to obtain a license in order to practice his occupation—before long the policeman's big hand is resting on his tiny shoulder and catches him. Ah Ming tries to struggle and urges the policeman to set him free, but to no avail.

He is placed in a dark room with several other boys of the same fate. Ah Ming puts himself in a corner weeping. He is thinking of his beloved mother who is waiting for him to go back. And when he thinks about not having any money for her, his tears pour out again. He always wishes to make his mother happy by bringing something home, but this time he is going to disappoint her. It seems as though quite a long time has passed before he is led to the officer in charge. Fortunately, this is the first time he has offended the Law; and the officer, seeing his young age, warns him of the Law and sets him free.

After he is set free, darkness has descended upon the whole place. Being as free as a bird again, he hurries back to see his mother who is already waiting for him by the doorway, because he is half an hour later than the usual time. In both hearts there is some joyfulness, the mother is happy because her son is back while the son is cheerful