

雀の日記

*The Diary of a Sparrow*



*The Mock Battle*

Recalling my thoughts when I was five or six years old is like remembering an event I dreamed many years ago. I lived on the lower slopes of Maruyama (Circle Mountain) surrounded by other mountains. Mt. Higashi (East mountain) had the sawtooth shape of a folding screen, and Mt. Yudachi (Thunder Mountain) was just like a wooden bowl lying upside down. Mt. Nishi (West Mountain) and Mt. Kita (North Mountain) lay off to the northwest. The mountains were always green, the rivers clear. Maruyama was a good place for observation, and crystal was produced there. These fondly remembered mountains, their distinct shapes and their natural elegance are my earliest, brightest memories.

In the spring time, in the rice fields where Chinese milk vetch bloomed everywhere, we became absorbed in playing "Surrender" and "Pile Driver." In the summer, we fished and swam in the Shinmei and Sengoro rivers. In the autumn, my friends and I sang "The Autumn Song" and hiked Mt. Nishi, where we climbed and played hide and seek among the maple trees. Sometimes we just amused ourselves sliding down the mountain cliff all day.

When the winter snows came, under the eaves of the houses we played "Pan-Pan," a game of slapping a pasteboard card down on the ground in order to overturn that of one's opponent. Stilts were our only toy. All the children had chilblains and chapped hands, but that didn't interfere with our play at all. Throughout the four seasons, we knew only our games, for we were just simple-hearted and unaffected children.

In the twenty-eighth year of Meiji, 1895, the Sino-Japanese War ended. The soldiers returned in glory to my village from the Ch'ing—China under the Ch'ing dynasty. The villagers received them with excitement and welcoming. A triumphant celebration would be held around the Oike (Big Pond) at the foot of Mt. Minami



もともより、山々の姿は、  
今に其の一節の任務に服しつゝあらのであらまいか。

寺の生息である。

人生五十年と云う長年月を歩き盡した今日、  
方一生を顧みれば、彼寺僧にも方々のもの、  
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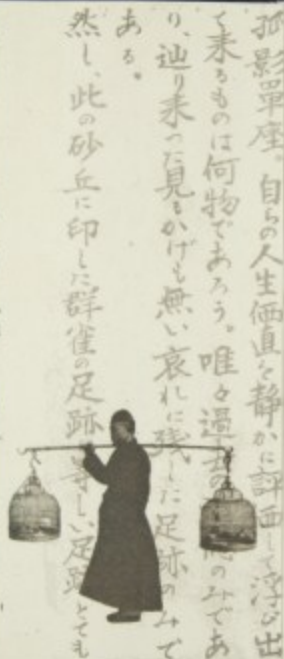
### The Sound-Making Box

One summer day in 1898, when I was in third grade at elementary school, a showman from a fair visited our school. At first, because he was wearing a western suit, I thought he was a government official. This man in western clothes had brought us a machine which was supposed to make sounds. His mission in visiting our school was to show the children this mechanism and offer its new technology as an educational example. The teachers all welcomed his visit, and so all of the children were gathered together in the schoolyard.

The showman stood before the children and explained the machine. "This is the machine called a "Sound-Making Box," he said. "It was invented by a man named Edison in America. There are only five of them in Japan, and this is one of the five."

Today we call it a gramophone.

Inside the glass box, the Sound-Making Box, a small mechanism was stored, as nowadays a sewing machine is stored in a cabinet. This small mechanism was called a "record" and it looked like white wax. When the wax, or the records, turned in the box, according to the man, supposedly it made sounds. But this box was specifically contrived so that no sound could escape from it. Instead, many narrow tubes like stethoscopes led from the box. Through these devices, we could hear the sound. The children stood in line and waited their turns. When my turn came, I put the tube to my ear just as a physician does his stethoscope, and I listened attentively to the sound coming through the pipe.



孤影單座。自らの人生価値を静かに評面して浮はら出  
く来るものは何物であらう。唯々還すのみであ  
り、辿り来った見もかけも無い哀れに残した足跡のみで  
ある。  
然し、此の砂丘に印した群雀の足跡  
等しい足跡とても

*An Aviator Named Marsh*


I reached the age of 24 in the 45th year of Meiji, 1912. On July 31 of that year, we heard the news of the Emperor's demise and a year of mourning was proclaimed. The Government ordered a suspension of all public performances of music and dancing for one year. Every household put out a flag draped in black and people wore either a mourning band or a badge all the time for one year. The young Prince ascended to the throne on August 1st, and the 45th year of Meiji then became the first year of the new Emperor Taisho.

These were times of great change. We soon heard blasting in my little town every day. A thirty-kilowatt electric power station was built to provide electric light in our houses. Telegraph poles appeared everywhere. I felt I was living in a modern civilized nation with all the signs of progress. And the astounding herald of these great events was the airplane that appeared the year before.

It was my second year in the army. My quarters were in the barracks of the Nagoya Infantry Regiment next to the ancient Nagoya Castle with its beautiful detached palace in central Japan. The five-story towers of the castle rose among dense old pine woods. The fabulous antique pair of great golden dolphins on the castle roof watched over our training exercises every day. These army days passed quickly.

I became a private first class. While this did not affect me much otherwise, I needed extra pocket money. My older sister would send me some money every month. Out of consideration for the first-year soldiers, seniors like myself did not feel right staying in the barracks on off-duty days. So we went out every Sunday and holiday. Of course, I visited the castle, the shrine, friends' and relatives' houses, but I couldn't do that all the time. So a fellow soldier and I rented a small room in Nagoya City. This

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