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## Chapter 28 - Patriotism

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The Duke's chef had served an Emperor with honor--the billiard room at Devenham Castle was the most comfortable room upon earth. The three men who sat together upon a huge divan, the three men most powerful in directing the councils of their country, felt a gentle wave of optimism stealing through their quickened blood. Nevertheless this was a serious matter which occupied their thoughts.

"We are becoming," the Prime Minister said, "much too modern. We are becoming over-civilized out of any similitude to a nation of men of blood and brawn."

"You are quoting some impossible person," Sir Edward Bransome declared.

"One is always quoting unconsciously," the Prime Minister admitted with a sigh. "What I mean is that five hundred years ago we should have locked this young man up in a room hung with black crape, and with a pleasant array of unfortunately extinct instruments we should have succeeded, beyond a doubt, in extorting the truth from him."

"And if the truth were not satisfactory?" the Duke asked, lighting a cigar.

"We should have endeavored to change his point of view," the Prime Minister continued, "even if we had to change at the same time the outline of his particularly graceful figure. The age of thumbscrews and the rack was, after all, a very virile age. Just consider for a moment our positions--three of the greatest and most brilliant statesmen of our day--and we can do very little save wait for this young man to declare himself. We are the puppets with whom he plays. It rests with him whether our names are written upon the scroll of fame or whether our administration is dismissed in half a dozen contemptuous words by the coming historian. It rests with him whether our friend Bransome here shall be proclaimed the greatest Foreign Minister that ever breathed, and whether I myself have a statue erected to me in Westminster Yard, which shall be crowned with a laurel wreath by patriotic young ladies on the morning of my anniversary."

The Duke stretched himself out with a sigh of content. His cigar was burning well, and the flavor of old Armignac lingered still upon his palate.

"Come," he protested, "I think you exaggerate Maiyo's importance just a little, Haviland. Hesho seems excellently disposed towards us, and, after all, I should have thought his word would have had more weight in Tokio than the word of a young man who is new to diplomacy, and whose claims to distinction seem to rest rather upon his soldiering and the fact that he is a cousin of the Emperor."

The Prime Minister sighed.

"Dear Duke," he said, "no one of us, not even myself, has ever done that young man justice. To me he represents everything that is most strenuous and intellectual in Japanese manhood. The spirit of that wonderful country runs like the elixir of life itself through his veins. Since the day he brought me his letter from the Emperor, I have watched him carefully, and I believe I can honestly declare that not once in these eighteen months has he looked away from his task, nor has he given to one single person even an inkling of the thoughts which have passed through his mind. He came back from the Continent, from Berlin, from Paris, from Petersburg, with a mass of acquired information which would have made some of our blue-books read like Hans Andersen's Fairy Tales. He had made up his mind exactly what he thought of each country, of their political systems, of their social life, of their military importance. He had them all weighed up in the hollow of his hand. He was willing to talk as long as I, for instance, was willing to listen. He spoke of everybody whom he had met and every place which he had visited without reserve, and yet I guarantee that there is no person in England today, however much he may have talked with him, who knows in the least what his true impressions are."

"Haviland is right," Bransome agreed. "Many a time I have caught myself wondering, when he talks so easily about his travels, what the real thoughts are which lie at the back of his brain. We know, of course, what the object of those travels was. He went as no tourist. He went with a deep and solemn purpose always before him. He went to find out whether there was any other European Power whose alliance would be a more advantageous thing for Japan than a continuation of their alliance with us. Such a thing has never been mentioned or hinted at between us, but we know it all the same."

"I wonder," the Duke remarked, "whether we shall really get the truth out of him before he goes."

The Prime Minister shook his head.

"Look at him now teaching old Lady Saunderson how to hold her cue. He singled her out because she was the least attractive person playing, because no one took any particular notice of her, and every one seemed disposed to let her go her own way! Those girls were all buzzing around him as though he were something holy, but you see how gently he eluded them! Watch what an interest she is taking in the game now. He has been encouraging the poor old lady until her last few shots have been quite good. That is Maiyo all the world over. I will wager that he is thinking of nothing on earth at this moment but of making that poor old lady feel at her ease and enjoy her game. A stranger, looking on, would imagine him to be just a kind-hearted, simple-minded fellow. Yet there is not one of us three who has wit enough to get a single word from him against his will. You shall see. There is an excellent opportunity here. I suppose both of you read his speech at the Herrick Club last night?"

I did," the Duke answered.

"And I," Bransome echoed. "It seemed to me that he spoke a little more freely than usual."

"He went as near to censure as I have ever heard him when speaking of any of the institutions of our country," the Prime Minister declared. "I will ask him about it directly we get the chance. You shall see how he will evade the point."

"You will have to be quick if you mean to get hold of him," the Duke remarked. "See, the game is over and there he goes with Penelope."

The Prime Minister rose to his feet and intercepted them on their way to the door.

"Miss Morse," he said, "may we ransom the Prince? We want to talk to him."

"Do you insinuate," she laughed, "that he is a captive of mine?"

"We are all captives of Miss Morse's," Bransome said with a bow, "and all enemies of Somerfield's."

Somerfield, hearing his name, came up to them. The Duchess, too, strolled over to the fire. The Prime Minister and Bransome returned with Maiyo towards the corner of the room where they had been sitting.

"Prince," the Prime Minister said, "we have been talking about your speech at the Herrick Club last night."

The Prince smiled a little gravely.

"Did I say too much?" he asked. "It all came as a surprise to me--the toast and everything connected with it. I saw my name down to reply, and it seemed discourteous of me not to speak. But, as yet, I do not altogether understand these functions. I did not altogether understand, for instance, how much I might say and how much I ought to leave unsaid."

"We have read what you said," Bransome remarked. "What we should like to hear, if I may venture to say so, is what you left unsaid."

The Prince for a moment was thoughtful. Perhaps he remembered that the days had passed when it was necessary for him to keep so jealously his own counsel. Perhaps his natural love of the truth triumphed. He felt a sudden longing to tell these people who had been kind to him the things which he had seen amongst them, the things which only a stranger coming fresh to the country could perhaps fully comprehend.

"What I said was of little importance," the Prince remarked, "but I felt myself placed in a very difficult position. Before I knew what to expect, I was listening to a glorification of the arms of my country at the expense of Russia. I was being hailed as one of a nation who possess military genius which had not been equalled since the days of Hannibal and Caesar. Many things of that sort were said, many things much too kind, many things which somehow it grieved me to listen to. And when I stood up to reply, I felt that the few words which I must say would sound, perhaps, ungracious, but they must be said. It was one of those occasions which seemed to call for the naked truth."

Penelope and the Duchess had joined the little group.

"May we stay?" the former asked. "I read every word of your speech," she added, turning to the Prince. "Do tell us why you spoke so severely, what it was that you objected to so strongly in General Ennison's remarks?"

The Prince turned earnestly towards her.

"My dear young lady," he said, "all that I objected to was this over-glorification of the feats of arms accomplished by us. People over here did not understand. On the one side were the great armies of Russia,--men drawn, all of them, from the ranks of the peasant, men of low nerve force, men who were not many degrees better than animals. They came to fight against us because it was their business to fight, because for fighting they drew their scanty pay, their food, and their drink, and the clothes they wore. They fought because if they refused they faced the revolver bullets of their officers,--men like themselves, who also fought because it was their profession, because it was in the traditions of their family, but who would, I think, have very much preferred disporting themselves in the dancing halls of their cities, drinking champagne with the ladies of their choice, or gambling with cards. I do not say that these were not brave men, all of them. I myself saw them face death by the hundreds, but the lust of battle was in their veins then, the taste of blood upon their palates. We do not claim to be called world conquerors because we overcame these men. If one could have seen into the hearts of our own soldiers as they marched into battle, and seen also into the hearts of those others who lay there sullenly waiting, one would not have wondered then. There was, indeed, nothing to wonder at. What we cannot make you understand over here is that every Japanese soldier who crept across the bare plains or lay stretched in the trenches, who loaded his rifle and shot and killed and waited for death,--every man felt something beating in his heart which those others did not feel. We have no great army, Mr. Haviland, but what we have is a great nation who have things beating in their heart the knowledge of which seems somehow to have grown cold amongst you Western people. The boy is born with it; it is there in his very soul, as dear to him as the little home where he lives, the blossoming trees under which he plays. It leads him to the rifle and the drill ground as naturally as the boys of your country turn to the cricket fields and the football ground. Over here you call that spirit patriotism. It was something which beat in the heart of every one of those hundreds of thousands of men, something which kept their eyes clear and bright as they marched into battle, which made them look Death itself in the face, and fight even while the blackness crept over them. You see, your own people have so many interests, so many excitements, so much to distract. With us it is not so. In the heart of the Japanese comes the love of his parents, the love of his wife and children, and, deepest, perhaps, of all the emotions he knows, the strong magnificent background to his life, the love of the country which bore him, which shelters them. It is for his home he fights, for his simple joys amongst those who are dear to him, for the great mysterious love of the Motherland. Forgive me if I have expressed myself badly, have repeated myself often. It is a matter which I find it so hard to talk about, so hard here to make you understand."

"But you must not think, Prince, that we over here are wholly lacking in that same instinct," the Duke said. "Remember our South African war, and the men who came to arms and rallied round the flag when their services were needed."

"I do remember that," the Prince answered. "I wish that I could speak of it in other terms. Yet it seems to me that I must speak as I find things. You say that the men came to arms. They did, but how? Untrained, unskilled in carrying weapons, they rushed across the seas to be the sport of the farmers who cut them off or shot them down, to be a hindrance in the way of the mercenaries who fought for you. Yes, you say they rallied to the call! What brought them? Excitement, necessity, necessities of their social standing, bravado, cheap heroism--any one of these. But I tell you that patriotism as we understand it is a deeper thing. In the land where it flourishes there is no great pre-eminence in what you call sports or games. It does not come like a whirlwind on the wings of disaster. It grows with the limbs and the heart of the boy, grows with his muscles and his brawn. It is part of his conscience, part of his religion. As he realizes that he has a country of his own to protect, a dear, precious heritage come down to him through countless ages, so he learns that it is his sacred duty to know how to do his share in defending it. The spare time of our youth, Mr. Haviland, is spent learning to shoot, to scout, to bear hardships, to acquire the arts of war. I tell you that there was not one general who went with our troops to Manchuria, but a hundred thousand. We have no great army. We are a nation of men whose religion it is to fight when their country's welfare is threatened."

There was a short silence. The Prime Minister and Bransome exchanged rapid glances.

"These, then," Penelope said slowly, "were the things you left unsaid."

The Prince raised his hand a little--a deprecatory gesture.

"Perhaps even now," he said, "it was scarcely courteous of me to say them, only I know that they come to you as no new thing. There are many of your countrymen who are speaking to you now in the Press as I, a stranger, have spoken. Sometimes it is harder to believe one of your own family. That is why I have dared to say so much,--I, a foreigner, eager and anxious only to observe and to learn. I think, perhaps, that it is to such that the truth comes easiest."

Of a purpose, the three men who were there said nothing. The Prince offered Penelope his arm.

"I will not be disappointed," he said. "You promised that you would show me the palm garden. I have talked too much."