

JAPANESE INCIDENT

By Henry H. Crane

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It happened last December in Detroit. The Christmas afterglow was struggling to survive in the hearts of some, but the more lurid light from the furious fires started at Pearl Harbor and Manila was all that mattered to most persons. It was a heyday for violent "patriotism" and for hatred of the vile enemy who had perfidiously attacked a peace-minded people.

I.

A Japanese gentleman, J. Y. Shimoda by name, was dining with his wife in a modest restaurant on Woodward avenue. Being United States citizens, born in Honolulu of Japanese parents, they felt secure enough, although naturally they were quite aware of the general atmosphere of hostility. But just now the sense of enmity seemed intensified. Glancing up from the table they saw a bus boy turn from his task of collecting dishes to glower at them with mounting anger and malevolence.

This bus boy, Pedro Z. Rosales, was a Filipino. Seeing these Japanese customers in the very restaurant where he worked outraged him. He wanted to hit them, hurt them, smash back at them in some way for what was happening at Manila and on Bataan. With difficulty he restrained himself--until Mr. Shimoda had paid his bill. Then, when he saw the Shimodas leave the building, he ran out the back door, grabbed a stout club he found at hand and, following stealthily, suddenly struck the unsuspecting Mr. Shimoda a savage blow on the back of the head, cutting open the victim's scalp and covering him with blood.

Terribly stunned and, as he later said, "seeing much black," Mr. Shimoda kept his feet. (These Japanese do not seem to fall over the way

they are supposed to.) Turning on his assailant, he looked at him a moment and then calmly, even graciously, said: "Ah, I understand. You are a Filipino. Because my people wickedly attack Manily, you hate all Japanese. You want to kill me. So sorry. I sympathize with your people, but you ought to keep cool. I am an American citizen. I love this country more than you do--and more wisely. I am not afraid of you. I could knock you down. But I must not do so. I am Christian. I must maintain Christian attitude. But I must have you arrested, to teach you a lesson in self-control."

Pressing his handkerchief to the vicious wound on the back of his head, without further ado Mr. Shimoda turned and looked for the nearest telephone to call the police. Pedro Rosales was so taken aback with the behavior of his victim that he stood, open-mouthed and with the club still in hand, looking very foolish and disconcerted. Then, as though suddenly remembering his bus boy duties, he dropped his weapon and dashed abruptly back to the rear of the restaurant.

The police arrived directly and escorted Rosales to headquarters where a young reporter, sensing a story, plied the culprit with questions. The story appeared in the evening edition, with all the prevalent patriotic propaganda appeal gratuitously embellishing it. "He Remembers Manila," was the caption, and the tale was so twisted as to make it appear that this young Filipino was in truth a one hundred per cent patriot and a gallant hero; for had he not risked his noble neck to save the country from the perfidious invading Japanese?

II.

The next morning, reading the outrageously misleading article, Mr. Shimoda determined to do something about it. He called up a Methodist minister whom he had never met personally, but whom he felt he knew at

least by reputation, and asked for an interview. Showing the minister the newspaper clipping, he asked for advice as to corrective procedure. His only concern was that the right impression be given to the public. Producing accreditation documents, he told the minister the story of his life. It was a heroic story, but told in simple, modest terms.

As a young man he had come to New York from Honolulu, and while there he had been converted to Christianity. He determined to become a missionary, and studied at Moody Bible Institute. Greatly influenced by Toyohiko Kagawa, he went eventually to Japan and conducted a preaching and teaching mission, stressing particularly the wickedness and danger of putting such complete faith in military might, urging the people to follow Christ instead of the gods of war. Such seditious sentiments naturally aroused the ire of the military gentry and soon Mr. Shimoda was ceremoniously deported from the ancestral shores and promptly returned to "his own country", the United States of America.

But presently Shimoda discovered that it was just about as difficult and dangerous for him to preach the Christian gospel here--particularly now that the war hysteria was being so assiduously augmented. To make enough money to support his family, therefore, he accepted a position as a chauffeur with a prominent Detroit citizen. But his major obsession always was to bear his Christian witness, and having tried to do so in this incident with the Filipino boy it was most distressing to have it so distorted in the press. What should he do?

The minister suggested that he, Mr. Shimoda, go first to the FBI and report the incident, and that he then seek out the editor of the newspaper which had mistold the tale and give him all the facts. His caller departed, promising to follow his advise.

III.

Before noon that day the minister's telephone rang with a call from his friend, the editor.

"Did you send this man Shimoda down here to see me?" the editor asked. The minister acknowledged that he had done so.

"Well, is he really on the level?"

"What do you think?" parried the preacher.

"My gosh, is that the way Christians are supposed to act?" queried the editor, incredulously.

"Have you seen any Christians around here lately setting such an example?" asked the minister.

"No, to tell you the truth, I haven't. But say, it really seems wonderful to see it really put to work, doesn't it? And a Jap, at that. Man, that IS news!"

"Think so?" said the minister, innocently. "Then why don't you give it the spread that it deserves?"

"Believe me, I will! So long! And say, if you come across another Christian like that send him to see me."

The next edition appeared with a two-column cut of Mr. Shimoda hand in hand with Mr. Rosales, each beaming beatifically upon the other, the Filipino with his arm about the shoulder of the Japanese in a gesture of genuine reconciliation. The caption over the picture read, "All's Quiet on the Detroit Front," and the headlines of the article stated, "Jap Forgives Filipino Who Clouted Him." Then followed a fair, full, frank statement of what had actually taken place, with the following denouement: "A love feast took place in the office of Assistant Prosecutor John A. Ricca, where Shimoda declined to sign a complaint against Rosales and passed off the clubbing which rendered Shimoda well-nigh unconscious and

left him with a large patch on the back of his head as 'just an emotional outburst.'"

But the most significant line of all was the sub-caption under the picture of the beaming brethren: "Everything's All Right Now, But If There Had Been A Gun Handy . . ."
