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worked out by Herr Strothmann with clear and precise care. The crisis created by insurgent nationalism for a Church like the Copts is obvious, but his closing word is that 'there is no unbroken African Christianity except that which exists to-day under the Coptic patriarch of Alexandria,'

and this record is not without promise and hope. It is a record which ought to awaken an intelligent sympathy with this sorely strained branch of the Christian Church in the East.

JAMES MOFFATT.

*New York.*

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## Entre Nous.

### Common Seeking and Finding.

*A Daughter of the Samurai*, by Etsu Inagaki Sugimoto, is a book to be commended to the curious—in the best sense of the word—that is, to children and to the unspoiled. It is a beautiful illustration of Walt Whitman's saying: 'As soon as histories are properly told there is no more need of romances.'

Here we have the history told by herself, of the life, from childhood to middle age, of a woman of high rank, a daughter of one of the noble feudal families of Japan. She must have been born about 1867. And if we can imagine having been born in, say, 1406 and in adolescence, having been dragged helter-skelter across the ensuing centuries to 1933, we might get some impression of what happened to Mrs. Sugimoto. The record of this passage from one era to another, from feudal to modern Japan, and thence to modern America, makes an extraordinary impression upon the reader. Seldom has it fallen to the lot of a writer to show such divergent pages of history, reflected not merely through a historian's mind, but through the personal intimate experiences of a sincere and intelligent contemporary.

The book falls into four main sections. The first section shows us the writer living in surroundings whose nearest Western parallel would be one of our great ducal houses in the Middle Ages: only, instead of Catholic piety pervading its customs and atmosphere, we have a grave and devout Buddhism, with Shinto elements intermingled.

Not the writer herself, but the elder sister, remembers the capture of the ducal mansion by the new democratic party, its tragic burning by the young mistress's own hand, to prevent its falling into the enemy's possession. The father was in prison and in imminent danger of death, and his girl wife, disguised as a peasant, her stiff straw coat barely hiding her silken robes, hid the heir and his

sisters and herself in outlying farms. Every night after their bath their faces were rubbed with persimmon juices to give a peasant darkness to their cheeks. Two years later feudal Japan was, politically, dead, and the prisoners were released, and the old home, in a shadowy way, restored, all its former splendours gone, but its manners and rituals retained.

Here we see little Etsu-ko, the writer of this autobiography, growing up in a world so strange and remote from ours, yet so finely civilized, that it is difficult, almost impossible, to believe that we are reading the life of a contemporary, and not some new and marvellous fairy tale.

At the age of six we see the little girl seated demurely before the priest, having her lessons from the four books of Confucius. She is destined by her father to be a priestess. For two hours she sits like a statue, then, unheard-of breach of propriety, one little knee slips a trifle, the body sways slightly, and instantly the priest must close his book, saying quietly but sternly, 'Little miss, it is evident that your mental ability to-day is not suited for study. You should retire to your room and meditate.' So she goes.

In this first part of the book one of the most beautiful chapters is that which describes the feast of Ura Bon, the Welcome to Souls Returned, that is, the yearly visit of the spirits of the ancestors to their former homes. Little Etsu-Bo's father has lately died, and here we have a naïve and exquisite picture of her mother, the young widow, singing as she prepares the house with flowers and many sweet formalities for the annual visit from the unknown land.

But Etsu-Bo after all is not to be a priestess, and in the next part of the book she tells of her betrothal to a Japanese youth in America whom she has never seen, and of her life in a mission

school in Tokio. The record of this first impact of Western civilization upon the sensitive mind of this young Samurai girl is a most original and touching document. She herself speaks of her conversion to Christianity as a 'natural spiritual development.' And nothing is more beautiful in the book than the impression of a real living experience which at the same time has been a grafting of the Christian faith upon the ancient tree of Buddhism. And when, years after, Etsu-Bo's mother dies, her daughter shared in forty-nine days of mourning according to the Buddhist ritual, and then, 'on the last night I knelt in my mother's old place and breathed a Christian prayer to the God who understands. Then I slowly closed the gilded doors (of the shrine) upon my prayer, believing sincerely that my mother's journey had ended in peace; and that, wherever she was or whatever she might be doing, she was faithfully taking her part in God's great plan.

'My minister was sorely troubled that I should have observed those last Buddhist rites. . . . I told him that, had I died even one day after I became a Christian, my mother would have been faithful, to the minutest detail, in giving me the Christian burial that she believed would satisfy my heart; and that I was my mother's daughter. Influence? Yes. The influence of loyalty, sympathy, understanding; all of which are characteristics of our Faith—hers and mine.'

The third section of the book describes the life of the Japanese bride in America, and it breaks in upon the stately measure of the book with a perhaps inevitable lightness, almost frivolity. Then comes the death of the young husband and the going with her two children to Japan, and then we return to the former theme, enriched and complicated by the American experience. Mrs. Sugimoto is rejoined by her mother, the *grande dame* of feudal Japan, and sometimes the old lady leads her half-Americanized granddaughter to the Temple service, and sometimes the child takes her grandmother to the Christian Church. 'There hand in hand they come home together, talking of what they had seen or heard.' Once they were talking of shrines, and the gentle old lady spoke. 'The holy shrine, little Chiyo, is only a box when it is empty, and my body is only a borrowed shrine in which I live. But it is a proper courtesy to leave a borrowed article in the best condition.'

Chiyo's eyes looked very deep and solemn for a moment.

'That's why we have to take a bath every day and always keep our teeth clean. Dear

me! I never thought of that as being polite to God.'

In these days, when friendship between the nations is so often perilously strained we need such books as this to recall to us the essential brotherhood of all seekers after God, and to remind us that even behind and beyond the scum and offence of militarism and nationalism there stand myriads of families and kindred and peoples of all races and creeds, bound to us by this common seeking and this common finding, of beauty and order and peace.

#### The Gain to me.

As I learned to value womanhood, I realized more and more that my love of freedom and my belief in my right to grow toward it meant more than freedom to act, to talk, to think. Freedom also claimed a *spiritual* right to grow.

I do not know exactly how I became a Christian. It was not a sudden thing. It seems to have been a natural spiritual development—so natural that only a few puzzles stand out clearly as I look back along the path. As I read, and thought, and felt, my soul reached out into the unknown; and gradually, easily, almost unconsciously, I drifted out of a faith of philosophy, mysticism, and resignation into one of high ideals, freedom, cheerfulness, and hope.

Of the wonder and glory of what I consider the greatest faith of the world I do not speak. Of that many know. And the selfish gain to me is beyond all words of all languages.<sup>1</sup>

#### A True Christian.

I think I am a true Christian. At least my belief has given me untold comfort and a perfect heart-satisfaction, but it has never separated me from my Buddhist friends. They have respect for this strange belief of mine; for they feel that, although I am loyal to the Christian God, I still keep the utmost reverence for my fathers and respect for the faith that was the highest and holiest thing they knew.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Etsu Inagaki Sugimoto, *A Daughter of the Samurai*, 147.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* 143.

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