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Lotus-Land Japan

Author(s): H. G. Ponting

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in New Zealand, where he settled in 1910, and his death occurred at Birkenhead in the province of Auckland in that Dominion.

I. N. Dracopoli.

In reference to our notice of the late Mr. Dracopoli in the March number (p. 231) we are asked to correct the statement that he came of Greek parentage, his father belonging to an old and well-known *Italian* family. Although his mother was British, his father retained his Italian nationality throughout, but the son became a British subject in 1914 in order to serve in the British army.

CORRESPONDENCE

Lotus-Land Japan.

IN a review of a revised edition of my book 'In Lotus-Land: Japan,' in the *Journal* for June, the writer states that he finds "many mistakes in the spelling and use of Japanese names, and in the diacritical marks which have so important a bearing on both their pronunciation and meaning."

Japanese is written in Japanese characters, and I spelt all names and words as phonetically as I could in English. In a most complimentary review of my book (a copy of which I send you) which the famous Japanese artist-author, Mr. Yoshio Markino, wrote in the *Bookman*, he stated: "My idea is that Japan has her own alphabet and spelling, and all the original words ought to be written in our way, and if any European wants to write Japanese words in his own alphabet and spelling, let him do it in his own way. And Mr. Ponting has done so. For instance, the Japanese Roman spelling law would spell 'kaya,' which he spells 'kaia,' and 'semi' which he spells 'seimi.' And how faithful he was to spell 'Chion-ji' as 'Chio-ji'! That is just how Kyoto people would pronounce!" Mr. Markino also stated: "The text is as truthful and sympathetic as the pictures. I sincerely recommend this book to every one who has a desire to visit Japan."

Your reviewer disputes the accuracy of my statement about the small seedless grapes which grow on the lower slopes of the volcano Asama-yama, stating that they are bilberries. My notebook shows that the mountain porters, who accompanied me on my ascent of the volcano, informed me that the fruit was known to them by the name "yama budo," which translated means "mountain grape." The Japanese call the bilberry "hama nashi" and "fujimmi." I am scarcely likely to be mistaken, as I owned a vineyard in California for six years in my younger days.

As regards the distances from the summit of Mount Fuji to Otome-toge, and to Lake Yamanaka, which your reviewer states are "greatly exaggerated." In the former instance the expression used was, "The pass is 3,333 feet high, and between it and Fuji there are 20 miles of space." The latter instance the expression used by me when in describing the exquisite spectacle of the lakes as seen from the summit of Fuji was "Yamanaka, nearest of them all, 2 miles below us and 15 miles away as an arrow speeds its flight, mirrors the azure heavens," etc. Reference to the map in Murray's guidebook shows that, allowing for the difference in height of about 2 miles, in the former instance the distance is 17 miles, and in the latter, to the end of the lake, 13 miles. The picturesque expressions used were, therefore, 3 miles out in one case and

2 miles in the other. Surely any one inspired by the feelings of an artist, writing of the scenic aspects of Japan, would be justified in speaking thus broadly. (The distance by footpath is in each case very much more.)

Your reviewer states, "The attractive feminine subjects depicted are almost all of a special class, and do not represent the ordinary type of Japanese women." As this sentence is likely to be widely misunderstood, I wish to state that some of the feminine subjects illustrated in my book are geisha. The social status of the geisha I have described in my book, and I have tried to remove some of the misconceptions about her. To most people the geisha is the most interesting feature of the feminine life of Japan, as she is certainly also the most picturesque, and the geisha has been famous throughout Japanese history.

The other feminine subjects depicted in my book include several studies of the pretty daughter of a Tokyo merchant; several studies of the pretty proprietress of a prosperous curio business at Miyanoshita; several studies of the dainty little waitresses of the famous Fujiya hotel at Miyanoshita; the daughter of a Kumamoto banker; the wife of a wealthy Kyoto manufacturer; a lady and her daughter travelling in the mountains; a proprietress; a ceramic artist; lady visitors to temples, etc.; country women and peasants. If such people do not represent "the ordinary type of Japanese women," I should like to know what they *do* represent.

Such a phrase as your reviewer uses is more open to misconstruction about the women of *Japan* than it would be about the women of *any* other land. Applied to the women of England or America it would mean nothing in any way suggestive; but it is quite different when applied to the women of Japan. There is "a special class" of women in Japan of whom every one has heard. They, and their environment, were favourite art motives of some of the old-time masters. The locality where they reside is one of the sights of Tokyo, and every visitor goes to see it. It therefore behoves one so punctilious about accuracy in trifling things in others, to weigh more carefully his own words about really serious matters.

As many of the "attractive feminine subjects" depicted in my book are friends whom I hold in esteem. I must request that you publish this letter with as much prominence as you gave to the review of my book, in the hope that it may serve to remove all possibility of misunderstanding about those whose photographs contributed so largely to make the book attractive.

H. G. PONTING.

[We have referred the above letter to the reviewer, who replies as follows:]

I much regret to learn that Mr. Ponting resents certain criticisms in my review of his book 'Lotus-Land Japan' in the June number of the *Journal*. May I be permitted to reply to some of the objections raised in his letter?

In doing so I must again draw attention to his statement in the Foreword that the volume "is intended, primarily, as a guide-book for the traveller." Apart from the fact that, in spite of its avowed purpose, it contains no map, this claim lays it open to closer criticism, and presupposes a greater degree of accuracy on points of detail than is expected in the ordinary travel-book.

With regard to the specific points raised in Mr. Ponting's protest I should like to make the following observations, at the same time remarking that they are based on many years of residence in Japan and on close study of things Japanese both at home and abroad.

The wild berry one finds growing profusely on the lower slopes of Asamayama, from which the excellent jam is made in and about Karuisawa, and with

which I have been pleasantly familiar for a quarter of a century, is known locally, it is true, as *Asama-budō* (Asama grape), *budō* being often used by country people to indicate a small round fruit bearing some resemblance to a grape. In this case it is a bilberry, and on one occasion the enterprising jam-maker of the village presented me with a dozen tins with a view to propaganda on his behalf!

Touching my criticism as to the mis-spelling of many Japanese words, the misuse of diacritical marks, etc., Mr. Ponting states that he has "spelt all names and words as phonetically as I could in English." On this point I would ask Mr. Ponting to compare his own usage with that adopted by practically all the leading English writers on Japanese subjects, whose authority not even he, I think, would wish to impugn. I will, however, confine myself to naming one whom both he and I would accept as an ultimate arbiter in this matter, our mutual friend Mr. Basil Hall Chamberlain, formerly Professor of Japanese and Philology in the Imperial University of Tōkyō, and editor of that unique 'Murray's Handbook for Japan,' of which Mr. Ponting writes (p. 1) as the "best of all guide-books on any land. . . . I know much of it almost by heart." Not only does Mr. Ponting, in many scores of instances, by his practice, oppose this authority, but by mis-spelling some words and by misplacing, in numerous cases, the diacritical marks now almost universally adopted by these scholars, he does really quite alter the proper pronunciation, and often the actual meaning, of a large number of place-names.

Exception is taken to my criticism that the distances from the summit of Fuji to the top of the Otome-tōge and to the nearer shore of Lake Yamanaka, respectively, are exaggerated. Mr. Ponting's figurative expressions are intended to convey the idea of a "bee-line"—the shortest distance between the points named. Careful measurements on several authoritative maps show that in the former case the distance is close on 15, and in the latter 8, miles—figures which the reviewer's intimate acquaintance with Fuji at all seasons and from every side permits him to confirm from personal knowledge.

The most serious remonstrance, however, is reserved for the reviewer's remark on one aspect of some of the beautiful photographs which put Mr. Ponting's book in a special category. In commenting on the offending criticism Mr. Ponting assumes that the words "a special class" can have only one meaning, and that of the most injurious character. The words in question were not intended to convey any such reflection. They were employed as an antithesis to "ordinary type," and simply indicated that the charming young people photographed were to a large extent specially chosen, as hotel waitresses, etc., for their attractive appearance and intelligence. A number of them, as well as the gracious lady who has trained them and scores like them, were known personally and individually to your reviewer and his wife during many visits to the best hotel in the Far East, extending over a number of years. Nothing was further from the writer's mind than to suggest any such offensive imputation as Mr. Ponting has attributed to the expression.