

priests were driven away and their native neophytes slaughtered, Yedo still ruled the empire. It was then that the country adopted its policy of seclusion and non-intercourse with foreign nations, and when Commodore Perry broke this shell of exclusiveness the Shogun was still found playing the *role* of emperor.

The 14th of July, 1853, was the day set for the reception of the President's letter by the representative of the Shogun. A place of meeting was prepared upon the shore, where the ambassador could be received with due ceremony, and a temporary landing wharf was constructed of straw bags filled with sand. The Commodore's barge and two large boats with bands of music, preceded by an escort of twenty boats filled with armed men, and each mounting a howitzer in the bow, left the flagship amidst a salute of heavy guns and approached the shore, the bands playing and flags flying gayly in the breeze. The marines having landed and been drawn up in double rank between the shore and reception hall, the boats were quickly arranged along the beach to the right and left, their howitzers bearing on the natives and their crews ready for action in case of the least evidence of treachery.

The Commodore, with his guards of honor and escort of music, marched direct from the landing to the reception hall between the double ranks of marines, no Japanese, save two official escorts, being permitted within the lines. Near the entrance the Japanese had planted two little brass cannon, two or three feet long, about large enough to make Fourth of July toys for an American boy, and in the rear of the marines were drawn up about twenty native soldiers, dressed in dirty shirts and bamboo hats, with equally dirty cross-belts, and armed with old English and American muskets or native matchlocks. These were all the native troops who bore firearms, and a queer looking lot they were, with their dirty shirts flapping against their bare legs. In marked contrast to these were the thousands of men and officers of the imperial army, drawn up on the plain beyond, their bright armor and shining helmets glittering in the sun as far as the eye could reach. Armed with swords, spears, lances, battle-axes and bows and arrows, their gay banners unfurled to the breeze, they made a grand martial display.

In front of the reception hall stood nine tall flagstaves upon which were hoisted beautiful silken banners of great size, while across the front of the building, to cover the rough boards of the hastily erected structure, were hung purple crape curtains, richly worked in gold with the Shogun's coat-of-arms. The whole interior of the building was curtained and festooned with purple, crimson and gold. At the extreme end of the hall, upon an elevated floor, were a table and a few camp stools for the commissioner and his staff on one side and the Commodore and staff on the other, while the majority of the escort of both parties were compelled to stand. The ceremonies were brief. The President's letter and other documents were enclosed in a richly embossed box of gold, which was contained in a heavy rosewood case mounted with gold. The letter and Perry's credentials,

beautifully engrossed on vellum and decorated with gold cord and tassels, bore the broad seal of the United States. These were handed to the commissioners, for which they gave their receipt, and without further ceremony the Commodore withdrew. The marines and sailors returned on board their respective vessels, and the first and most difficult portion of the Commodore's mission was accomplished.

Commodore Perry had reason to be proud of his success. In six days he had so far compelled the Japanese to relax their haughty pride that, whereas they at first forbade him to proceed beyond Nagasaki, and would only forward his message to the Shogun by the hands of an inferior official, they finally deputed royal princes to receive it with great ceremony only a short distance from Yedo. Thus by his wise management were opened the first negotiations between Japan and a Caucasian nation that had been permitted for two centuries. From the first arrival of the fleet the temple bells in the villages were heard tolling and beacon fires blazed from hill to hill, carrying news of the invasion, till the whole empire was in a ferment. Yet, in spite of all they could do, Perry forced them to receive him with proper respect.

There was another element which contributed its portion to achieve the Commodore's success. The night after the fleet's arrival a very large blazing meteor appeared in the sky, illuminating the whole country around almost as bright as sunlight from midnight till four o'clock in the morning. It appeared like a huge blue ball with a flaming red tail, and emitted sparks like an ascending rocket. Perry remarked that the ancients would have looked upon this as an augur of success—a sign of approval and encouragement sent direct from Heaven. "And," said he, "we will so interpret it, praying that our efforts to open this wonderful *terra incognita* and restore it to civilization may be blessed with success without the shedding of a drop of blood."

After returning on board his vessels from the reception hall, Perry weighed anchor and the whole squadron proceeded up Yedo Bay in search of a better anchorage ground for the fleet, when they should return in the spring to receive the Emperor's answer. This movement caused the greatest consternation among the thousands of natives on the shore, who conceived the idea that this invincible being had decided to go to Yedo after all. When he dropped anchor again several miles further up the bay, the Governor of Uragawa hastened on board to learn the object of this unexpected movement, and to protest vigorously against any further advance in the direction of Yedo. When told of the Commodore's purpose, and that he would return in the spring with his whole fleet of ten vessels to receive a reply to the President's letter, the Governor shrugged his shoulders, as much as to say that it was useless to struggle against fate, and retired over the side of the ship. On the 17th of July the squadron sailed for China, having accomplished the most difficult part of its mission without having fired a shot save as an honorable salute.

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