

# Council of Elder Statesmen, the "Big Four" of Japan

THE recent departure of Marquis Ito on a special mission to Korea, although at present he holds no official position in the Japanese government except the rather anomalous one of head of the "council of elder statesmen," serves to call attention to this unique body, which is the only one of its kind on earth. It is only one of the more interesting because of the many more or less mysterious references to it in the news dispatches of the past few weeks. It has been called into frequent existence by the emperor and has even seemed to replace the cabinet as the real governing body of the nation.

Although the council of elder statesmen of Japan is official, it is only advisory and is without power so far as final action on any proposition is concerned. It simply gives the emperor counsel. It is the council of the great statesmen who made modern Japan. This sort of body in western countries would be called a "senate" or "cabinet." Because of the distinguished men who compose it, the appellation disrespects them. At any rate the arrangement solves the question of what to do with the ex-premiers, a problem that with the ex-nations is sometimes vexing enough. Yet it is doubtful if the Japanese plan would work in most countries. It is as though the United States should make an advisory council of her ex-presidents.

At present the council of elder statesmen consists of four members—Marquis Ito, the president; Count Inouye, Count Matsukata, and Marquis Yamagata. It is doubtful if four men could have been chosen who have played a greater part in the evolution of Japan or who together could give more valuable advice in the present crisis. Each supplements the others, each is strong in some one direction or in some especial department of government. It is the wise, tactful, conservative minister of state; Ito, the more resolute statesman; Inouye, the more radical man of affairs; Matsukata, the greatest financial minister; and Yamagata, the fighter and military politician.

The genro, which is the Japanese name for the council of elder statesmen, was provided for under the new constitution and was to be composed of those who had been especially famous in war, finance, diplomacy and statesmanship. It was formerly a more numerous body than at present, but death has thinned its ranks. Membership in it is for life. The emperor only calls it into existence in great crises. Now, advising the mikado is not a light matter. In the old days to counsel him unwisely was a crime that was severely punished. It is related that Duke Yamagata, a brother of the present marquis, once advised the emperor on a warlike step against Korea. The other statesmen deemed such a move inexpedient at that time. In other words, the advice the duke had given was pronounced bad, and as a consequence he suffered several years' imprisonment and never again was given any voice in the government of Japan. This law has since been repealed, but the spirit that prompted it doubtless yet lives.

It is safe to say that none of the members of the genro needs the check of this salutary provision. That is the reason they are members. If of the four the greatest and by all odds the best known is Hirobumi Ito, the maker of modern Japan. He was born in the province of Choshiu in 1840. He came from the samurai and was by nature a conservative. It seems strange in the light of his subsequent career that it was his violent opposition to the introduction of western ideas into Japan that got him into difficulties at home and caused him to run away.

He went to England, saw a new world and was converted. Returning to his own country, he became the leader in its modernization. First, he won the ear of the emperor and convinced him that the Land of the Rising Sun could never become a great nation until she embraced western civilization. Then Ito helped overthrow the shogun and was one of the principal factors in placing the emperor on the throne. This



Marquis Ito.

ed and rugged, and the two predominant characteristics are kindness and shrewdness. The story of Kaoru Inouye is so interwoven with that of Ito that the two should be told together. The men are of almost the same age, were born in the same province and have been the warmest friends from boyhood. Inouye was always more fiery and aggressive and so as a young man was more vio-



Count Matsukata.

lous in 1868, but the young reformer by very force of character came to the forefront, and there he has remained. He became premier and the trusted adviser of the mikado. He drafted the new constitution and was its chief advocate until it was adopted. He was at the head of affairs in putting down the famous Satsuma rebellion. Tactful, shrewd, knowing just how fast he could go and not alienate the people, he moved steadily toward the goal he had in view—the transformation of his country into one of the enlightened and therefore one of the powerful nations of the world. Restraining the more ardent reformers, diplomatic and gentle of speech, he succeeded in winning to himself a personal following that held him in power even when the majority of the parliament, or diet, as it was called, opposed his views. He was in power at the time of the Chino-Japanese war and had much to do in bringing about the brilliant result of that struggle. But in the succeeding negotiations, when Russia and two other powers combined to wrest from Japan the fruits of her victory, Ito suffered from the resentment his people felt, though he was in no sense to blame. They thought him too conciliatory, however, and he went out of power. Later he came back to the premiership for a short time, but finally retired two or three years ago. It must not be understood, by the way, that he was constantly premier even prior to the Chino-Japanese war. There were breaks, for these were stormy times, but through all the ups and downs Ito was the guiding figure.

In personal appearance this greatest of oriental statesmen is rather tall for a Jap, with a chunky body and strong physique and, what is rare in the far east, an adult beard. His face is sear-

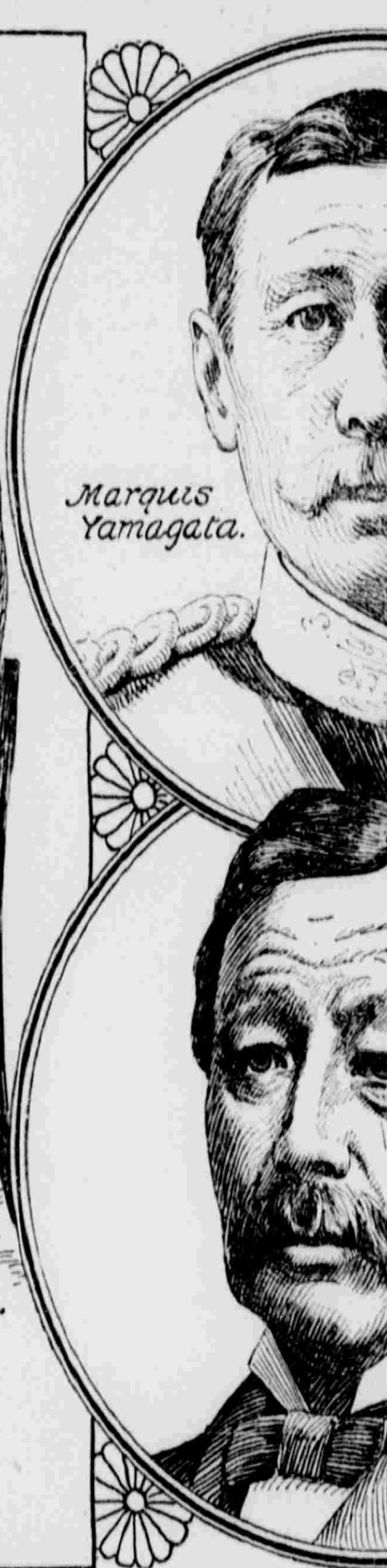
ched and rugged, and the two predominant characteristics are kindness and shrewdness. The story of Kaoru Inouye is so interwoven with that of Ito that the two should be told together. The men are of almost the same age, were born in the same province and have been the warmest friends from boyhood. Inouye was always more fiery and aggressive and so as a young man was more vio-



Count Inouye.

lent in his antiforeign proclivities. It was he that led the attack on the English, American and Dutch consulates in which those buildings were destroyed. Soon after both Inouye and Ito were proscribed by the government, and it was this which caused them to run away from their country. Though of noble birth, they became common sailors on an English ship and landed in London with only \$2 between them. One of the dollars was tossed up to see who should go for bread, and the choice fell on Inouye. Reparing to a bakery, he laid down the dollar, grabbed a loaf of bread and fled before

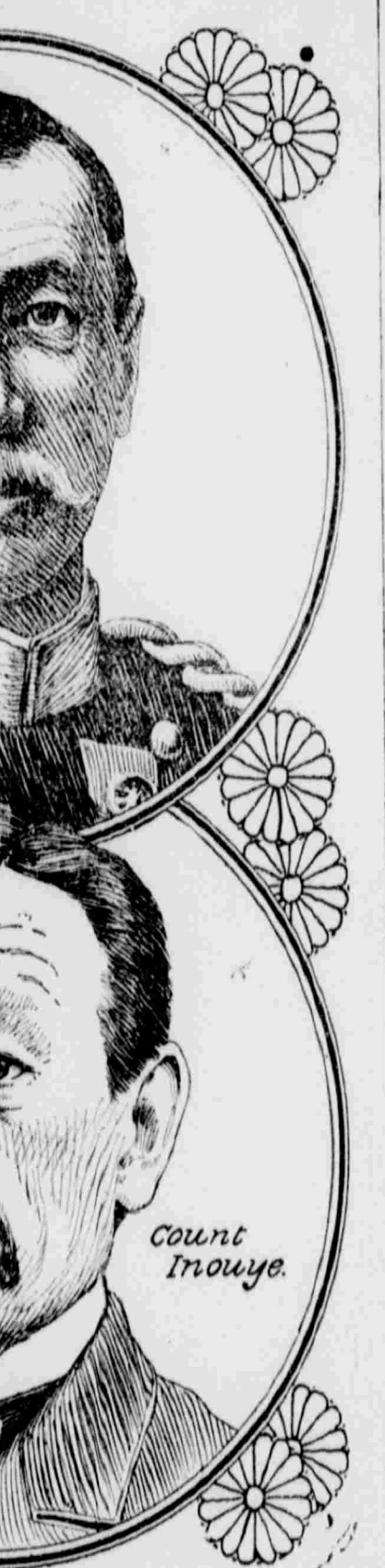
stead she wrapped him in cotton and nursed him back to life. It was at this time that one of the prettiest incidents in the life of Ito occurred. He was attacked like his friend, but succeeded in escaping after killing one of his would be assassins. He fled to the home of a geisha girl whom he loved, and she hid him under the floor and saved his life, refusing to disclose his whereabouts even when dragged about



Marquis Yamagata.

the room by the hair. For this the coming premier married her. So close was the friendship between Ito and Inouye that the former on more than one occasion refused to take the premiership unless his more extreme and radical associate might be with him in the cabinet. This friendship Inouye fully returned, although often impatient with what he considered the too conservative and conciliatory policy of his chief. The two were known as the reform statesmen of Japan. Count Inouye was frequently the minister of foreign affairs, at other times was finance minister and on one occa-

sion, about sixteen years ago, held the portfolio of education. He was also minister to Berlin, a position that his son now holds. As long ago as 1875 Japan was casting slant eyes at Korea, and in that year Inouye was sent on a special mission to that then Chinese dependency. It was at a crucial time in the history of the Land of the Morning Calm, and the service rendered by the Japanese



Count Inouye.

statesman gave him the friendship of the men at the head of Korean affairs. It was for this reason that several years later, when the Japanese were accused of murdering the Korean queen, Inouye was again sent on a special mission to Seoul and succeeded in preventing an open rupture between the two countries. Inouye is of the reformer type, resolute and outspoken, and stands second only to Ito as the author of the new order in Japan. Count Masayoshi Matsukata is the son of a military retainer of the Satsuma clan and was born in 1835. Like

the other members of the genro, he took part in the revolution of 1868 that overthrew the shogun and placed the present emperor securely on the throne. He was at various times finance minister, holding the office in all about fourteen years, and twice was premier.

Perhaps Matsukata's most noteworthy accomplishment was in 1877, at the time of the disastrous Satsuma rebellion. He found the country flooded with a vast amount of inconvertible paper currency, which he redeemed and brought to par, an accomplishment that the Japanese believe made their phenomenal industrial and economic development possible. Among his other achievements are the land tax reform, the organization and centralization of the fiscal administration, the establishment of a modern banking system and the founding of an industrial bank. He also managed the monetary affairs of the empire through the Chino-Japanese war, floated a \$50,000,000 loan in London and brought the currency again to a stable basis at the end of the conflict. He had the boldness to try all financial systems and select what seemed most practical. He is the author of a fiscal paper that has become an authority in western nations. Moreover, he told the people of Japan bluntly that they were not sufficiently provident and quoted the statistics of individual savings in foreign nations to prove his statement. He is a man of great moral courage and firmness.

Marquis Yoritomo Yamagata, like Ito and Inouye, comes from Choshiu. He is about sixty-six years of age, is known as "the little gray man" and is the military hero of Japan. As a mere stripling of twenty he defeated 20,000 men with 2,000 when a shogunate army sought to invade his province. He was second in command in the revolution that overthrew the shogun in 1868, the event that marked the beginning of the new regime in the Flowery Kingdom. He preceded even Ito as premier, an office which he has held frequently since. He has also been minister of war in various cabinets and has had more to do perhaps than any other man with the evolution of the Japanese army. An event that shows his devotion to his country has a touch of the pathetic. It relates to the plan of Duke Yamagata, his brother, to invade Korea, to which reference has already been made. This the marquis did not hesitate to oppose, though it meant his brother's downfall and imprisonment.

Another important service rendered his country was during the Satsuma rebellion of 1877, led by his old friend, Saigo. Yamagata was one of the chief commanders on the side of the government and finally brought the rebellion to a close by a personal appeal to Saigo. The event that made Yoritomo Yamagata the popular idol of Japan, however, was his brilliant victory over the Chinese at the memorable battle of Pingyang during the Chino-Japanese war. After the close of the war he retired from active service in the army, but retained his title of field marshal.

Yamagata was a great admirer of General Grant, whom he assisted in entertaining when the American chief of state visited Japan on his way around the world. Years later when the Jap warrior passed through New York on his way as special ambassador to the coronation of the czar the first point he expressed a desire to visit was Grant's tomb in Riverside park. This was his third visit to the United States, for which country he has always expressed the warmest affection. These are the "big four" who more than any other men, living or dead, have contributed to the making of modern Japan. It is peculiarly fitting that they should be set aside in a body of advisers to the emperor whom they placed upon the throne and whom they have served so long and so faithfully. J. A. EDGERTON.

THE MEN BEHIND THE THRONE.

## The Red Cross Service In the Russo-Japanese War

HERE is one universal banner recognized by all the nations of the earth. It consists of a crimson cross upon a field of snow. It floats side by side with every flag, is respected by people of every race and military camp and receives from every soldier homage second only to that rendered the standard under which he fights. Yet it is a badge without political significance, a symbol of mercy and not of murder, an emblem of peace. Those enlisted under it are soldiers of his instead of of death; they come not to maim and destroy, but to help and to heal. Thus every army carries an organized rebuke of its own bloodthirsty purpose; every war engenders an agency that prophesies the end of war.

No institution of this age is more cherished in the hearts of all men than the Red Cross. It attends alike the American and his Spanish Slav, Belgian and Boer, Turk and Bulgarian, Slav and Jap. In fact, its work has never been more thoroughly organized than in the present war in the far east. The czar is the head of it in Russia, and a prince royal is its president in the Land of the Rising Sun.

The presence of the Red Cross in a Russian war is not a new thing. It was in evidence in the struggle with Turkey in 1877. The Muscovite also employed it, but asked that he might change the emblem to a crescent. This the czar's government agreed to, provided the Turk would respect the badge worn by the Russian agents of the society. The Porte assented, and the arrangement was accordingly made. It was in an earlier war with Russia—that of the Crimea—that the idea really had its birth, though in this case it was the British minister of war saw the need of some organized effort to care for the sick and wounded. He asked Florence Nightingale, then a nurse in a London hospital, to undertake the work, and the efficient manner in which she and her attendant angels of mercy carried out the mission not only alle-

viated the sufferings of thousands of soldiers in the Crimea, but made the name of Florence Nightingale immortal. The general and organic plan did not take form till some years later, however. A citizen of Switzerland of

lish a book describing the horrors of Solferino and to advocate a plan for the care of the victims of future wars. This he did shortly after, and the book created a sensation, being translated into several languages. M. Dunant suc-

ceeded in interesting Gustav Moynier, president of the Society of Public Utility of Switzerland, and several eminent physicians in his plan, and the upshot was the calling of the famous Geneva convention of August, 1864, which provided for the Red Cross. Sixteen na-

tional flag, which is a cross of white on a field of red, was made the emblem, and likewise the name of the Red Cross. As a further recognition of the Swiss republic, its tribunal has always been considered the central body

through which all appeals pass, and the head of that body, the same Gustav Moynier before mentioned, is by courtesy considered the international head of the entire service. Russia was not one of the nations to

that it was at The Hague peace convention, called by the present czar, that necessary amendments were made to the Geneva agreement, and the work of the Red Cross was extended to the navies of the world. It may be remarked in passing that America was not one of the original signatory powers either, but it was through Clara Barton, the head of the American society in later years, that the victims of natural calamities, such as earthquakes and floods, were added as subjects of Red Cross work. Incidentally, Russia was also concerned in this, but as a recipient. At the time of the great Russian famine Miss Barton, under this very provision, organized a mission of mercy that gained the undying gratitude of the Slav empire.

In the present war the Russian plans for Red Cross work are very extensive. At a recent meeting in St. Petersburg it was reported that 30,000 beds, \$700,000 worth of bread and \$20,000 worth of meat had been prepared for shipment. The funds available for the work at that time were \$5,000,000, and it was planned to spend \$4,000,000 during the first six months of the war. Count Orloff Davidoff has given \$500,000 for hospital and medical use at the front. Of this amount \$200,000 is to be devoted to the establishment of a school for children made orphans by the war. Russia's Red Cross society is said to be the richest in the world. The czarina is giving every encouragement to the work, and the czar's sister has volunteered to go to the front and assist in the actual nursing of the sick and wounded.

In this humanitarian service Japan is not one whit behind her bigger adversary. The Red Cross society in the Land of the Rising Sun was founded in 1877 to care for the victims of the rebellion in the southwest provinces. It was then called the Hakuai-sha, "the society of benevolence." At the end of the rebellion the organization was made permanent to provide for other wars in future. In 1886 the government became signatory to the Geneva articles of agreement, and the association adopted the name of the Red Cross Society of Japan, its scope of work was enlarged and rules were adopted for its perma-



RUSSIAN RED CROSS HOSPITAL AT HARBIN.



A GROUP OF JAPANESE RED CROSS NURSES.

the name of Henry Dunant was traveling in Italy in 1859 and witnessed the battle of Solferino. He helped to care for the wounded and was deeply impressed by the lack of hospital facilities. He had read of the work of Florence Nightingale and decided to pub-

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THE WORLD AROUND.

The pope is an enthusiastic post card collector. Before his accession to the chair of St. Peter he had accumulated 100,000.

Parisians smoke cigarettes made of the leaves of the coffee plant. Those who have tried them prefer them to tobacco cigarettes.

Half a dozen firms practically control

the meat output of the United States and own or otherwise control three-fourths of the railroad cars used in transporting the meat from the ranch to the packing house and from the packing house to the market.

In Manila most of the houses and offices have window panes made of translucent oyster shells instead of

glass. An average window, six feet high by four feet wide, contains 250 shell panes, which temper the heat and light of the sun and prevent blindness.

The three distinct aboriginal people of South Africa are the Bushmen, Hotentots and Kafirs.

With the assistance of the latest machines a piece of leather can be transformed into a pair of boots in thirty-four minutes, in which time it passes

through the hands of sixty-three persons and through fifteen machines.

The Japanese navy is now seventh among the navies of the world.

The Transvaal has been divided into school districts, and an educational league in London is collecting books, which are to go to the formation of libraries of good English literature, a library to be attached to each district.

The United States is buying 30,000 ounces of cocaine a year at about \$3 an ounce. Of this only a small proportion is used legitimately. It robs its victim of his mental faculties and destroys his moral responsibility in shorter time and in greater degree than any other drug.

The superiority of the American mechanic has been attributed to the stimulus of the climate, but Herr Mueller, who was sent to the United States by a

German society to investigate mechanical methods, attributes it to "better payment," the lesser use of alcoholic stimulants and the fact that his social position depends entirely upon himself.

England is suffering from the most serious failure of the potato crop in twenty-five years.

There were found in the Tiber last year the bodies of 16,509 dogs, 1,355 cats, 1,630 rats, 791 turkeys, 3 pigeons,

317 canaries, 159 other birds, 1,712 hares, 21 rabbits, 5 sheep, a parrot and a snake.

France has within six months paid in subsidies for new ships \$38,600,000.

Dr. A. Koch, the professor of journalism at the University of Heidelberg, not only lectures on his subject, but makes his pupils write editorials, reports, book reviews and criticisms of entertainments.