

# Viscount Kaneko Sounds Note of Warning

## He Fears That the Good Feeling Between Japan and America Is Losing Strength Because of the Vital Race Question

Viscount Kentaro Kaneko, who gave the following important interview to two American women journalists, Elsie F. Weil and Gertrude Emerson, was born in 1853, of an old Samurai family. He received his education in America, being graduated from the Harvard Law School in 1878. He began his career as a professor in the school that was the forerunner of the Tokio Imperial University. In 1885 he became private secretary to Prince Ito, then Premier of Japan; was sent abroad for the purpose of investigating constitutional systems; served as President of the Privy Council, 1893-1899, and Chief Secretary of the House of Peers, 1899. Two years later he was a delegate to the International Law Conference in Switzerland. He was Vice Minister for Agriculture and Commerce in 1904; Minister of the same department in 1905, and in 1906 Minister of Justice. During the Russo-Japanese war he was non-official representative of the Japanese Government in the United States. Viscount Kaneko has been President of the American Friends' Society. At present he wields his influence in the Government as a member of the Privy Council.

An Authorized Interview with

### Viscount Kentaro Kaneko



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**T**O get a baseball hero or railroad President to talk is one thing; to persuade a Japanese official to make any observations unrelated to the neutral theme of the weather is quite another. In any case the lot of the foreign interviewer is far pleasanter than that of a poor Japanese reporter in these days of suppression of reputable journals for publishing "dangerous" interviews with Ministers of State.

Viscount Kentaro Kaneko has lived long enough in America to become accustomed to American methods of directness and American journalism, and consequently he does not seem to be quite so afraid of expressing his opinions. As a member of the Privy Council, with a long official career back of him, he voices opinions worthy of consideration.

When we went to see him at his Tokio residence the weather was the topic of conversation in unofficial as well as official circles, for it was the nubai, or rainy season. Our ricksha coolies, drenched to the skin, grunted and puffed up the slippery hills and splashed thick layers of mud up their bare legs. Little Japanese ladies and lank Japanese school-boys and shop apprentices and merchants all clacked along on their high wooden geta, at least four inches above the puddles, and everybody was carrying soft green and red and blue and yellow and black oiled paper umbrellas—those flat spiny umbrellas that are almost the last vestige of picturesque Japan in Tokio, which is so breathlessly trying to catch up with other modern capitals.

At the Kaneko residence shoes were properly deposited on the door step, and a dignified man servant in black silk kimono ushered us into the foreign room, which is a feature of every upper-class Japanese house. In the square, sunny room were several comfortable armchairs, a soft pink and gray rug, low tea tables, a silver pagoda in a glass case, a Venus of Milo in the tokonoma recess, a shelf crowded with photographs of American friends, and sliding glass doors opening into a corner of an artistic garden.

"I am very glad to see you," Viscount Kaneko said, as he came into the room a moment later. "I am always glad of the opportunity of talking with visitors from America."

The Viscount was in Japanese dress. He wore a black ceremonial coat lined with green silk, and a gray and black striped hakama, or shirt. Somewhere in his sixties, he is a man of slight build, with iron gray hair thinning away from his forehead; heavy black eyebrows, a gray mustache, small, keenly alert eyes, with rather tired lines around them, and delicate white hands.

"You see, I am almost an American myself," he went on. (The Viscount is noted for his friendly attitude toward

America.) "I spent so many years of my life in America, went to the public grammar schools and high schools of Boston, and was graduated from Harvard in the class of '78. Since then I have been in America on several missions from the Government, among others, unofficially representing Japan in the United States during the Russo-Japanese war. Mr. Roosevelt, two years my junior at Harvard, is a very good friend of mine," and he pointed to the former President's picture, occupying a place of honor on his shelf.

"Whenever I go to New York Mr. Roosevelt always comes to see me, and I always go to Oyster Bay to spend a few days with him. Recently, on the death of my wife, I had a most beautiful letter of condolence from an old high school comrade, whom I had not seen or corresponded with for thirty years. I have many bonds connecting me with America, and I feel that I understand the American people and the American point of view better than almost any one else in Japan. When I first came to Japan after completing my education I was more American than Japanese.

"The question of Japanese and American relations is a very important one, and perhaps it would be worth while to explain what the Japanese really think of Americans. This is a point I think the American people would like to know. When our nation was first introduced into the family of nations by the invitation of the United States, we found, first, that we were far behind Europe in modern civilization; and, second, we found that America was practically in the same position. It was a new country, its re-

sources had to be developed, State and national affairs had to be worked out in conformity with European civilization, railroads, State Houses, theatres, Post Offices, City Halls, all had to be created over night. Your nation is comparatively a new one in the arena of world politics.

"Naturally we turned to your country for new inventions, new models of steam power and engines, new methods of practicing business. In America we found the best forms of things and the most modern inventions. Our Government and people went to America to study and came home with American ways of doing things. I went to America in 1868. As an example of our adoption of American forms of things I might cite the question of money and currency. Prince Ito went to New York and studied the American system with Mr. Henry Clews, for, just like America after the civil war, we had a scarcity of gold money. Our Government asked a New York printing house to print Japanese money, and fifteen years later, when I came back to Japan, I found the same familiar greenbacks in circulation in Japan that I had used in America. Later we invited American educators to come here and help establish public schools, high schools, and colleges, and Dr. Murray of New Brunswick, N. J., came with many young teachers and organized our public school system.

"At that time many officials went to America, and young boys were sent there to school, because it was nearer than Europe. People said at the time that it would be better to send young men to England, Germany, and Austria, because those were monarchical countries

and would give a safer influence to our young men. If they went to America they would come back with a democratic spirit and republican form of thought, and that was to be feared. But the result was exactly the contrary. Every young Japanese who was educated in America from 1870 to 1900 came home with more conservative ideas than the men educated in Europe.

"I can tell you why. America as a nation is democratic and the people are very conscientious and have a great deal of common sense. In America you have to get money for your living; you have to build railroads, schools, harbor works, and cannot spare one hour for meditation. Americans are an active, practical people. Young Japanese men thrown into contact with them come home with practical knowledge. In the European countries education is more theoretical, because the people cannot put their ideas into practice under the more repressive forms of government. The young men who came home from America with me did not care a snap for Utopian theories, and their attitude was that they had to roll up their sleeves and go to work for the Government. We said, let the Germans take care of all those philosophical, dreamy things. The young men educated in Europe in the early days did not succeed so well, either in business or in the Government service, as those educated in America."

Viscount Kaneko's practical training showed itself in his consideration for one's material comfort. A pretty little maid came in with soft, woolen slippers, which he insisted that we put on for fear of catching cold, and tea—foreign tea—with sugar and thin slices of lemon. A charcoal hibachi was also brought in to scare away the nubai.

We asked him if the feeling had not shifted in Japan about American education, for present-day education is obviously modeled after the German system.

"No, the feeling has not shifted," said the Viscount, "but the greatest influence of American education was felt between 1870 and 1900. In 1900 our system, particularly the universities, was modified according to the German system. However, for business, engineering, and practical science, Japanese students still go to America, because American education gives practical common-sense training for the needs of life."

"How do the young men, especially the student class, feel toward America?" we asked.

"They owe their education, the tools of success, to America, and consequently they feel a debt of gratitude. But here," added Viscount Kaneko, "comes a very unfortunate affair. Most of the Japanese graduates of American universities on the Pacific Coast, or in the East, take a weekly paper, and reading so many disagreeable anti-Japanese articles of late, signed by well-known names, perhaps by former acquaintances, they naturally feel hurt. You know yourself that when you feel gratitude toward any man or woman whom you consider your patron, and disagreeable criticism comes from that benefactor, you feel hurt. Well, reading these articles, we feel a sense of injury we should not feel if the same articles came from Turkey, or Greece. Gradually we are wondering why the American people are writing in this way. If it is the truth we cannot complain. We have our better and our worse parts, and we must stand by unbiased judgment. But most of these articles seem especially manufactured to estrange good feeling. Of course, we are human and feel angry.

"The cause of these articles I do not know. This is my guess. Since the European war the German Government agents have been carrying on great propaganda, doing mischief in America toward Japan by giving false reports, saying that the Japanese are planning to attack San Francisco, Mexico, China, and what not. Of course, our treatment of China has not been good. I cannot indorse every step of our Government

toward China. The Chinese cannot appeal to Europe, and therefore they appeal to America. Millard is preaching anti-Japanese sermons. He has been stamped as anti-Japanese since our war with China twenty years ago. Perhaps you read in the March number of the Century an article on an American-Japanese war. A terrible article! Coming in a good magazine, we feel that such an article is particularly dangerous to a feeling of good-will between the two countries.

"If we were making a preparation to attack America we should have to bear the penalty of the severest criticism, but we have no such idea. The Hearst papers put out false articles week after week, and are doing a great damage in undermining Japanese-American friendship. I understand the American Nation never pays any attention to these articles, but they are translated into Japanese and reprinted in the Japanese yellow journals, with hot-headed editorial comment, and then the articles of these Japanese yellow journals are sent to America, where they arouse or increase bitter feeling.

"There is another thing I cannot understand. I read the Congressional Reports, and I see that some Senators and Representatives in Congress, men of standing, make absurd speeches against the Japanese. Some Japanese fishermen near San Diego have a license to dry their nets on the beach. It is alleged that they are secret agents, are getting a coaling station, are preparing for a naval base, a submarine base, and such nonsense. We never expect to have a naval base in Lower California. The Senators know better, but they make these speeches to stir up the American people. The American people like to talk many things that they do not mean, particularly some of those Congressmen fellows. I met Captain Hobson, and wherever I was he would never say anything, because he knew I would stand up and answer him, but afterward he said things just to play up to the people. The Japanese believe everything that is written in the papers and have no power of discrimination between what is true and what is false. It is true that the good feeling between the two countries is losing strength and force.

"The race question is really at the bottom of it all. The Japanese-American problem is momentous. On the surface it is merely an economic problem, a labor problem, an immigration problem, but at the bottom it is a race problem. It all comes down to a question of two races that are so far apart in every way—manners, thinking, living—that there is no common pivot. A Japanese can never be made so white as you are, nor his hair so brown as yours. No god can ever make the Japanese an American, because the globe is dotted with different races. This fact, however, is the greatest contribution to world progress. Suppose the whole world were Anglo-Saxon. We'd hate to live in it. But Anglo-Saxon, Latin, Mongol, Slav, with different learning, traditions, civilizations, all make one harmonious whole. The Japanese are fundamentally Mongolian and they cannot be changed into anything else.

"All these races must exist as themselves and contribute in their own way to the world's progress. We don't want to go to America and insist on our own way in San Francisco. When we go to Rome we ought to do as the Romans do. Americans cannot come here and grumble at Japanese houses, streets, and methods of living. If we go to America, we cannot have such airy rooms as we have been accustomed to, and we must put up with the American way of living. The great mistake on the part of Japanese emigrants is that they do not conform to the American way. They go barefooted in the streets, do not wear hats, do not go to church, and live in the careless, loose way that they lived in the interior of Japan. Consequently the Americans class them as undesirable.

"I don't blame the Americans. But the Japanese as a member of the Mongolian race can conform to the American fashion and be received from a farmhouse to the White House. He can be agreeable, entertaining at the dinner table, socially charming in spite of racial differences, if educated according to the American fashion. He can be made just as good an American citizen as those who come from any European country. When I am in America I visit many people.

They never ask me to go away, to leave their houses because they do not like me. I can laugh, cry, and enjoy life with Americans, and live just as they do. I laugh outright if they say a ticklish thing. I can appreciate their satire. If a man can appreciate and understand the humor and satire of a country he is no longer a foreigner.

"The Japanese who have come to America are laborers, uneducated coolies, ignorant of the American system of government and type of society, and they are not representative Japanese people. I am one of those who oppose sending Japanese coolies and laborers to America. When two countries come together, the poorest class should not be sent first. In your country you have had a number of disagreeable experiences. Before the civil war the negro came from Africa, and you have had a fearful time with that problem. But if all negroes were like Booker T. Washington or Frederick Douglass, you would have thought of the black race as African gentlemen. At first, when the Irish came, you had the worst element. You still have Tammany as a disagreeable political inheritance. The Irish are clever, affable, and kind-hearted. Without the Irish literary men and women, such as Goldsmith, Moore, and Lady Gregory, English literature never would have attained its high position. If you had had such Irish as these in the beginning you never would have had any trouble.

"If we had sent good Japanese, no doubt California would have accepted them. We made a great mistake. Now we don't send any more emigrants. We expect to root out the worse part and give instruction in writing and lectures to make the rest conform to American customs, forms of thought, and social intercourse. This race question must take a long time, but if we send good people to America racial differences can be chiseled off with comparative ease, and intellectual and psychological understanding can be attained on both sides. I have been working toward that goal in the American Friends' Society, which has a large membership, with the object of bringing the two nations to a better understanding."

"Count Okuma and other prominent Japanese and Orientals like Sir Rabin-dranath Tagore are constantly referring to the contributions that Eastern civilization can make to the West. What are the specific contributions referred to?" we asked Viscount Kaneko.

"The East and the West have much to learn from each other," was the reply. "From the West we learn freedom, material and individual. Righteousness and independence are lacking in Eastern civilization. We can learn from Europe and America self-reliance and a systematic and logical management in which the Western people excel.

"Now for the Eastern side. The Eastern people have a peculiar instinct for looking at things from a poetic or aesthetic point of view. The Westerners are too matter of fact. They do not care for a chimerical will o' the wisp point of view. 'What is the use?' they always say. The general trend of American community life is utilitarian. The Eastern people analyze things. If misfortunes befall them they do not grumble. They say, 'Such is my destiny. The god rules.' People here are satisfied with very small incomes. There are very few Carnegies, Morgans, or Rockefellers in Japan. In the small villages people are contented with 20 sen (10 cents gold) a day. You never see happy simplicity in Europe or America. The very eyes of a foreigner show by their expression his restless desire to get ahead. The Japanese thinks of his threescore and ten years to live, and asks what use there is in rushing and grabbing. He molds his life according to his destiny. He does not care to accumulate money, beautiful mansions, and automobiles. If the American people looked at life a little differently they might feel more comfortable. Go to Forty-second Street or Wall Street from 4:30 to 6 and see the shopgirls and clerks coming out pell-mell with distracted pale faces. They earn \$6 a week and are just like machines or clocks.

"There is danger of Japan losing the aesthetic point of view. Brought in contact year after year with the utilitarian point of view, we are losing our old traditions for the Western ideal. Our art has already been vitiated in the last twenty years through imitation of Western art, but I have a conviction that, al-

though the artistic taste may deteriorate more or less, the Eastern spirit or essence of life can never be lost to Japan. The Japanese are a Mongolian race, and they cannot be made Caucasian. We may change our physical construction somewhat by eating meat, bread, and milk, and Japanese under this diet may differ physically from the Japanese of old days, but there the change ends."

Viscount Kaneko was asked whether in the give and take of ideas between Japan and America intermarriage would play an important part.

"Intermarriage is a most difficult question," he remarked. "I have had many Japanese friends who have married French, German, English, and American ladies within the last twenty years. Some of the marriages proved very happy; others were unfortunate. If our houses, society, and institutions came nearer to the Western mode, then the marriage question might be settled more easily. When I was in America I used to drive, dance, and go to the theatre with American girls, as your boys do. I was often asked if I would not marry an American girl. I thought the American way of choosing a wife was good, and I said that I should like to marry an American girl very much, because they make happy homes, but I had a mother, two brothers, and a sister in Japan. I had to have a home of my own and look after my mother. If I brought back an

American wife to Japan, my mother would never be able to speak to her, nor she to my mother. The wife would be very unhappy, because my mother and family would look on her not as a daughter-in-law, but as a strange foreign lady. If the Japanese live in America, intermarriage is possible, but a New York young lady would be very unhappy here in Tokio, without her theatres and concerts and dances and social clubs and circle of friends.

"But there will be a radical change in the next generation," the Viscount continued. "Japanese women are slowly growing more toward the American fashion. The girls educated in the female schools are quite individual. They appear in society, go to theatres and garden parties, and make calls. They are not so much domestic housewives and stay-at-home ladies as they used to be.

"Japan and America have many things in common. English literature has been the source of great inspiration, and our art has made its influence felt in the Western world, and may be destined to wield a still greater influence. Religion is a plane of thought above racial and personal questions where both nations may meet. Personally I have firm faith that the friction between America and Japan will cease to exist in the light of greater understanding of, sympathy for, the real ideals and character of the two countries."