

19: Tsumago, Tokyo and Nikko

After a good night's sleep, I wake at about seven, and am ready for breakfast at half past. Like yesterday evening's meal, it is brought to my room. It is delicious; I eat almost everything, but leave a fried egg untouched. When the lady comes in to remove my tray, she cries out in amazement when she sees the egg. I simply say, '*Tabemasen*' ('I don't eat') and she seems to understand. I then ask her the time of the bus to the train station at Nagiso; she tells me 8.17, which means that I have to rush. I pay up and leave immediately, running part of the way.

As it is a beautiful and sunny morning outside, I am sorry not to have the time to appreciate it to the full. The bus appears and I am off. At the station I discover that there will be no train until 10.09! It is a pity that I did not check the timetable yesterday morning. I had planned to pay a short visit to Narai village on my way to Matsumoto today; because of this forced delay, I decide to scrap this part of my plan. I am not too bothered, for I suspect that Narai cannot be much different from the traditional villages that I have already visited.

With time to kill, I try following the walking route back to Tsumago, but as I can make neither head nor tail of the roads, I set off in the opposite direction. This part of Nagiso is quite ugly and is full of modern buildings and shops. At last I find a path that leads me up into the mountains, and soon I am away from it all, enjoying the fresh air, sunshine and pleasant surroundings. I stop at a house at the end of the path in order to admire the view, and am greeted by a barking dog. The sound echoes in the hills and a lady comes out to pacify the animal. I rise, excuse myself and leave.

Back at the station I wait for a short while and finally board a limited express train bound for Matsumoto. It is a comfortable train and it travels quickly. The scenery, despite the usual ugly modern intrusions, is both dramatic and beautiful: fine wooded mountains flecked with autumnal colours, an occasional distant peak capped with snow glinting in the sunshine, and the winding course of the blue Kiso River below. There is a real Alpine flavour about the scenery; it could be in Switzerland, except that everything here is on a larger scale. I had thought about taking an expensive bus journey to Kamikochi in order to see the Japan Alps properly, but now I realize that this is unnecessary as I can see plenty of mountains from here.

I arrive in Matsumoto at about 11.20 a.m. As it is a huge, modern sprawling city (described in the guide book as 'a mountain castle town'), I decide not to visit it and enquire about the next train to Tokyo, which will leave at 11.57. To fill in the time, I look at maps and notes in order to plan ahead, and buy a *bentō* (station lunch box).

The train soon arrives and I am off, going back the way that I had come. When a lady comes along with a trolley, I buy a bottle of tea, then start my lunch soon after twelve o'clock. A lady in the carriage presents me with a *mikan* or Japanese orange, and then another lady, who has just bought a box of grapes, offers me a large bunch, a paper handkerchief and a paper towel. These huge grapes, which I eat after my lunch, are delicious. Afterwards I thank the lady and have a short conversation with her in my limited Japanese; I tell her about myself, ask her where she lives, and so forth. When she compliments me on my Japanese, I humbly reply, '*Mada heta desu*' ('I'm still poor').

I then sit back and apply myself to the scenery, which has picked up again. This journey is even more dramatic than the last: the mountains are more impressive and the scenery is more rural. Here there are fewer cities and more paddy fields, where I can see people, bent double, working in them.

When we approach the large city of Kōfu, I suddenly see the peak of Fujisan (Mount Fuji) rising above all the other mountains. It is just about visible, as it is shrouded in a heat haze. At last I have seen the famous dormant volcano! I hope to see more of it near Otsuki, but when we approach this city, it is completely hidden behind a wall of mountains. I am tempted to get off here and take another train to the base of Fuji, but before I can make a decision, we are off again. I really do not have the time; I shall just have to make do with having seen Fujisan in the distance. Although *san* and *yama* both mean ‘mountain’ in Japanese, the Japanese never say ‘Fujiyama’, but ‘Fujisan’. *San* is the Japanese pronunciation of the Chinese word ‘*shān*’. Fuji, however, is not a Japanese word; it is believed to have come from the Ainu language.

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East Capital

We now travel rapidly downhill, and gradually the mountains recede into the distance. As the plain widens, we enter the built-up suburbs of Tokyo. In the bright sunshine and under such a clear blue sky, the vista does not look too bad. It takes us a long time to reach one of the central stations, for the train now travels at a snail’s pace.

We finally stop at Shinjuku station soon after 3.30 p.m., where I get out and mingle with the crowds. Just as I have been told, there are no signs in English here, and so it is very difficult to find one’s way around. At the ticket office I learn that this station is not the starting point for my next port of call, Nikko, and that the Japanese lady’s house is not close to the JNR line, but near a private rail line.



View from the Central Plaza, Iidabashi, Tokyo

As it is now almost four o’clock, I decide that it is too late to travel anywhere else, and so I ring the local youth hostel. At first I can get no answer, but finally I get through and book a bed for the night. Following the instructions given to me over the phone, I take the JNR train to Iidabashi, alight, and walk to the Central Plaza. The hostel turns out to be in a skyscraper. Inside, it is very modern and plush. A girl at a desk tells me to take the lift up to the eighteenth floor. On the way up, I notice that there is no fourth floor, but a floor 3A. Four in Japan is like thirteen in the West; the number is avoided at all costs as its pronunciation in Japanese, *shi*, is the same as the word for ‘death’ – *shi*.

On the eighteenth floor I find the most luxurious youth hostel that I have ever set eyes upon: it is almost like a high-class hotel. I check in and go to my room: a small, smart dormitory with four bunk beds, tables and chairs, lockers, and a fine, panoramic view of the huge city. It is most impressive.

I meet a tall American chap named Myles in the dormitory; later we go outside for a walk. We just follow a narrow street lined with shops, and stop to peep inside one or two of them. So, this is Tokyo: the city that I have been trying to avoid! It seems to be not so bad after all! It certainly looks very impressive so far.

We return soon after six and sit down to dinner: a compromise between Japanese and Western food. Afterwards I relax, pore over my maps and then take a bath. Feeling tired after a day of travelling, I return to my room to write my diary while two Indian chaps spend an inordinate amount of time trying to figure out how to get to Tokyo's Disneyland. They seem to be interested in nothing else but their proposed trip to Disneyland. Eventually, as I become so fed up listening to them trying to work out their route, I go over and solve their 'difficult problem' in a minute, by showing them how to get from here to the main Tokyo train station by rail. There is not a word of thanks from either of them – a strange pair indeed! They then retire to bed soon after 9.30 p.m., and one begins to snore until he is woken by announcements over the loudspeaker.

I finally finish writing just before eleven o'clock, look out over the twinkling lights of Tokyo far below, and climb into bed.

A bad night's sleep, for one of the Indians had kept me awake by snoring loudly; I had to wake him at least twice. However, I am up in time for breakfast at seven. Most of the food is Japanese, except that we are given toast and butter instead of rice, and coffee instead of tea. Afterwards I decide on what I will do today: as the weather is not particularly good, I will spend the day watching another Kabuki play. I have discovered that this month's performance will end tomorrow.

As soon as I am ready, I set off for the train station and travel to the famous Ginza shopping area. Despite the rush hour at this time of the morning, there is very little traffic. I discover that this part of the city is decidedly ugly; large, dirty buildings glower in the dull light. I walk to the Tourist Information Centre, where I obtain some information about Nikko and, as my holiday is nearing its end, getting to the airport. I then go in search of the Riccar Art Museum, which specializes in *Ukiyo-e* ('Floating World') woodblock prints. Thanks to my vague map, it is difficult to find. When at last I arrive at the building, I am unable to get the lift to go up to the appropriate floor. I walk up the staircase, but find the doors locked. Mystified, I go down to the entrance of the building, where I find a notice stating that the museum does not open until 11 o'clock. I will just have to forget about it.

As there is nothing else to do in the meantime, as even most of the shops are not yet open, I decide to walk to the Imperial Palace and visit the public gardens. It takes me quite some time to get there. Everything is on a grand scale and, just as expected, nothing can be seen of the palace except for the wide moats, the tall stone walls and the outer gate houses. It is interesting to see, nonetheless. At least it is a little quieter here, away from the noise of the streets, for here there is less traffic.

Having looked around and decided that I do not have enough time to see the gardens (which will not look their best on such a dull day), I head back towards the Ginza district. I am happy to do as much brisk walking as possible, for I will probably spend the rest of the day sitting down.

I finally arrive at the Kabukiza (Kabuki Hall) just before eleven o'clock. I join a short queue, buy a ticket for the upper balcony at ¥3,000 (£12 – the cheapest), pay another ¥800 for an English programme, and am shown to my seat. Just as well I had made it here before eleven, for the show is about to start! I had got it into my head that it began at 11.30 and that I had given myself plenty of time!

I quickly sit down and read the first few pages of the programme notes as the clappers go 'clack-clack-clack', and I am ready to apply myself to the play when the curtain is pulled back. This morning's production is *Tamamonomae Kumoino Hareginu*. This is based on a legend about a golden fox with nine tails which, 'after taking the form of a beautiful lady in ancient India and again in ancient China, caused the ruin of the emperors of both lands through their infatuation for her.' The play, in its original form, was first performed in 1821, but is now presented in a rescripted form, complete with spectacular special effects. In true Kabuki style, the plot is quite improbable and extremely complicated. However, the production is very colourful and exciting. Various magical happenings take place: rocks split open, the fox-lady appears and disappears, a mirror turns black when directed at her, objects fly about, supernatural green flames flicker across the stage, the fox-lady flies off into space, her figure emitting a strange light, and so on. It is a real feast for the eyes. The acting is superb and the timing is perfect.

As before, I watch the first act from my cheap seat, where I have a very poor view, then move down to the stalls, where I get a good seat quite near the *hanamichi* (the ramp extending from the stage). From here I can see the actors making their entries and striking up their forced *mie* poses. The only disadvantage of sitting here is that I find myself sitting close to a young lady who has a cold and will not blow her nose – she constantly snorts in a most disgusting manner as she sniffs back her mucus.

I am unable to discover from the programme notes if this play had its origins in puppet theatre, for the music, played on a *shamisen* with voice, is in the *gidayu* style – the style used for the play I had attended in Kyoto. Also, as in Kyoto, background music and effects are performed behind the left-hand flat. All in all, it is most interesting. During an interval I buy a small boxed lunch for ¥500 and eat it. The food is basic but quite tasty.

Later we have a second play: *Banzui Chobei*, a more modern and realistic production written in 1881. I sense that many people in the audience are not so interested in this play, for many leave the theatre. However, it is quite spirited and obviously funny in places, for some of the jokes raise belly laughs. The plot is not so intricate as it is a much shorter play, and it is relatively easy to follow. It is about loyalty to a superior; there is much coming and going of henchmen and so forth. The acting this time is more natural and fast moving; less of the formal conventions such as *mie* posing, stylized walking and fighting. The costumes are less flamboyant and more natural. This is a play concerning real people living ordinary lives – not supernatural beings. It is quite enjoyable, despite some long scenes in which there is nothing but dialogue.

The performance ends at four o'clock. As the next play, due to start in half an hour's time, looks interesting, and as I have nothing better to do than return to the hostel, I decide to buy another ticket and stay on. I pay another ¥3,000, join the queue and go back inside. What a crazy thing to do!

This time my 'cheap' seat is worse than before; from up in the gods again, the stage is only barely visible. Before settling down, I stroll around to exercise my legs and read a little of the programme notes. I am therefore ready to watch the play when it begins. Called *Kikunoen Tsuki-no Shiranami*, it is a long performance in four acts,

which will last until 10 p.m. The Japanese obviously don't believe in doing things by halves! It was written originally by Tsuruya Nanboku IV (1755–1829), first presented in 1921, and now revived in rescripted form for the first time in 150 years. It is basically a parody of the popular *Chusingura* play, the story of the Forty-Seven Rōnin (masterless *samurai*) and, like this morning's play, it is performed in the spectacular classical style of acting.

The plot of this play is extremely complex and confusing, but the action and special effects are even more astounding than this morning's performance. During the first interval I move down to an excellent seat right at the back of the stalls, where I can see everything. As the play is a parody, it is basically a comic one, though it does have its moments of pathos. The most spectacular scene is when a palace is set on fire by magic and we see an excellent illusion of smoke, flames and the structure collapsing. Ghosts appear and disappear, we are treated to an incredible firework display in the night sky, which is created by coloured laser lights, there are magical happenings, and finally there is a dramatic fight on the roof of a temple, which ends with the hero (everyone's favourite character) taking off into the sky on a kite. Although the plot is utterly improbable, I willingly surrender myself to the action, and am completely transported into a world of magic. A child actor, who is really excellent, endears himself to everyone, and draws bursts of applause from the audience, which *oohs* and *aahs* in true Japanese style.

During the performance, many people of high rank enter the theatre at various times and sit in expensive seats: well-heeled gentlemen in immaculate suits and elegant ladies in beautiful kimonos. Indeed, many of the women in the theatre are dressed in traditional clothing, which is a very pleasant to see. Those in the boxes to the left and right enjoy the best seats and views; they have the added comforts of traditional *tatami* mats, tea, hot towels, and even meals provided by personal attendants. It is interesting to observe the different levels of society all in one building. In the cheaper seats are the rough country bumpkins: people bent double with age, with rough skin and mouthfuls of silver teeth, many of them coughing and hawking. Not so far away are the elite dressed in their finery, bowing to each other and exchanging courteous greetings. The few *gaijin* in the audience, especially the large, overfed and grumpy American tourists, look quite out of place. No doubt I also look out of place, but the Americans, who are listening to an English translation through earphones, are so large that they do not fit into their seats.

As I am determined to sit it out until the last act, which is, as I have expected, the most spectacular of all, I realize that I will have to travel back to the hostel by taxi before it closes at 10.30 p.m. Accordingly, at the moment the play finishes, I am out in a flash and off in a big, posh taxi. The driver is elderly, polite, and he compliments me on my Japanese. As every traffic light turns red when we approach it, it takes a long time to make the journey. Then, in true Japanese style, the driver does not know where exactly the Central Plaza is located. As the time ticks away, we try to work out where the building is; at last I recognize the skyscraper and we hasten towards it. I pay the bill (¥1,200), jump out, and am inside the hostel ten minutes before closing time.

Much to my disappointment, I find that the Indians are still here – this means that I will have to endure another night of snoring. So much for cheap and handy lodgings! However, it has been a most enjoyable day. Watching the Kabuki plays has been a unique experience, and is something that I may never have the chance to see again.

After another night of interrupted sleep, I sit down to breakfast at seven feeling very groggy. As there is a large group of Japanese students in the hostel this morning, breakfast consists of traditional food and is quite tasty.

Having noted this morning's beautiful weather – bright sunshine and a clear sky – I decide to visit Nikko today. Although the place is not number one on my list, I will visit this famous spot, which is noted for its beauty, though its shrines and temples look rather gaudy in the photographs that I have seen. Nevertheless, it will be nice to finish up with a splash of colour.

I set off directly after breakfast. I start the journey northwards by catching a commuter train to Akihabara, then another to Ōmira. In theory, the latter is a separate city, but in fact looks like an extension of Tokyo. As the train stops at every station, the journey becomes long and tedious. At Ōmira I change to a *Shinkansen* or bullet train, and shoot off to Utsunomiya. Although I now travel a much longer distance, the journey only takes thirty minutes. At Utsunomiya I run down some steps in the station and jump on the train bound for Nikko; this last journey takes forty-five minutes. At last we leave the vast built-up area around Tokyo and head out into the countryside. High and dramatic mountains begin to appear and – wonder of wonders! – some old thatched houses. This part of the country seems to be more traditional, as the workers in the paddy fields wear wide coolie hats made of straw and have their trousers rolled up in true Japanese style. The views are like scenes depicted in the old woodblock prints.

We finally reach Nikko: a typically modern and noisy Japanese town. Delighted to be back on my feet again, I decide to walk to the first shrine rather than go by bus. Examining my map, I briskly march down what I believe is the main street, but soon realize that I have gone wrong. I turn back, ask for directions and head off along a busier and noisier street. I stop to buy an apple, but as there is nobody around to serve me and as I haven't the time to wait, I make off with it, munching as I walk. It is delicious.

At last I reach the end of the monotonous street and cross the bridge over the river, stopping briefly to look at the Shinkyō or sacred bridge, a smaller one with vermilion rails, beside it. It looks quite picturesque against the water and the trees. I can now sense that I am in a very touristy area; all around are tour coaches and American tourists.



Toshogu Shrine, Nikko

Climbing up some stone steps, I head for the Sambutsudō, the main hall of the Rinnoji temple, which contains three golden images of the Buddha. This turns out to be a featureless red wooden building, which looks quite modern and leaves me stone

cold. After a cursory glance inside, I leave and continue to the main attraction here: the great Toshogu Shrine with its fantastic Yomeimon gate. Dedicated to the great Shōgun Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542–1616), it has been described by some authorities as the greatest example of Japanese architecture, and by others as the gaudiest. I am interested to see what I will think of it.



Yomeimon gate, Toshogu Shrine, Nikko

When I find it and encounter so many people milling around it, I am shocked. Although I have seen photographs of the gate, in which it appears impressive, it now looks indescribably ugly: the ultimate in showiness and bad taste. I find the colours and overdone décor quite revolting. I take photos of it and the crowds only because I want to use up the film in my camera. Satisfied that I have seen this monstrosity and have got it out of my system, I move on.

Passing by the queues of schoolchildren shouting ‘*harō!*’ at me, I turn to the right and walk along a pleasant avenue lined by tall trees to the next place to be seen. This is the Daiyūinbyō, Ieyasu’s mausoleum. Although built in the same gimmicky style, it is on a smaller scale. It is much quieter here – I almost have the place to myself. Once again, I take a brief look around and leave. One good thing that can be said of this place is that everything is located in a superb setting of fine parkland and trees, many of which are now assuming their autumnal colours. Putting aside the tasteless buildings, one can easily enjoy these quieter areas, climbing stone steps and being surrounded by nature.

The next building to be seen here is the Futarasan Shrine, a vermilion building (the oldest one here) that I find hiding behind a sanctuary. As there is nothing outstanding to be seen here, I merely glance around, leave by a different avenue and find my way down to the bus stop.

After a short wait, I catch a bus going to Lake Chuzenji, said to be of great beauty. The journey there turns out to be quite a thrilling experience. Once outside Nikko town, we climb up the mountains by means of a crazy road that ascends in a series of dizzying zigzags, with the driver swinging the bus around sharp hairpin bends. Never have I been on such a dramatic journey before: the scenery here is just astounding. At every turn we are greeted with yet another breathtaking view of the mountains and the deep valley below. Most of the leaves on the trees have become autumnal and are ablaze with colour: green, yellow, gold and flaming red. I wish that I could take photographs, but it is impossible because of the speed and motion of the bus.

Along the winding road we zoom, passing out tourist coaches, until we reach the top. I expect that we are about to go tumbling down the other side of the mountain, but no; we now approach Chuzenji Spa and the conical Mount Nantai, presumably an extinct volcano. We stop at the terminus, I pay ¥700 for the journey and, walking past the souvenir shops and restaurants, walk to the lake. I reach it in a couple of minutes.



Lake Chuzenji, near Nikko

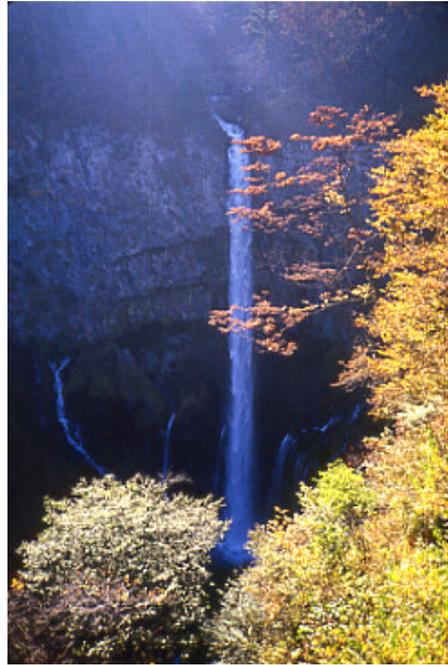
Despite the glaring commercialism (the hotels, ugly buildings, pleasure boats and idiotic-looking motor boats in the shape of swans), it is quite impressive, especially with the distant view of mountains shrouded in heat haze at the other side. It is a huge, spectacular lake; the combination of the water, the boats, the wooden jetties, and Mount Nantai is quite stunning.



Chuzenji Spa with Mount Nantai, near Nikko

I wander around, enjoying the view and sunshine and, as it has gone past two o'clock and the restaurants have probably emptied, I go off in search of some lunch. I find a *shokudō* or 'food hall' with a fine view overlooking the lake, where for ¥1,300 I enjoy an excellent meal of soup, delicious fish, rice, vegetables, pickles and tea. I take

my time, relax and gaze out the window at the pleasant view. I have the place to myself.



Kegon Falls, near Nikko

I leave soon after three and walk to the nearby Kegon Falls, an impressive waterfall that plunges down a steep cliff to a river far below, in a narrow, dark valley. From the other side of the observation platform can be seen an impressive view of the mountains between the trees.



View from Kegon Falls, near Nikko

As it is now becoming cool after the heat of the day, and as the tourists are beginning to disappear, I decide that it is time to leave. I catch the bus at five past four and off we go, now plunging down the mountainside along a different road. The Japanese engineers have constructed two roads: one for going up, and another, on the opposite side of the valley, for travelling down. No doubt this sensible arrangement lessens the danger of accidents. The scenery on this road is no less spectacular.

Although we reach the train station before five o'clock, it has already turned dark. No doubt this is due to the time of year. As I have time to spare before catching the next train, I take a look inside a couple of souvenir shops. Just as I have expected, everything is gimmicky and expensive. I just buy a purse for my cousin Anne in Ealing.

I am on a train by 5.20 p.m., and so begins the boring journey back to Tokyo. Because it is dark outside, there is nothing to see. At Utsunomiya I catch a *Shinkansen* express earlier than expected and, as it is crowded, I spend most of the journey standing in the corridor. At Ōmiya I hop on to another *Shinkansen* (I find a seat this time), which brings me to Ueno station much quicker than this morning. Finally I travel by commuter train back to familiar Iidabashi.

As I feel cold by now (I am only wearing a vest and shirt), I jump into a hot bath as soon as I return to the hostel, and wallow in it until I am warm again all over. Feeling refreshed, I go down to the first floor of the building, where there are some good-quality restaurants. I choose one and, despite the noise of pop music playing, sit down to a hot bowl of noodles with assorted vegetables and some meat, washed down with iced tea. I notice that the restaurant is extremely clean. The price is reasonable at ¥650.

Afterwards I take a walk up a nearby street, stopping to examine the shops and restaurants. As I now need to use up my money, which I do not want to bring home, I start looking for presents. I have deliberately left this until the last moment so that I do not have to carry parcels when travelling.

On my way down the street, I peep into some *pachinko* and games arcades; the racket inside is deafening. In a 'Games Hall' I see young people playing video games with their eyes glued to television screens. There are loud explosions from different machines as players shoot down space invaders or crash racing cars into oncoming ones; how they can concentrate with the noise from adjacent machines beats me. The displays on the screens are quite dazzling. In the *pachinko* halls I can hear the constant clatter of pin balls, levers and coins dropping into the machines; above this unceasing din can be heard loud pop music being played over loudspeakers. What a mindless way of spending an evening! The arcades are packed with people.

I quickly escape from this area and wander down some side streets, where I discover some very small and very exclusive restaurants. The newly polished wood, the sliding *shōji*, and the short curtains over them all look so homely and inviting. I see several taxis and posh cars parked outside some of them. I also discover some upper-class houses here. I suddenly become aware of how quiet it is in this area, away from the main road, despite the noise of such a large city.

Back out on one of the main streets I discover a pottery shop that sells plain, ordinary ware which is very attractive nonetheless. Although a man is in the process of closing the shop and bringing in the articles displayed outside, I am able to go inside and take a look at what is on sale. I find a small and attractive teapot which costs just ¥650. I decide to buy it and then, as an afterthought, select three simple cups without handles, at ¥200 apiece, to go with it. Although the cups do not match the teapot, they are designed in a similar style.

Pleased with my purchase, I now return to the hostel, and arrive there by 10 o'clock. I have enjoyed my walk; during it I have savoured my last precious – and memorable – moments in Japan, for I am due to fly home tomorrow. I was not going to waste the evening sitting in the hostel with the Indian lads, writing up my diary – I can write it tomorrow on the plane. I do some packing and retire to bed at 10.30 p.m.

Despite my initial disappointment with Nikko earlier today, I am glad that I have gone there, for I have certainly enjoyed the dramatic scenery and Lake Chuzenji. Almost everything has gone perfectly to plan here in Japan; the only hitches were the uncomfortable experience with the Buddhist monk in Kyoto and the loss of my jumper. I have managed to get rid of my slight cold, and everything, despite one or two little anxieties, has gone like clockwork. My impressions of the country and the people are mixed; some aspects of Japan I have enjoyed immensely, some I have disliked – common enough impressions, as I have gathered from others. Certainly it is a land of contradictions and contrasts, some of which can be a little unsettling. I have come to the conclusion that I would not like to live or work here, as conditions are not very inviting. I also doubt that I will ever want to return here, as I feel that I have seen the best that the country has to offer. I have done almost everything that I have wanted to do, though I have not had the opportunity to hear any *gagaku* or court music, have not stayed in a thoroughly Japanese high-class *ryokan* or inn (because of the expense), have not attended a proper traditional tea ceremony (simply because I have failed to find the genuine article), have not been inside a *sushi* shop, and have not attended a *sumo* wrestling match (a form of entertainment that I find quite disgusting). Admittedly, I have only scratched the surface and have not availed of the doors that could have been opened to me in order to savour life in a Japanese home, but I can regard my brief flirtation with Japan, Japanese culture and people as a very interesting experience. I realize that a foreigner in Japan can only do so much and do no more.