



Part 5: Japan 1910-1924

The Great Wave off Kagagawa by Katsushika Hokusai

Contents

Introduction

Part 1 Empire Rising

Part 2: Straits Settlements

Part 3: China

Part 4: Australia

Part 5: Japan

Part 6: Canada

Inside Part 5

Japan Before Contact

Early Years

An Expat's Life

Earthquake!

Cameos

Part 5 Highlights

Part 5 changes the focus from China to Japan where the Bruce family spent the better part of 1910 to 1923.

- *The Royal Navy gets bigger and more lethal and British possessions grow*
- *The East India Company is formed by wealthy investors to pursue trade in the Far East*
- *Landowners evict tenant farmers to maximize their profits*
- *Inventions increase production but displace workers*
- *Sugar, slavery and huge profits trigger a 'gold rush' in the Caribbean*
- *A slave trading physician makes his fortune*
- *An apothecary changes the law and general practice medicine is born*
- *A physician to the rich starts the British Museum*

The Bruces

In relation to the author Peter Bruce:

Sydney Bruce:	grandfather
Rose Mary Caldwell:	grandmother
Irene Bruce:	aunt
(Sydney) Frank Bruce:	father
Violet:	aunt
Maurice:	uncle
Geoffrey:	uncle
Eva Bruce:	great aunt
Ernest Bruce:	great uncle
Hester Spriggs:	mother
Alison Spriggs:	aunt



Sydney Bruce

Japan Before Contact

Archeology dates the first humans on Japan to 30,000 BC., known as the Jomon Period. They were hunter gatherers. About 300 BC the Yayoi people immigrated to Japan from the mainland. They brought with them iron technology and agriculture. These advanced methods allowed their population to quickly exceed that of the Jomon who faded away.

Between the 4th and 9th centuries, numerous tribes and kingdoms were formed which came to

be unified under a single Emperor. Struggles for power continued over the centuries until, in 1598, Tokugawa Ieyasu was appointed shogun by the emperor. This became known as the Edo period (1600-1868). The Edo period was a prosperous and peaceful era wherein a strict class system was imposed on society and almost all contact with the outside world was cut off.

That changed dramatically when the American Perry Expedition arrived and stayed between 1853 and 1854. Japan's trade doors opened at the end of a gun barrel and Japan entered the modern world. During the Taisho Period (1912-1926) Japan's military became all-powerful and in the 1920's and 1930s, over-ruled civilian leaders.

That allowed Japan to engage in wars with China and then with the Allied Forces in WW2. Nuclear bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki ended Japanese resistance and since then, Japan developed into the democratic and economic powerhouse it is today.

Early Years: England

Sydney Bruce and Rose Mary Caldwell met in the neighbourhoods of South London, Norwood and Croydon where they grew up. Sydney lived at home through his school years; Rose Mary appears to have lived in Hong Kong during her early years, then lived in London for her high school years, boarding out when her mother was in Hong Kong for extended periods with her husband Daniel Edmund Caldwell. A similar arrangement was

probably followed for Mary's siblings, Millicent and Daniel Augustus (Gus) Caldwell.

We have no understanding of Rose Mary's feelings for Sydney, as all her letters were destroyed in the earthquake. We do, however, have a fairly accurate picture of Sydney's feelings for Rose Mary, for she kept Syd's letters and was in London at the time of the earthquake (fortunate, indeed, for it seems unlikely she would have survived the earthquake at the house where the entire neighbourhood was destroyed by fire and all family members were elsewhere at the time).

Sydney's letters to Rose Mary make it clear that he was deeply in love with his wife and utterly devoted to her. Rose Mary, for the duration of her life, was plagued by depression, a condition

which I believe left her with limited energy to nurture the children. Pictures of Rose Mary seem to confirm this view. She seems lifeless, lacking 'joie de vivre.' Here are some excerpts from Sydney's letters.

An Expat's Life

Yokohama

A mere five years after Commodore Matthew Perry forced the shogun to open Japan to the West in 1854, Yokohama was founded as Japan's first Foreign Settlement. Yet it had already grown into a cosmopolitan city of half a million people, including traders, entrepreneurs, fugitives, spies and drifters from all over the world.

The Bluff

The neighbourhood favoured by foreigners included the Bund, the waterfront promenade and the Bluff, a high promontory behind the Bund where my family and other ex-pats lived. The Bluff was a carbon copy of England, with extravagant brick houses, wide streets, and well maintained fenced gardens. Our rented home was a rambling, wood structure which perched right on the edge of the Bluff, affording wonderful views across Yokohama.

Author Joshua Hammer states that East met West in this neighbourhood. Liberal ideas including democracy, collective bargaining and women's rights were enthusiastically discussed here. In the big hotels, one would find a riot of



Lounge of the Grand Hotel, Yokohama



DINING ROOM, THE GRAND HOTEL, YOKOHAMA.

Dining Room of the Grand Hotel, Yokohama

colours and smells “the odour of cigars, the aroma of chocolate, the fragrance of flowers, the scent of perfume.” Yokohama was a world class city.

The Bluff offered every luxury — men’s clubs, tennis courts, fitness rooms, cricket pitches, a race track and first-class hotels.

The Bruces in Yokohama

From 1910 until the devastating earthquake of 1923, the Bruce family maintained two households, one in Yokohama, Japan, and one in South London, England where the children took their schooling. Rose Mary spent extended periods both in London and in Yokohama. Sydney largely lived in Yokohama, but he did get holiday breaks of several months each in London with the family.

The demands of work and the cost of returning to England made such trips infrequent.

British expats typically worked for British Companies. Sydney worked as an accountant for the export firm Sale & Frazar Co. as well as for a major insurance company . He was well paid. The Bruces had four servants, lived in a large house, held a membership in the country club and the Freemasons, and generally enjoyed a lifestyle which only the very wealthy could afford back in Britain. It must have been an addictive life.

There was, however, a price to pay. British expats were typically insistent that their children be educated ‘back home,’ for only a good English education ‘counted’, that is, it opened doors and allowed for career advancement.

For ex-pats, that meant that families must be split up for extended periods, leaving pseudo-parenting in the hands of kindly boarding school teachers (if they were lucky) and servants. The end result, frequently, was that children grew up with very limited abilities to parent. Such was the case in my family and in countless other upwardly aspiring families in the Victorian era.



East met west in Yokohama, the designated trading port for Japan



Sydney and Frank

Earthquake

At two minutes to noon on September 1, 1923, a massive geologic event occurred just 30 miles south of Tokyo and six miles beneath the earth's crust. A 60 mile long piece of the Philippine oceanic plate slipped and drove itself against the Eurasian continental plate. At that moment, down at the docks of Japan's largest port, Yokohama, Maurice Bruce and his Aunt Eva, along with hundreds of others, were seeing off friends and family departing on the Empress of Australia. The 615 foot luxury steamship was bound for Vancouver, BC.

Here is the surviving half of a letter written by Maurice to his mother Rose Mary, September 11, 1923, aboard the steamer President Jefferson, headed for Seattle, Washington.

Maurice's Account

"Dear Mum, I know quite well you have heard of the terrible earthquake, fire and typhoon which have wiped out Yokohama and almost all Tokyo. I heard that Dad and Frank walked back from Tokyo after the earthquake and joined Vi on reaching Yoko. A young chap recently out from London who was staying with us looked after Vi, and as far as I can tell they must be all four together safe and sound.

I happened to be on the pier at the time seeing somebody off on the Australia and just as they

were hauling up the gangway this thing started. I stood calm while everybody lost their heads, screaming fainting and running in all directions. I soon was unable to stand up and when I found the pier going in I beat it for the opposite side and in crossing over, the whole place went in and I was thrown down, of course. I hurt my arm and shoulder a little but not seriously and under such circumstances one does not notice such trifles anyway. I got to the side of this place which had not fallen in and was on the point of swimming to the land when somebody I knew came running up and I tell you, we were glad to see each other and immediately decided to board the French mail boat which happened to be in at the time, As soon as the strongest jerk was over which brought down all the buildings, a terribly thick cloud of dust came over from the land which filled our eyes and throats. Then the typhoon and

fires started creating the most terrible sight of the lot, a sight I am totally at a loss to describe. The whole place, the Bluff, the wharf and the Settlement was on fire with a terrible wind which threatened to blow us clear off the pier altogether. Explosions were to be heard all round and the lighters, barges, launches, all were flaming and being blown onto us gradually.

Well, we had a terrible time on that ship and the storm not abating until the evening at which time there was an extremely anxious..." [remainder is missing. Frank Bruce added a note to say Maurice got on to the Empress of Australia and thence was trans-shipped to the President Jefferson.]

④ to be heard all round and the lighters, barges, launches, - all were flailing and being blown on to us gradually. Well, we had a terrible time on that ship and ~~kept~~ the storm not abating until the evening at which time there was an extremely anxious

Describing Japanese earthquake 1 Sept 1923 by Maurice Bruce. He afterwards got on to the Empress of Australia, docked nearby.



THE ADMIRAL LINE
PACIFIC STEAMSHIP COMPANY

On board S.S. Pres. Jefferson
enroute to Seattle
September 11-1923.

Darling Mum,

I know quite well you have heard of the terrible earthquake, fire and typhoon ~~that~~ which have wiped out Yokohama and almost all Tokyo. I heard that Dad and Frank walked back from Tokyo after the earthquake and found Nii on reaching Yoko; a young chap recently out from London + who was staying with no looked after Nii, and as far as I can tell they must be all four together, safe + sound.

I happened to be on the pier at the time



Virtually nothing of Yokohama survived the earthquake and much of Tokyo was totally destroyed as well. When Sydney wrote the following letter to Rose Mary on 10 January, 1924, Maurice had caught a ship to Seattle with Aunt Eva, Vi had just days earlier, married her employer Joe Fish in Tokyo and Frank and Sydney had found separate accommodation, Frank in Tokyo and Sydney in Kobe.

Sydney's Account

Sydney struggles with post traumatic stress syndrome as he writes the following:

*46 Hariura Machi
Kobe*

1 Jan 23

Darling

Just had your letter dated 23 August and a gentle reminder that I owe you more than one. Have tried to write you once or twice but each time had to give it up. The earthquake seems to have knocked the stuffing out of me. What a bit of luck you left here in July! Not only prevented you from a bad shock to the nerves (although I expect you had a bad time waiting for news of us) but you saved all your belongings which nobody else in Yokohama did. The whole city and Bluff are as flat as a pancake, dreadful sight and it is a wonder that so many of us are alive to tell the tale. Unfortunately, about 300 foreigners lost their lives. Quite a number among them are our friends — poor old Watson and Patterson, Tait,

8

be careful which I know you
always are but I don't know
what to do about Paddy - unless
there is any real reason for keeping
him at school after Xmas I
think he should be starting in
business - the expense is a heavy
one for me now & he will be nearly
17 & quite time he should make
a start. please consider this
very carefully & decide as
promptly as possible. & also
make enquiries regarding my
wages if you can & try to get
those fees reduced - Ernest, Rose
& Ethel will be together very soon
& they must do more than they
have done hitherto. ~~✂~~

Well no more now sweetheart
nearly 11 o'clock & I in bed
were dozing in a garden at present!!
& Vi at the kitchen - quite comfy
& all well.

Lots of love & hugs & kisses
Your
Your devoted
Paddy

Tom Abbey, Dr Reidhead, Dr Wheeler, Dr Ishiura, all gone.

I was on the train at the time, close to Omori Station, with Frank, Chapman and Catto, travelling at about 40 miles an hour and I have often wondered since how we kept on the rails. The train pulled up eventually and then we realized what had happened, but we had no idea of the extent of the damage at Yokohama and the awful catastrophe which had overtaken the town.

We walked from Omori along the line to Kawasaki. The big bridge had sunk 4 feet in the middle and some of the brick supports were right out of place. All this time continuous shocks which nearly threw us off our feet, during one of which we were passing a heavy freight train and to see

the engine shaken as though it were a toy was a bit scaring to say the least.

From Kawasaki, we took to the road. I think now this was a mistake. Nearly all the houses were down or partly so and close to Tsurinami we had to run through the fire. Of course, it was already over but still too hot to be comfortable. We eventually got back onto the railway again and from then on I decided to give the fire a wide berth and as we could not get further than Kanagawe on this account we made for Hokkaido in the hope of eventually getting [past] the burning district and reaching the Bluff via Nakamura but we were too tired and at 12 o'clock at night found ourselves at the end of the tram line beyond Ni-Bombashi where we camped for the night in a field being provided with a couple of tatami by a

Japanese whose house had collapsed but had escaped the fire.

At daybreak, we started off again through the burnt district — a sight I shall never forget. Great holes in the road, tram rails twisted into all sorts of shapes, telephone and telegraph wires blocking our path at almost every step, bridges blazing away. We had to cross one which was still burning. And tram cars, cart, motor cars just burnt where they stood from the time of the earthquake.

Needless to say I had a very anxious time as I was not sure Vi and Maurice were alright. Fortunately I knew where they ought to have been at the time of the earthquake but of course could not be sure — Vi at Yokohama Station in the car to meet me, and Maurice seeing his friends off by

the Empress of Australia, comparatively safe places, although the pier where Maurice was almost disappeared entirely into the harbour. To add to my troubles it was intensely hot and from 8 o'clock on we got very little to drink.

However, we got out safely for which we have to be very thankful and while our losses are considerable — furniture, clothes and some stock in the Canadian Trading Company, I am hoping I can recover my bonds (which were also burnt at the Chartered Bank) as I happened to have the numbers of them in my safe at the Tokyo office which was intact.

On arrival at the Bluff at about 6am I was fortunate enough to have news of Maurice and soon after was told that Vi was alright — Maurice on the Empress and Vi at the Grimessay's com-

pound at Nagaishi. So I sent word to her by young Geoffrey Fearon, who just then came along to tell me to come to the Bun's at once and meanwhile, Frank Levack and another young fellow named Hallen and myself assisted in getting old Captain Cars (who is unable to walk) down to the boat.

Some funereal procession, I can tell you (we were all dead tired and nothing to eat for 24 hours) having to climb over fences and heaps of debris blocking the roadway and wires everywhere.

I had previously been to look at the house — absolutely not a trace of anything and about 12-15 feet of the bank had gone too. The only thing remaining was the garage which had collapsed. I have been to Yokohama twice since to the

memorial services on the 23rd Sept and again a few days later but am not anxious to go again as it has a very depressing effect on everybody who visits it.”

To Canada

Tales shifts its focus now to the Bruce family in Canada. Sydney and Frank finished up their business affairs in Japan in the spring of 1924, then left for England by ship via the Suez Canal. Renie (Irene) and Neb (William) Caruthers were already in England; Vi and Joe's movements are not known.

Five members of the family, Sydney, Rose Mary, Frank, Maurice and Geoffrey gather in London. There is a brief effort to start a chocolate busi-

ness but it is short-lived and a decision is made to immigrate to Canada.

Type to enter text

Type to enter text

Type to enter text

Type to enter text

Type to enter text

Type to enter text

Type to enter text

Type to enter text