CHAPTER SIX

THE DREAM HOTEL

Representatives of Japan and China signed the Treaty of Shimonoseki on 17 April 1895, bringing the Sino-Japanese War to an end and alerting the world to Japan’s emergence as a military power in East Asia and its success, after a mere three decades, in the project of modernisation and industrialisation. Shumpanrō, the Japanese inn where the cosignatories gathered, was only a few steps away from the house acquired by Holme, Ringer & Co. in 1890 to serve as a residence for their agent in Shimonoseki (see Chapter 8).

In addition to recognition of Korean independence, the terms of the Treaty of Shimonoseki included China’s cession of Formosa (Taiwan) and the Penghu (Pescadores) Islands to Japan, as well as rights to the strategic Liaotong (Liaodong) Peninsula. China also granted permission for Japanese companies to operate ships on the Yangtze River and establish manufacturing facilities in Shanghai and other treaty ports, advantages similar to those won by Britain in the wake of the Opium Wars. China had to pay a crushing war indemnity of some 200 million silver taels, again simulating the terms of the Treaty of Nanking and Treaty of Tientsin earlier in the century. Victory brought Japan headlong into the commercial, political and military maelstrom of East Asia and translated into a sharp boost in Nagasaki’s fortunes as the closest port to China and a coal depot, supply harbour and rest place for foreign warships and merchantmen.

In early 1896, the local English-language newspaper reported that:

During the year 1895 no less than 160 different men-of-war of all nationalities visited Nagasaki. Of course the number of men-of-war entries is much greater, some of them coming here as many as five or six times during the twelve months. And large as these numbers are, those of this year give every indication of being larger, the large increase in the Far-Eastern fleets of the Powers and disturbed state of the political atmosphere being the prime factors in bringing this about.\(^1\)

In March the following year, seven Russian warships anchored in Nagasaki for rest and replenishment, marking the beginning of regular visits of the

\(^1\) The Nagasaki Shipping List, 21 February 1896.
Russian East Asian Fleet.2 The Spanish-American War and the cession of the Philippines to the United States in 1898 also drastically increased the American naval presence in Nagasaki. In December the following year, American military representatives arrived in Nagasaki from Manila and established a depot to provide food and supplies to American forces, pay salaries, and arrange for the coaling and provision of American ships visiting the port.3

The increase in harbour traffic naturally resulted in an economic windfall for the people of Nagasaki, filling the coffers of suppliers and trading companies and lining the pockets of all the people, Japanese and foreign, involved in business and transportation. In an 1896 report, Nagasaki British consul Joseph H. Longford describes the trade boom in Nagasaki and expresses optimism about the future of the port:

Nagasaki is, of all Eastern ports, perhaps that which is most frequented by foreign men-of-war of all nationalities, and it would not be an excessive estimate to say that fully $1,000,000 are annually spent in the port by their crews and on the purchase of supplies, a great portion of which goes into Japanese hands, directly or indirectly. Large sums are also disbursed by mail and other merchant steamers for supplies, and by tourists and other temporary residents, especially by Russians, large numbers of whom from Vladivostok are now making the port a winter residence. But in addition to Nagasaki there are other ports which furnish an outlet for the productions of Southern Japan, the principal being Shimonoseki, Moji, and Kuchinotsu, and all three may be considered as subsidiary ports to Nagasaki... With the single exception of the French, all lines of mail steamers now running to the East call at Nagasaki both on their outward and inward voyages, and this is the only port of call either in China or Japan of the magnificent vessels of the Russian Volunteer Fleet. The preponderance and advance of British shipping are both very marked. The number of British vessels that entered Nagasaki in 1896 was 335 and the tonnage 746,130, and the total entered both in Nagasaki and the subsidiary ports, 722 vessels of 1,582,479 tonnes... The Island of Formosa has not yet answered the expectations formed of it by the Japanese, but in whatever wealth it may ultimately bring to Japan, Nagasaki as the nearest port must have a large share, while the opening of the Siberian Railway must also tend greatly to its advantage, and from its proximity to the Pacific terminus of the railway, give it also a large share in whatever trade Japan may develop with Siberia.4

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2 Nagasaki City Chronology, p. 131.