It is almost a year now since Professor Takeo, Ph.D., who lectures on philosophy at two universities, began bringing back a bunch of flowers almost regularly once a week to his home in the suburbs.

The first time it was on a winter's day when he brought home some scarlet salvias. His wife and his maid, who had gone out to welcome him on the verandah, were indeed much surprised when he silently produced the scarlet flowers from underneath his long black overcoat. It was not until the flowers had been placed on the big table in the dining room that they were able to talk to each other about them. His daughter, a graduate of a girls' high school and now a member of the Y.W.C.A., had a mania for sports, spending all her time swimming in summer, skating in winter, etc., and had hardly ever been tempted to buy flowers. "Amazing, isn't it!" she repeated, moving her round eyes in her sunburned face shining with health above a white, hand-knitted sweater.

"It is almost like a story: an old professor of philosophy bringing home some red flowers on such a gray evening with the threat of snow in the air—isn't it?" said his niece, who was a student at a women's college and who happened to be staying with them overnight.

"Whatever made you buy flowers?" asked his daughter.

"Ha, ha . . . " Dr. Takeo only laughed deprecatingly.

"In your younger days, didn't you prefer either white or blue flowers?" asked his genteel wife, who wore her hair tied in a tiny knot.

"But then you haven't brought home any flowers for ages. I must say, I am surprised. And now that you have finally brought home some flowers, they are gaudy crimson ones like these. What are they called? When we were young there weren't any such flowers as these. I suppose they were imported into our country since then."

"Really, Auntie, you are telling us all the secrets of your youth. Thank you!" teased his niece.

"Why, they are called salvias," interrupted the sports-crazy daughter; at least she knew the name of the flowers. "When he was a romantic youth, he loved tiny flowers that were either blue or white; but twenty or thirty years later he has turned into a serious old professor who brings home crimson flowers. What could have caused such a change of heart? Why, it's getting to be more and more like a story, isn't it?" added his niece.

"Ha, ha, why, it's just like putting on the red jacket an old man should wear according to our ancient custom. But then I suppose you modern girls wouldn't know that." Dr. Takeo laughed good-naturedly.

It was then that Dr. Takeo noticed his younger son (preparing to enter high school), who was munching a hamburger steak across the table, starting to smile, look his way, and then quickly avert his eyes.

COME winter, come spring, come summer, Dr. Takeo, usually attired all in black, left his home in the suburbs four times a week to lecture at two of the city's universities, carrying under his arm a huge brief case he had bought in London. Descending a gentle slope and walking through a tiny business section, it usually took him eight and a half minutes to reach the suburban railway station. A young person might perhaps have covered this distance in six minutes.
That is to say, this is not only due to the fact that Dr. Takeo was old, but that he walked leisurely, as if at every step he took he were thinking about something. The professor had long ago lost the habit of his younger days of pondering as he walked, but his body had retained the mechanical form. At any rate, the old professor was the most dignified and self-possessed person among all the office workers, students, professors, military men, and government officials the station gobbled up and spewed out day and night, upright in his posture, walking at a steady gait, and always looking straight ahead.

We cannot recall the exact date at which a new flower shop appeared along that road. The shop could boast only of a small frontage next door to a drugstore, but it made a charming spot of color that seemed to brighten up the roadway. Yet, just as people are not conscious of the exact time that the street lights have gone on or not aware of the exact time that the stars begin to brighten up the evening sky, so Dr. Takeo only knew that the flower shop was suddenly there; and the first time he was actually aware of the existence of this flower shop was when he had bought the salvias.

Inside the shop there was a small, fair-skinned woman of about thirty-three or thirty-four. She was directing a docile young boy to trim the branches of a plum tree while she was untying a bunch of narcissus. At first the professor thought of taking a pot of hyacinths, but quickly changed his mind and decided on those red flowers. The woman owner of the shop was apparently rather surprised at seeing a solemn old gentleman in a black overcoat appear in the doorway. She blushed prettily as she asked: “Is it these salvias you want?” Still surprised and even forgetting to give her orders to the boy, she merely stood facing Dr. Takeo for a while. Then the boy brought out the flowers. Dr. Takeo hurriedly left the shop as soon as he had paid, hardly listening to the “Thank you” of the owner.

After that it became a habit of the professor to buy flowers at this shop every week or two. Really, you could hardly call it more than a “habit.” Besides this one, Dr. Takeo also had other habits which he followed almost unconsciously. Thus, for instance, he had one, which lasted for several years, of never failing to stop for a few moments on a bridge over a little stream half-way to the station to look down at the running water. Another habit which lasted for two or three years: on reaching the station he always walked slowly to the end of the platform whenever the train had not come in yet, to admire the view of Mount Fuji and the mountains in the west. Perhaps it is true that the brains of a philosopher tend to acquire some mechanical habits like Kant's habit of walking.

Since then he brought home tulips, calceolarias that look like bags, amaryllis, fuchsias, and azaleas. But strangely enough he seemed always to select bright red flowers. Not that he was conscious of it, but that was how it always turned out to be. “You have developed a fancy for gay colors since you’ve grown old, haven’t you? Why don’t you try wearing knickerbockers made of bright homespun or something like that?” his wife once teased him.

The pretty owner would always be standing modestly in a corner of the shop, and whenever Dr. Takeo came in silently in the evening she bowed respectfully. In a small voice, almost timidly, she would ask: “What would you like?” Dr. Takeo would point out “This,” or “That.” Then, after carefully handing over the flowers to Dr. Takeo as if she were presenting them to him, the owner would say: “Thank you.” “How much are they?” Dr. Takeo would ask. “So and so much.” And silently Dr. Takeo would place the amount in the small white palm of the woman.

Never once did their conversation develop beyond this. There was no indication that the flower-shop owner knew his name or profession; nor did Dr. Takeo know anything about the woman's life. They never even exchanged remarks about the day’s weather. It became practically a set rule that he bought flowers on Friday. Friday was the day on which he lectured on epistemology at both universities; it was the day that tired him most and saw him return home the latest. Whether or not the woman knew of this day and waited for him with an arrangement of flowers to his liking—that, too, we do not know.

A home is brightened up with flowers. Without exception the family’s conversation at the dining table seemed to be more lively on Friday nights than on any other night. Only Dr. Takeo’s son, always silent and with almost cynical eyes, seemed to assume the attitude of an onlooker on these conversations on flowers between his parents and his sister.
Once Dr. Takeo's niece, back at her woman's college, sent him a letter:

I have read your article, "On Culture," which appeared in one of the women's magazines. "A gentle heart; a rich heart; a heart which can appreciate the taste of even a piece of bread while chewing it; a heart which loves nature; a heart which loves the classics; a heart which loves children, flowers, music, art—such must be the possession of culture as one of its phases." At the point where you mention flowers, I happened to remember the salvias you brought home one night. Do you still bring home flowers now and again? But, dear Uncle, don't you think it would have been better to include another phrase: a heart which is capable of making love? With this inserted, I felt it would be natural to think of you, Uncle, as the elegant embodiment of the "man of culture" of the Meiji era, nay, of the period preceding the Meiji era; that although this type is gone, a thing of the past, it is lovable, that it is in itself a perfect image of a human being and, indeed, beautiful as a philosophy.

"Did I really write 'a heart which loves flowers'?" Dr. Takeo tried to recall the essay he had written a month ago; and, knowing not why, he had a rather bashful expression as he placed his niece's letter in a drawer of his desk.

But in early summer Dr. Takeo began to return home on Friday nights without bringing any flowers with him.

"What has happened?" his daughter asked him after three consecutive such Fridays.

"I thought it didn't look proper," answered Dr. Takeo.

"Perhaps you are right," said his wife.

His son let out a short, cynical laugh and averted his eyes as usual. "I know everything," was what those eyes seemed to express.

It so happened that at this time every evening saw a man perhaps a little younger than the owner of the flower shop, a stranger to the district and dressed in a well-cut suit, sitting for hours in the shop, fingering some flowers or helping with the work in the shop. That he was a man of leisure was revealed by his appearance and manner. Dr. Takeo, too, when passing the display window of the shop, frequently saw this man beyond the window pane or behind some flowers, talking to the woman owner. Walking past the shop, Dr. Takeo would direct a fleeting glance toward it, but quickly return to his customary steady gait and, without another look to either right or left, would pass through the business section and ascend the gentle slope toward the residential district.

We do not know whether the pretty owner of the flower shop felt any concern over the fact that the gentleman in the black suit who used always to come on Friday evenings went past without taking any notice of her shop.

When summer came, Dr. Takeo's family moved to a little seaside villa. Here Dr. Takeo read books and his daughter was tanned really black bathing in the sea. His son was busy memorizing English vocabularies and working out algebra problems. Autumn saw the whole family return to their home in the suburbs.

At the flower shop there were beautiful autumn arrangements. The owner, though a little thinner and looking more frail than before, seemed as usual to be carrying on her business modestly but diligently.

Dr. Takeo again walked to and from the station at his steady pace, carrying with him his big brief case. When passing by the show window, his habit of glancing at the shop seemed not to have changed, in spite of the summer interruption. Unconscious as he was of looking into the shop piled high with autumn flowers, he did become aware of the fact that he saw nothing more of that leisurely-looking young man who used to spend his evenings in the shop before Dr. Takeo went to the seashore.

One Friday evening some time in October the figure of Dr. Takeo entered the shop. "What would you like?" the owner asked him in exactly the same voice and the same shy, timid manner as before. "That," said Dr. Takeo, and she handed him a big bunch of red dahlias as if she were presenting them to him. It almost looked as if the flowers had been prepared for him, as if the owner knew he would come for them that day. Asking the price, placing the money in the small white palm of the woman, and going out of the shop—all this was done in the same, stereotyped manner as on that first occasion in winter when he had bought the salvias.

At the foot of the slope a group of five or six grammar-school pupils stopped short,
looking surprised and amused at the sight of a dignified gentleman attired in black silently walking along the road with a bunch of flowers. After having let him pass by, they noisily chattered and laughed about the strange scene.

Red flowers once again appeared on the dining table after a long period of absence.

"My! This is unusual," exclaimed his daughter.

"The room looks gay again, doesn’t it?" smiled his wife.

"Really, it seemed as if there were something missing with...

out them, didn’t it! The Friday attraction—a bunch of red flowers—that was the feature of our family!" his daughter joked.

However, in contrast to former occasions, Dr. Takeo did not reply with a jest; instead, he seemed to look a little sullen.

His face mechanically turned toward his son. With an expression more ironical than when Dr. Takeo had first started bringing home flowers, or than when he had ceased bringing them home, his son glanced at him but quickly averted his eyes again.

APPENDIX

DOCUMENTS CONCERNING AMERICA’S ATTITUDE TOWARD THE WORLD

1. An Open Letter from the Editors of Life to the People of England (Excerpts)

We want to know frankly what you are prepared to do to help us. You may not think that we have any right to ask for help. But you must be realistic. Of course we aren’t asking for men or tanks or warships. It’s our business to supply those tangible things. What we need is something that we have never in all our history—with but few exceptions—received from the English people, namely, concessions in policy. . . .

So here is one concrete concession that we demand of you, as partners in battle. Quit fighting a war to hold the Empire together and join with us and Russia and your other allies to fight a war to win by whatever strategy is best for all of us. After victory has been won, then the British people can decide what to do about the Empire (for you may be sure we don’t want it). But if you cling to the Empire at the expense of a United Nations victory you will lose the war. Because you will lose us. . . .

We Americans are a strange people, may be. You think of us as rather practical—the dollar-lovers, the makers of automobiles, the engineers. Well, we are practical. But you can’t understand us at all unless you realize how much principles mean to us. We fought you on principles in the first place. Once in our history we killed 500,000 of our own sons to establish the principles of freedom for the black man. And there’s no use pretending that America is going all-out in this war unless it becomes clear to us that this is a war to establish certain principles that we believe in, and to make them stronger than they were when the war started.

Maybe you will object that we haven’t defined these principles very well, as yet. That’s a fair objection. But let us remind you that one reason we haven’t defined them, and one reason that at least half our people are pretty dubious about their existence, is that we are not convinced that you would fight for them, even if they were defined. For instance, we realize that you have a difficult problem in India but we don’t see that your “solution” to date provides any evidence of principles of any kind. In the light of what you are doing in India, how do you expect us to talk about “principles” and look our soldiers in the eye! . . .

If you want to keep us on Your Side you must move part way over to Our Side. If you will do so, then you will find that Our Side is plenty big.... It is much bigger than the British Empire.... Our Side is as big as all outdoors.


1. The Security Council. The United States, Great Britain, the Soviet Union, China, and later France, will have the main power and responsibility for keeping the peace of the world. They will have permanent seats on the Security Council of the new league which is to be called “United Nations.” Six other states will be elected to the Security Council for two-year periods. The Security Council of eleven will have full powers to put down aggressions without reference to the view of the other nations. The question of voting in the Security Council is still under consideration.

2. Settlement of Disputes. Disputing states should try to come to an agreement through nego-