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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE FOUR CORNERS IN JAPAN ***

THE FOUR CORNERS IN JAPAN

THE CORNER SERIES

THE FOUR CORNERS
THE FOUR CORNERS IN CALIFORNIA
THE FOUR CORNERS AT SCHOOL
THE FOUR CORNERS ABROAD
THE FOUR CORNERS IN CAMP
THE FOUR CORNERS AT COLLEGE
THE FOUR CORNERS IN JAPAN
THE FOUR CORNERS IN EGYPT (*in preparation*)



ALL SORTS OF STRANGE FANCIES POSSESSED HER

The Corner Series
THE FOUR CORNERS
in
JAPAN
By
AMY E. BLANCHARD

George W. Jacobs & Company
Philadelphia.

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CHAPTER I
STARTING OFF

1

1

CHAPTER I

STARTING OFF

"I feel a migratory fever stirring within my veins," remarked Miss Helen Corner one morning as she sat with the elder two of her nieces in their Virginia home.

Nan put down the book she was reading; Mary Lee looked up from her embroidery. "You are not going to desert us, Aunt Helen?" said Nan.

"Not unless you girls will join me in my flight."

"But where would you fly?" asked Mary Lee.

"What do you say to Japan?"

"Japan? Oh, Aunt Helen, not really."

"Why not? Every one goes there these days. We could make the trip by way of California, stop off for a few days at Honolulu, and see some of the strange things I have been reading about this winter. I am strongly inclined to make the trip if you two will go with me."

"And would we start soon?" asked Nan. "In time for the cherry blossoms, the lovely flowery Japanese spring and all that?" [Pg 12]

"It was what I was planning to do."

"What about mother and the twinnies?"

"We should have to make up our minds to leave them behind. I believe your mother has declared against going with us. She thinks the twins should not be taken out of college and that she should be within call while they are there. That should not prevent your going, however. Nan, what do you think about it?"

"You know me, Aunt Helen," responded Nan.

"What about you, Mary Lee?"

"Oh, 'Barkis is willin';' that is if mother approves."

"I consulted her before I mentioned it to you, for I did not want any one disappointed. Therefore, young ladies, consider yourselves booked for a personally conducted trip. I think we might start next month, and we need not burden ourselves with too much of an outfit."

"I should think not," returned Nan, "when such lovely and cheap things can be had in Japan. Hurrah! Mary Lee, let's go tell Jo."

The two girls started off together. The month was February, but already the first hints of spring could be found in the warmer sunshine, the longer days, the swelling of buds on trees and bushes. A few yellow stars were already spotting the forsythia which clambered up one end of the front porch of Dr. Woods's house which they soon reached. They entered without knocking, for their friend Josephine Woods was like a sister, and would have resented any formality. They knew where to find her, for it was after her husband's office hours; he was off making his professional visits, and Jo would be up-stairs attending to certain housewifely duties. [Pg 13]

They discovered her in the little sewing-room surrounded by piles of house linen.

"Hallo," cried Nan, "what in the world are you doing, Jo?"

"Marking these towels for Paul's office," she returned soberly.

Nan laughed. "It is so funny to see you doing such things, Jo. I can never quite get over your sudden swerving toward domesticity. We have come over to tell you something that will make you turn green with envy."

"Humph!" returned Jo. "As if anybody or anything could make me turn green or any other color from envy. I am the one to be envied."

"She still has it badly," said Nan shaking her head. "What is there in marking towels to make it such an enviable employment, Mrs. Woods?" [Pg 14]

"Because it is being done for the dearest man in the world," replied Jo promptly.

"I wonder if you will still continue to be in this blissful state of idiocy when we get back from Japan," put in Mary Lee.

"Japan!" Jo dropped the towel she was holding, barely saving it from a splotch of indelible ink.

"Aha! I knew we could surprise you," jeered Nan. "She is green, Mary Lee, bright, vivid, grass green."

"Nothing of the sort," retorted Jo. "Of course I always did long to go to Japan, but I wouldn't exchange this little town with Paul in it for all the Japans in the world."

"You are perfectly hopeless," said Nan. "I wonder if I shall ever reach such a state of imbecility as to prefer marking towels to going to Japan."

"I wouldn't put it past you," returned Jo. "Just you wait, Nan Corner. I expect to see the day when you are in a

state that is seventy times seven worse than mine ever was."

"If ever I do reach such a state, I hope the family will incarcerate me," rejoined Nan.

Jo laughed. "This does sound like the good old college days," she remarked. "But do tell me what is up, girls. Are you really going to Japan?" [Pg 15]

"So Aunt Helen says," Mary Lee told her.

"And when do you go?"

"Next month."

"The whole family?"

"No, the kiddies will have to continue to grind away at college. I think it probable that mother will go back with them after the Easter holidays and stay there till summer, when they can all go away together."

"And how long shall you be gone?"

"Don't know. All we know is that we are going. We didn't wait to hear any more till we came over to tell you. What shall we bring you, Jo?"

"I think I should like a good, well-trained Japanese servant," returned Jo with a little sigh.

"Poor Jo; there are serpents even in Paradise, it seems. Does the last kitchen queen prove as unworthy to be crowned as her predecessors were?"

"Oh, dear, yes, but never mind, I am still hoping that the one perfect gem will at last come my way. Meantime I am learning such heaps of things that I shall become absolutely independent after a while. You will see me using fireless cookers, and paper bags, and all that by the time you get back."

"Well, good luck to you," said Nan. "We must be off. You shall have the next bulletin as soon as there is anything more to report." [Pg 16]

They hurried back to find their mother, being entirely too excited to stop long in one place. After talking the plan over with her, they hunted up their Aunt Helen to join her in consulting maps, time-tables and guide-books. Before night the date was set, the route was laid out, the vessel upon which they should sail decided upon.

At last one windy morning in March the Virginia mountains were left behind and the little party of three set their faces toward the western coast. California was no unknown land to them and here they decided to tarry long enough to see some of their old friends, making Los Angeles their first stop.

"Doesn't it seem familiar?" said Mary Lee as they approached the city where they had lived for a while.

"The very most familiar thing I see is out there on the platform," returned Nan as she observed Carter Barnwell eagerly scanning each car as the train came into the station. Nan hailed him from the car window and he was beside them before the train came fairly to a standstill.

"Glory be to Peter! But isn't this a jolly stunt you are doing?" he cried fairly hugging Miss Helen. "Why didn't the whole family come, as long as you were about it?" [Pg 17]

"By the whole family you mean Jack, of course," remarked Mary Lee.

Carter laughed a little confusedly. "That's all right," he returned; "I'm not denying it. Where are your checks and things? Give me that bag, Miss Helen. You are going straight to the house; Mrs. Roberts is counting the minutes till you get there."

The three were nothing loth to be settled in Carter's automobile and to be whirled off through summerlike scenes to Pasadena where Mrs. Roberts's home was.

"Do let us go past the little house where we used to live," said Nan who was sitting on the front seat with Carter. "I suppose it is still there."

"Oh, yes," was the reply, "and I hope it always will be. It was there I first saw Jack, you know; the little rascal, how she was giving it to that youngster." He laughed at the recollection. Then in a lower voice and more seriously he asked, "Did she send me any message, Nan?"

"We didn't see the twinnies before we left, you know," returned she. "There wasn't any special excuse for a holiday and it didn't seem worth while to bring them away from college just now. Doesn't she write to you, Carter?" [Pg 18]

"Sometimes," he answered soberly.

"Oh, well, you know what Jack is," said Nan with an effort to be consoling. "Just hang on, Carter, and it will be all right, I am sure."

"Yes, perhaps it will," he responded, "but sometimes it does look mighty discouraging. I haven't had a line from her since Christmas, Nan."

"Isn't that just like her? I suppose she had the politeness to thank you for that lovely set of books you gave her."

"Oh, yes; she wrote a perfectly correct little note. I was afraid maybe she didn't like the books."

"She was crazy about them, but she just wouldn't give you the satisfaction of knowing it," said Nan comfortingly.

"That is something to know," returned Carter in a more cheerful tone. "There's the house, Nan." He halted the car for a moment that they all might have a glimpse of the vine-embowered cottage where they had lived, and then on they sped again to draw up, after a while, before the door of the Roberts's pleasant home in Pasadena.

They were tired enough from their long journey to be glad of the rest and quiet which Mrs. Roberts insisted they should have. "You are to go to your rooms and have a good restful time before we begin to chatter," she told them. "Since you assure me that you left every one well at home, I can wait to hear the rest of the news."

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So to their rooms they went to descend after a reasonable time to luncheon when they were welcomed by Mr. Roberts and were waited upon by the same Chinese servant who had been with the Robertses for years.

Another day or two here and then off again they started to San Francisco where they would take their steamer. Carter insisted upon seeing them thus far on their way, and they were glad enough to have his assistance in getting started.

"Wish I could go along," he told them, "but I reckon I have enough of traveling on this continent. It is something of a jaunt to Richmond and they think I must show up there every two years anyhow."

"Then I suppose this is not your year for going since you came to see us graduated last summer."

"No, but I am banking on getting there next year."

"And of course when the twins are graduated you will be on hand."

"You'd better believe I shall. No power on earth shall keep me from going then."

It was Nan to whom he was speaking, and she well knew why he was so in earnest.

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"Well, remember what I told you," she said. "Don't give up the ship, Cart, no matter how discouraging it looks. Jack is a little wretch at times, but she is loyal to the core, in spite of her provoking ways."

"Nan, you are a perfect old darling," said Carter wringing her hand. "You have put new life into me. I'll remember, and I shall not give up till I see her married to another man."

"That's the way to talk," Nan assured him. "Dear me, is it time to go? Well, good-bye, Cart, and good luck to you."

Carter turned from her to make his adieux to Miss Helen and Mary Lee, then back he turned to Nan. "You are a brick, Nan," he said. "Good-bye and write a fellow a word of cheer once in a while, won't you?"

Nan promised and in another moment Carter had left them. The steamer's whistle blew a farewell blast and they were moving out of the harbor, Carter watching them from shore, his waving handkerchief on the end of his umbrella being visible as long as they could see.

They remained on deck that they might watch for every point of interest which the beautiful harbor displayed, and at last through the Golden Gate they steamed out into the broad Pacific.

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"Doesn't it seem queer to be going the other way around?" said Nan to her aunt. "Do you realize that this is the Pacific and not our old friend, the Atlantic?"

"Old friend," scoffed Mary Lee; "old enemy I should say. I hope to be spared the seasickness which I always associate with our last voyage."

"Of course you won't have any such experience," Nan assured her. "This is placid water and in four or five days we shall be in Honolulu. It wouldn't be worth while to get seasick for such a little trip as that."

But Mary Lee was not altogether satisfied with her prospects and was glad to seek her steamer chair before very long, and the other two decided to follow her example, Nan going to their stateroom to get wraps, and other paraphernalia, together with the guide-books with which they had provided themselves. After seeing that her aunt and sister were comfortably tucked in, Nan proposed that she should dispense information, while the other two became acquainted with the Pacific. "Of course you know," she began, "that Honolulu is on the Island of Oahu. I used to think it was on the Island of Hawaii, didn't you, Mary Lee? It is quite like an American town except that it has tropical trees and plants and things like that. I don't suppose it is half as picturesque as it was before we took possession of it. It was ceded to the United States, I mean the Hawaiian Islands were, in 1898."

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"How big is Oahu?" asked Mary Lee.

"It has an area of six hundred square miles, and it is the loveliest of all the islands."

"Dear me, I hadn't an idea it was so big. I thought we should be able to walk all over it during the time we expected to be there."

"Not this trip, my honey, but we can drive about or go on the street-cars around Honolulu."

"Oh, are there street-cars?"

"Certainly there are. Honolulu is quite a big city."

"I always think of it as a wild sort of place with queer little grass huts for the people to live in when they are not disporting themselves in the water and making wreaths of flowers. I expected to see coral reefs and

palms and people with feather cloaks on, when they wore anything at all."

Nan laughed. "You might have seen all that if you had lived some eighty or ninety years ago in the days of King Kamehameha."

"Oh, dear, and I suppose there is no more *tabu*, and we shall not see a single calabash. I don't understand *tabu* exactly, but I thought I should have an excellent chance to find out." [Pg 23]

"No doubt the book tells," said Nan turning over the pages. "It was like this," she said presently after a little reading. "If a chief wanted a field that appealed to his tender sensibilities he set up a pole with a white flag on it and that made the field *tabu* to any one else. Sometimes if he wanted a lot of fire-wood he would *tabu* fire and the people had to eat their food raw. All the nicest articles of food were *tabu* to women who were obliged to eat their meals in a different room and at a different time from the men."

"Dear me," cried Mary Lee, "then I am sure I don't want to go back eighty or ninety years even for the sake of grass huts and feather cloaks. We shall probably receive much greater consideration in this twentieth century. Tell us some more, Nan."

"You know the islands are of volcanic origin and they have the most delightful climate imaginable. On the Island of Molokai is the leper settlement where Father Damien lived and died. It is a larger island than Oahu, but only a part of it is given over to the lepers, and they are cut off from the remaining land by a high precipice, so they could not get away if they wanted to, as the ocean is on the other side. You will see plenty of coral at Honolulu, Mary Lee, for there are buildings made of blocks of it, and there is a museum where we can be shown the feather cloaks. They were made for royalty only, of the yellow feathers taken from a bird called the Oo. He was black but had two yellow feathers of which he was robbed for the sake of the king. They let him go after they took away the yellow feathers so he could grow some more. But just imagine how many feathers it must have taken to make a cloak that would reach to the knees, sometimes to the feet. No wonder there are none of these birds left." [Pg 24]

"It is all very interesting," declared Mary Lee. "Is there anything about calabashes?"

"Not very much," returned Nan after another examination of her book. "Perhaps we can find out more when we get there."

"I think I may be able to tell you something about calabashes," said a gentle voice at Nan's side.

Nan turned to see an elderly lady with a bright face, who had her chair next to the Corners'. "We are trying to get our information crystallized," said Nan. "It would be very good of you to tell us something about calabashes."

"I live in Honolulu," returned the lady, "and I have been entertained by your remarks. You have been quite correct in all you have said. The calabashes are quite rare now and rather expensive, though once in a while there is an auction sale when one can get them more reasonably." [Pg 25]

"Do you hear that, Mary Lee?" cried Nan. "Oh, wouldn't it be fine if there should happen to be one while we are in Honolulu?" She turned again to the lady by her side. "Our name is Corner," she said. "This is my sister, Mary Lee, and my aunt, Miss Corner, is next."

"And I am Mrs. Beaumont, the wife of an army man who is stationed at Honolulu. We are in the way of knowing some of the out-of-the-way things that all travelers do not know about, for we have been there some time. I am just returning from a visit to my sister who is in California."

Nan felt herself in luck and continued her talk with this new acquaintance, getting more and more enthusiastic as various things were told her about the place to which they were going. "I have been noticing you," said Mrs. Beaumont when they had become on quite friendly terms. "You are always so eager and interested."

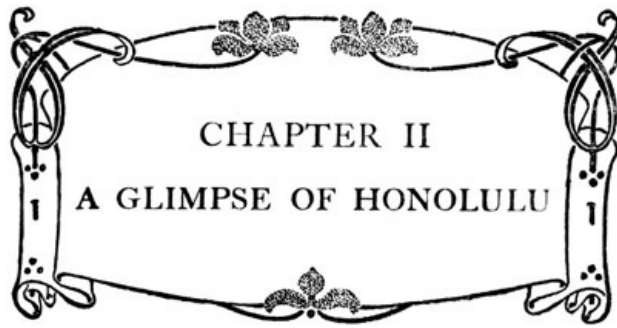
"Oh, yes, I know I am," Nan said a little ruefully. "I am so very eager to know and see everything that I don't think of consequences, at least my sister tells me so." [Pg 26]

"And are the consequences liable to be disastrous?" asked Mrs. Beaumont.

"Sometimes," Nan smiled reminiscently, "though, take it all in all, I would rather have a few disasters than miss what lucky experiences bring me. Nothing very terrible has happened to me yet for I have a younger sister who is so much more impulsive that I am able to curb myself on account of her didos. I daren't do things that I must warn her from doing, you see."

Mrs. Beaumont laughed. "I think many of us could understand the position, though, like yourself, there are some of us who delight in experimenting with the unconventionalities."

Nan's heart warmed to the speaker at this speech and the two sat talking till the call for dinner sent them below.



CHAPTER II

A GLIMPSE OF HONOLULU

By the time the reefs of Oahu were in sight, the Corners had become so well acquainted with Mrs. Beaumont that they felt that they would have a friend at court when they should finally reach Honolulu. The four stood on deck together watching for the first glimpse of the coral reefs, Koko Point, and Diamond Head, then the city itself at the foot of the mountains. Finally they passed on to the harbor inside the reefs and beheld the tropical scene they had pictured. There were the palms, the rich dense foliage, and, at the moment the vessel touched the wharf, there were the smiling natives with wreaths around hats and necks, waving hands, and shouting, "*Aloha!*" So was Honolulu reached.

As Nan had warned them it was quite like an American city, and as they were driven to the hotel which Mrs. Beaumont had recommended, they could scarce believe themselves upon one of those Sandwich Islands associated with naked savages and Captain Cook, in one's early recollections of geography.

"I do hope," remarked Nan as they entered their rooms, "that we shall not find any centipedes or scorpions in our beds." [Pg 30]

"Horrors!" cried Mary Lee. "How you do take the edge off our enthusiasm, Nan."

"Well, there are such things, and I, for one, mean to be careful."

"We shall all be careful," said her aunt, "but I don't believe in letting that mar our pleasure. Mrs. Beaumont says one rarely sees those creatures, though of course they do exist. Some of them are not so poisonous as we are led to suppose, and one soon recovers from the sting. Now, girls, don't let us waste our time in discussing centipedes and tarantula, for we must make the most of our time. I have ordered a carriage for a drive to the Pali, which, I am told, is the favorite one. We can take the shore line next, Waikiki, it is called, and then we can see the surf-riding and all that."

"Such lovely, queer names," commented Nan.

"Such queer looking people," said Mary Lee as they started forth, looking eagerly to the left and right that they might observe anything worth their while.

"Why do those women all wear those awful Mother Hubbard looking frocks?" said Nan. "While they were adopting a costume, couldn't some civilized person have suggested something more artistic? Poor things, I think it was a shame to condemn them to wear anything so ugly. When there were Japan and China to give them models of picturesque kimonos, it seems almost a crime for them to adopt these hopelessly ugly things." [Pg 31]

"Now Nan is off," laughed Mary Lee. "You touch her in her tenderest spot when you offend her artistic or musical taste."

"Speaking of music," said Nan, not at all offended, "I want to hear the song of the fishermen. Mrs. Beaumont says it is very weird and interesting."

"And I want to go to a *luau*," Mary Lee declared.

"I think that may be possible," Miss Helen said, "for Mrs. Beaumont has promised to be on the lookout for any festivity which might interest us and will let us know."

"She was a true discovery," Nan went on. "I am so glad she happened to be on board our steamer. Those wreaths that the natives wear around their hats and necks they call *leis*. Isn't it a pretty fashion?"

"The flowers are really wonderful," said Mary Lee, "but oh, such commonplace looking shops, with canned things on the shelves just as at home. In such a summery, balmy climate I should think they could raise almost anything." [Pg 32]

"So they could, but they don't," her aunt told her. "Everything almost, in the way of fruit particularly, is brought from the coast. Sugar is the great crop here. There are some coffee plantations, and rice is raised. Pineapples and bananas receive some attention, but the possibilities for cultivating other things seem to be unconsidered except by a very few."

"The natives eat *poi*," said Nan. "It must be horrid stuff from the description of it. It is made from a tough root something like a sweet potato. They mash it, or grind it up, mix it with water into a sort of paste, and sometimes they let it ferment before they dish it up in a calabash. Then the family sits around to eat this appetizing dish with their fingers. Mary Lee, how should you like to dine out with some of the Hawaiian gentry and be asked to join in a dip into the all-sufficing calabash with dried tentacles of an octopus as a dainty accompaniment?"

"Ugh!" Mary Lee looked disgusted.

Yet the next day when Mrs. Beaumont appeared to bear them all off to a *luau* they were all quite as eager to go as if they had not discussed *poi* to its disadvantage.

"*Luau* is the Hawaiian name for feast," Mrs. Beaumont explained. "The presence of guests will turn nearly any dinner into a *luau*. We are going a little out of town so that you may see one in its primitive method of serving." [Pg 33]

"Shall we have to eat anything that is set before us?" asked Mary Lee anxiously.

"Oh, no, but I am sure you will find enough to satisfy you among the things you can eat. There will be fish

steamed in *ti* leaves, and probably pork roasted in an oven built underground. And I am sure you will like a green cocoanut eaten out of the shell."

"But tea leaves," said Nan—"I should think they would give fish a queer flavor."

"Not t-e-a, but t-i," Mrs. Beaumont explained. "The *ti* plant is used for many things. It makes a convenient wrapping for one's ordinary marketing, and takes the place of paper in more than one instance."

The girls were very curious to see what the *luau* would be like, and were charmed to find that the feast was to be served from a mat spread upon the ground. The mat was finely braided and was adorned with a profusion of flowers. At each place were laid *leis* of carnations, begonias, bourga invilleas, or some unfamiliar flowers; only roses and violets were conspicuous by their absence.

Mrs. Beaumont and her guests were welcomed with low salaams by those who were native Hawaiians, though the company was a mixed one, as the feast was attended by some of the officers and their wives more in a spirit of policy or curiosity than because of strictly social relations. The girls discovered that Mrs. Beaumont was quite right in her advice about the fish and pork which they found delicious. They tried the *poi*, but barely tasted it. There was a very possible salad made from the alligator pear, and the green cocoanuts were indeed a delicacy which they could enjoy. It was not appetizing to watch the eaters of *poi* wrap the sticky mass around their fingers before putting it into their mouths, and one or two glances were entirely sufficient. Knives and forks were provided for the principal guests, and indeed for any who preferred, but some still clung to the simpler and earlier manner of eating with their fingers. [Pg 34]

Later on came a visit to the shore to see the surf-riding, less indulged in than formerly since clothes have become an impediment, yet interesting enough. Here, too, they heard the wild and melancholy song of the fishermen which Nan tried to jot down as a hint to her musical memory in days to come. A sightseeing tour about town was planned for the next day when they were to see the various buildings, the Executive mansion, once the palace, the Museum where, indeed, were the feather cloaks and other interesting exhibits of primitive days, the Punahou College, and, what to the Corners was the most interesting of all, the Lunalilo Home for aged natives. [Pg 35]

"When I see those low salaams, I know I am in the Orient," said Nan. "Did you notice that old fellow actually prostrate himself?"

"They are a very gentle, biddable people, if they are lazy," remarked Mary Lee, "and they say they are strictly honest."

"I think that is because of the old system of *tabu*," Nan made the remark. "You were not allowed to take anything that belonged to a chief, for it was a matter of life and death, and even to allow your shadow to fall across the path of one of those mighty beings meant 'off with his head' or some similar order. I know what I shall do when I am queen of these islands; I shall *tabu* Mother Hubbards. Look at that fat old monstrosity; isn't she a sight?"

"There are quantities of Chinese and Japanese," said Mary Lee, noting the various persons who passed them.

"It seems to me one sees more of them than of the natives."

"I believe they do outnumber the natives," Miss Helen remarked, "for they form the principal class of laborers. The Chinese, more than the Japanese, have become shopkeepers, and own a larger proportion of real estate, so no wonder we see so many of them." [Pg 36]

"Are you all very tired?" asked Nan suddenly.

"I must confess that I am," Miss Helen told her.

"And I shall be mighty glad to get to my room," Mary Lee put in. "Why do you ask, Nan?"

"Because I am wild to take a ride on those King Street cars. Mrs. Beaumont says that nobody of the better class does ride on them, and that is the very reason I want to go."

"Oh, Nan, I wouldn't," objected her sister.

"Why not? Nobody knows me, and I shall probably see sights undreamed of. Come along, Mary Lee."

"No, indeed, I don't want to get mixed up with lepers and filthy scum of the earth."

"Nonsense! There couldn't be any lepers, for they keep a very strict watch and hustle them off to Molokai as soon as one is discovered."

"Mrs. Beaumont saw one; she told me so."

"Oh, Mary Lee, did she really?"

"Yes, she was buying something in one of the Chinese shops at the time of the Chinese New Year, and this creature was begging outside when she came out. She says she shall never forget the sight, and that sometimes their friends hide them so the officers cannot find them." [Pg 37]

"Well, they will not hide them on a King Street car, that's certain," retorted Nan. "If neither of you will go with me, I shall go by myself."

Finding her determined, Miss Helen and Mary Lee went on to their hotel while Nan boarded the car she had selected. It was about an hour before she rejoined them. "Well, how was it?" asked Mary Lee as her sister came in.

"It was great larks," was the answer. "You missed it, you two proper pinks of propriety."

"Come in and tell us, Nan," called Miss Helen from the next room.

Nan laid aside her hat and came to her aunt, sitting on the side of the bed while she related her experiences. "It was perfectly decent and respectable," she declared, "and the route is a beautiful one. A most polite Chinese person of the male persuasion took my car fare to deposit, handed me my change with an entrancing bow and then," she laughed at the recollection, "neatly abstracted his own nickel from his ear and put that in, too."

"From his ear?" Miss Helen exclaimed.

"She is just jollying us, Aunt Helen," said Mary Lee.

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"Indeed I am not," declared Nan, "and, what is more, he had stowed away another nickel, for his return fare, in his other ear; I saw as I came out. For my part I think it is a lovely idea, and I believe I shall adopt it in future, particularly when I must get on one of those evil inventions, a pay-as-you-enter car. One day in New York I dropped as many as three car fares in trying to get a nickel into the box. It was a rainy day; I had my umbrella and a small traveling bag to carry, so how in the world I could be expected to grasp the situation I have been wondering ever since. No, the ear is the place, a simple and effective way of solving a very difficult problem."

"What else did you see?" queried Miss Helen.

"I saw a bland, urbane native lady, gowned in a pink Mother Hubbard—I have learned that the native name for these horrors is *holuku*—well, she wore one. She carried a basket of fish, principally alive, for one that looked like a goldfish almost jumped into my lap. When she left the car I noticed that the Chinaman next me began to jerk his foot in a most remarkable manner. He attempted to get up, but somehow couldn't seem to manage it. The woman was going one way; the car the other; but finally another passenger stopped the car after some unintelligible words to the motorman and I discovered that the woman's hook and line had caught in the Chinaman's shoe. The woman was dragging away, all unconsciously, for she had caught a fish which she didn't intend to fry. It was very funny, but I was the only one in the car who laughed; the rest were far too polite."

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"Well, Nan, it is just like you to have had such an experience," said her aunt.

"If I were going to stay in Honolulu for any length of time," returned Nan, "I think I should like to take a ride in the King Street cars every day. What are we going to do to-morrow?"

"We are to have tea in Mrs. Beaumont's little grass house—you know she owns one—and she thinks there is to be an auction."

"Calabashes!" cried Nan. "Good! I have set my heart on one, but I am not going to pay more than ten dollars for it."

"I am afraid you will be disappointed then," her aunt told her, "for they run up as high as fifty dollars and over, I am told."

"Well, we shall see," said Nan. "Of course I can't spend all my spare cash on calabashes or I will have none left for Japan where I expect to be tempted beyond my powers of resistance."

"We are to dine at Mrs. Beaumont's this evening, so you'd better be thinking of dressing," Mary Lee warned her.

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"And no doubt we must look our best for there will be some fascinating young officers there, I believe. Isn't it fortunate that our steamer chairs happened to be next Mrs. Beaumont's? She has been perfectly lovely to us all, and we have seen twice as much as if we had tried to trot around alone."

They were not disappointed in their evening's entertainment which brought them in contact with some of the ladies, as well as the men, of the garrison, and gave them an opportunity of learning many interesting things. The evening ended in a surprise when a band of natives came to serenade, bringing their rude musical instruments and giving songs typical of these islands of the South Seas.

The calabashes were the great interest of the next day when an auction sale of a small private collection was held. Mrs. Beaumont, who was wise on the subject of the antique wooden ware, went with them, and to her great satisfaction Nan did secure an excellent specimen for the price she had set.

"You see," said Mrs. Beaumont, "as there is no metal on these Hawaiian Islands, the best substitute known to the natives was the *Koa* wood which has an exceedingly fine grain and is susceptible of a very high polish. Wherever a calabash was decorated by carving, it had to be done either with a stone implement or with one made of sharks' teeth, and though these carvings are crude they are really very interesting and add to the value of the calabash. There are very few of the very old ones left now as they have been bought up by collectors. The natives use those made of cocoanut shells or of small gourds, as you may have noticed."

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Nan bore away her calabash in triumph, stopping at a little place to have it polished by a man who was noted for doing such work well. Hers, while not large, was rather unique as it had a division in the middle so that two kinds of food could be served at once in it.

There were more walks and drives, and even a visit to one of the neighboring islands. The pretty little Japanese tea-houses, which they came upon frequently in their drives, the girls absolutely refused to patronize. "We want to save everything Japanese till we get to Japan," they declared. "There is quite enough novelty in that which is strictly Hawaiian."

"And more than enough that is strictly American, if one is looking for novelty," remarked Miss Helen. "Who would suppose that in these South Sea Isles one would find severe-looking New England houses, electric lights, electric cars, telephones and all the rest of American modern improvements?" [Pg 42]

"Including Mother Hubbards," Nan put in. "I am glad they have left something typical of the old times. I suppose the little grass houses were unhealthy places, but how picturesque they are."

They had the opportunity of observing one of these primitive houses more closely that very afternoon when Mrs. Beaumont gave them tea in the small hut which she retained as a curiosity. It was quite a gay little company which gathered there, young officers, bright girls and charming, elderly, soldier-like military men who, the girls maintained, were more entertaining than the younger ones.

At last came word that the steamer for Japan would arrive the next day, and so there was a repacking of trunks, a stowing away of souvenirs and a final farewell to those who had helped to make the stay at Honolulu so pleasant and profitable. Then early the following morning the three travelers boarded the steamer for a still longer journey to Japan.

But they were not allowed to go off without being speeded on their way by their new friends who came bearing *leis* in such number that their hats, their necks, their waists were adorned with garlands as the vessel slowly moved out. When the last "*Aloha!*" had died upon the air, they had moved outside the reefs, and finally when Oahu was lost to view, upon the waters they cast their wreaths that they might be borne back to land, a silent message to the friends they had left behind. Such is the pretty custom in these southern seas. [Pg 43]



CHAPTER III
FIRST IMPRESSIONS

CHAPTER III

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

As one nail drives out another so were the sights of Honolulu lost in those newer ones which were met as the vessel entered the great bay.

"It is just like the pictures," cried Nan, eagerly squeezing her sister's arm.

"It is exactly," responded Mary Lee. "Oh, Nan, those square-sailed things are the junks, aren't they? And oh, what a lot of little boats."

"And isn't the color beautiful?" returned Nan, her eyes seeking the further mass of shore beyond the calmly glittering waters. "I am wildly excited, aren't you, Aunt Helen? Somehow it seems the foreignest of all the foreign countries we have seen yet, much more than Honolulu did, for there was so much that was American there."

"It is certainly deeply interesting," her aunt agreed. "I suppose we shall have to come down to the matter-of-fact question of customs directly, and after that we can begin to enjoy ourselves."

"Oh, dear me, I always forget that there are such disagreeable things as customs. I hope they will not capture my precious calabash." [Pg 48]

But the customs were easily passed and then came the first sensation of the day, a ride to the hotel in a *jinrikisha*.

"I feel as if I were on a fan or a *kakamono*," giggled Mary Lee, as they were borne along by their galloping coolie.

"What funny little houses," commented Nan. "Can you imagine that really sober, every-day people live in them? It all looks like a joke, and as if we might come to our sober senses after a while. To be sure some of the houses do look somewhat European, but even they have a queer expression."

"I didn't expect to see any horses, and yet there are a good many." Mary Lee made the observation.

"I suppose they have been brought in by the foreign population," said Nan. "I have seen quite a number of phaetons, and some persons on horseback, so there goes one rooted theory. Set it down for a fact that they do have horses in Japan."

"Don't the shops look fascinating! But we mustn't try to buy much of anything here for we are going to Tokyo almost at once, Aunt Helen says. Do you know how far it is, Nan?"

"Only about twenty miles, I believe. Ah, here is our hotel right on the quay. We get a harbor view, but they say the best scenery is not here, but that further in the interior it is wonderful. I am wild for the first glimpse of Fujiyama." [Pg 49]

"I suppose we shall be honored and kowtowed to from this out," remarked Mary Lee as they left their *jinrikishas* to be met at the hotel door by a bowing, obsequious person who conducted them inside.

"It should be a flattering possibility, but you must remember that we are only poor miserable females and are of no account in this land."

"I shall remember that when I get carried away by my admiration of things Japanese," replied Mary Lee.

Their rooms looked out upon the water, and for some time they gave themselves up to viewing the novel scene spread out before them; the queer crafts which passed and repassed; the lambent, soft light which played over the waters; the effect of a swarming crowd in the costume of the country, at times diversified by the wearing of a partial European dress, again accentuated by those who wore such attire as was most familiar to the girls in their own home. It was quite late in the day and, as they expected to go on to Tokyo the next morning, they decided to take *jinrikishas* or as they discovered them to be called *kuruma* and *kurumaya*, that they might see something of the city of Yokohama and have their first experience of Japanese shops. [Pg 50]

"Now, Nan," warned Mary Lee the wise, "don't get too reckless even if things are cheap. We have months before us and if you begin to load up now, think what you will have by the end of the time."

Nan, hesitating while she looked longingly at a fragile cup and saucer, sighed. "I suppose you are right, but one's enthusiasm is always so much more ardent in the beginning. Besides, I have always found that no matter how much I carried home with me from abroad, I was always sorry I didn't buy double."

"But these breakable things will be so hard to lug around."

"True, my practical sister. I think I will limit myself to the purchase of two things alone in this precious town and it will be fun to decide what they shall be."

From shop to shop they went, stopping to look at the queer hanging signs, to examine the curios, the silks, and the odds and ends which could be picked up for a mere trifle. But at last Nan decided upon a silk scarf as being easy to carry and a singularly lovely *kakamono*, though she gave many a sigh to the beautiful bits of color which she must pass by. "So cheap," she would murmur, "and I can't have it." [Pg 51]

Then Mary Lee would resolutely rush her away with the consoling remark that doubtless she would find things twice as lovely and even more cheap in other places. "For you must remember," said she, "that we are only on the threshold, and probably, as this is such a well-known seaport, and one which is so much visited, things here are more expensive than they will be further on."

"I bow to your superior judgment," Nan would reply, with a last backward look at the treasure she coveted.

Mary Lee, herself, followed Nan's decision and bought but two articles, one a small piece of carved ivory and the other a piece of embroidery, both of which could be easily tucked away and would take up little room.

Their afternoon would not have been complete without a first visit to a tea-house. "A really truly Japanese one this time," said Nan. "Aren't you glad we waited? I have much more of a sensation, haven't you, Aunt Helen?"

"It does seem the real thing in such an atmosphere and such a company," she returned, as they were served with the pale yellow beverage in tiny cups by the most smiling of little maids.

It was something of a ceremony as they discovered, when, at the very door, they must remove their shoes that they might not soil the clean straw mats with which the floor was thickly spread. Slippers were provided them and shuffling in with these upon their feet they sat on cushions, when a little maid in kimono and broad *obi* came forward to ask if the honorable ladies would like some honorable tea. [Pg 52]

"Dear me," whispered Nan, "it is just as I hoped it would be. We have been called honorable at last."

Presently the *mousmeé* approached on her knees bearing a carved tray which she presented most humbly, and the three sat drinking their tea and trying to realize that this was Japan and that they were not dreaming.

Continuing their ride, they were taken still further away from the European quarter of the town through the streets which looked more and more foreign; but they did not stop at any of the tiny shops, raised above the street, with their banner-like signs of blue or red or white all bearing lettering in fantastic Japanese or Chinese characters. It was all wonderfully rich and harmonious and the three were so busy drinking in the sights, the queer little low houses, the people, mostly habited in blue, short of stature, smiling, picturesque, that they were taken by surprise when at last their broad-hatted runner stopped. They looked up there to see before them in the evening light the great cone of Fujiyama, or Fujisan, as the wonderful mountain is called. [Pg 53]

Nan began to laugh hysterically. "What makes you do that?" said Mary Lee. "I don't see anything so amusing about this glorious view."

"I have to do something," returned Nan, "and I don't want to cry. I have to do one or the other, it is so wonderfully beautiful. Doesn't it seem like the very spirit of a mountain wrapped in this pale, misty evening light? The great sacred mountain! And how high is it? I must look at my book and see." She turned the leaves of the book which she carried with her. "The great volcano," she read, "is between 12,000 and 13,000 feet high. It is 120 miles around the base. It has been practically inactive since 1707, yet there is a spot where it still shows indications of inward fires which, it is safe to declare, may break out some day."

"Dear me, let us hope it will not be while we are here," said Mary Lee.

"It isn't at all probable," Nan assured her, "for I am sure there would be some warning, unearthly noises, and growlings and mutterings. I shouldn't mind a little harmless sort of eruption, and I am rather looking for a baby earthquake that we can really expect almost any time. Do you know, Mary Lee, I am only beginning to wake up to the tremendous possibilities of Japan. Every little while I come upon the description of some famous shrine or temple, some wonderful view, some queer custom, or fascinating festival. I am beginning to get more and more bewildered, and shall have to sift this information so I can gather together the few grains which must serve us while we are here. It would never do to go away with merely a hodge-podge of facts not properly catalogued in our minds. You, who have an orderly and practical mind, must help me arrange some sort of synopsis of what we are to see and why we must." [Pg 54]

Mary Lee agreed and after a short observation of the magic mountain, they turned their backs upon it and saw only the bobbing hat of their runner who bore them through the unfamiliar and weirdly interesting streets, whose shops were now beginning to be lighted by gay paper lanterns, on to a more familiar looking quarter of the city, peopled principally by Europeans and back to the hotel on the quay, where they stopped. Their minds were full of new sensations, and their eyes were still filled with the pictures of foreign streets, smiling, gentle-voiced little people, and lastly great Fujisan, calm and beautiful in the sunset glow. [Pg 55]

After dismissing the *jinrikishas*, the three entered the hotel again, Nan walking ahead. As they were passing through the corridor, she stopped short as she came face to face with a girl about her own age who also came to a halt as she saw Nan. Then she sprang forward and took Nan by the shoulders, giving her a gentle shake. "Nan Corner, as I live! This is surprising."

"Eleanor Harding, who could have expected to meet you on the other side of the world?" cried Nan.

"How on earth did you get here?" asked Eleanor.

"Just dug a hole and fell through," returned Nan.

Eleanor laughed. "Dear me, that does make me feel as if we were all back at Bettersley. Why, there is Mary Lee, too! What fun!" She hastened forward to greet her old classmate, and to speak to Miss Helen whom she had met more than once at various college functions. "Well, this is luck," she declared. "Do let us go somewhere and have a good talk. Have you all had dinner? No? Then come along and sit with me for I was just going in."

"But we are still in traveling dress," objected Mary Lee, always particular. [Pg 56]

"Never mind that; lots of others will be, too. Come right along."

Thus urged the three followed along to the dining-room where they found a table to themselves over in one corner, and the chattering began.

"Now tell me all about it," said Eleanor. "Dear me, but it does me good to see you."

"We have come just because we all wanted to," Nan told her. "Aunt Helen proposed it, and here we are. We left mother and the twinnies at home."

"Jack and Jean are at Betteresley, of course."

"Yes, pegging away and getting along about as well as the rest of us did in our freshman year. Jack, as may be guessed, is in everything, including scrapes, but she is a general favorite and always comes out on top."

"It makes me sort of homesick," said Eleanor with a sigh.

"But you haven't told us yet what brought you here," Mary Lee reminded her.

"Oh, so I haven't. I came out with my aunt whose husband is an army man. My brother is in the diplomatic service and is to be here some time, probably, so every one thought it was my chance for seeing this country."

"It certainly is, for you will have opportunities denied the rest of us mere tourists. Is your aunt here in Yokohama?" [Pg 57]

"For the present. She and my brother have both gone to some function this evening, hence I am alone. Do you know what I thought when I first caught sight of you, Nan? I thought you were married and had come on your wedding trip."

"No such prospect for Nancy," was the answer.

"What about Rob Powell?" asked Eleanor. "He used to be your adorer a year ago."

"Was it only a year ago? It seems ten," returned Nan. "Oh, I hear of him once in a while from Rita Converse. He is doing pretty well for a beginner, I believe."

"What callous indifference," replied Eleanor. "I quite counted on hearing of your engagement by this time."

"I don't seem to engage as readily as some others," Nan made answer, "and the longer I put it off the more 'fistidious' I become as Jean used to say. What about yourself, Nell, my dear? I don't forget Yale Prom."

"Oh, bless me, who can count upon what happened before the deluge? I've begun all over again. I am counting on my brother Neal to supply me with something in the way of a Mikado or a *daimio*."

"Deliver me if you please," cried Mary Lee.

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"So say we all of us," echoed Nan. "No Japanese mother-in-law for me. You must do better than that, Eleanor."

So the chaff and chatter went on. Eleanor had been one of their comrades at college and there were a thousand questions to ask on each side, reminiscences and all that, the process of what the girls called "reminiscing" continuing long after they had left the table and had retired to a spot where they would be undisturbed. Here, after a while, they were discovered by Eleanor's brother who was duly presented and who entertained them all by an account of the affair which he had just attended. Later came in Mrs. Craig to hunt up her niece and nephew. She was a charming woman who had already been through many interesting experiences, and who was disposed to make much of these college friends of her niece.

"We must all have some good times together," she proposed. "My husband and Neal have both been out here long enough to give us suggestions."

Neal declared himself eager to be of assistance and lost no time in beginning to plan what they all must do the next day. There was some discussion about hours and engagements, but at last all was arranged to the satisfaction of every one concerned and the little company broke up.

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"Did you ever know such luck?" whispered Nan as they were going to their rooms. "Aunt Helen, we certainly started out under a lucky star. What would Honolulu have been without Mrs. Beaumont? And here come Mrs. Craig and Mr. Harding to act as cicerone for us here. Nell Harding of all people! I can't get over my surprise yet."

"Were you very intimate with her at college?" asked Miss Helen.

"Not quite as much so as with Rita Converse and one or two others. Still we were very good friends, especially during our senior year. Do you remember, Mary Lee, that she was the one who wrote to her brother about that horrid Oliver Adams, when you were taking up the cudgels for Natty Gray?"

"Indeed I do remember," returned Mary Lee. "She was so nice about it; I have always liked her better ever since that time. What do you think of this brother, Nan?"

"Pleasant sort of somebody. Looks as if there might be a good deal in him. Not specially good-looking, but he has nice eyes and a well-shaped head that looks as if he had more than ordinary intellect. I think we shall all become very good friends. Don't you like Mrs. Craig, Aunt Helen? I am sure she is great, and is going to be no end of help to us."

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So the talk went on while the night opened up new stars to their vision, and the coming day promised new friends, new scenes and new experiences.



They Looked Up to See the Great Cone of Fujiyama



CHAPTER IV
TEMPLES AND TEA

CHAPTER IV

TEMPLES AND TEA

"And aren't we to go to Tokyo to-day?" asked Mary Lee as she sat up in bed the next morning.

"Don't ask me," replied Nan. "We supposed we were, and as it is only twenty miles away we may be going yet though Aunt Helen did not say anything about it last night. She and Mrs. Craig were plotting all sorts of things for to-day while we were talking to Nell and her brother. I caught a word here and there about temples and *tori-i* and things."

"And we, too, were making plans meanwhile, so it looks as if we might have a busy day, Nan."

"Yokohama and Tokyo are practically the same city," Nan gave the information, "for they are so near one another. Because of that we may be going to carry out the original plan. I'll go ask Aunt Helen." She pattered into the next room to find Miss Helen already up. "What's the first thing on the carpet to-day, Aunt Helen?" she asked.

"Why, let me see; breakfast, of course."

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"Decidedly of course, but I didn't mean anything quite so obvious."

"Then Mrs. Craig is coming for us and we are to take a drive to see some temples, and this afternoon we are to call on a Japanese friend of Mrs. Craig's."

"A real Japanese?"

"A really, truly one whom Mrs. Craig knows quite well."

"And we shall have the chance of seeing a veritable Japanese house? Good! I've been hoping we might have such a chance. Where is the house?"

"In Tokyo."

"Then we are to go there as was first planned."

"I think so; it is more attractive than in Yokohama, and you know Mrs. Craig is stopping there. She and her nephew came to Yokohama simply to meet Miss Harding whom they will take back with them to Tokyo, so it seems to me we would be better off there ourselves."

Nan uncurled herself from the foot of the bed where she was sitting and went back to her sister. "Tokyo it is to be," she announced. "Tokyo and temples and a visit to a Japanese home; that is the day's programme. Isn't it great? You'd better get up, Mary Lee; Aunt Helen is all dressed."

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The two girls made haste to join their aunt and before very long were ready for their morning of sightseeing. This time they were to go, not in *jinrikishas* but behind Mrs. Craig's stout little ponies which carried them along at a good pace to a spot where suddenly arose before them a great stone stairway.

"Oh, where do those steps lead?" asked Nan, all curiosity.

"They are the first intimation we have that we are nearing a *tera* or temple," Mrs. Craig told her.

"And do we climb that long flight?" asked Mary Lee.

"Assuredly."

They all alighted from the carriage and began the ascent. At the top they confronted a queer gateway.

"Is this what they call a *tori-i*?" asked Nan.

"No, it is merely a gateway in the ordinary sense," she was told.

"We must stop and look at it," Miss Helen decided, and they all stood looking up at the strange structure.

"What an odd roof," Mary Lee observed, as she regarded the peaked pagoda-like affair.

"And such carving," exclaimed Nan. "Do look at all those queer gargoylish lions' heads, and see the dragons on the panels; snakes, too."

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"And there is Fuji." Miss Helen, who was resting after her exhausting climb, and was enjoying the view, directed their attention to the great mountain whose dim peak arose above the town at their feet.

Nan turned from her regard of snakes and dragons that she might look off at the scene. "No wonder one sees Fuji on fans and panels and pretty nearly everything in Japan," said she. "I don't wonder the Japanese honor and adore their wonderful mountain."

After giving further examination to the gateway, they all walked on, presently coming to another one which showed more dragons and gargoyles. Through this they passed to enter a sort of courtyard. The girls looked with curiosity at an array of stone objects which they supposed to be monuments. "What are they?" Mary Lee asked.

"Stone lanterns," Mrs. Craig told her, "and yonder are the Buddha lions." She pointed out two strange, fantastic stone figures in sitting posture each side the way.

"And does Buddha live here?" asked Nan with a smile.

"He lives in many places," Mrs. Craig replied with an answering smile.

Just ahead they perceived three steps leading to a low edifice. Men and women were going and coming from these, stopping to kneel at the entrance of this, the temple which they had come to see. Most of these people tarried only a very short time, bending their heads in silent prayer for a few minutes, while they joined their hands reverently. Some clapped three times quite slowly, though noisily. There were many contributions made, small coins thrown into the big wooden box at the entrance. [Pg 67]

The girls stood watching the worshippers curiously. "It would be interesting to know how much their offerings amounted to," said Mary Lee. "I suppose very little in our money."

"Very little indeed," responded their guide. "When you consider a *rin* is one-tenth of a *sen* and that a *sen* is only about equal to one of our cents you can see that a very small contribution suffices."

"What is inside the temple?" asked Nan.

"The shrine of Buddha, but he is not on exhibition except on feast days. If you go in you will have to take off your shoes, so perhaps we would better wait till some other time."

They decided that they would not attempt an entrance at this time, but they peeped through the paper-screened sides of the building to see a dim interior whose contents were in such obscurity that they could not make them out. [Pg 68]

"Do you always have to take off your shoes before entering a temple?" asked Mary Lee.

"Oh, dear, yes, and not only upon entering a temple but before entering any house. You know all floors are furnished with soft matting rugs which it would never do to soil. When one considers how much mud and dust we carry into our homes on our shoes and skirts I am inclined to think the Japanese have more than one custom which we might adopt to advantage. If you want to see a *tori-i*, Miss Nan, I think we can find you one not very far away."

"I don't exactly understand what a *tori-i* really is," confessed Mary Lee.

"There are two theories concerning them," Mrs. Craig told her. "Many assert that they were originally perches for birds, one meaning of the word being a bird-rest, and it is supposed that they were used as a sort of altar on which fowls were offered to the gods; others maintain that the word means simply a gateway. One can easily see how either meaning could be accepted, for they do look like a perch as well as a gateway."

After another drive through a labyrinth of streets, where were queer little houses and queerer signs, they arrived at the bottom of another hill where again a flight of steps arose before them. [Pg 69]

"Dear me," sighed Miss Helen, "I wonder if I am equal to all these climbs. I should like to import a few elevators for the sake of my American powers of climbing."

However, rather than be left behind, the ascent was decided upon by Miss Helen, Nan helping her up, and lingering with her when a pause for breath seemed advisable. At last they joined the other two who, more agile, had reached the spot before them. "So this is a *tori-i*," said Nan looking up at the gateway. "Such a simple affair; just two upright pillars with two things across them. It might easily be a bird-perch. No carving, no letters, no anything, yet it is sort of impressive just because of its simplicity. Is there a temple beyond?"

"No, only a shrine," she was informed, "and probably closed."

"Then we shall not have to climb that second flight of steps," said Miss Helen in a relieved tone. "If one has to mortify the flesh in this manner before seeing temples, I am afraid I shall not see many."

"Oh, but you used to climb lots of steps in Europe," Nan reminded her. "How many were there in the duomo at Florence?"

"Don't ask me, my dear; the remembrance of them is still with me. Probably because I did climb so many in Europe is why I hesitate here, and perhaps the weight of years might be added as a second reason." [Pg 70]

Nan frowned and shook her head. "You mustn't say that. You are as young as any of us."

"In spirit, maybe," her aunt returned with a smile.

"We certainly shall not expect you to see all the shrines and temples we come upon," Mrs. Craig told them, "for there are too many, and the best way is to select the most famous only to visit."

"We learned to do that way in Europe," said Nan. "One gets mental indigestion by tearing off to see every little thing, and finally one is so mixed up that nothing is remembered correctly."

"And if one lived here a lifetime it would be impossible to see all the sights or to learn all the legends," Mrs. Craig went on. "The best way is to get some well-written book and study up between times. You need to know a little of the folk-lore and something of the religions in order to understand the sights you wish to see. It will be impossible to get more than merely a very superficial idea even then, particularly upon the question of the two old beliefs of Shintoism and Buddhism." [Pg 71]

"The Shinto belief is the worship of ancestors, isn't it?" asked Nan.

"It is founded upon that, as we understand it," Mrs. Craig explained. "Lafcadio Hearn probably can give you a better idea of what it means than I can, so I advise you to hunt up his books."

"We have some of them," Nan returned, "and I shall look up the subjects when we get home."

"Do all the Japanese adopt the Shinto creed?" asked Mary Lee.

"Oh, no, some are Buddhists, some are Christians, some have a mixed belief in which both Buddhism and Shintoism have a part. The ramifications are so numerous and so intricate that it would be impossible to explain them. I know only a very little myself, and I have been here three years. As to the language, it is hopeless. I shall never be at home with it, and there are only a very, very few foreigners who ever do master its intricacies. When you consider that every schoolboy is expected to learn six or seven thousand characters for daily use alone, and a scholar must know twice as many more, you may imagine the undertaking. Moreover there are several styles of writing these characters, so you may be glad you are not expected to master Japanese."

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"Oh, dear," sighed Mary Lee, "it makes me tired merely to think of it."

After the climbing of so many steps, and after the fatigue following the constantly recurring sights which passed before their vision, they decided to go home and rest that they might be ready for their afternoon's entertainment. Their last sight of the *tori-i* was one they never forgot, for it framed the exquisite cone of Fuji as in a picture, and they were interested all the more when Mrs. Craig told them that these ancient gateways usually did form the framework for some special object such as a mountain, a temple, a shrine.

After having had luncheon and a good rest they were all quite ready for the next experience which Mrs. Craig had promised them. Eleanor who had been off with her brother all morning joined them in the afternoon's entertainment and was quite as much excited as the others to be a caller upon a really truly Japanese.

"It is such a pity," said Mrs. Craig, when they were about to start, "that you couldn't have been here in time for the Doll Festival which occurs upon the third of March. I am hoping, however, that the dolls will still be on view at the house where we are going, though they are usually stored in the go-down at the end of the three days."

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"And what in the world is a go-down?" asked Eleanor.

"It is the family storehouse," her aunt told her. "Very little is kept out to litter up a Japanese house, where the utmost simplicity is considered desirable, so they have these storehouses in which all superfluities are kept. When you reach Mrs. Otamura's you will be surprised at the very absence of furnishings, but there, I must not tell you too much or you will not be sufficiently surprised."

"It is so lovely to be sensationed," said Nan with a satisfied air.

Mrs. Craig laughed and they proceeded on their way to the house which stood, its least attractive side toward the street, in a quarter of the city where the better class lived. The garden was at the back, and there were verandahs at the side. There were no chimneys, but the roof was tiled and the sides of the house were fitted with sliding screens covered with paper. These were now thrown open.

At the door they were met by a servant whom Mrs. Craig addressed with respect and with a few pleasant words, this being expected, for none save the master is supposed to ignore the servant. Each one of the party removed her shoes and slipped on a pair of straw slippers before stepping upon the soft, cool matted floor. The room into which they were ushered was indeed simply furnished; in an alcove whose floor was slightly raised, hung a single kakemono, or painted panel, and a vase stood there with a single branch of flowering plum in it; there were also a little shrine and an incense burner. On the floor, which was covered with thick mats, were placed square silk-covered cushions on which the guests were to be seated.

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But before this was done they were greeted by the mistress of the house with the most ceremonious of low bows. She could speak a little English and smiled upon them so sweetly that they all fell in love with her at once. She was dressed in a soft colored kimono and had her hair arranged most elaborately. Close upon her heels followed her little girl as gaily decked as a tulip, in bright colored kimono and wearing an obi or sash quite as brilliant. This *treasure flower*, as a Japanese will always call his child, was as self-possessed and gracious as it was possible for a little maid to be. Following her mother's example she knew the precise length of time during which she should remain bent in making her bow, and her smile was as innocent and lovely as could be any one's who was called by the fanciful name of O-Hana, or Blossom, as it would mean in our language.

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There was a low table or so in the room and, as soon as the *hibachi* was brought in, small stands were placed before each person, for of course tea must be served at once. The *hibachi* was really a beautiful little affair, a fire box of hammered copper, in which was laid a little glowing fire of *sumi* sticks, these being renewed, as occasion required, from an artistic brass basket by the side of Mrs. Otamura. "The honorable" tea was served upon a beautiful lacquered tray and from the daintiest of teacups, offered by a little maid who humbly presented the tray as she knelt before the guests.

The conversation, carried on partly in English and partly in Japanese, was interesting to the foreigners who were on the lookout for any oddities of speech, but who would not have smiled in that polite and gracious presence for anything. They drank their pale honey-colored tea with as much ceremony as possible although not one of them was accustomed to taking the beverage without milk or sugar.

"The dolls are really on view," Mrs. Craig told them after a few sentences in Japanese to her hostess, "and O-Hana will take you to see them."

"Oh, how lovely," cried the girls, their enthusiasm getting the better of them.

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At a word from her mother the little black-haired child came forward and held out her tiny hand to Miss Helen, who as eldest of the party deserved the most respect. Following their little guide they went through the rooms, each screened from the next by paper covered sliding shutters, until they came to one where upon

row after row of crimson-covered shelves appeared a most marvelous array of dolls, with all the various furniture, china, musical instruments, and even warlike weapons, that any company of dolls could possibly require.

"Aren't they perfectly wonderful?" said Mary Lee looking at a magnificent royal family in full court costume.

"Oh, no, they are very poor and mean," replied the child who quite understood her.

It was very hard not to laugh, but no one did, each turning her head and pretending to examine the doll nearest her.

"And which do you like best?" asked Miss Helen.

"This one," O-Hana told her, pointing to a very modern creature in a costume so much like their own that the girls could not restrain their mirth at the reply.

"She is very beautiful," said Nan hoping that her praise would do away with the effect of the laughter.

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"She is very ugly, very poor," replied O-Hana, "but," she added, "I like her the best."

"It would take hours to see them all," said Miss Helen, "and we must not stay too long." So after a cursory view of officers and court ladies, musicians and dancers, ancient heirlooms in quaint antique costumes elbowing smart Paris creatures, they finally took their leave of the dolls, wishing they might stay longer.

There was a little more ceremonious talk and then as polite a leave-taking, O-Hana doing her part as sedately as her mother.

"I should like to have kissed that darling child," said Nan as they all started off again, "but I didn't suppose it would be considered just the correct thing."

"Indeed it would not," Mrs. Craig told her, "for the Japanese regard it as a very vulgar proceeding. I fancy we foreigners shock their tender sensibilities oftener than we imagine, for they are so exceedingly ceremonious and attach the utmost importance to matters which we do not regard at all."

"I know I shall dream of that funny little doll-like creature, O-Hana," Nan went on, "with her little touches of rouge on her cheeks, her bright clothes and her hair all so shining and stuck full of ornaments. As for Mrs. Otamura, she is delicately lovely as I never imagined any one to be, such tiny hands, such a fine, delicate skin, such an exquisitely modulated voice, and so dignified and gracious; I felt a very clumsy, big, overgrown person beside her."

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"You were right about the house, Mrs. Craig," commented Mary Lee. "It certainly was simplicity itself. Think of our great masses of flowers in all sorts of vases and bowls, and compare all that to the one lovely spray of plum blossom so artistically arranged."

"Their flower decorations are a matter of great study," Mrs. Craig answered. "It is taught as a branch by itself and all girls study it. The few decorations a house possesses must be in harmony with the season. When the cherry blossoms come you will see an entirely different kakemono in the Otamuras' house, an entirely different vase for the flowers and other things will be in keeping."

"It is all very complicated," sighed Nan, "and I am afraid I shall carry away only a very small part of what I ought to find out about these curious people."

She was quite sure of this as Mrs. Craig began to tell of some strange customs, stranger feasts and still stranger folk-lore the while they were carried along through the narrow streets to their hotel. Here they found Neal Harding awaiting them with a friend of his, a young journalist whom he presented as "Mr. Montell, who hails from the state of South Carolina."

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The addition of a bright young American to the party was not at all regretted by the girls who went to their rooms commenting, comparing and, if it must be said, giggling.



CHAPTER V
AN EVENING SHOW

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AN EVENING SHOW

"Speaking of dolls," said Mr. Montell to Nan, when they all met at dinner, "we Westerners have no idea of their value nor of the sentiment with which they are regarded here in Japan. Did you know that there was once a doll so human that it ran out of a house which had caught on fire?"

"Oh, Mr. Montell!" Nan looked her incredulity.

"If you don't believe it I refer you to that wonderful writer upon Japan, Lafcadio Hearn. It is a belief in this country that after generations of care and devotion, certain dolls acquire a soul; as a little girl told Mr. Hearn, 'they do when you love them enough.'"

"I think that is perfectly charming," cried Nan. "Tell me something more about the dolls. We were deeply interested in those we saw this afternoon, but we hadn't time to examine them all to see if there were any among them who had gained a soul through love. Have you been to a Doll Festival, Mr. Montell?"

"Oh, yes, and to several other festivals, for I have been here since the first of January."

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"And which was the first festival you saw?"

"The feast of the New Year which lasts about two weeks. It is something like our Christmas holiday lengthened out, for during the whole month every one wears his, or her, best clothes, gifts are exchanged, and there is much visiting back and forth; besides, the Japanese homes overflow with dainties, at least with what they consider dainties. There is a cake made of rice flour, and called *mochi*, which isn't half bad."

"I rather like the rice cakes, and I have always liked rice, but when it comes to raw fish and such things I draw the line. Imagine seeing a perfectly good live fish brought to the table and then seeing your host calmly carve slices from its writhing sides! Ugh! I hate even to think of it. Were you ever present when such a thing was done?"

"Yes, I was on one occasion, and I cannot say that the vision increased my appetite. I had the good fortune to be given letters of introduction to one or two prominent Japanese families and have been able to see something of the home life of the people. It is really charming when you know it. I never knew a more beautiful hospitality, nor a sweeter spirit of gentleness shown."

"They do seem a happy race, for they are perpetually smiling."

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"And yet we would think the lot of most a most unhappy one."

"Except the children's and some of the old people's. I have been shocked to see what terrible burdens some of the poor old women carry. I had an impression that all old people in Japan were revered and were treated as something very precious."

"On general principles it is so, but among the lower classes the women are treated with little respect and have duties imposed upon them which make one fairly groan to think of."

"I have learned that women have not a price above rubies in this land, although they are much more fascinating than I imagined. Mrs. Otamura is the most delicate, doll-like little creature, really very pretty and with such an exquisitely gracious and graceful manner. That reminds me again of the dolls. Is it real food they offer them? I wasn't quite sure and I didn't like to ask."

"Oh, yes, it is real rice and *saké* and all that which you probably saw. It is a great pleasure to the little girls to set a meal before their dolls whenever one is served to themselves."

"Such beautiful little lacquered and china sets of dishes they were, too; I felt like playing with them myself. When is there another festival, Mr. Montell?"

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"I think the feast of the Cherry Blossoms will be the next important one, but there are little shows all the time, small temple festivals rather like a fair, such as one sees in Europe in the small towns."

"And can one buy things at them?"

Mr. Montell laughed. "The difficulty will be not to buy, for you will be pestered with persistent venders of all sorts of wares."

"We bought such a funny lot of little bodyless dolls to-day; we felt that we must have some, such dear little faces with downcast eyes and such a marvelous arrangement of hair. They were only five *rin* apiece. I am just learning the value of the coins, and only learned to-day that there was such a thing as a *mon*. I have it written on the tablets of my memory that ten *mon* make a *rin* and ten *rin* make a *sen*. Five *rin*, then, is about half a cent, so our dollies are very cheap."

"I recognize your little doll at once; she is O-Hina-San. You see her frequently, though, as you may have observed, no O-Hina-San looks exactly like another."

"Well, at all events she is a very cunning little person. I am surprised to find what cheap and pretty things one can buy for so very little. Don't you think that in the countries where there are coins of such small denominations one can always find cheaper things than at home? When I am in Europe I always think twice before spending five centimes and twenty-five seem a whole great big lot, yet they represent only five cents of our money, and who hesitates to spend a nickel? If we had mills as well as cents I believe it would soon reduce the price of things."

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Mr. Montell laughed. "That is a theory to present to our political economists who are trying to get at the cause of the high price of living. Will you write an article on the subject? I might place it for you."

Nan shook her head. "No, indeed. I will present you with the idea and you can work it up for your paper. I could do better with an article on the Doll Festival. Dear me, why didn't I come to Japan before I left college? I love that theory of their gaining souls, and, indeed, some are so lifelike that it is hard to believe they are not alive, and some of them that we saw were over a hundred years old."

"You know the dolls are never thrown away, but are given something like honorable obsequies. The very, very old ones must, in due course of time, become hopeless wrecks. They are not exactly buried, but are given to the god *Kojin*. A mixed person is *Kojin*, being neither a Shinto nor a Buddhist deity. A tree is planted near the shrine where he lives, and sometimes the poor old worn-out doll is laid at the foot of the tree, sometimes on the shrine; but if the tree happens to be hollow, inside goes dolly."

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"Isn't it all entertaining and surprising?" returned Nan. "I suppose you have seen and have learned many wonderful things."

"More than I hoped to. I am going further up into the country after a while, for in the isolated districts one can get at some very curious customs which have not become modified by modern invasion."

"Just as it is in Spain or any other country which is not tourist-ridden."

"I am wondering if there may not be a temple festival to-night; I will inquire. If there is we must all go, for it is something that every foreigner should see."

"An evening affair, is it?"

"Yes, and for that reason the more interesting, to my mind."

"Do you hear that?" Nan turned to the others. "Mr. Montell is going to pilot us all to an evening street show, a temple festival. Won't it be fine?"

"Is it this evening?" Miss Helen inquired. "If it is I am afraid you will have to count me out, for I have about used up my strength for to-day."

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"Even after having had a reinforcement of food?" inquired Nan.

"It won't prevent your going, dear child," said Miss Helen. "You know we agreed that we were not going to stand on the order of our going and coming, and that any one who felt inclined should always be at liberty to drop out of any expedition she felt disinclined to make."

"I think you young people would better undertake the show," put in Mrs. Craig. "Nell and Neal can chaperon you all, and we elders can stay at home and keep one another company. I have seen temple shows galore, so I shall lose nothing."

This was agreed upon, and they all arose from the table, separating into groups, the younger people going to the front to look out upon the passing crowd, while Miss Helen and Mrs. Craig seated themselves for a talk over the plans for the following day.

Mr. Montell went off to make his inquiries. Nan and Eleanor Harding paced up and down the corridors, leaving Mary Lee with Mr. Harding.

"We don't know a thing about Tokyo," said Mary Lee addressing her companion. "What is the name of this street, for instance?"

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"It is a part of the great Tokiado Road which is three hundred miles long."

"Gracious!" exclaimed Mary Lee. "Where does it end?"

"It goes from Tokyo to Kyoto and passes through many towns. It is really a wonderful trip from one city to the other."

"Have you taken it?"

"Yes, I went with a party of six."

"How did you travel?"

"By *jinrikisha*."

"Dear me, all that distance?"

"Yes, indeed. The runners can travel six or seven miles an hour, sometimes even as much as eight, and it is really a most agreeable way to go, for one has a chance of seeing the country as he would in no other way, unless he walked."

"I wish we could do it."

"There is no reason why you shouldn't. If you are good walkers you can relieve the monotony by getting out once in a while; we did whenever we felt inclined, and over the mountains it was a distinct advantage."

"I am afraid that wouldn't appeal to Aunt Helen particularly. She is not so ready as she used to be to endure discomfort, and we shall probably have enough of that if we keep on beaten tracks. There are wonders in abundance to be found without doing any terrific stunts, and I reckon we may as well keep to them."

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"How long had you planned to stay?"

"Oh, I don't know. We haven't planned at all. We will stay till we think it is time to go. I suppose we shall get homesick for mother and the twinnies in course of time."

"You'd better do as much of your sightseeing as possible before the rainy season begins."

"And when may we expect that it will?"

"It is liable to start in almost any time during the spring, but usually extends through late spring and early summer."

Just here Mr. Montell returned with the news that he was correct in his surmise and that there would be a night festival in another part of the city. "It is over by ten o'clock," he told them, "so we'd better be off if we want to enjoy it."

The girls rushed to their rooms to prepare themselves for the outing while the young men hunted up the *jinrikishas* which were to take them to the spot.

"We shall be tired enough after an hour in that jostling crowd," Mr. Montell replied when it was proposed by the girls that they should walk one way. [Pg 92]

"And besides," put in Mary Lee, "we have been going all day, and we must not get tired out in the very beginning, for we want to save up for all the rest there is to see."

So off they set in the *jinrikishas*, to arrive at last before the temple which was supposed to occasion the gathering of the crowd which jostled and clattered within a small radius. Just now it was at its greatest. At first the arriving party merely stood still to see the varying scene. A few turned to look at the foreigners, but such were by no means rare in this huge city and they did not arouse as great an interest as did the booths and the flower show.

"Isn't it the weirdest sight?" said Nan to Mr. Harding who had her in charge while Mary Lee and Eleanor were under the care of Mr. Montell.

"It is certainly different from anything we have at home," he returned. "Shall we see the flowers first? I think we may as well move with the crowd, as it will be easier than standing still where one is liable to be shoved and pushed about."

They slowly made their way toward the spot where there was a magnificent display of flowering plants, young trees, and shrubs lining both sides of the streets. The only lights were those of torches, which flickered in the wind, and of gay paper lanterns swung aloft. [Pg 93]

"Before you attempt to buy anything," Mr. Harding said, "let me warn you not to pay the price first asked. The system of jewing down is the order of things here and you will be cheated out of your eyes if you don't beat down your man."

"I am afraid I don't know enough of the language to do anything more than pay what they ask, unless you will consent to do the bargaining, that is, if your proficiency in the language will allow."

"I think I can manage that much," he replied cheerfully.

Nan paused before a beautiful dwarf wisteria. "What wouldn't I give to have that at home," she said, "but when one considers that it would have to be toted six thousand miles, it doesn't encourage one to add it to one's impedimenta. I am already aware that I shall have the hugest sort of collection to take home with me, and my sister is continually warning me not to buy everything I see. I think, however, I shall have to get just one little lot of cut flowers to take back to Aunt Helen. Oh, those are cherry blossoms, aren't they? The dear pinky lovely things! I shall have to get a branch of those". They paused before the beautiful collection of plants and flowers whose charms were being made known vociferously by the flower dealer. Foreigners are easy prey of course, so at once the price was put up beyond all reason. [Pg 94]

Mr. Harding shook his head. "Too much," he said in the vernacular, and immediately the price dropped perceptibly, but it required more haggling before it came within the limits of reason. But finally Nan bore off her treasure in triumph, holding it carefully above the heads of the crowd. This was rather an easy matter as she was much taller than the general run of those who constituted the throng, and more than once was regarded with amusement. She could not leave the flower show, however, without one more purchase, this time a beautiful little dwarf tree in full flower, for Mrs. Craig, "who," explained Nan, "has a place to keep it."

Mr. Harding assumed the responsibility of carrying this purchase, and, leaving the flowers, they pressed their way toward the booths where myriads of toys were for sale. "Things unlike anything in the heavens above or the earth beneath or the waters under the earth," exclaimed Nan pausing before a booth which attracted her and which was surrounded by children looking with eager longing at the toys. Most of them, to be sure, would be certain not to go home empty-handed, for the parents of these were seldom too poor to spend half a cent to please a child. But there was one little pale-faced creature with the inevitable baby on her back who did seem destitute of a *sen* or even a *rin*. [Pg 95]

"There is an example of womanhood's burdens," said Mr. Harding, watching the slight figure in its gay kimono. "The little girls are seldom without a baby on their backs, it seems to me; no wonder they look old and bent and wizened before their time, yet they are the most cheerful, laughing creatures in the world, and do not seem to mind being weighted down with a baby any more than American children would with a hat."

"But this seems a particularly small girl and a particularly big and lusty baby," returned Nan, eyeing the little motherly creature. "Do you suppose I might make her a present? I wonder what she would like best of

anything on this stall."

"Shall I ask her?"

"Oh, will you?"

Mr. Harding put the question, but beyond the answering smile, there was no reply from the shy little maid, though her interest in the foreigners was immediately awakened.

"There is a lovely O-Hina-San," whispered Nan. "Do you suppose she would like that?"

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"I am sure it wouldn't come amiss, and would be worth the guess."

"Then I will get it at the risk of a whole half cent." She laid down her five *rin* and took up the queer little figure, a flat stick covered with a gay kimono made of paper, and surmounted by a pretty little head. Nan held out the gift smilingly, but the little girl looked at her wonderingly, making no effort to take it. Nan opened the small fingers and clasped them around the doll. The child smiled and looked at Mr. Harding.

"For you," said he in the child's own language.

The smile brightened and down went the child, unmindful of the baby, her head touching earth while her tongue was unloosened to say "Arigato gozaimasu," which meant "honorable thanks."

"Now I must get something for the baby," declared Nan; "that is, if I can get any idea of what these things are for. There is a most fascinating red and blue monkey clasping a stick; that strikes me as appropriate. Will you ask how much it is?"

Mr. Harding put the question. "One-eighth of a cent," he told her, "and this is 'Saru,' the 'Honorable Monkey'; why honorable, I cannot say."

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The toy dealer picked up one of these toys, pressed a spring and lo! the monkey ran up the stick. "I must have him. All that for one-eighth of a cent! Surely this is a Paradise for children." She placed the monkey in the baby's little fat hand. He regarded it gravely, but his little sister again prostrated herself to offer her "honorable thanks," and rising, looked at Nan with as adoring an expression as her small wan face could assume.

"And all for less than a cent," said Nan. "I should like to spend the rest of the evening buying toys for these poor little mother-sisters. I could buy thousands for a dollar."

But by now the little girl had moved away, probably to go home with the wonderful tale of the foreign lady, who had given her an experience which was quite as delightful as the presents themselves; and Nan with her escort followed along with the crowd, stopping to examine the toys and have their meaning explained whenever possible.

"Many of these toys have a religious meaning," Mr. Harding told her. "All these queer little images represent some god. Fukusuke looks like a jolly sort of a boy, and Uzume who is the god of laughter, I take it, is a most merry personage. That one with a fish under his arm is Ebisu, the god of markets and of fishermen."

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Seeing their interest, the dealer picked up a figure representing a hare sitting on a sort of handle of what Nan took to be a bowl of some sort. "Usagi-no-kometsuki," said the man.

"Aha! this is Hare-in-the-Moon," exclaimed Mr. Harding. "He is cleaning his rice."

"Oh, is that what the pestle is for? I have seen them cleaning rice; they do it by stepping on the handle."

"The next time you see the moon, look up and try to discover Usagi-no-kometsuki. Will you allow me to present him to you?" He bought the little toy and handed it over to Nan who laughingly accepted it, and they went on past the booths showing more toys, or sometimes quaint little ornaments, strange compounds of confections or fans, goldfish and such things, all entertaining enough to one unaccustomed to such a display.

Presently the crowd began to thin out, the torches flickered uncertainly, paper lanterns bobbed off in different directions as individuals took their way home; the clatter of the wooden clogs grew less noticeable. Nan suddenly came to a realizing sense that the show was over "Oh, is it time to go?" she asked. "I wonder where the others are. We have not once seen them. I forgot everything in my interest in the show."

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Her companion smiled. "It is easy to see that you are a person who has not worn out her enthusiasms," he said. "We will hunt up a *jinrikisha*, if you say so, for the flower dealers are packing up their wares, and it is after ten o'clock."

Stowed away in a *jinrikisha*, they were borne away from the fast dimming scene, and after what seemed a labyrinthine journey through strange streets they stopped at the door of the hotel.



CHAPTER VI
AT KAMAKURA

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Nan found her sister waiting for her; the others had gone to their rooms. "Well," exclaimed Mary Lee, "you did take your time. What became of you? We never once caught a glimpse of you after we reached the grounds."

"We went to see the flowers the first thing, and that occupied some time. Where were you?"

"Oh, we started off in exactly the opposite direction, so no wonder we missed one another. What did you think of it, Nan?"

"It was most interesting."

"I thought the crowds were quite as fascinating as the show. Did you ever see so many little children and so many poor little youngsters with babies on their backs? They seemed perfectly content and happy, both babies and their carriers, but it was funny to see the babies' heads bob around with no one to mind in the least. The little girls never appear to be aware that the babies are there; they go skipping or bobbing or playing while the babies are like great big bundles and nothing more."

Nan told her experience with one little girl and baby, Mary Lee listening attentively. "Well, you did make more of your opportunities than we did," she admitted regretfully. [Pg 104]

"I think it was partly because I had so good a companion," returned Nan. "I thought at first that I should like Mr. Montell better than Mr. Harding, but I have changed my mind."

"Mr. Montell is much better looking."

"Yes, and an interesting talker, but once you know Mr. Harding you find that there is really more to him. You know what a dear child Nell always was, so sympathetic and genuine; I fancy her brother is much the same."

Mary Lee laughed. "Take care, Nan. You are such an enthusiastic old dear that you will be investing the young man with all sorts of beautiful characteristics he doesn't possess, once you get your vivid imagination into real good working order."

Nan smiled. "Oh, I am perfectly sound and whole so far, though one never can tell where lightning will strike. You may fall a victim yourself."

Mary Lee looked grave and then she said in a low tone, "You know it would be impossible, Nan. You must leave me out of all such conjectures. There was never any one but Phil and there never will be."

Nan gave her sister a compassionate hug, and realized that Mary Lee's devotion to the young cousin who had died was not a mere matter of months, but that it was a thing of years if not of a lifetime. She changed the subject. "Did you see Aunt Helen when you all came in? Did she say what we were to do to-morrow?" [Pg 105]

"Both she and Mrs. Craig were up," Mary Lee told her, "and they have arranged for a trip to Kamakura, they told me."

"Where that huge statue of Buddha is, the one that is called the Dai Butsu? I am glad we are going there. How many are going? All of us?"

"Yes, and Mr. Montell; he has promised to take his camera, so we can have some pictures to send home."

Nan was thoughtful for a moment. "I don't believe Mr. Harding can go, for he said something about being on duty to-morrow morning. We shall have to leave him behind."

"And you will be sorry?"

"I certainly shall. One man doesn't go around when there are three girls."

Mary Lee laughed, and the two settled themselves for the night.

The party that started for Kamakura the next morning did not consist however of five women and one man, for Colonel Craig joined them and proved to be a most acceptable addition, a fine soldierly, courteous man who was a mine of information. The journey, to what was once a city of a million souls, was made by train, but was continued by *jinrikisha* to the great image which was the special object to be visited. [Pg 106]

"Isn't it a queer little train?" said Eleanor as she seated herself.

"It reminds me of those in Italy," returned Nan; "they always seemed such harmless well-meaning little things that wouldn't hurt you for the world. Do see that picturesque little village, Eleanor. Isn't it just like the pictures with the straw-thatched houses? Those are rice-fields, of course, there where the people are wading. Such a horrid sloppy way of getting a crop. I should think they would hate it, but I suppose the 'honorable rice' is too precious a product for them to consider the manner of its growing or harvesting; the main thing is to get it any old way."

"Aren't those wonderful groves of trees?" returned Eleanor, observing on her part. "There are mountains, Nan, beautiful purple mountains, but it is rather sombre scenery, don't you think?"

Here Mr. Montell came over to speak to them. "You mustn't expect to see a glorious city," he told them, "for it has suffered from terrible fires and from a great tidal wave which destroyed most of the many temples. There are still some left, nevertheless, and these we shall see." [Pg 107]

In spite of this warning it was a surprise to the girls to behold a queer little village wandering between hills and showing a canal worming its way through it. The houses were very old, straw-thatched and gray, with strange grasses, and even flowers, growing on their ancient roofs.

Nan caught her breath. "How desolate!" she gasped. "Could one ever imagine this was once a busy, restless city with magnificent buildings, temples and wonders of all kinds?"

"Some of the wonders still remain, as you will see," said Colonel Craig as he helped her into a *jinrikisha*. "When you have seen the Dai Butsu you will acknowledge that even a Japanese fishing village retains some of its ancient glory."

They bobbed along behind the huge spreading hats of the runners and presently entered a long avenue of trees to go through a temple gateway and a long courtyard.

Suddenly the runners stopped, and the visitors, looking up, saw the huge statue before them. One after another alighted from the *jinrikishas* and gathered around Mr. Montell and Colonel Craig. [Pg 108]

"Isn't he enormous?" cried Mary Lee looking up at the colossal figure seated in a lotus flower.

"He is nearly fifty feet high," said the colonel.

"And he isn't in a temple, but just in plain out-of-doors," remarked Eleanor.

"There was a temple once," her uncle told her. "You can see some of the bases of its sixty-three pillars if you look for them. The great tidal wave destroyed it, and the surrounding buildings, away back in the fifteenth century. So far as we know the statue was cast about 1252. It is made of bronze. The eyes are four feet long and the distance across the lap from one knee to the other is thirty-five feet, so now you can get some idea of his bigness."

They all stood in silence looking up at the renowned figure with a real reverence. Nan slipped her hand into her Aunt Helen's. "I love his gentle smile," she whispered. "How placid he looks after all the great convulsions of nature, the ravages of time and all the desolating things that have happened around him."

Her aunt responded with a little pressure of the hand. "He is a lesson, dear, to all of us. Did the colonel read you the inscription at the gateway? I have written it down." She read from her note-book: "O stranger, whosoever thou art, and whatsoever be thy creed, when thou enterest this sanctuary remember that thou treadest upon ground hallowed by the worship of ages. This is the temple of Buddha and the gate of the Eternal, and should therefore be entered with reverence." [Pg 109]

"Could any one feel anything else but reverence?" returned Nan. "And not only reverence but a real awe and certainly a great admiration."

"Shall we go inside?" asked Mr. Montell who had been busy with his camera and who now came up. "You know there is a small opening in the side of the big lotus-blossom on which Buddha is sitting. There is a shrine to Kwannon inside and if you care to climb up a ladder you can go as far as the shoulders and have a peep at the grounds."

Nan shook her head. "No, let those who are not impressed as I am descend to such things; I don't want to remember that I climbed to his shoulders; I only want to remember his kind smile and his half-shut eyes. It is the most wonderful thing I have seen in Japan except Fujiyama."

"Harding ought to be here," laughed Mr. Montell. "He feels just as you do about the Dai Butsu." [Pg 110]

Allowing the others to penetrate to the interior of the statue, Nan seated herself at some distance and gave herself up to a contemplation of Buddha. She was rather glad to be alone for she was an impressionable young person and a dreamer of dreams. For some time she sat lost in her thoughts, and carried back, back how many centuries. All sorts of strange fancies possessed her, and at last she could scarce have told where she was.

Presently some one descending from a *jinrikisha* caught sight of her sitting there, chin in hand, her eyes fixed on the statue. He made his way rapidly to her side, stood for a moment watching the rapt expression of her face, then very softly he spoke, "Miss Nan."

She looked up with a start. "Why, Mr. Harding," she said, "I thought you couldn't come."

"I found that I could get off after all," he replied coming over and seating himself by her side. "Where are the others and what are you doing here all alone?"

"The others are feeling and touching and prying, as if it were not enough to look and become absorbed into the soul of Buddha."

"Oh, you have the fever," cried her companion. "I knew you would get it and that is why I so wanted to be here to-day. I knew how impressed you would be with the wonder of it. Doesn't it express all the peace and the calm you ever dreamed of as existing in Nirvana? Shall you ever forget it?" [Pg 111]

"Never, never. I cannot tell you what heights I have climbed while I have been sitting here, nor what dreams I have dreamed, nor where my soul has wandered."

"I saw all that in your face as I came up and I hated to disturb your dreams, yet I wanted to share them. Whenever I have felt homesick and discouraged I have come here and never have I failed to find comfort."

Nan turned to smile and to nod understandingly. Then for a moment the two sat looking at one another. Nan saw a pair of hazel eyes; a rather lean face, smooth shaven; a mouth not small but well-shaped; a rather large

nose; a forehead, broad and low, above which was a crop of brown hair of uncertain shade. Not good looking in the least was this brother of her old college mate, but it was a face which could show tenderness, courage and unselfishness and she decided that she liked it very much.

On his part the young man saw a girl with eager, long-lashed gray eyes, a sweet mouth, a clear, colorless complexion and masses of dark hair; not so pretty as her sister Mary Lee, but with a more expressive face and to his mind a more attractive one. [Pg 112]

Nan's gaze was the first to falter. She arose rather hastily. "I believe they are looking for me. Shall we go up there and join them? I believe they are buying photographs."

They walked slowly up the paved path, the sunshine and the waving trees about them. Once or twice they stopped while Mr. Harding pointed out some remnant of bygone splendor, a pile of stones, a distant *tori-i*, but at last they reached the others.

"We are going to have lunch before we go to the temple of Kwannon," Mrs. Craig told them after greeting her nephew whose coming was a surprise to every one. "There is a little inn back there. We can take our *jinrikishas* back to it."

"Oh, dear, must we eat?" sighed Nan. "I don't feel as if I could lose a moment in this wonderful place. Is it far to the temple of Kwannon and couldn't one walk?"

"Oh, yes, one could walk easily enough, but it seems to me that one could do it better after partaking of a meal," replied Mrs. Craig. So Nan, all unwillingly, followed the rest and in a short time they found themselves on the verandah of the Kaihin-in, the small hotel to which they had come for their meal. They could see a small strip of blue sea between pine woods and sand-dunes, but the famed island of Enoshima was not in sight, though the colonel told them it could be seen from a point a little further on. "We must go there some day," he said, "for it is well worth a visit, and is often included in this trip to Kamakura, but I realize that you are not the kind of rushing Americans who wish to see everything sketchily rather than a few thoroughly, so I think we would better save Enoshima for another day." [Pg 113]

"I certainly second that motion," spoke up Nan. "I couldn't come here too often; it perfectly fascinates me."

A queer little meal was served them,—rice, eggs, dried fish, strange sweetmeats, the tender young shoots of the bamboo, and various other things untouched by the guests because undistinguishable. Then forth again they fared to the hill behind the great Dai Butsu where they should find the temple of the great goddess of mercy and pity, she to whom all Japanese mothers pray, for she is the children's protector, they believe.

Before ascending the steps before the temple, the group stood to look off at the blue sea and the plain of Kamakura below them. "To understand Kamakura you must know something of its history," said the colonel, "but we mustn't take time for that to-day, though I advise you to read up when you get back. Japan is so full of history, folk-lore and religious traditions that one can understand only a little of her great sights until he has made a study of certain great personages and certain events." [Pg 114]

An old priest in white robes appeared at the entrance, as they came up, and invited them to enter the dim interior, but the great goddess was not to be seen at once. It required a golden means to bring visitors this privilege, though the party lingered to look upon the things at once before them, strange votive offerings, images, lanterns, inscriptions. Leading the way through a low doorway, the priest ushered them into a dark and lofty place where at first nothing was visible but the glimmering light of his lantern.

"Are you able to distinguish anything?" whispered Mr. Harding to Nan.

"Not yet," she answered. "How mysterious it is. Will you tell me what we are expected to see?"

"Wouldn't you rather the mystery would unfold itself?"

"Yes, I believe I would. Now I see something that looks like a great golden foot. Another foot. I see some ropes hanging. What are they for?" [Pg 115]

The answer came when the priest hung a couple of lanterns to the ropes and as these were slowly drawn up, the outlines of a figure were disclosed. Further and further swung the lanterns while expectation increased.

"I can see the hand," said one.

"Another hand holding a flower," said another.

"The face! the face! there it is," cried Nan, as a smiling visage at last shone out of the dimness.

"There is more yet," Mr. Harding told her. The "more" proved to be the crown of maiden's faces in pyramidal shape which surmounted the statue. The strangely shining figure in the midst of darkness was very eerie and effective, and they all came away much impressed.

"There are many legends concerning the Kwannon," the colonel told them. "She is supposed to have given up her right to heavenly peace that all mankind should be saved by her prayers. She never refuses a petition except when it is twice made in her name of Hito Koto Kwannon, as it is not the proper thing to address her twice by this title. Under her orders the god Jizo Sama looks after the ghosts of little children. She loves animals and some of the peasants take their cattle to certain shrines to receive her benediction. She represents all that is womanly and loving, and is really one of the very choicest of all the deities." [Pg 116]

"I am getting bewildered with all these deities and sub-deities," declared Eleanor. "They don't seem very beautiful, only very large and uncouth."

"That is because you have no imagination, my dear," said her brother. "When you have read all the wonderful

legends of this land, you may be more interested."

"Oh, dear, I never did care for mythology," returned she. "I would much rather see shops than shrines, and real people than images."

"Philistine of Philistines, isn't she, Miss Nan?"

"Well, I am sure I couldn't spend hours over dead religions and old worn-out traditions as you do," retorted Eleanor. "You should see Neal when he gets hold of a book of Japanese folk-lore; he is fairly daffy."

Neal and Nan looked at one another and smiled. Each knew that Eleanor was a dear girl but was by no means a creature of sentiment. As if by common consent these two fell behind the others.

"Let us find the sea," said Mr. Harding, and following a rugged path which led to the shore, passing down old stone steps, or under ancient gateways, between rocky walls, they finally came to the sea which lay blue and smiling before them. Wonderful color, mysterious light bathed earth, water, and sky, touching the soft green of a small island near by, shimmering upon the silver and sapphire of the water and turning the sands to mellow gold. [Pg 117]

"How wonderfully beautiful," said Nan after she had silently gazed upon the fairy-like scene. "Is it the island Enoshima?"

"Yes, it is Enoshima, the tortoise, the Sacred Isle," her companion told her.

"How does one get to it? It almost seems as if we might be spirited there, or as if we could suddenly develop wings which would carry us."

"There is a perfectly simple way of going at low tide, for there is a little causeway over which one can pass safely. The tide is up now, but we will come when it isn't."

"And that means there is another beautiful thing to do. It looks to me as if we could make Tokyo our headquarters for months to come and yet not exhaust all the fascinating things within an hour's distance of it."

"That is quite true, but when the hot weather comes you will be glad to go up into the mountains somewhere." [Pg 118]

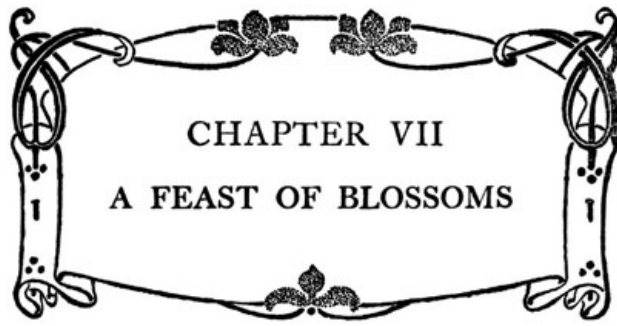
"I think that is what Aunt Helen is planning to do. I think we must turn back now for the others are going."

They left the shining sands, where many little children were picking up the beautiful shells which lay in great numbers about them, and followed the rest of the party to the spot where the *jinrikishas* were waiting, but they walked so slowly that they were the last to arrive.

"It is much too beautiful to leave," explained Nan. "Couldn't we come and stay a little while at either Kamakura or Enoshima, Aunt Helen? There must be somewhere we could be comfortable."

"We shall see," her aunt replied. "We might stay a night or two, perhaps, but we will determine later."

So, leaving the children on the sands, and the goddess in her temple, they were borne swiftly through the desolate and forsaken streets of the once great city that they might take their train back to town.



CHAPTER VII
A FEAST OF BLOSSOMS

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"The cherry blossoms are here, so says the paper this morning," announced Mr. Harding as the girls came down to breakfast one day in April.

"The paper says so? What do you mean?" said Eleanor.

"It is so important an event, my dear, that the papers always spread the news abroad," her brother told her. "There will be great doings and we must not miss them."

"Well, I am sure I am pleased to see something more than temples and shrines and such old stuff," returned his sister. "What special form of enticement can you offer us?"

"I was going to suggest a picnic. To be sure Uyeno Park will be crowded with thousands of people who will take a lunch and go there to enjoy the blossoms, but as we shall want to see the crowd as well as the cherry trees we can be satisfied to become parvenu for once."

Eleanor laughed. "As if we never did anything but ride in coaches of state and sit on a raised dais when we are at home. What do you say, girls?" She turned to Mary Lee and Nan. [Pg 122]

"It will be great," cried Nan enthusiastically, and Mary Lee agreed, if less heartily.

"We might take a boat and go out on the river," Mr. Harding suggested. "Ever so many persons do that; in fact, I don't know that the river will be any less crowded than the shore; still we can keep a little more to ourselves in a boat. You know the river Sumida's east bank shows ranks of cherry trees which will exhibit finely from the river. We can go ashore any time we like to see the people and can pick out some good place to take a lunch. Would you rather we took a hamper along or shall we depend upon a tea-house or inn or something like that?" He turned to Nan.

The girls consulted together for a while and then gave it as their decision that it would be best to take a hamper. "You see," said Nan, "when there are such crowds it will be difficult to be properly served and one may be starved before getting anything to eat."

"Most wisely concluded," approved Mr. Harding. "Well, we will talk it over with the others and if they all want to do something else there will be at least some of us to vote for the picnic."

But the others were quite satisfied with the arrangement although Mrs. Craig at first proposed that they should return to the hotel for lunch. This plan was so distinctly opposed that she laughingly gave in. "Oh, dear, dear," she cried, "I wouldn't come back for the world. I am sorry I spoke. I never met such a unanimity of opinion." [Pg 123]

"We want to forget that there are such things as hotels, if we are to appreciate the spirit of the Feast of Cherry Blossoms," declared her nephew. "It is an outdoor festival entirely and doesn't mean conventionality of any kind."

"Oh, very well, very well, I give in," replied his aunt, "but if Miss Corner and I get tired of crowds and sharp sunlight and noise, you must allow us the privilege of coming back when we feel like it."

"We shall not put the least restraint upon you," spoke up Eleanor. "Neal and I are perfectly capable of chaperoning these two girls and Mr. Montell, who, of course, will come, too; he has been talking about the cherry blossoms ever since we came."

"I will go and call him up," said her brother, "and then, Nell, suppose you and I have a secret session to talk over what is to be packed in the hamper."

"You'd better let me have a word to say about that," spoke up Mrs. Craig. "Eleanor doesn't know anything about what Tokyo can provide, and I have had experience, plenty of it." [Pg 124]

She was allowed to take part in the conference while the Corners went off to write letters knowing there would be no further opportunity for such things that day. However, the start was not made till nearly noon, Mr. Montell appearing at the last moment, breathless and fearing lest they had gone without him.

"Couldn't help it," he replied in answer to Mr. Harding's reproach. "Had to get off some stuff in time for the mail steamer and sat up nearly all night in order to get it done; it was a long story, and simply had to be done. Awfully sorry."

"You haven't kept us waiting so very long, Mr. Montell," Eleanor told him. "Neal, himself, wasn't on time."

"But I was detained at the office," explained Neal.

"Well, that is no better excuse than mine," retorted Mr. Montell.

"Here, here, stop your quarreling, you children," cried Mrs. Craig. "You are wasting time. Is everything ready, Neal? Then come along." So off they started to where the *jinrikishas* were in waiting and it was not long before they were afloat on the river Sumida, upon the top of a flower-adorned pleasure boat from which they could see many other as odd looking crafts, some of them bearing companies of singing girls. [Pg 125]

"Isn't it a gay sight?" cried Nan. "It reminds me a little of a fête on the Grand Canal at Venice, only there one sees no such flowers as these and there is no such bright color among the costumes."

"It is stretching one's imagination rather far," said Mary Lee, "for I don't see any resemblance except that

there are boats and singing."

"You are so very literal," declared her sister. "I didn't mean that it was exactly like, only that the spirit is the same and one gets something the same feelings."

For a mile along the bank of the river the flowering trees extended presenting an array of double blossoms under which the limbs were bending. Unlike our own cherry blossoms these were of pale pink, and against the blue sky looked like huge bouquets.

"I think the trees at Uyeno Park are really more beautiful," said Mrs. Craig critically. "I think we shall have to see those to-morrow. The blossoms do not last long and that is one reason of their attraction. The Japanese admire very much the dropping petals and refer to it often in their poetry. You see it, too, in their decorations. The double blossoms which you see here do not mean fruit after a while, for even the cherries of the single blossoms are not of much account, far inferior to ours."

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"Isn't it so with most of the fruit here?" asked Mary Lee.

"With most, yes, although there is a small orange that is pretty good, and one can get quite nice figs. They raise small fruits, too, which are not half bad, but our American markets supply much better things than one can get here."

Nevertheless when the lunch hamper was opened, there was such a display of food as might be seen on a similar occasion at home.

"Hard-boiled eggs," cried Nan, peering into the basket. "Now I do feel as if I were really on a picnic. Chicken salad, is that? Good. I feel more and more at home. What else is there? Candied ginger, sardines and crackers, cheese, imported of course. I think this is doing pretty well for a foreign land. I observe you have some of those nice little rice cakes as a native production and—a bottle of wine, as I live."

"It is considered a flagrant omission if one doesn't taste wine at this special festival," explained Mr. Montell. "The natives indulge in their *saké* or rice-wine almost too freely, but I observe that Harding has been careful to observe moderation and has furnished only a very light variety which will hurt no one."

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"Well," said Miss Helen, "I don't see that we have anything to complain of and are to be congratulated upon having so wise and efficient a caterer as Mr. Harding."

"Oh, don't lay it to my door," protested the young man. "Nell suggested the eggs and Aunt Nora a lot of the other things."

It was a merry little party which enjoyed their luncheon in sight of the flowering trees and within sound of many merrymakers strumming on *samisens*, singing in queer strident voices perfectly unintelligible songs and, once in a while, getting a little too uproarious over their gourds of *saké*.

"They have flower festivals right along through the year, don't they?" said Eleanor. "What will be the next to come?"

"The wistaria," Mr. Montell told her. "A good place to see those flowers is at the temple of Kameido, here at Tokyo, I am told. It is believed that the vines of wistaria flourish better if wine is poured upon their roots and so many a drop is allowed to trickle from the wine-cups used there."

"After the wistaria, what?" inquired Mary Lee.

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"The iris. Where's a good place to find those, Neal?" Mr. Montell turned to his friend.

"Just right here close to this river, at a place called Horikiri. It is a great sight to see the crowds on the river then. The flower blooms in June in what is the rainy season, but there are opportunities of getting out between drops. After the iris come the midsummer flowers, the peony and the lotus. The lotus has a religious significance and is specially dedicated to the water goddess Bentei whose temple we are going to see at Enoshima. Of course we know the chrysanthemum comes in the fall; it is made much of because it is about the last flower of the year. Many think it the national flower, but the cherry blossom is really that, although the chrysanthemum is honored at court and a magnificent show is given every year in the palace gardens. The royal bird of Japan is the crane as you may have guessed for you so often see it in decorations."

"Isn't it interesting?" whispered Nan to her aunt, "and don't you wish we had sentiment enough to do such things at home? Is the chrysanthemum the very last flower festival of the year?" She turned to ask Mr. Harding.

"Oh, no; at least I should say that with slight modification. The Maple Festival is the last, but that is not exactly a flower festival; it is given at the time when the maple leaves show their most brilliant colors. Other trees turn at the same time and it is the time for picnics and for gathering mushrooms which is made a jollification. You make up a party to gather mushrooms in the country and you enjoy the autumn foliage at the same time."

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"What fun! I am going to organize just such a sport when I go home," declared Nan.

Luncheon over, they all decided to join the crowd on the banks of the river. Nan found herself by Mr. Harding's side as they joined the throng of revelers. "I want to tell you about a princess of the old days," he said. "She was not a reasonable young person and declared that she was going to give a cherry-blossom party although the month was December. As a princess must have anything she desired, the court was in despair till some one hit upon a happy plan. The result was that an army of workers was set about making paper blossoms, pink and white, which were fastened on the bare trees and gave so realistic a look to them that the garden party was a great success."

"Where could that happen but in Japan?" said Nan, pleased with the tale. "They make paper flowers so wonderfully that I can imagine the effect was all that could be desired. I have but one thing against these really fascinating people, and that is their music. Did you ever hear anything so dreadful as that singing, for instance?"

"Yet I have heard some little songs which were quite lovely. There is a lullaby which I recall, and which I am sure you will agree is as tender and plaintive as anything we could produce. If I had my violin here I could show you how it goes."

"Oh, do you play the violin?" Nan asked eagerly.

"Yes, a little, and you play the piano very well."

"Nell told you that, of course. I don't play anywhere near as well as I want to, but I do enjoy it. Is your violin here, and can't you play for us some time?"

"I have it at my rooms, but please don't think I am anything of a musician although my violin is a great solace to me. When my aunt gets back to her own house we must have some music. She has a piano there, you know."

Nan gave a sigh of pleasure. "I didn't realize how I missed my music till you began to talk about it," she said. "Even Japan has some disadvantages."

"But doesn't one enjoy a thing all the more after he has been deprived of it a while? We can make but one prayer to Kwannon, you remember, and I suppose that means that we should not ask too much of heaven." [Pg 131]

Nan's eyes looked starry and bright as they always did when she was deeply interested. "I liked Kwannon," she said, "but I believe I liked the great bronze Buddha better."

"I thought you did, and so I brought you a little souvenir to-day to commemorate that visit to Kamakura." He drew from his pocket a very small but exquisitely carved figure of the Buddha. It was of jade, and was really a most beautiful piece of work.

"For me?" exclaimed Nan, as he gave it into her hand.

"If you will honor me by taking it. I thought you would like it as a souvenir."

"I should love it, but I don't know if I ought——" She hesitated.

"To take it from your friend's brother? Why not? It is not such a mighty gift."

"No," returned Nan doubtfully, "only it is so very beautifully done, and is really a treasure. I am afraid I shall have to take it."

Mr. Harding laughed.

Nan grew confused. "Oh, please don't think I mean that I don't appreciate it, for I do, very much. It is because I want so dreadfully much to keep it that I was afraid I shouldn't." [Pg 132]

"Then please don't have any more compunctions."

"I won't, and I thank you so much. I consider it one of my very greatest and most valuable gifts."

"You will see so many more rare and beautiful things while you are here that you will soon learn how insignificant this little souvenir is. Isn't this a gay and happy crowd? Like a flock of bright butterflies, isn't it? They all wear their very best on such a day."

"The children particularly. What gorgeous kimonos and *obis* some of them have, and how they do love flowers."

They wandered on, sometimes coming up to the rest of their party, sometimes falling behind, and at last all returned to the boat for another slow journey on the river, and at last to return to the hotel well pleased with this first of their picnics in Japan.

The next day gave promise of rainy weather, and so they hurried to the Uyeno Park to see the trees there, which were already shedding their blossoms. These trees, it must be said, were more impressive in size and showed, against a background of evergreen trees, to better advantage than had those on the cherry avenue along the banks of the river. They contrasted well, too, with the surroundings. [Pg 133]

"And here," said Mr. Montell, "is where we hang verses on the trees, I hope you all have yours ready."

There was a scramble for paper and pencils, and each one set about the task of writing rhymes in order to follow out the pretty custom. Presently Nan jumped up and waved her paper. "My ode is completed," she cried.

"You might know Nan would be the first," remarked Eleanor. "Rhyming always came as easy to her as rolling off a log. Let's see, Nan."

But Nan shook her head. "No, it might spoil the charm. I am going to dispose of it at once." This she did, picking out a particularly lovely tree whose low-hanging branches allowed her to reach up higher than could most of the young Japanese maidens who had already followed the custom.

"This is literally hanging one's verses in the wind as Emerson said," Nan remarked as she came back. "Who is next?"

There was no immediate answer but presently Mr. Harding left his place and Nan, watching, saw that he had hung his paper by the side of hers. "I don't see how he knew exactly which tree and which branch," she said to herself, and was convinced that he must have watched her very closely.

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In due time the little poems were all tied in place and then Mrs. Craig declared that it was time to go. It was always a temptation to stop at some of the many curio shops on the way, but this time they were carried to their destination without any delay for it was beginning to rain, and although they were well sheltered by the curtains of the *jinrikishas*, they did not fancy being caught out in a downpour.

That night Nan took out her little jade figure and showed it to Mary Lee, telling of having been given it by Mr. Harding.

"It seems to me you have a case," declared Mary Lee. "Nobody has taken the trouble to pick me out a souvenir as fine as that."

"Perhaps some one will," returned Nan nonchalantly. "Don't you think this is a particularly good piece of carving? I was always crazy about jade and I am pleased beyond words to have this. I felt awkward about taking it at first because it is really valuable."

"Or would be at home. No doubt one can pick up such things here for very little, that is if one knows where to go."

That eased Nan's conscience and she put away the small charm without further qualms.

They had been in bed some time when from Mary Lee came the question, "Do you ever hear from Rob Powell, Nan?" [Pg 135]

"I haven't heard for some time," returned Nan.

"Does he know you are here?"

"I don't think so, unless Rita has told him."

"Who wrote last, you or Rob?"

"He did, I believe."

"Nan Corner, I believe you have turned him down, yet you used to like Rob."

"I liked him very much but I was never in love with him, if that is what you mean."

"You used to talk about him a lot."

"Probably because I wasn't in love with him."

Mary Lee turned this speech over in her mind and decided that when Nan began to talk about Neal Harding a great deal she might take it for granted that there was no sentiment on Nan's side in that quarter. That Neal was strongly attracted to Nan she required not much perspicuity to see, and Mary Lee determined that she would keep her eyes open and, what was more, she would make a study of the young man, for it would be hard for any one to be found quite good enough for this eldest of the four Corners, the others thought. "If it gets very serious I will talk to Aunt Helen about it," decided Mary Lee, and with this thought in her mind, she glided into the land of dreams.



CHAPTER VIII
FLYING FISH

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FLYING FISH

The rain lasted several days, the weather promising to be damp, humid and unpleasant from this time out. "Japan is most enervating," sighed Miss Helen. "Of course I knew its reputation as to climate, but I didn't quite realize how devitalizing it really would prove to be. If you girls have energy enough to go forth in the rain to view temples and curios and mission schools, you must not count on me as a constant companion." So the young people "flocked together," as Eleanor put it, and spent a part, at least, of each day in seeing shrines and such temples as could be reached without too much effort. Mrs. Craig was occupied in arranging for quarters at some cooler spot in the mountains and Miss Helen was half inclined to yield to her persuasions to become a neighbor if a suitable house could be found.

"I think it would be great fun to have a Japanese house of our own, for a little while anyhow," said Mary Lee, but Nan was not so sure that she wanted to leave Tokyo yet.

"There is much more to see," she urged as her reason.

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"We could come back to it," argued her aunt.

"But it will get hotter and hotter," said Nan, "and more mosquitoish and we shall not want to come back until the summer is over," she added.

"Well, we needn't begin to argue about it yet," put in Mary Lee, "for we couldn't go anyhow until Mrs. Craig finds a place for us, and that will not be so easy to do."

So they lingered on in the rain, amusing themselves in many ways. Mr. Harding was very busy just at this time and was not able to give them much of his society, but Mr. Montell appeared frequently and Colonel Craig escorted them to many interesting places, to the museum in Uyeno Park, to the Zoölogical Garden, to Asakusa, or up and down the Ginza, the principal shopping street of the city.

"For my part," said Nan one day, as she and Mary Lee were being drawn rapidly through the rain to make a second visit to the temples of Asakusa, "I think it is really amusing to see the streets on a rainy day. It is ridiculously funny to watch the people with paper umbrellas and those queer clogs. Look at our runner, too; isn't he a sight, with his queer hat and that straw thatch of a cloak to keep off the rain? He looks so like the pictures we see that when I get to dreaming I can fancy the whole thing is unreal and that I am not here at all, but am looking at a moving picture show."

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"Yes, but the *jinrikisha* men don't say 'Hi! Hi!' every few minutes as this one does," returned Mary Lee who was tenacious in the matter of absolute facts.

Nan laughed. The two were so very different, yet as they grew older were closer companions than they had been in their early days. Common experiences at college and in their travels had given them a better relation.

As they peeped out from behind the oilcloth curtain which protected them from the rain, they could see other *jinrikishas* drawn by similar straw-draped coolies, the water dripping down their legs, and their ceaseless note of warning calling attention to their advance through the narrow streets. They could see, too, women and children trotting along on their high clogs and wearing their rain-proof garments over which they held their umbrellas of oiled paper, so that, in spite of rain, the scene was not lacking color. Once in a while, a Buddhist priest or nun would be seen, and through the open fronts of the tea-houses along the way could be discerned squatting figures before tiny tables, eating with chop-sticks.

"Wouldn't it be fun to have a real Japanese party when we get back?" said Mary Lee. "We can get some chop-sticks and lacquered trays and things such as they have here."

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"So we could," Nan fell in with alacrity. "We could have a *hibachi*, too, and we might, on a pinch, arrange a room just as one would look in a Japanese house here."

"And serve tea and rice cakes."

"Yes, and learn exactly the way to present a tray and to make a ceremonial bow. We could wear kimonos, of course, and could try to do our hair in Japanese style. We must get very handsome *obis*, for they are what determines a Japanese girl's dress."

"Do you notice how little jewelry they wear? Scarce any except handsome hair ornaments."

"That is so. We must not forget to buy some more hair ornaments; they will make lovely Christmas gifts. It will entertain us on some of the rainy days to go forth and provide the proper things for a real Japanese tea. We can have Joe come over to help us, and it will be great larks."

"We can give one another Japanese names; they have such funny ones. Imagine being called Bamboo Corner, or Tiger Corner, or some such queer name."

"But some of the names are very poetical, and not unlike those we use, flower names, like Lotus and Plum; those are not very different from our Rose and Violet."

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"But nobody would think of calling a daughter Years of Bliss, not in the old United States."

"An Indian might, and as I think of it the Japanese do give names which mean in their language much the same that Indian names mean."

"I hadn't thought of that, but I believe you are right," returned Mary Lee.

They had now arrived before the gateway to the Park Asakusa, seeing before them oddly-shaped stone lanterns. On each side stood guardian figures known as the Two Kings. Once inside the gate were paved walks bordered by ancient cedar trees, hardly in keeping with the booths and shows which occupied the grounds. In spite of rain these were in operation, for here was a perpetual market-place where one could be amused on any day. The *jinrikishas* stopped to allow the party to alight and they all then stood before the great five-storied pagoda with its red roof.

"Shoes off, slippers on," said Eleanor slipping off her foot gear.

"And don't forget to wash your face and hands, nor your mouth and hands at the stone trough," Nan reminded her. They all went through this ceremony and went further in encountering the dealers in incense to be burned before the gods, and the sellers of rice for the sacred pigeons. [Pg 144]

"We must get something for the horse," said Mary Lee, and after supplying herself with some cooked peas on a small plate she offered the food to a snow-white, pale-eyed animal who is dedicated to the goddess Kwannon. This office performed, they went inside to feed the pigeons and to hear an interesting talk from Colonel Craig who had made a study of this old temple.

The place was dimly lighted and full of the smoke of incense which, rising continually, made all objects indistinct,—glimmering Buddhas, strange pictures, streamers, banners, statues. The sound of chanting, and of startlingly queer musical instruments mingled with the clapping of the hands of worshipers kneeling before the various altars, while not in the least restrained, little children ran softly over the pavement laughing as they threw their handfuls of rice to the fluttering pigeons.

After they had made their rounds and had heard about early and late Japanese architecture, about other Pine Tree temples than that of Asakusa, and about the various shrines including that of the little Bindzuru, made of red lacquer and seated in a chair, they felt the pangs of hunger and were glad when the colonel proposed an adjournment to one of the various tea-houses in the grounds. [Pg 145]

"We can refresh the inner man and then we can go to the circus or the museum or anywhere else you like," he said.

So off they went under the dripping cedars to find a modest little tea-house where they were received thankfully and were served a simple meal by a little smiling *musmeé* who drew up the tiny low tables before them where they sat hunched up on the floor cushions. The colonel and Nan found it hard to dispose their feet gracefully, much to the entertainment of the small maid who knelt before them to present her lacquered tray.

"Watch how she does it," whispered Nan to her sister, "for we must learn the trick before we leave this little country."

Mary Lee nodded understandingly and kept her eyes on the girl who smiled in response to such close observation.

The meal over, off they went to the museum and, but for the rain, would have stopped to see a fortune-teller who tried to lure them into her booth.

"We couldn't understand what she said, so what's the use?" remarked Mary Lee.

In some such manner were many rainy days spent, but at last there came a morning in May when the sun shone, and when from houses far and near floated strange figures of fish, "The Honorable Carp," for this was the Boy's Festival, and, as good luck would have it, the sun shone. [Pg 146]

"Come and see! Come and see!" cried Mary Lee as she looked from the window that morning. "Isn't it a sight?"

"What is?" Nan hurried over. "Oh, we forgot entirely that this would be the fifth of May and that we might expect to see his honor, the carp, flying all over the city."

"I remember now, and Mr. Montell told us all about it. The carp is the symbol of courage and bravery which are the two things Japanese boys are taught to acquire."

"Those qualities, and loyalty to the emperor for whom any one of them would cheerfully die and say thank you."

"Why carp, I wonder. Why not shark or whale or dolphin, for example?"

"Because the carp is supposed to smile sweetly when you carve a slice from his living self, and to say, 'Hack away, good people; it doesn't hurt me and seems to please you.'"

"So that is why they serve them alive at dinners. I suppose it is to keep the much admired qualities continually in evidence. It doesn't seem quite fair to poor Brer Carp, whatever effect it may have on the little boys." [Pg 147]

"I wonder why five fish are flying from that house over there," said Nan looking in the direction where the figures which, made like a bag and filled with the blowing wind, swelled their sides and flopped their tails quite realistically.

"There must be five boys in that house and the biggest fish stands for the youngest and littlest boy."

"Stands, did I hear you say?"

"Well then, wriggles or swims, whatever you like."

"I wonder what those little gilt baskets represent. They are baskets, aren't they? Over there on the long bamboo pole in front of that house that has the three fishes flying."

"Oh, those are supposed to hold the rice balls with which they feed the real fish. Some of the houses have other ornaments, you see; flags and signs and things. It looks very gay, doesn't it? But there isn't much of a crowd on the street, no more than usual."

"I like that legend of the *koi*, as they call the carp. He is said to be very persevering about swimming upstream against the rapids and when he actually can fight his way up a waterfall he is caught up by a white cloud and becomes a dragon." [Pg 148]

"That is why so many dragons, then."

"And by the same token, it is the why of fishes and waterfalls, and little gold balls in so many of the decorations. Isn't it queer that no matter at what time of year a boy is born his birthday is celebrated on May fifth?"

"Quite a matter of economy where there are several boys. Do you remember how Jack always used to feel aggrieved, when she was little, because she and Jean had to celebrate their birthday on the same day? She felt that you and I had the best of it because there were two days of feasting and party-giving instead of one for the two of us."

"Dear old Jack," said Nan with a sigh. "I tell you, Mary Lee, it will be mighty good to see those twinnies again and mother. As for mother it seems a year since we left her."

"We mustn't get homesick on a festival day. Let us go down and hear what is going on that we can join in. No doubt Mrs. Craig will have something on hand for to-day."

But there was nothing more exciting proposed than a ride through the streets and an invitation from the colonel to dine at some pleasant spot out of town where they could see a mass of iris in bloom.

Meantime, Mr. Harding, who had a little leisure from his duties at the legation, entertained them with stories of the festival. "I have a Japanese friend who has told me some interesting things about his boyhood," he began. "It used to be the custom to decorate the fronts of the houses with iris leaves on May fifth, at least such houses as might be the home of a boy, and in order that the lads should have a definite idea of what real fighting meant and in order to inure them to hardship they were obliged to rise at three or four o'clock on a winter morning, then, barefoot and with but one garment upon his little body, the youngster had to go to the fencing field where he had to do his best at sword play. He was not more than eight years old when he was expected to do this in order that he might learn not to fall into luxurious habits." [Pg 149]

"Poor little fellow," said Nan compassionately. "Imagine an American boy doing such a thing. Wouldn't he think it hard lines?"

"He surely would, for even though he may be a farmer's son, he isn't expected to go out barefoot and so slightly clad on a winter morning."

"Tell us some more boy doings," said Eleanor.

"You will see them with their little swords at mock battle even to-day, and if you could go into one of their homes you would observe that the decorations were in keeping with the spirit of the festival. Iris will be the flower partly because of its sword-like leaves and partly because the iris is supposed to have qualities for giving strength. Our Japanese boy will have the leaves thrown into his hot bath, and if there be more than one boy the eldest will have the first turn." [Pg 150]

"It is the funniest thing how they seem to pop into a hot bath upon all occasions," remarked Eleanor. "I believe some of them stay there most of the time in winter in order to keep warm."

"There is really some truth in that. You see there are a great many hot springs in Japan and their means of heating houses are not like ours, so as nature provides liquid heat why not take advantage of it?"

"Didn't I hear some one say that the carp is the emblem of good luck as well as of strength and courage?" asked Nan.

"Yes, and that gives him a double cause for being used as ornament. Last year I went to a native house on the fifth of May when I saw a lot of carp swimming about in a tub. They had been sent as a present in honor of the arrival of a young son. I learned it is the custom to do this. There was an older son in the family and he took me into the best room which is called the guest room, and there I saw the most exquisite arrangement of flowers I ever came across, but the flowers were of small account to the boy by the side of his toy weapons and soldierly figures all in array. Soldiers on horseback, men in armor, bows and arrows, swords, spears, strange emblematical banners and such things, and each figure represents some hero, some tale of loyalty or courage which the little boys are taught to know by heart. The figures are really portraits and as such are more appealing than ordinary ones would be. It was all very interesting and if I had a better knowledge of the language, I could have understood the stories better, but as it was, I heard enough to be impressed." [Pg 151]

"Dear me, I wish we knew some Japanese boys," said Eleanor.

"The family I spoke of is not here now," her brother told her, "or we could go to their house to-day."

"At all events," said Nan, "it is very nice to hear of your experience and we had the delight of seeing the dolls on exhibition in March."

"They have special cakes for to-day and red rice is served," Mr. Harding went on, "and in their *saké* they" [Pg 152]

scatter iris petals. The boys hope for some warlike toy when their 'honorable father Mr.' gives them anything. So you may see the little fellows playing soldier with a new sword, a little gun, a bow and arrows or something of that kind."

Later in the day as they went through the streets in front of the little brown, low houses they did see the boys playing soldier quite as one might see them at home, and as the young people walked along, below the flapping fish with their gaping mouths, staring eyes and glittering fins, they saw little confusion.

Colonel Craig met them with a tiny gold carp for each girl as a souvenir of the day and on their bill of fare the *koi* was in evidence, although not alive as he should properly have been in Japanese estimation. The spot the colonel had chosen was close to the river Sumida and near to fields of iris, not yet in their full glory which would be attained in June, still, at this season, one could stand upon the banks and look down upon the flowers already sending up their gay banners.

"Such a flowery, fairy-like land is this," said Nan to Mr. Harding who, as usual, had sought her out. "I hate to think of how it is changing, and how they are adopting our ugly costumes in place of their own picturesque one. Your aunt says at all public functions and even at private social gatherings the European dress is always worn."

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"Yes, that is very true, though I fancy that it is exchanged for the native one as soon as home is reached. The Japanese are very proud of their progress in European habits and customs and cannot bear to have you deplore it. They think that it would mean a retrogression if they retained the old Japan. They would rather be praised for their industries than their temples, for their political acumen than their flower culture and for their wealth than their picturesqueness. The American market calls for so much that is in bad taste that we cannot expect their own not to be vitiated. Vulgar wealth calls for ostentation and why should they retain simplicity? We are a great nation whose success is enviable and why not imitate us in all matters?"

"It is discouraging," sighed Nan, "but I suppose it is the law of compensation. As we acquire some love of the artistic so it is lost by those who supply us with what appeals to a growing taste for the beautiful, and so civilization levels."

"At the rate that foreign art treasures are pouring into the United States we shall soon expect to find more at home than abroad."

"They won't take up the Forum and Pompeii, nor the Egyptian pyramids," said Nan with satisfaction, "so I shall still expect to have enough to last my lifetime."

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"There is nothing like finding a cause for congratulation under all circumstances," replied Mr. Harding with a laugh. "I knew you were an optimist."

"Except sometimes when I get a fit of real indigo blues and can see no rose-color anywhere."

"Oh, yes, that happens to most of us. I get struck bally west by the blues myself once in a while and then——"

"What do you do?"

"I get out my violin."

"That reminds me that you have not yet played for me. The next rainy day we must have some music, now that your aunt has taken up a residence in her own house."

"Agreed. We will make it a compact to hie us to a rainy day festival as soon as occasion requires, and we shall not have to wait long for it, if I know anything about Japanese springs."

Here the rest joined them and it was voted that a boat might provide a good means of seeing more of the iris fields. This was decided upon, theirs not being the only one upon the river, for they discovered it to be quite the fashion to go boating at iris time quite as it was when the cherry blossoms invited a crowd to gaze upon the flowering trees.

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CHAPTER IX
A RAINY DAY

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"Rain, rain, rain," said Mary Lee looking disconsolately out of the window a few mornings after the day of the Boy's Festival. "It certainly is discouraging. We have seen all the sights within easy distance of Tokyo and even of Yokohama. We have spent all our allowance on frivolous trinkets at the curio shops and markets, and I, for one, wish we could go somewhere else. I am tired of rainy days in Tokyo."

"Oh, I don't mind in the least," returned Nan cheerfully. "I am rather glad of a real true rainy day, for then you can be absolutely decided about your plans; when it is a question of whether it is going to rain or not it keeps one in a very fretful state of mind."

"But what is there to do but write letters? I have no desire to add to the number of my correspondents and I have already written to every one."

"Begin over again. You can't write too often to mother and the girls, nor to Jo."

"You are so annoyingly cheerful about giving advice that I believe you have some plan for yourself up your sleeve." [Pg 160]

Nan laughed. "Well, to tell you the truth, I have." She turned with heightened color from the window.

"Well, out with it. What is your alluring project?"

"I hope, at least I expect, to go to Mrs. Craig's for some music."

"Oh, dear," sighed Mary Lee. "I might have known I would be counted out on this depressing day of all times. It only adds to the grievance to have Mrs. Craig no longer here at the hotel and to have Eleanor gone, too."

"Why not come along and flock with Nell? Mrs. Craig begs that we shall feel perfectly at home and says she counts on us to keep Nell in good spirits."

"But there is Aunt Helen. Shall it be said that we have both deserted her on a hopeless day like this?"

Nan looked sober. "I did promise," she said wistfully.

Mary Lee regarded her with a little smile. "I won't be hard on you, old girl," she said. "I know what I can do; I can call up Nell and get her to come over in a 'jinriki,' for at least part of the day, and unless you intend to make a day of it yourself we can arrange some other thing for the afternoon." [Pg 161]

"Nice child," returned Nan commendingly. "That is just the ticket. Of course I shall have to find out first at what hour Mr. Harding can get away, but I think it will be the morning after eleven."

"Oh, Mr. Harding," returned Mary Lee in pretended surprise. "Did you expect to meet him at his aunt's?"

"Why, why," Nan began blunderingly, "I—we—did plan to have some music." Then seeing the mischievous look on Mary Lee's face, she cried, "I have half a mind to box your ears; you knew perfectly well what I meant."

Mary Lee laughed. "It is fun to get a rise out of you, Nan, once in a while; I don't often get a chance nowadays. All right, you find out about when you are going and I will make my arrangements accordingly."

She did not have to wait long, for while they were talking, came a message that Miss Corner was wanted at the 'phone and after a short absence from the room Nan returned to say that she was to be on hand by eleven o'clock, and that she would take a "jinriki" over, and she would find out what Aunt Helen wanted to do. So it was decided that Mary Lee should remain on hand. "To keep the lid on Aunt Helen," as she expressed it. [Pg 162] "Then you go on and let Nell come back in your 'riksha if she will."

Nan started off in the pelting rain snugly tucked in and not minding it in the least. There were always sights to see and she was perfectly secure from wet, although her coolie was dashing through puddles and the rain was pouring from his straw cloak and down his legs in a manner which showed the extent of the downpour. He did not seem to mind it in the least, however, and in fact appeared to enjoy it. Mrs. Craig had taken possession of a comfortable house in the European quarter of the town and before this the runner stopped short, drawing up closely enough to the door to allow Nan to alight without getting wet, a paper umbrella held over her head shielding her to the very entrance.

A Japanese servant bowed low to the floor and ushered her inside, but before he could announce her, Eleanor came running in. "I knew you would be here," she said. "Neal has already announced your coming. He has been tuning his fiddle and giving us preliminary flourishes for the last ten minutes. I was left out when they were giving musical talents, you know, and Neal got it all. You may well remember my futile efforts at singing college songs in those halcyon days of yore."

"I do remember well, and so I infer that a concerted performance will not be so greatly enjoyed by your fair self that you will not be willing to forego it. Mary Lee is in a state of doldrums and wants you to come over." [Pg 163]

"To share the doldrums?"

"To scare them away. She is wearied of the rain, and proposed that you should return in the rikky I have just left. As near as I could make the man understand he is to wait."

Eleanor went to the window. "He is still there, so he evidently understood. I don't want to desert you, but I know perfectly well when two musical cranks get together there is no hope for an outsider and so I shall

leave you and Neal to your own devices, expecting still to find you when I get back. Aunt Nora has gone out but she left word that you must not fail to stay to lunch. She has gone now to get some octopus tentacles or some other Japanese horror as a delicacy for you."

Nan would not promise to stay, but as the sounds of a violin came from an inner room, she followed Eleanor to where her friend declared her brother was waiting impatiently.

The young man came forward, his violin tucked under his arm and the bow in his hand. "So glad you could come," he said. "I have brought some music, but I shall expect a solo first to pay me for waiting ten minutes."

"I have heard Nan Corner play too many times for it to be a rarity to me," declared Eleanor, "so I shall go and get ready for my ride. Perhaps you'd better explain to the man, Neal. He is waiting outside, and may refuse to take back a different person from the one he brought." She hurried off while her brother went out to make the matter clear to the coolie. [Pg 164]

When he returned Nan was sitting at the piano softly and caressingly trying a little nocturne. It seemed good to touch the keys again and for a few moments she was lost to all but the music she had in mind, but after a while she stopped and began to sound only a few chords. A soft clapping made her turn to see Mr. Harding standing behind her.

"I heard you play that once before," he said.

"You heard me? Where?"

"At Bettersley in your freshman year."

"But how did it come about? I am sure I never saw you."

"No, for you had hardly made my sister's acquaintance then. I had run up to see her and she took me to one of your club-houses. You were at the piano playing."

"And you never told me in all this time."

"No, for you see I did not meet you on that occasion and at first I did not associate you with the dark-haired girl who was playing Chopin at Bettersley four years ago." [Pg 165]

Nan arose. "Now since I have finished the solo you demanded, let us look over your music."

"Oh, but you didn't play that expressly for me."

"For whom then?"

"For yourself, didn't you? I exact the fulfilment of my claim. Please play something else."

Nan hesitated, but she was not one of those who required persistent urging so she sat down again and played a dainty little shadow dance. "That seems to express Japan better than anything else I know," she said when she had finished.

"I think you have responded to its call," said her companion. "Thank you, Miss Nan. Now then what shall we do?"

They looked over the music together, finally settling down to a sonata and giving themselves up entirely to its requirements. An hour passed, then another hour and still they played on while the rain beat outside and those within the house came and went all unheeded. At last a voice interrupted a discussion they were having over a certain passage.

"Well," said Mrs. Craig, "aren't you two pretty nearly ready to drop? But no, I needn't ask. I have lived with musicians before and I know how indefatigable they can be. I have just had a 'phone message from Eleanor who says she will stay to lunch with Mary Lee unless you are coming back, which of course you will not think of doing. Tiffin is ready." [Pg 166]

"Dear me, is it so late?" said Nan springing up. "We have had such a good time. I had no idea how long we had been at it. Thank you, Mrs. Craig; if Eleanor is going to stay with Mary Lee I will accept your very kind invitation. You do not know how good it seems to get hold of a piano again."

"I had to have mine brought out, for we can't tell how long we may be here, and I like to drum a little myself."

"Aunt Nora plays well," Mr. Harding declared.

"But not near so well as you do, Nan. You are a real artist. I have been listening to you with the greatest interest; it was such a delightful entertainment for a rainy day."

"It certainly was for me," returned Nan simply, as she followed her hostess to the dining-room where the colonel presently joined them, and where they made merry over their meal.

It was a temptation to remain and to continue the music, but Mr. Harding said regretfully that he must return to his office while Nan declared that she was imposing on Mary Lee by staying away all day, so she called up Eleanor to know if Mary Lee wanted to return with her. The reply was that Mary Lee did not intend to go out, and that Nan had better return as soon as she could, as Eleanor was about leaving. It was Mary Lee herself who did the talking. There was something a little agitated and mysterious in the way she spoke and she urged Nan's return so decidedly as to cause some apprehension on Nan's part. [Pg 167]

However, she said nothing of this to Mrs. Craig but started off as soon as she could, feeling a little worried at what might have happened in her absence. She hoped Miss Helen was not ill, or that there had been no bad

news from home. She hurried to her room as soon as possible after arriving at the hotel. Mary Lee met her at the door. She looked excited but not worried. "What is the matter?" asked Nan anxiously.

"Matter? What should be the matter?"

"I thought maybe something might have happened while I was away. There is no bad news, is there?"

"Why should you think that?"

"I don't know, only that you made such a point of my coming soon. Aunt Helen is not ill, is she?"

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"No indeed, but as soon as you take off your things you'd better go in and see her."

Nan wondered a little at this and hastened to take the hint. She knocked at her aunt's door, received the customary answer, "Come in," and entered the room to see a familiar figure sitting there. She could scarcely believe her eyes, but in another second she had rushed across the floor crying, "Oh, mother, mother, you dear, dear mother!" and in another instant was clasped in her mother's arms.

"How did you get here? When did you come? How did you leave the twinnies?" the questions came thick and fast.

But before they were answered, a little suppressed giggle sounded from some mysterious corner and Nan sprang to her feet. "That sounded exactly like Jack," she exclaimed. "I do believe she is here," and then from behind a screen, out rushed Jack to be hugged and kissed and exclaimed over.

Hardly was this excitement over and the questioning begun again, before the screen was pushed aside and out walked Jean, as demure as you please, and then there was more exclaiming and wondering and querying.

"You don't happen to have any one else back there, do you?" inquired Nan, going over to examine the space behind the screen. "I feel as if this were something like a sleight-of-hand performance when they let doves out of little boxes and rabbits from pockets. Do sit down and tell me all about it."

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"Well, it is just this way," said her mother. "There were some cases of scarlet fever in the dormitory where the girls were, and as Jean was not well I was afraid she might fall a victim in case of an epidemic, and so I took the two girls away, for I wanted to run no risk. It was so near the end of the term that I think they can make up the lost time next year, and as I thought it over it seemed to me they might profit as much by a trip to Japan as by keeping on with their college work, so we talked it over and I concluded to start right off to join you. I must confess that a very large longing to see my other two had something to do with the decision. Japan seemed such a very long way off and it seemed to me it would work greatly to my content to know that we were all together. We reached Yokohama early this morning and did not waste much time in getting here."

"And have you been here long?"

"No, we came just before luncheon. We wanted to give you a surprise, so we prevailed upon Eleanor to stay and thus put you off the track."

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"But I did suspect something," Nan told her, "for Mary Lee could not keep the excitement out of her voice. Oh, me, but it is good to see you. You came through California, of course. Did you stop to see the Robertses?"

"They came up to San Francisco to see us off," her mother told her.

"Carter, too?"

"Yes, Carter, too. They gave us a great send-off."

"Did you stop at Honolulu?"

"Only so long as the steamer was there. We saw a little of it, but we were too anxious to get on to tarry there over a sailing."

Nan sat on the floor hugging her knees and looking from one to another with a beaming smile. "Isn't it larks?" she said rocking back and forth, then making a grab for Jack she rolled her over and began hugging her anew. "You dear old sinner, it is good to behold you again," she declared, and Jack, nothing loth, snuggled up to her and chattered away. Thus the rainy day passed in a more exciting manner than many a sunshiny one had done.

It was not till they were preparing for bed that Mary Lee thought to ask Nan about her morning's pleasure. "Did you have a good time, and did Mr. Harding come?" she asked.

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"Oh, yes, and it was all so delightful that I didn't know how the time was going," Nan replied.

"Does he play well?"

"Very sympathetically."

"As well as your one time friend, Mr. Wells?"

"He has not such execution but I think he plays with more feeling," Nan answered after a pause. "He is more modest about his playing, too."

"So, take it all in all, it appeals to you more strongly."

Nan smiled reminiscently. How long ago that early summer madness appeared in the light of later experiences. "What a callow creature I was," she said.

"And I suppose in five years you will be saying the same about this present little affair."

Nan did not reply to this but instead asked, "Did Jack say anything about Carter?"

"Not one word. I am afraid she is a heartless youngster."

"Poor old Cart," returned Nan. "However, Mary Lee, Jack may be all right at heart; she generally is, though she is so thoughtless. I shall talk to her and see if she has any confidences to give. She is mighty young yet and we can scarcely expect her to be anything but a flyaway. She looks well."

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"And so does Jean. I think mother was wise to bring them away from possible danger."

"Dear old mother, she always does just the right thing."

"Of course," returned Mary Lee as if that were a question no one could doubt. "I suppose now that Jack has arrived we may look for lively times, Nan," a prophecy which was not without fulfilment as was later seen.

"Well, you were wishing for excitement this morning," returned Nan, "but we certainly did not expect it to be furnished by Jack. Isn't it just the climax of our pleasure here, Mary Lee, to have mother and the girls? We shall have to stay in Tokyo for a while anyway to let them see the sights."

"And I suppose," said Mary Lee slyly, "you are not sorry for the excuse."

Nan pretended not to understand this thrust, and went on discussing plans while Mary Lee had her own thoughts about Nan's satisfaction in the prolonged stay in Tokyo.



CHAPTER X
A SACRED ISLE

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Jack's entrance into the group reminded one of the sudden appearance of a very lively trout into a quiet pool of goldfish. She had seen half the town by evening of the next day, had already begun a Japanese vocabulary which she did not hesitate to use with frequency, had quite captured the colonel at whom she fired questions with such accuracy and precision that she had a dozen legends of Fujiyama at her tongue's end, and was beginning a study of the religions. She decided offhand that Mr. Montell should be relegated to Eleanor and that she was not to poach on her preserves, and so as she, herself, could not be without a cavalier she made up her mind she would appropriate Mr. Harding. To do her justice, it never occurred to her that this would in any way disturb either of her sisters. Nan was a dear old thing, but, in the eyes of eighteen, really something of an old maid, and therefore hardly to be classed with those who might still have attractions for young men. Five years' difference in ages makes a tremendous gap at this time of life, and so from the first Jack turned to Mr. Harding as her rightful escort and companion.

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As for Mr. Harding, he was helpless. In the first place Jack was newly arrived, she was Nan's sister, and, therefore, consideration was due her. Added to this, as Jack advanced, Nan retreated, and it was a very rare occasion that allowed the young man the elder sister's society. Nan herself was too proud to assert herself, and moreover she had always given way to Jack and it was in the usual course of things that she should do so now. She was really very humble about it. Who would not prefer gay, merry Jack? She, who was so amusing, so perfectly at her ease, so young and joyous? And so it fell out that Nan would stay at home with her Aunt Helen and insist that the others go forth to see the sights which had been already taken in by the earlier arrivals.

Then Mrs. Craig made a start for the mountains, taking her household with her, so there were no more opportunities for music. The climate was beginning to tell on Miss Helen and she was so languid and indisposed to effort, that Nan urged her to keep quiet until the rest should be ready to go to the mountains.

So a week passed and then it was decided that all the Corners should go to Myanoshita for a while, and that ended the association with the young men for the time being at least. With the approach of July heat would come the swarms of mosquitoes which started life in rice fields, and with this affliction, added to the humid condition of the atmosphere, the frequent rains and the great dampness, Tokyo promised to be anything but an agreeable summer resort. So Miss Helen and Nan pored over guide-books and decided to make certain journeys by easy stages.

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"But," objected Jack who was having a very good time, "we haven't been to Enoshima yet, and I do so want to see those lovely shells."

"Who wants to pick up shells in the pouring rain?" said Jean.

"It doesn't rain every minute," retorted Jack. "There have been some quite pleasant days since we left home."

"But scarcely one since we reached here. I had no idea that Japan was such a moist, unpleasant place."

"You ought to have known it would be in summer, but I don't see but that we do very well even when it rains. There are the *jinrikishas* to take you everywhere."

"Oh, but it is depressing without any sunshine," protested Jean, "and it is so damp all my things are beginning to mould."

"I suppose," remarked Jack who was ready to make capital of any information which came her way, "that is why they wear pongee and crape in these countries; I never thought of it before, but now I see why. Don't you think we might take a day for Enoshima, Aunt Helen, just one day before we go? Even if it rained it wouldn't make so much difference."

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"What do you say, Nan?" asked her Aunt Helen.

Nan, who was busy examining a map, traced a line on its surface. "I don't see why we need take a day off to go there specially, when our way leads right past it. Why not stop there over night, or at Kamakura? We always meant to do that, you know, then we could go on the next day. I think it might be the best plan, for it ought to be less tiresome for you and mother."

"Very well, we will decide to do that, for, as you say, Nan, it will be carrying out a former plan and will not be out of our way."

"I shall pray for a pleasant day," said Jack. "I am so glad to find out where it is. If I had known that Myanoshita was in that direction I should have felt easier."

"Just where is Myanoshita?" asked Jean coming to Nan's side and looking down upon the map.

"Right there." Nan put her finger on the spot. "It is about fifty miles from Yokohama. It is in the Fuji highlands."

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"Oh, good!" cried Jean. "I should think it would be perfectly lovely. How do we get there?"

"We go by rail to Kodzu where you can take a tram car to Yumoto, and then you go up the mountain road by *jinriki* to Myanoshita."

"It is a watering place, isn't it?"

"Yes, one of the numerous springs, hot springs, which are everywhere all through Japan. They say the

temperature is very agreeable, not so hot as some others and without any odor of sulphur."

"I suppose," put in Jack, still on the quest for information, "that they use the hot baths quite as we do stoves; whenever they feel cold they pop into the hot water, and that is why they are so fond of hot baths."

"It is probably something that way," returned Nan shutting up her book. "Well, I suppose packing is the next thing in order." She gave a little sigh. How fleeting really good times were. She wouldn't for the world have had a disloyal thought of Jack, but she could not help but remember what happy days those first ones had been, and now they had passed like all bright things.

Jack's prayers must have been of avail, for the day of their departure from Tokyo was a pleasant one, although no one could tell what might befall them the next. [Pg 180]

They were not allowed to go off without a "bon-voyage" from their friends, for Mr. Harding and Mr. Montell were both on hand. On this occasion the former managed in some way to get a word with Nan. She had so persistently avoided him since his attentions to Jack that he had never once seen her alone.

"I had looked forward to the pleasure of a trip to Enoshima with you," he began.

"Yes?" said Nan with a polite rising inflection.

"Didn't we plan that out on that unforgettable day at Kamakura?"

"Perhaps we did; I really don't remember, but you know the old and oft quoted words about the best laid plans."

"I wish it were possible for me to get off to-day, but I am afraid it is not, but I am counting upon seeing you all later in the season. I don't forget that Aunt Nora is to look up a house for you all."

"But not in Tokyo," returned Nan.

"There are possible ways of reaching other places, you know," returned the young man with an effort at playfulness.

"Oh, yes," replied Nan indifferently. "Excuse me, but I must speak to my aunt," and she left him to wonder what had come over her since those first days of good comradeship. Perhaps she intended to let him know that she had left her heart at home and that he need not persist in his attentions. The more he thought of it the surer he was that this was the case, and from that moment he was quite as distant as herself. At parting, he merely bowed and wished her a pleasant trip. There was no word of regret at her leaving, no further reference to a future meeting, and so Nan went on to Enoshima with no such anticipation as had filled her on that perfect day at Kamakura. [Pg 181]

The way to Kamakura was now enlivened by fields of iris and by the paddy fields of rice, the plants now grown higher. It was all new and enticing to Jack and Jean who were eager for the stop at Kamakura where they had all decided to spend the night. Nan had no desire to visit the temples again and Miss Helen decided to keep her company at the little hotel under the pine trees. The tide was out and these two concluded to spend their time in watching the nets hauled in. It was something to see, the brown fishermen, the little boats, the dragging nets and finally the little group of children and old people who came up with their bowls and baskets to receive what might be doled out to them from the lot of unmarketable fish left after the catch had been separated into heaps. On this occasion, there was fish enough to go around and the poor people went off happy in the expectation of a hearty supper. Gentleness and quietness prevailed, and the children were happy and joyous, not only the gleaners of fish but the gatherers of shells as well. Of these there was no lack, for the shells could be sold to the makers of beautiful things at Enoshima. [Pg 182]

Nan and Miss Helen picked up such as they liked for themselves, delicate, frail, changeful things they were, full of color and light, even the tiniest.

Nan and her aunt loved the quiet hour and wandered around contentedly till the others returned. Then there was much talk and chatter till the moon came out on the sea, and there was only the sound of the wind in the pines and the moaning of the breakers on the sands, for the spirit of silence touched even talkative Jack.

Instead of one night, two were spent at Kamakura, so fascinating was the ancient town to all. Moreover the morning of that first day brought rain, so the trip to Enoshima was put off till it held up, which it did about noon. A wonderful spot they found the charmed island, for here it seemed as if all the shells from all shores had been poured. Little shops to the right and left were full of delicate shell work. Wonderful things of mother-of-pearl met them at every turn. The girls hung over them hardly able to drag themselves away from the array of jewelry, the cunningly wrought and tiny figures of beasts and birds, the card cases, picture frames, anything and everything that ingenuity could contrive from such lovely material. [Pg 183]

"There is one thing about it," said Jack cheerfully, "we shall probably not need to spend any money at Myanoshita and so we needn't feel badly if it all goes here," a speech which showed up Jack's philosophy so well that the others all laughed.

The street came to an end at last and consequently so did the temptation to spend money. A *tori-i* indicated that the entrance to a shrine or temple was near, and the high, steep flight of steps further indicated this. The stone trough, too, was there, and in this the pilgrims washed their hands and then rinsed their mouths before going on to the shrine.

Near the trough were hanging votive offerings in the shape of blue and white towels. The girls stood gazing at them, wondering what they were, when a kindly looking elderly gentleman came up and told them that they were offered to the great sea-goddess, Benten. "The goddess of love and good luck has her shrine here. Have you seen her three temples and the Dragon Cave?" [Pg 184]

The girls answered that they had not, but would like to. "Is it far?" asked Nan, "and is it a hard way, because if it is, we'd better leave our aunt and our mother behind."

"It is rather a climb," confessed the stranger, "and the way to the cave is somewhat difficult."

"Is there much to see when you get there?" asked Jack.

"That depends upon what interests one," was the answer. "I don't know that it would please you ladies to clamber down black slippery rocks to view an empty shrine, and perhaps to be sprinkled with sea-spray, but there are guides, and in lieu of any other, I should be glad to show you the way."

After some consulting, the girls decided to give up a visit to the Dragon Cave. "For," said Nan, "after all Enoshima had so much that is beautiful to offer us that we shall be satisfied without anything further." After receiving their thanks the stranger passed on, and then Jack declared that she would like to climb up to the top of the ridge if any one would go with her. She would like to see the view even if she did not care specially about the temples. Her sisters declared that they would like to go, too, so leaving their elders sitting on the stones below, they began the climb.

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"It reminds me of Amalfi," said Nan, "with the blue bay below and the winding way up the cliffs. Instead of Vesuvius we have Fujiyama, and instead of the old monastery we have Buddhist temples."

"If the colonel were here he would tell us many tales of Enoshima," said Jean.

"And Mr. Harding could tell just as many," remarked Jack who was beginning to miss the company of entertaining young men. "Don't let us stop to prowl around here very long; I think it is nicer down in the village. I bought a lot of things but I didn't spend any money to speak of and I am sorry I didn't get more. There was such a darling cunning little fox there that I think I will get when I go back, if I can find the shop where I saw it."

The view was indeed beautiful, with the silver sea below, the quaint little village, the golden sands, and, lifting its lovely crown to the clouds, Fujisan in the distance. Nan would again have tarried long, but a desire for the tiny fox once having taken possession of Jack nothing would do but she must get it as soon as possible. So down the ridge they went to rejoin Mrs. and Miss Corner and to go back under one *tori-i* after another to the town where the shops proved scarcely less fascinating than at first sight.

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But at last even Jack confessed to being tired and so they walked back past the sand-dunes to where the little uncertain bridge led across to the mainland, and before long they were back in Kamakura and presently reached the inn whose lower front stood hospitably open to them.

"I almost wish we had gone to the cave of the Dragon when we were so nearly there," said Nan as she looked off toward the dimpling waters. "I shall never have another chance."

"But it promised to be a treacherous and unpleasant way down those slippery steps and in that dark and wet cavern," returned Mary Lee. "One of us might have fallen or something uncanny might have happened. I am rather glad we didn't go."

"If we had gone I might not have had time to get my fox," interposed Jack who, with Jean, was sitting on the cool mats looking over the purchases they had made that day. "See, Nan, isn't he a darling?"

"As for me," remarked Jean, "I wouldn't have gone for the world. I do so dislike those wet, slimy, ghoulish places." So of them all, Nan was the only one who regretted not having made the acquaintance of the Dragon of Benten Sama.

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Another night by the sea and then came the start for the hills. There was some debate as to whether they should stop at the pretty town of Yumoto whose attractive hotel invited them, but Miss Helen argued that if they were to halt at every attractive place in Japan they might as well make up their minds to abandon their own country entirely and spend the rest of their days in the Land of the Rising Sun. Therefore they proceeded on their journey by *jinrikisha* up the steep road to the place of their destination. A lovely way it was, though hard on the coolies, whose brown backs, tattooed with all sorts of strange designs, glistened with the moisture given forth by reason of the exertion.

"When I haven't anything else to interest me," said Jack, "I study the designs on my runner's back. It is really very entertaining to make out the flowers and dragons and queer things. I wonder if they are there for the express purpose of entertaining those who ride in the 'jinriki.'" She and Nan were walking up a particularly steep part of the way.

"Don't ask me the whys and wherefores of things in Japan," returned Nan. "I long ago gave up trying to find out the reasons for things. Aren't the woods delightful after the heat of the city, and aren't we fortunate not to have rain? I am looking forward to having the loveliest walks and excursions through these wild mountains."

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Jack gave a little sigh. "I should like it better if we hadn't left all the men folks behind. It is stupid to tramp through rough places without some one to ease your way a little."

"No doubt you can get a coolie or two," returned Nan coldly. "Indeed, I believe that one does generally travel in a chair, as they call the thing they carry lashed to those poles."

"Oh, yes, we must try those. I saw some one carried that way yesterday, and I thought I must experiment the first chance I got. Allee samee, I would rather prowl around with Mr. Harding than be carried by a coolie. Don't you think he is nice, Nan?"

"Who, the coolie?"

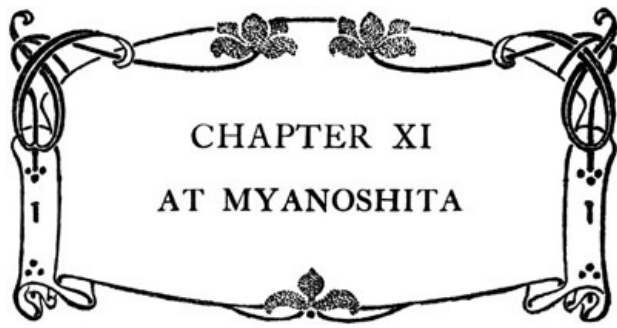
"No, Mr. Harding, of course. I am quite gone on him."

"What about Carter?"

"Oh, Cart makes me tired," responded Jack.

Nan made no reply, but as she resumed her ride in the *jinrikisha*, her thoughts were busy. She did not know exactly how matters stood between Jack and the young man who had been devoted to her since she was a child. Of course Jack was too young to know her own mind, even supposing she had imagined herself sentimentally fond of Carter. Who could tell when she would really fall in love? Perhaps Mr. Harding had attracted her strongly. Well, if it were a mutual thing, Nan decided that she must do all she could to further it. Jack had always been a problem, and if it meant her happiness and her future good, why then, of course, nothing else must be considered. Neal Harding was a fine, clean-minded, unselfish man, missing him who could tell upon what unworthy object Jack might next set her fancy? Nan thought it all out as she was borne along over the mountain paths, and had settled it all in her own mind by the time Myanoshita was reached.

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CHAPTER XI
AT MYANOSHITA

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In a comfortable hotel, half European, half Japanese, they found themselves settled that evening, with the mountains rearing their tops all around them and Fujisan a nearer neighbor than ever before. The stream, Hayagawa, babbled noisily within hearing, and the lofty pines gave out a sweetly pleasant odor.

"This is the most restful spot I have found in Japan," sighed Miss Helen. "I was quite worn out when we reached here, but that delicious warm bath has acted like a charm. There must be some quality about these springs beyond their mere temperature."

"And such lovely bath-rooms, too," agreed Nan, "so clean and sweet-smelling. It seems good to be in the hills again, doesn't it? We are so used to seeing them at home that one misses them after a time."

"I should really like to stay here a long while," remarked Mrs. Corner. "The gardens are so attractive and the little town has all sorts of enticing shops, I noticed. Then there are a number of delightful trips to make, I am told."

"Oh, dear," sighed Nan. "And we must go to Nikko and to Kyoto and a dozen other places which I suppose will be quite as fascinating. If only the twins didn't have to go back to college we could just stay on till we had seen all." [Pg 194]

"There is no reason why you shouldn't stay on with Helen and Mary Lee," returned her mother.

Nan shook her head. "No, once having hold of you I realize how valuable you are and I don't feel as if I could let you go back without me."

"Don't let us plan the going back yet a while," interposed Miss Helen. "Just when we are beginning to have a sense of peace and rest we should enjoy it. Let the morrow take thought for itself."

Jack and Jean were already down among the wood-carvers in the village and came back after a while with their hands full of pretty things. They tried to coax the others to make an immediate visit to the shops, but no one was enterprising enough to undertake the errand that evening.

"We will go to-morrow," said Nan. But alas, when the morrow came it brought rain again, and no one cared to venture till afternoon, when finding time hanging heavily on her hands, Nan ventured forth alone, clad in her rain cloak and carrying a gay oiled paper umbrella. The streets were almost deserted but in front of one of the shops a *jinrikisha* was waiting. Because she was curious to see who might be the other shopper out on that rainy afternoon, Nan entered the wood-carving establishment and came suddenly face to face with Neal Harding. [Pg 195]

"Miss Nan!" he exclaimed. "Isn't this luck? I was just wondering in which hotel you were staying. The chief has given me a week's leave, as he thought I was a little done up. That is, I am not to be recalled unless some special pressure of work demands, and so I thought this would be just the place for me."

"But why did you seek us in a perfectly strange wood-carver's shop?" asked Nan.

He laughed. "It does look as if I were making a house to house search for you, doesn't it? I had an errand here for one of my friends who left an order for some carving which has not been delivered as promised. Where are you stopping?"

"At the Fujiya."

"And all stood the journey well, I hope?"

"Very well." Nan was rather non-committal.

"And you stopped at Kamakura as you intended and went to Enoshima, I suppose."

"Yes, we did all that. We were two nights at Kamakura and have been here but one." [Pg 196]

"If I had only known I could get the holiday, I might have been with you. I feel quite defrauded when I think of it. One of the other men was to have been off this week, but he found it would suit him better to get leave later, consequently I was offered the time in his place. May I go with you? Were you going to buy some carvings?"

"I was going to amuse myself by looking around. After being housed all morning I wanted to get a bit of the outside world." She gave no permission but he took it for granted and followed on as she went from one charming object to another. "I may as well be pleasant to him," reflected Nan, "for he may be my brother-in-law some day," and she began to unthaw a little. "You said you had not been well," she began. "I hope it was nothing serious and that you are feeling better."

"Oh, it is nothing very serious. It has been pretty hot and I have been working rather hard of late, so I was a trifle run down; that is all. I shall be fit as a fiddle by the end of my stay here. There are some tremendously interesting excursions to be made from this centre, you know. One is to Lake Hakoné and another is to that grewsome spot O-Jigoku. There is a magnificent view of Fujisan from there. You will need an alpenstock if you go. Here is a good one. Let me get it for you. You can keep it to carve names on, names of places you visit and people you meet. May I put my humble initials on it?" [Pg 197]

What could Nan do but consent? And she stood silently by as he made the initials of her own name first, placing his own under them, the little Japanese shopkeeper looking on with a smile, probably to see how

much less dextrous these foreigners were than her own countrymen who produced such wonders of carving.

Nan accepted the stick with a meek "Thank you," and felt herself very disloyal to Jack, this giving her cause to make only a hurried survey of mosaics and inlaid woods, of dainty carvings and ingenious toys. She bought one or two things to give countenance to her errand in the rain and then declared she must return, steadily ignoring all suggestions to visit other shops or to take tea in one of the many pretty little tea-houses. Mr. Harding dismissed his *jinrikisha* and walked to the hotel with her where he received a warm welcome.

"You are the one thing needed to make us a complete party," declared Jack. "A lot of women without one man to countenance them is an anomalous organization," and so he was taken in quite as a matter of course.

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A trip to Lake Hakoné was arranged for the very next day, if it did not rain. "We must make the most of you," Jack told Mr. Harding, "for if you have only a week it may rain half of it and we don't want to put off anything that ought by rights to include you." She expected to appropriate the young man as a right, Nan noticed.

But Jack's plan did not come out entirely as she expected, for as they were sitting on the verandah that evening, Jean grabbed her twin sister's arm. "Jack, Jack," she exclaimed, "here is that Mr. Warner that came over on the steamer with us."

"Oh, bother!" cried Jack shaking her head with a frown. "I don't suppose he will have sense enough to realize that he will be in the way."

"You couldn't expect him to after being nice to him on the steamer," returned Jean.

"Oh, well, that was because he came in handy to walk with and to tuck in my steamer rug and things like that. He is a silly ass, and I don't want him around. You will have to take him off my hands, Jean."

"Indeed I shall not then," returned Jean. "I don't like him any better than you do, and I am quite sure I never gave him any occasion for thinking so, which is quite the opposite of the way you did."

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"Well, all is, I hope he won't see us," returned Jack, changing her seat so that her back would be to the garden.

"Who is the man?" Nan asked having overheard the conversation.

"Oh, he is a softy we met on the steamer. He knows some of our friends and is perfectly respectable, of course, otherwise mother would not have allowed us to have anything to do with him. There wasn't any one else around, and you know what Jack is. He served her for the time being. I don't mean there was anything like a flirtation, but she was nice to him and he trotted after her as men like that do when a girl is half-way kind to him. We thought we were rid of him when we left the steamer, but you see here he is."

"Well, my dear, one is very liable to run up against acquaintances like that when both are traveling in the same country; it happens over and over again. Jack will have to take the consequences, of course."

But this was precisely what Jack did not intend to do, and for this very reason she cajoled and demanded until Mr. Harding was helpless in doing anything but what she expected. Nan, while pleasantly polite to this young man, gave him no opportunity of returning to a comradeship and he was more and more convinced that she wished to keep him at a distance.

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Mr. Warner was not one to avoid a group of pretty girls and as soon as he caught sight of Jack the same evening, he made straight for her with every exclamation of pleasure and surprise. He was not a bad-looking person, and was perfectly assured in his own mind that he possessed every quality a girl could desire. He was an inveterate punster and was always doing what Jack called "monkey tricks." Nan could see that he promised to be something of a bore, as he was invariably flippant and frivolous, taking nothing seriously and ready to make jokes of everything. No spot too sacred, no object too impressive to become the target of his supposed wit. He quite resented Mr. Harding's presence as an admirer of Jack's, and to Nan's amusement always spoke as if he were an interloper whom Jack might reasonably wish to be rid of.

Because of all this, Nan more than once relieved the situation by allowing the young man to become her escort and met him on his own ground with frivolous speeches, so that he began to think that, after all, this elder sister was almost as desirable as Jack, and when he couldn't get pudding he would quite cheerfully take pie.

However, there were occasions when Nan could not sacrifice herself even for Jack, and she would get out of the way, having discovered a secluded spot from which she could get a view of the sea with Enoshima within vision, and on the other hand the stately form of great Fujisan.

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The excursion to Lake Hakoné did not take place at once on account of morning showers, but a day later it was agreed upon and with Mr. Warner, an attachment which they would willingly have been rid of, they all set out through the green mountain-paths, where the high bamboo grass colored the landscape vividly, and where many wild flowers peeped from the thickets. It would have been a more successful expedition but for the persistence with which Mr. Warner joked about everything in the heavens above, the earth beneath and the waters under the earth, allowing no one to enjoy either beauty or solemnity without interpolating either a pun or a silly speech of some kind, so that at the last every one was in a bad humor and whisperingly arranged a secret session. Little slips of paper were tucked into the hand of first one and then another by Jack. Each read: "Meet us at the deserted tea-shed back of the Bachelor's quarters at eight this evening." So by ones and twos the conspirators crept forth, keeping out of sight as much as possible lest they be seen and overtaken by the marplot, as they had come to call Mr. Warner.

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Promptly the small company gathered, Jack's three sisters and Mr. Harding. "We simply cannot have our expedition spoiled by that silly monkey-on-a-stick," announced Jack. "We must get away for our trip to O-

Jigoku without his seeing us. He has no better sense than to butt in without being invited and we cannot have him. Has any one mentioned that we were going?"

No one had, and Jack proceeded to unfold her plan. "I propose that we get up very early and meet somewhere, get breakfast at some little out-of-the-way tea-house and then start. What do you say?"

All agreed. "It carries me back to our college days," said Nan, "when we used to scheme in order to outwit the sophs."

"Mother and Aunt Helen are not going, I suppose," remarked Jean.

"Oh, no, the climb after we leave our chairs will be too hard for them," returned Mary Lee. "Now we must settle just where we are going to meet. Of course, we girls will have no trouble, but Mr. Harding must be certain."

"Suppose we say that little place just beyond the last carving-shop; it is unpretentious and no one would think of it; the only trouble is that one can see right into those places as soon as the *shoji* are pushed aside." [Pg 203]

"And what is more one can hear," put in Mary Lee. "I don't see how they can possibly keep secrets in Japan when the partitions between rooms are nothing but screens."

"Why not meet right here?" proposed Mr. Harding. "We can make a *détour* and come out somewhere beyond where I will have the chairs meet us."

This was considered the best arrangement, and the party separated as they had come, Nan agreeing to take Mr. Warner off in such direction as should prevent his seeing from whence the others came.

Early the next morning they crept forth, climbed the hill to the shed where they had met the evening before and, piloted by Mr. Harding, made their way to a spot further on where the chairs were waiting. The mists were rolling up from the mountains and Fujisan's crest was quite hidden. There was no sign of a living creature, but once or twice a blithe lark caroled forth his morning song. The waving green of the bamboo stretched on each side, making a perfect jungle, and trees of beech, oak or fir arched overhead. It was decided to stop at one of the tea-houses of the little village of Kiga where they could get breakfast and then continue their journey. A pretty place was chosen where there was a garden and a pond of goldfish, a spot not unlike many others near by, but it seemed the most attractive, and the smiling maids were perhaps more inviting than those they had passed by. [Pg 204]

Exultant at having entirely outwitted the ubiquitous Mr. Warner, and refreshed by their breakfast of tea, eggs and rice cakes, they started on, stopping to feed the fishes first and to view the pretty little garden. Only the rush of mountain streams broke the silence as they went on to the pass of O Tomi Toge. Here they halted, for the rest of the journey must be made on foot and with a careful guide.

"Oh, look!" exclaimed Nan as she descended from her chair and cast her eyes in the direction of a great valley. "Such a view of Fujisan I never had."

"Glorious! Splendid!" came from one and another. The mists were still curling around the crown of the solitary peak, but this rendered it even more beautiful, with a foreground of pines and box-trees, and nearer still, growths of snowy flowers, as if reflected from the snowy peak of the mountain itself.

"It smells very queer," remarked Jean sniffing daintily, "but then Japan is so full of queer odors that I am not surprised." [Pg 205]

"We must be near the 'Valley of the Greater Boiling,'" decided Nan.

"There is no doubt of that," remarked Mr. Harding; "look at those blighted trees, and see that stream dashing over those rocks of black and yellow. This must be the very entrance to the Stygian valley."

A precipitous and awe-inspiring climb they had now, following the guide with the utmost caution lest they slip through and become engulfed in the boiling mud. No vegetation was here, but the earth and the rocks bore evidences of a blasting, sulphurous heat. In some spots, smoke issued and there were ghastly sputterings and splittings of the earth's crust.

"Isn't it the very epitome of all that is horrible and frightful?" said Nan. "Jack, please be very careful. I heard of some one who lost his life by falling into that awful place, and more than one has been burned severely."

Jack promised and did intend to be very careful, but she was a venturesome young person and could not withstand the temptation to go a little nearer the edge of the dark stream. But fortunately Mr. Harding was watching and dragged her back in time to prevent a misstep into the seething sulphur. Jack herself turned pale as she realized the danger, for the guide, taking a pole, cautiously plunged it into the crust near which she had ventured and immediately it sank deep, deep down into depths of boiling mud. [Pg 206]

Nan covered her eyes. "Oh, Jack," she quavered, "just suppose you had gone an inch nearer."

"But I didn't," returned Jack lightly.

"You would have but for Mr. Harding." Nan turned eyes still full of horror on Jack's preserver, while Jack herself held out her hand.

"Thank you," she said. "I came near getting into a bad scrape, didn't I?" She walked off in a direction which gave her safety, really more overcome than she was willing to admit.

"I want to thank you, too," said Nan in a low voice to the young man. "I cannot face the thought of what might have happened but for your quick eye and——" She paused and turned her head, unable to keep back the

tears which nervousness brought to her eyes.

"Don't, please don't," said Mr. Harding coming to her side. "Let us leave this terrible place and go somewhere out of danger where you can sit down and get calm. You are trembling still."

He led her to a sheltered spot and presently she was herself again. Mary Lee and Jean had already returned, Jean being quite too timid to venture so far as the others. Jack meekly followed behind Nan and her companion, for once feeling too young to demand attention, and altogether ashamed of having given her dear Nan such cause for alarm. She sat apart quite in the manner of a younger Jack who so often felt herself a culprit. "We must not say anything to Aunt Helen and mother about this," charged Nan as she rose to her feet. "Remember, Jack, not a word to any one, not even to Mary Lee or Jean. There is no use in giving needless worry to them, for even now that it is all over and you are safe, it would distress mother and call up all sorts of visions." [Pg 207]

"Dear me," returned Jack plaintively, "I am sure I shall only be too glad not to have it known that I was such a silly thing. The worst of it is," she added, "that I cannot feel that I am superior to Mr. Warner after this."

This brought a laugh and relieved the tension. Then after one more look at the curling white smoke, the bare, leafless valley, they left the place and took the narrow path which led them back to what seemed an upper world.

"I feel as if I had been to the mouth of the underworld," said Nan. "It is early yet; suppose we go around by Lake Hakoné; it is so lovely a spot that perhaps it will drive away the horror of this. We shall enjoy it more today with no punster along, and moreover it is a much brighter day and we shall see the reflections more clearly." [Pg 208]

This plan was unanimously approved and returning by another path, they came to the bottomless lake in whose perpetually cold waters Fujisan was reflected in all its beauty, for now the mists had rolled away and the Lady Mountain revealed herself without her veil.

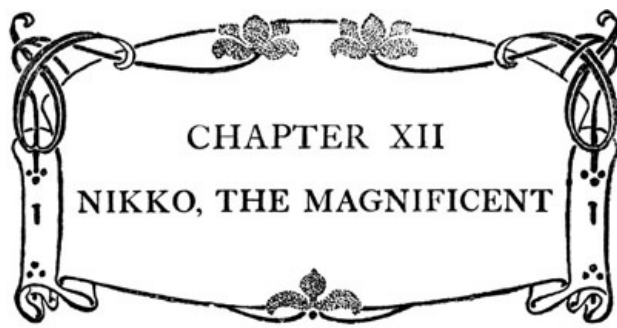
A tea-house near at hand furnished them with lunch and after a rest and another stop to feed the fishes in Kiga's tea-house garden they went on their way, arriving at Myanoshita to find that Mr. Warner was off in search of them and could not imagine how they had escaped his watchful eye.

"We told him you started very early," Mrs. Corner said merrily, "and that neither your Aunt Helen nor I had seen you before you went."

Later on when the young man did appear he was charged with being a sleepy-head and so well were the tables turned that he believed himself alone to blame for being left out of the day's expedition.



CURIOS TO SEE WHO THE OTHER SHOPPER MIGHT BE



CHAPTER XII
NIKKO, THE MAGNIFICENT

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Before the end of the week, came a letter from Mrs. Craig urging them all to join her in the mountains near the famous temples of Nikko. "I have been unable to find you a proper house," she wrote, "but I think you can be very comfortable at one of the inns. I would my own cottage were larger so I could take you all in, but I shall insist upon having Nan and Mary Lee at least. Eleanor gets lonely and begs that they will not disappoint her. You know the old saying, 'Do not say *kekko* till you have seen Nikko,' meaning that you are not to call any spot magnificent until you have been up here."

Mrs. Craig's letter was followed by one from Eleanor herself. She clamored for her college mates, using every persuasive word and every argument in her power, till they felt it would be fairly wicked not to accept.

For some reason Mr. Harding seemed almost as eager as Eleanor, lending his arguments to hers till finally the girls wrote to say that they would come and Miss Helen decided that they would trust to Mrs. Craig's declaration that the rest could be well housed near by. [Pg 212]

"We must keep it a dead secret from Mr. Warner," declared Jack, "for the first thing you know he will bob up serenely with that ridiculous helmet of his and that pongee coat. If I see any one up there wearing the likes, I know I shall faint on the spot, for I shall believe it is Sylvanus Warner reincarnated. Such a name, Sylvanus; it makes me tired."

"He will think we are going back to Tokyo to stay, so we must get off before he gets on to the plan," remarked Jean.

"We will leave a polite little note," said Nan, "telling him that we are going to visit and travel and then when we get back to Tokyo we will let him know. Then we must make up our minds not to come back to Tokyo but to keep on to Kyoto which we must see."

"But it will be hot there," complained Jean, "for it is even further south."

"Oh, well, never mind; we can't stay in the mountains forever, and after being up there and getting back some of our lost energy we ought to be able to stand Kyoto for a while, anyhow," Nan decided.

Mr. Harding bade them good-bye the next day with more cheerfulness than Jack felt was exactly flattering. Nan thought that there was a touch of expectancy in his parting words to her. "I shall see you soon again, I hope," he said. "I am so very glad that you will be with Eleanor and Aunt Nora." Nan, however, kept her own counsel and did not speculate aloud upon what he might have meant her to infer. [Pg 213]

Mr. Warner attached himself to their party when they returned to Tokyo, and no one seemed to mind very much, for, as Jack said, "It is always well to have a man around when you take a journey, even if he is a Silly Billy."

"I wonder if they called him Syly for short when he was a little boy," said Jean, which was pretty good for her.

"They might just as appropriately have called him Vainy," returned Jack; and Syly Vainy they dubbed him from that time out.

There was only a short halt in Tokyo, and then the start was made for the mountain retreat in the lovely highlands of Nippon. This meant a journey of about a hundred miles by rail, over a well-managed road. At various stations on the way, one could get from boys, only too eager for customers, well-packed luncheons, put up in attractive boxes, so a dining-car could be dispensed with.

"This seems quite like Europe," said Nan nibbling at her broiled chicken, "but I wish I had something to drink; one doesn't dare to try unboiled water in this country." Her wish was soon granted, for almost immediately came a boy with a little earthen pot of tea and a cup which he offered for the modest sum of two cents, pouring on hot water from a steaming kettle he carried. [Pg 214]

On, past rice fields, once in a while catching glimpses of vast forests of cryptomeria, they journeyed to Nikko where they were met by Eleanor and the colonel to receive the warmest of greetings and to be hurried on to the mountain inn where four of the party were to stay.

"We will come to Nikko itself another day," the colonel said. "You will find enough to interest you in this region, I am sure. If you feel historically inclined, there are the temples and shrines rich with suggestions of Iyeyasu, than whom is no greater character in all Japanese chronicles. His tomb is here as well as that of his successor, Iemitsu. If you want splendor in the way of temples you have but to visit those erected to his memory. Then if your mood is for natural beauties, we can show you such waterfalls and cascades, such streams and lakes and rocky precipices, forests and glens that ought to satisfy the most ardent nature lover."

This all sounded very alluring and the whole party congratulated themselves that they had not left out this part of the country from their trip. [Pg 215]

The Craigs' house was built on the Japanese plan with matted floors, and screened partitions. The entire front could be opened to the day, but at night it could be shut in by the wooden amado. An entrancing garden was kept in order by a Japanese gardener who devised miniature lakes and forests, rockeries and waterfalls, so that the whole was a most unique and delightful place at any hour of the day. Even in wet weather one could find protection under a most artistic summer-house, built of bamboo and supporting vines in flower.

The air was fresh and cool, a great relief after the sultriness of Tokyo, and a warm bath was ready, the water

being brought through bamboo pipes. Then there was tea in the little pagoda and afterward all walked over to see how those at the inn were getting along. They were found to be in a state of entire content, in cool, pleasant rooms overlooking a charming garden, a verandah running along in front of their windows giving them a sheltered place to sit if they preferred seclusion.

"We are all going to see the temples the first thing to-morrow," announced Eleanor, "so you must all be ready."

"I can scarcely wait," declared Nan, "for I have dreamed of them ever since I began to study up on Japan. I hope you will all sleep well, so as to be in condition for our wonderful day." [Pg 216]

"Sleeping on mats and hearing every least sound through paper partitions may not be conducive to sleep," returned her Aunt Helen, "but we shall do our best. What are we to see first, colonel?"

"The river and the Sacred Bridge would be the most natural in line of progression," returned he. "I am sure you will not exhaust the neighborhood in a long while, so we are hoping to keep you for many weeks."

"The more I hear, the more there seem to rise up new objects to marvel at," said Nan. "I have just heard of a wonderful cavern in the side of an extinct volcano. The Two-Storm Mountain they called it because of the fearful tempests that came spring and fall, but a great saint quelled the storm devils and now it is called Nikko-San, which means the Mountain of the Sun's Brightness. Isn't that a nice tale? I am trying to write down all the legends I hear, but there is such a bewildering number of them that I know some will get away before I have them safely captured."

The cool, mountain breezes made every one so sleepy that conversation lagged at an early hour and no one was inclined to sit up late that night, but there was not one who was not the better for the long night's rest and who was not eager to start out promptly the next morning. [Pg 217]

"And so that is the Sacred Bridge, the red lacquer bridge over which none but the emperor may pass," said Mrs. Corner looking at the famous structure which spanned the torrent. "It is really beautiful against the rich green, isn't it? Who but Japanese would ever think of building a red lacquer bridge? But somehow it suits the landscape."

"The scarlet arch," murmured Nan thoughtfully. "Tell us something about it." She turned to the colonel.

"I should have to give you a long dissertation on Iyeyasu and the Tokugawa which I think would probably bore you all. We'd better wait till some rainy day for that."

"So I can make notes and not find my eyes and thoughts wandering as they would have to do now," returned Nan.

Jack was looking in her guide-book. "It is eighty-four feet across," she gave the information, "and it is said that the wood is in as good condition as when it was put there something like two hundred and forty years ago."

They left the scarlet arch to go on to the great grove of cryptomerias where stood the sacred temples. Many there were, large and small. Shrines and images, pagodas and gray stone lanterns were scattered throughout the wood, and wonderful some of these were, showing such richness of color, wonders in bronze and lacquer, marvels in gilt and white and black, miracles of design and splendor of ornament. It was all too bewildering to be taken in at one time, and they all agreed that one could get only a general impression upon a first view. [Pg 218]

"We shall want to come many, many times," Miss Helen declared. "With such an embarrassment of riches one is left in a state of helpless amaze."

"It is by far the finest thing we have seen yet." Mary Lee was sure as to her opinion.

"I suppose every professor at college will be asking me my impressions and will be insisting upon a detailed description, when I get back," said Jack. "I shall have to learn pages of the guide-books for I shall never get a perfectly clear idea of it. I can hear myself saying lamely, 'Oh, it is all gilt and lacquer and there are dragons and queer beasts over everything.'"

"Such a very lucid description," said Jean contemptuously. "I shall try to make as clear a study as possible and take only a little at a time, one shrine, or a part of one temple." [Pg 219]

"Good!" cried Jack, "then I can copy yours." It was exactly what Jack would do. She always economized time by taking advantage of Jean's plodding methods, and arrived at much more brilliant results thereby.

"We haven't seen the five hundred Buddhas," said Nan as they left the temples. "I read about them and it is said that they are so elusive that no two persons ever decide upon the same number when counting them."

"Oh, do let's go find them," cried Jack, this being in the manner of a game particularly appealing to her.

They came back to the bridge and climbed up the hillside by a flight of stone steps. Before them were more shrines and holy pagoda-like edifices. Mary Lee and Jean discovered the stone which marks the resting place of the great shogun's favorite horse. They lingered by the spot, Mary Lee reading aloud from her book. "The horse was at last turned loose on the hillside," she told Jean, "and had a long life of freedom here under the trees."

These two presently caught up with the others who were standing near a long row of queer stone images.

"These are the Buddhas," announced Jack.

"Did you ever see such a strong family resemblance as they bear to one another? I have counted them twice, [Pg 220]

but can't make anything like five hundred. The spray keeps them always moist and that is why they have gathered moss, like other individuals who stay in one place."

"One does seem to have been seized with a *wanderlust*," cried Nan. "Come here, Jack. There is one at the foot of the hill. I remember reading how he broke away from his companions once when he was afraid of a terrible storm. He tried to reach the village, but didn't quite get there."

They wandered about over the hillside till some one declared it must be time for lunch, and then Mrs. Craig announced that they were to make a picnic of this meal and were to find a silver lake where they were to be met by the servants with the hamper, and where they could rest and enjoy the lovely scene.

"What a delightful surprise," cried Miss Helen, as they suddenly espied the fair lake from a turn in the road, which they had just made. "Is this our picnic ground?"

"It is, and I hope you like it," Mrs. Craig answered. "Chuzenji Lake it is called. It is one of my favorite spots and is rather a relief after the gorgeousness of the temples."

"It is just that, sylvan quiet and perfect peace. One could lie here by the sands and think many thoughts."

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The servants were bustling around unobtrusively and presently had an appetizing meal spread. They had brought a *hibachi* with which they could do wonders in preparing eggs, tea and various other things grateful to tired sightseers. There was much talk of the old legends and of later historical tales, the colonel waxing eloquent upon the subject of the great Iyeyasu who founded the Tokugawa Shogunate which continued almost to the present century.

"Iyeyasu died in 1616," the colonel told them, "and the present emperor came into power in 1868. Iyeyasu boasted of having fought ninety battles. He nearly destroyed Christianity and closed the door of Japan upon foreign nations. He was really a great man for he accomplished much, and although we must condemn many of his acts, we can but admire the man's tremendous force and strength of character. It was his request that his body should be brought to Nikko where were the most magnificent temples in the country. He is supposed to return to earth once a year to ride in that fine lacquered vehicle which brought his body hither. Some day when we get better acquainted with him and when you have become more familiar with the splendors of the various temples we will come and look at the relics of Iyeyasu."

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"I get so dreadfully mixed up on the religions. I thought all the Chinese and Japanese were followers of Confucius," said Jean.

"Shinto is the legalized religion," the colonel told her. "It is ancestor worship, to describe it briefly, but you will find that the doctrines of Confucius are accepted as philosophies rather than as religious dogmas. Shintoism means 'the way of the gods.' To quote one writer, 'it is a mixture of nature worship and the worship of ancestors.' It has its own mythological gods, heroes and traditions. The god, Izanagi, and the goddess, Isanami, are supposed to be the parents of the Japanese Islands. The great Sun-goddess, who is the supreme deity, was born from Izanagi's left eye. The Shinto temples are very simple compared to those of the Buddhists who introduced their religion into the country about the sixth century. There are several sects of Buddhists. There is the Shin-shu and the Jodo-shu, for instance, and though all these sects differ on minor points they agree upon the more important ones. Buddhist temples are often built in isolated spots, upon the mountains or in deep valleys, while the Shin sect erect their places of worship principally in the cities. One would have to make a pretty deep study of all these different beliefs to understand the differences, or indeed to understand just what is the belief of any one sect. If you go in for folk-lore it will be necessary for you to get some slight notion, at least, of the mythology and of the salient features of the doctrines. There, I have given you a long lecture, and I shall not tire you out by saying any more."

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"It is all very interesting, and makes one want to go deeper into it," confessed Nan.

"Very well, any time you come up against a blank wall I will do my best to open the way for you," said the colonel. "I am by no means an authority, and have only the veriest smattering of the subject, but I find it an interesting one, and in my talks with various missionaries, I have learned something."

"There is something very wonderful about the temple gardens," said Miss Helen. "I notice that each one has some special form of development. Here we have the cryptomeria trees as a dominant feature; at Uyeno it was the cherry trees, and at Kamakura the lotus held sway."

"That is all quite true, and at Kyoto you will find that water is made to occupy the centre of interest. The gardens of Japan are alone worth a study. I was surprised, when I first came, to see how one single material was sometimes worked up in such a way as to give a charming individuality. In one, garden rocks would be used; in another, there would be little waterfalls, rills, and aquatic plants; in a third, you would find certain scenes reproduced in miniature; a little pool will stand for a lake, the rock in the middle will be an island, the mountainside will be represented by small inclines planted thickly with dwarf bushes. Such gardens are often real works of art."

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There was much more talk of this kind during the time they were resting after their meal and then the move was made for a return. "So we can digest our luncheon and the colonel's lecture at the same time," said Jack saucily.

"I hope both will agree with you," returned the colonel with a smile. They returned by way of the town where a new sight caught their amused attention. An energetic bullock, the motive power of a short railway line, was seen performing his office of engine quite as a matter of course, drawing cars along the track at the rate of two miles an hour.

"In this land of Upside-down-ness, that is about the funniest thing I have seen," declared Jack. "I shall expect

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to see monkeys acting as telephone girls and cats doing the postman act."

"There is one thing about the cats here, I notice," said Jean gravely, "they don't carry tails."

The girls all groaned. "See what pernicious influence can be wrought by one person," said Mary Lee. "Jean has been associating with Syllly Vainy for so long that she has borrowed his peculiarities." Which remark quite settled Jean.



CHAPTER XIII
CRICKETS AND FIREFLIES

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"To-night we must see the Bon-ichi," said Mr. Harding, "for to-morrow will begin the Feast of the Lanterns." The young man had arrived on the scene the day before, surprising every one except, perhaps, his sister.

"Oh, I have read of the Bon-ichi," said Mary Lee. "I think the Feast of Lanterns must be the most wonderful of all. I wish we could see some of the customs in the native houses."

"No doubt that could be managed," returned Mr. Harding. "The Feast of Lanterns, or Bormatsuri, as it is called here, is truly a most beautiful festival. It begins on the thirteenth of July and continues to the fifteenth. It answers somewhat to the All Soul's Day which you know they celebrate in special ways in Europe. I think, however, that you will find the ceremonies here even more interesting."

"Tell us something about them," said Eleanor.

"New mats are woven for this feast to be placed upon all the Buddhist altars. Shrines and altars are decorated with lotus flowers, the natural flowers when possible, when not, paper ones are used. Fresh boughs of anise and other plants are used as well. The little lacquered tables from which the Japanese take their meals, and which you have so often seen, are placed on the altar to hold the food served to the spirits of the departed. In the very poor houses, these offerings of food are sometimes merely wrapped in a leaf and laid on the fresh mats. Wine is not given, neither do they give fish nor meat to the departed friends, but they offer fresh, pure water and give them tea every hour. They serve the meals exactly as they would to living guests, even supplying chop-sticks."

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"It is something like the Indian custom, this giving of food to the dead," remarked Mary Lee. "Why is it called the Feast of the Lanterns?"

"Because the prettiest sorts of lanterns are hung each night before the houses. These are in special shapes and have a peculiar kind of paper fringe. At the going down of the sun, torches are placed in the ground before the earthly homes of the ghosts so that they may find their way. Welcome fires, too, are seen all along the shores of the streams, the lakes and the sea where there are villages."

"How perfectly lovely," exclaimed Nan.

"To my mind," Mr. Harding went on, "the last evening, the fifteenth of July, is decidedly the most interesting of all. It is then that the priests offer food to those poor ghosts who have no friends to give them anything, and it is the night when the dance of Bon-odori is given."

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"Oh, I should like to see that," said Eleanor.

"But the most beautiful of all the customs," Mr. Harding continued, "is that of sending out the little boats of farewell, with a lantern at each prow and a freightage of dainty food. In these tiny crafts the souls of the ancestors are supposed to return to their ghostly homes by way of the sea, bearing with them written words of loving cheer."

"It must be wonderful to see all the little boats afloat."

"It is a thing not to be forgotten. At the present time it is forbidden to launch them on the sea at the open ports, but in isolated regions they are still sent forth."

"It is all the most fascinating and charming feast that we have heard anything about," declared Mary Lee. "We must go over and tell mother and the rest about it. They will want to go to the Bon-ichi, of course."

"I will go with you," said Eleanor jumping up.

They had been sitting in the pretty garden near where a little fountain splashed softly over rocks and pebbles, washing the feet of slender aquatic plants and then trickling on to form a small pool in which a tiny island was visible. Nan would have followed the two girls, but as Mr. Harding said, "Please don't go," she sank back again into her seat. She would yield to the temptation this once. Jack would be in evidence that evening and she must then efface herself, so she would take these few golden moments for her very own.

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"I want you to go with me to the Bon-ichi this evening," said Mr. Harding. "Will you?"

"Why, yes," replied Nan. "We are all going, aren't we?"

"But you will go with me, won't you?"

Nan laughed. "As if it were an opera or the theatre you were inviting me to, I suppose."

"Exactly." He spoke quite seriously and Nan, stealing a glance at him, saw that he looked very grave and earnest.

"Oh, very well, I will consider myself specially invited," she replied lightly, "though I don't see what special difference it will make."

"We were lost in the crowd that night at the temple festival in Tokyo, you remember."

Nan fidgeted with the leaf of a small plant near her. It made her very happy to have him talk this way, yet she wished he would not. No, she did not wish he would not. She would like to be lost in any crowd so long as he was by her side. She wondered if Jack really did like him so very much, and wasn't it disloyal to Carter to encourage Jack to smile on any one else?

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Mr. Harding interrupted these conjectures by repeating, "You do remember, don't you?"

For answer Nan said, "I have the wee rabbit to remind me."

"And Kamakura?"

"I have this." She took the little jade figure from the small bag she carried and held it out.

Mr. Harding took it in his hand, looked at it with a smile and handed it back saying, "Will you mind very much being lost again?"

Nan shot him a swift look. She felt the color rising to her cheeks as she answered, "I will not mind." Then fearful of further temptation she arose and fled, not even turning her head as Mr. Harding called after her, "Please, Miss Nan, don't go. Please come back."

Back she would not come, but she was happy, happy. She would let herself go for this one time. Surely so much was her due. In a little while these happy days would be over. Mr. Harding would be returning to his work. In the meantime let him choose between her and the younger girl. She would let fate decide.

Why Mr. Harding had gone so far as to venture on such an invitation, Eleanor might have explained. She adored Nan and had charged her brother with fickleness. Had asked why he treated Nan with such coldness when at first the two had seemed to be the best of friends. He had replied that it was all Nan's own doings, that she had turned the cold shoulder, and that he could but accept his position. "I think she wishes me to understand that some one else has a prior claim," he said at last. [Pg 234]

Eleanor considered this before she replied. "I don't believe a word of it. I am quite sure she is not engaged to any one, but I shall make it my business to find out from Mary Lee. If she isn't and even though she may be interested in some other man, I don't see why you haven't as good a chance as he has. There isn't a girl in the world I would rather have for my sister, Neal, old boy."

"You are a trump, Nell," returned her brother, but he did not say that there was no girl he would rather she should have for a sister, an omission which Eleanor thought of in the light of after events.

By some hokus-pokus, Jack found herself in the society of Mr. Montell when they all started off for the Bon-ichi. This young man had come up with Neal Harding, and it is to Eleanor's credit that she managed to hand him over to Jack rather than to accept his escort for herself. Jack did not mind the experience in the least, although if it had been given her to choose, she would have selected Mr. Harding. [Pg 235]

Between the flickering light of lanterns and torches all the way down the street moved a crowd of people and soon the party of Americans became a part of the throng, themselves, though soberly clad, conspicuous above the little women in bright garments and the small men in blue or black or gray. In spite of this, Nan and her companion were soon separated from the rest. They had stopped long before a booth where were sold lotus flowers and leaves for the ceremony of the morrow.

They lingered, too, to look at the bundles of hemp sticks, the crude dishes of earthenware, made especially for the ghostly visitors. As they turned away from these last, Mr. Harding looked down with a smile. "Now we are alone," he said with a smile.

Nan understood. Who is so alone as in a crowd? Some distance ahead she caught sight, once in a while, of the colonel's soldierly figure towering up above his companions, and once or twice she could see Jack's hat, and her sparkling face turned gaily toward her escort.

"We have gone back to the temple fair at Tokyo, I hope," said Mr. Harding as Nan grew more and more expansive and chatty. [Pg 236]

"We won't talk about goings back," returned she lightly. "It is always better to go ahead. What is done is done. We can control the future somewhat, but we cannot help the past."

"That sounds like one of Confucius' philosophies. I accept the lesson it holds."

Just what did he mean by that? Nan felt that she had been more didactic than wise and wished she had said something else. She must be more guarded. She forgot her introspections in the beauty of the things to be seen at the next stall: wonderful lanterns of most beautiful shapes and colors, although there were some that were a pure luminous white and these were intended for the cemeteries. They stood long looking at them but in time moved on to where queer little figures made of straw were offered for sale. "What in the world are these?" inquired Nan.

"These are horses for the ghosts to ride and oxen to work for them," her companion told her.

"How queer, how very queer, and what is that on the next stall?"

"That is incense."

A little further along they came upon Jean and Mary Lee all absorbed in a display of tiny horsehair cages, from which twinkled and sparkled myriads of lights. Alongside of these were larger cages, though small enough, of bamboo from whose interiors the strident notes of great green crickets came incessantly. [Pg 237]

"Aren't they darling?" cried Jean enthusiastically as Nan came up. "You can get a cricket and a cage for two cents, and for one cent you can buy fifteen fireflies in a cage. Mary Lee and I are getting ever so many."

"What for?" inquired Nan.

"Oh, just to give them their freedom. We hate to see the poor little creatures caged. The cages are so curious

that we want those anyhow."

"Have they any religious fitness?" Nan asked Mr. Harding.

"Oh, no, they are only for the children."

Nan concluded that she must have a cage, too, and bore away a galaxy of twinkling stars which she declared she would make a ceremony of liberating.

Then while Mr. Harding told her a pretty tale of how the fireflies came to exist at all, and then wandered off into other folk-lore, they moved slowly out of the seething crowd to find their way into shadowy groves and at last to come upon a shrine before which lights were burning but where no one worshiped, for it seemed quite deserted.

"If we could but reach Kwannon-with-the-Horse's-Head," said Mr. Harding, "we could send up a prayer for the animals which have died, and Kwannon might answer." [Pg 238]

"And where is Kwannon-with-the-Horse's-Head?"

"Away down near Izumo. I have seen the shrine and it seemed a very pleasant thing to think that these people cared to remember the welfare of their animals, and to want them to enter a better state after the trials of this. Their religion seems very fanciful and, to us, full of all sorts of errors, but one comes across very beautiful customs every now and then."

Nan knelt before the little shrine and opened her cage of fireflies. One after another found its freedom, darting out and floating up into the dimness of further distance. They stood watching them glimmering fitfully under the dark trees. "They seem like departing souls, themselves," said Nan. "They make me think of 'Vital spark of heavenly flame.'"

"Then you have found in them a symbol that the Japanese seem not to have discovered. I knew you would surprise me with something of the kind."

"How did you know?"

"I divined it as one sees with the eyes of his spirit."

"There is one poor little firefly left," said Nan suddenly observing a faint glimmer still coming from the tiny cage. "I am afraid he is hurt. If I knew what to feed him on I would take him home and keep him till he is able to fly." [Pg 239]

"They feed the crickets on eggplant and melon rind. We can get some on the way back, or we can find out what to give this little fellow."

"Then that is what we must do, though I wonder if we take him so far away if he can find his way back to his companions. Do you suppose he will want to? Or does it make no difference to a vital spark where it is liberated?"

"I don't imagine it will make any difference. I know my soul could find its way to——" He stopped short fearing he was growing too bold.

"To where?" asked Nan.

"To its kindred soul," was the reply which was not exactly what was first intended.

Nan sighed. It was all so dreamily mysterious out there in the mild warm air under the trees. It was a great temptation to stay and listen to perhaps more daring speeches. They were both silent for a little while, Nan watching the feeble glimmer of the imprisoned insect, and Mr. Harding watching her in the light of the lantern hung before the shrine. "It is very lovely here," said Nan at last, "but I think we should go back." [Pg 240]

"Must we? I could stay forever."

"It is very lovely," repeated Nan, but she began to move away from the spot.

They passed a temple where people were coming and going and heard the clanging of its gong, the shuffle of feet upon the stairway leading to it, the murmur of voices. "Shall we go up?" asked Mr. Harding.

Nan shook her head. "No, I don't care to, do you?"

"No, I would rather stay a little longer in the shadow of my dreams." They stood apart for a moment watching the moving throng, and then they turned away, each dwelling in a world far away from that which they saw, the land of Heart's Desire.

For some reason, Nan noticed that whenever Jack started off with Mr. Harding alone, after the night of the Bon-ichi, she was not allowed to go far without being joined by either Mary Lee or Eleanor, but when she, herself, happened to come upon either of these two latter in the young man's company, some mysterious errand would take one or the other to another part of the house or grounds. She was too happy to search very far for the cause of this and accepted what fate brought her in the way of a tête-à-tête. That it was anything more than accident she did not ask, that it was really a conspiracy she did not for a moment imagine. For one short week she would enjoy herself and then let come what must. [Pg 241]

The last day of the Feast of Lanterns was the great one. On its morning Mary Lee came to her. "I want you to do something for me, Nan," she said. "I suppose you will think it is foolish, and of course I don't in the least believe in these queer religions, for who could? But I do want to do one thing. It seems as if somehow Phil might know that I am sending him a message and it would comfort me to pretend. I want to launch a little

boat on the river this evening. Will you come with me?"

"Of course I will," said Nan heartily. "I don't think it is foolish at all. I should feel exactly the same under the circumstances. Where will you get the boat?"

"Oh, I have it. I managed all that. I shall not do as the Japanese do, of course, and load it with food. I shall only write a little letter and shall send out my boat with the lantern on it. I hope Phil will know," she said wistfully.

Nan's eyes filled with tears. This was the romance of Mary Lee's life she understood. All the poetry and romance of her nature was centred in the memory of the young lover she had lost. "I am sure, if our dear angels know anything of what we do, he will know," she answered her sister gently. "Are we not compassed about by a cloud of witnesses?" she added. "He must know, Mary Lee."

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"I am glad you remembered that," returned her sister. "It is comforting. I will come for you, shall I? or will you come for me?"

"Whichever you say."

"Perhaps you'd better come for me, then we can steal away by ourselves more easily. I know just the spot."

The sun had set, but there was still light in the sky, when Mary Lee and Nan set out for a secluded place along the riverside. The little straw boat which Mary Lee carried was carefully screened from view and it was not till they reached the river's brink that she took it from its wrappings to set it afloat with its tiny lantern and the written message of love and longing. Very carefully Mary Lee lighted the small lantern, very cautiously set the tiny craft afloat and watched it drift off adown the current to join the fleet further along. The twinkling lights from many another frail bark showed that a host of phantoms were supposedly moving out upon the current to find the sea at last.

The two girls stood silently watching the boat slowly making its way down-stream. When its tiny spark at last vanished around a bend in the river Mary Lee turned away with a quick sob. "Sometimes I feel as if I could not bear it," she said.

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Nan put her arms lovingly around the younger girl and laid her cheek against the fair hair. "I know, I know," she whispered, "but he is always there, dear, and always yours."

"Yes," returned the other, "and that is all that comforts."

"Suppose you had been obliged to give him up to some one else, loving him as you did, wouldn't it have been harder?"

"I don't know. Perhaps. Yes, he is mine, forever mine, and he may not be very far away if I could only have faith to realize it. I shall think he does know and is glad to have me do what I have done to-night."

They returned slowly saying little. As they neared the hotel, they saw Jack and Mr. Harding sauntering through the garden paths. They appeared to be having an animated conversation. "Do you like Mr. Harding as much as you did at first?" inquired Mary Lee.

"Oh, yes," returned Nan in as indifferent a manner as she could assume though she felt the color rush to her face. Mary Lee stole a glance at her, and remembered what Nan had forgotten. It was when she did not talk freely of any special man that she might be counted on as feeling the deeper interest. Nan rarely discussed Neal Harding and Mary Lee drew her own conclusions.

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"I wonder what Carter would say if he saw Jack now," she said after a pause.

"He knows what Jack is," replied Nan, "and moreover I don't know that he has any right to criticize her actions. We only assume that he has any claim. Jack has never said so."

"No, she is a perfect sphinx upon the subject. Sometimes I think she doesn't care a rap for him and again I am convinced that she would never consider any one else."

"She is too young to know her own mind."

"I knew my own mind when I was younger than she."

"Well, I think she ought to have her chances."

"And you think Neal Harding is one of them."

"I think it within the bounds of possibility."

"Nonsense!"

"Why nonsense? He attracts her and I think she would attract him if——"

"If what?"

"If propinquity were made a factor."

"Do you think she would be happy married to Neal Harding?"

"Certainly. Why shouldn't she be? He is a fine, honorable gentleman with a good mind and with excellent prospects. I cannot imagine how any one could find fault with him."

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Mary Lee smiled wisely. "Oh, I am not picking flaws. I think he is fine but I don't concede that he would suit

Jack in the least."

"Oh!" Nan seemed a little bewildered, but Mary Lee, watching the pair wandering around the garden together, made up her mind to several things which she did not reveal to Nan.

Jack espied her sisters as they came forward. She ran to meet them exclaiming: "Why, where have you all been? We have been looking all over for you. Mr. Harding wants us to see the great dance, the dance called Bon-odori. Eleanor and the rest are waiting for us. The others have gone on ahead."

There was nothing to do but follow out the suggestion and in due time the party reached the temple court where the strangely-fascinating, weird dance was going on. It was one of those peculiar religious rites performed in many countries on special feast days, though varying with the time and place, a quaint and rhythmical march, accompanied by the clapping of hands, the beat of a drum. A procession of maidens swaying, turning, stepping lightly, moving gracefully around the temple court; this is what they saw. Presently others joined the procession, men and again other women. Then began the songs, curious antiphonal chants rising with more and more volume as the company of marching figures grew larger.

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"It reminds me of some strange old Scriptural rite," said Mrs. Corner to the colonel. "One might imagine the daughters of Israel going out to meet David, or dancing before the golden calf. It is very Oriental, but really very beautiful. The hands are very expressive and the rhythm is perfect."

"I have seen the dance done in different parts of Japan," returned the colonel, "and it is never quite the same, but it is always interesting."

They tarried till a booming bell gave signal that the dance was over and then they joined the throng of toddling women and shuffling men who turned toward their homes.

"To-morrow," said the colonel, "the fishermen can go out again, for those who have parents need not go without meat, although those who have lost a parent must wait a day longer before they can have fish to eat."

"But we shall have fish," said Mrs. Craig with decision. And so ended the great Festival of the Bonku.



CHAPTER XIV

JEAN VISITS

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Nan hung the tiny cage with its one occupant outside her room on the verandah and the next morning discovered that the small maker of light had escaped through the open door. Later in the day, joy itself took wings with the return of Neal Harding to his post. He had declared that he would see them all again, but as he would remain in Tokyo, to which place they did not expect to go again, it seemed to Nan that the end of her summer had come. He had not asked her to write, and she told herself that this dream was ended, ended with the flitting of the ghostly visitors from another world. "It was all a phantom anyhow," she sighed as she took down the wee cage and laid it among her treasures. She wondered if Jack would start up a correspondence. Jack did not like to write letters, to be sure, but she was one who made a means serve her ends and if she really did like Mr. Harding above any other man she had met, she would be sure to find a way of keeping him in sight.

A few days later Nan happened to come upon her mother and aunt deep in a discussion of further plans. "You're just the girl we want to see," said Mrs. Corner. "Come, sit down here and talk it all over with us. We feel that we should be thinking of starting forth again, not because we are tired of this lovely spot, but because there is so much more to see, and one can scarcely expect to come to Japan more than once in a lifetime. You and Mary Lee have made the Craigs a long visit and it is time that should be ended. Now what do you think we should make our next point?" [Pg 250]

Nan gave the question due consideration. "We must certainly see Kyoto," she said at last. "It is such a very old city and was the capital before Tokyo became so. I have been told that it is the most interesting city in Japan."

Mrs. Corner looked at Miss Helen. "Now that is quite as it should be. Jean has had an invitation to visit there."

"She has? Who has asked her?"

Mrs. Corner raised her voice slightly to say, "Jean, dear, come in here and bring the letter you had this morning."

Jean, who could hear perfectly well through the thin paper partitions of the room, appeared presently with the letter in her hand. It was written on a very long sheet of paper, ornamented delicately upon its surface with shadowy designs. It was in a long narrow envelope, and was folded over and over many times in order to make it fit. [Pg 251]

"It is from Ko-yeda Sannomiya," said Jean. "You remember her, Nan? She was the little Japanese girl at Rayner Hall. We took her to Cloverdale once and tried to be nice to her. She is a funny little thing, and some of the girls fought shy of her, but I always liked her, she was so sweet and gentle."

"And has she come back home?"

"Yes, and lives in Kyoto. She heard in some roundabout way that we were over here and had the sense to write to Betterley and ask to have the letter forwarded. It has been a long time on the way, of course, but the invitation stands for any time I may accept it."

"I don't see why she didn't ask me, too," said Jack who had come in.

"I know," said Mary Lee; "you are too big, and you would scare her family; besides you would fill up the house and there wouldn't be room for any one else."

"Oh, pshaw!" exclaimed Jack, "I am no taller than Nan."

"Well, they didn't ask her."

"That is all nonsense," replied Jack. "I suppose the real reason is that Jean flocked with her more than I did, and once I laughed at her for some funny mistake she made. I suppose I shouldn't have done it for it wasn't very polite, but the laugh came out before I thought." [Pg 252]

"Are you going, Jean?" Nan asked.

"I think so. It is quite a compliment, I reckon, and I ought to take advantage of it, though it scares me rather to go in among such exceedingly foreign people. I shall only stay a day or so, however, and I don't reckon anything very terrible can happen in that time."

"So then it is settled, is it, that we go on to Kyoto?" said Nan.

"It will be pretty warm, I suppose, after these delightful mountains," remarked Miss Helen regretfully, "but if we come to Japan in summer we must take the consequences. At all events we can be thankful that the rainy season is over."

"I wonder what Ko-yeda means," said Nan musingly, as she handed back the letter to Jean.

"It means a slender twig," Jean informed her. "Ko-yeda told me so long ago."

"It is very pretty, especially for a young girl," Nan decided.

In spite of Eleanor's protests and charges of desertion, and of Mrs. Craig's persuasions, the day was set for their departure. It came all too soon. The evening before, Nan made a last visit to the temples and to the little shrine where she had set free her fireflies. The discovery that Jack had received a letter from Mr. Harding [Pg 253]

that very morning did not give her a very serene state of mind, but in spite of that she felt a melancholy satisfaction in visiting the places where she had been so happy. The booths had departed from the streets and the crowd had dwindled to the usual number, but in the garden, which held many a dear memory, the water still lapped the slim reeds and the nightingale still repeated its song, not a long sustained, nor so full a strain as she had heard in Italy, but nevertheless a lovelier one to her because of association. Here they two had sat and listened on more than one evening when the air was soft and balmy and when the scent of lilies came to them. "Nevermore, nevermore," was the only refrain which Nan's heart could hear.

Eleanor found her in the little summer-house where they all had spent so many gay and happy hours.

"I could weep when I think of your leaving me, Nan," she said. "I used to be awfully fond of you there at Bettersley but I have enlarged the borders of the place you occupied in my heart and now you take up such a lot of room that I don't see how I can let you go." [Pg 254]

"Better come along," said Nan lightly.

"Do you really mean it?"

It had not occurred to Nan before, but, as she turned the plan over in her mind, she was pleased with it. "Why not?" she said.

"I'd simply love to. Of course I must see all I can of Japan, and Aunt Nora wouldn't leave the colonel, neither would he leave her, if he could, which he can't. As for Neal he is not to be depended upon except upon occasions. I don't in the least see why I shouldn't go with you, for a time anyhow. I know Aunt Nora will say I must. Are you really in earnest, Nan, and do you think your mother and aunt would consent to let me hang on to your skirts?"

"I am sure they would be delighted. You all have been mighty nice to us, Nell Harding, and even if we didn't like you so powerful much as we do we'd say, 'Come along.'"

"Don't talk of our having been nice. Why, my dear, you all have been the whole show this summer. You have simply lifted us all out of stupid monotony into delirious excitement."

An hour later it was all settled that Eleanor should be one of the party and after a whirl of packing on her part, she started off for Kyoto with the Corners the very next day.

After all it was found that Kyoto would be more easily reached by way of Tokyo than by any other route and in the latter city was made the stay of a night. It brought Mr. Harding post haste to see them all, but, as luck would have it, Nan was laid up with a headache and could not appear. She insisted upon going on the next morning, and so Tokyo brought her no added memories. At the quiet European hotel in Kyoto, Jean met her late schoolfellow and was borne off without delay. [Pg 255]

She made a little wry face over her shoulder as she said good-bye to her sisters, but Jack was very envious of her opportunity and bemoaned her luck in not having won Ko-yeda's regard. "It doesn't make it any better to tell me it is my own fault," she said to Mary Lee, who reminded her of the fact. "Never mind, I will have some sort of adventure before I leave this town; you see if I don't."

However reluctantly Jean started forth, nothing could have exceeded the gracious welcome she received from the family of Ko-yeda. Mrs. Sannomiya bowed to the floor, likewise did Grandmother Sannomiya, as well as every one else in the establishment. Into a fresh, sweet room covered with mats of rice straw she was ushered, a silken cushion was placed for her and she was at once served with "honorable tea," sweetmeats and cakes. This ceremony over, she was taken to another matted room where, as she told her sisters afterward, she hung up her clothes on the floor and listened to what they were saying in the next room. After this Ko-yeda led her to the front of the house which did not face the street, but the garden, and a charming one it was. Not large, but displaying a tiny grotto, a miniature pond where goldfishes and little turtles lived, and where, at this season, lovely lotus blooms floated. Along the stone paths potted plants were set and in one spot Ko-yeda pointed out with pride a cherry tree which was the garden's glory in spring. It was not a very big place but it was admired and beloved by the whole family from the opening of the first budlet to the falling of the scarlet leaves from a baby maple tree. The verandah of the house overlooked the garden rather than the street. [Pg 256]

Ko-yeda's pleasure in her company was boundless. She spoke English well and chattered away asking innumerable questions of this and that one and inquiring all about what Jean had seen in Japan. "You are traveled more than I," she said. "Never to Nikko have I been. I go some of the day. You see I do not mean be as other Japanese girl. I am student of America and I very free in my thinking of what I mean do. My grandmother frown and say I naughty little girl, for that I wish no be like the honorable ancestor. She Christian, too, but she cannot forget the ancestor. For myself, I like better remember my present ones." [Pg 257]

"Do you think you will marry, Ko-yeda?" asked Jean.

"I cannot say. I would not like to think. It is not respectable for me here in Japan to do so. In your country it is opposite. You marry some of the day?"

"Oh, dear me, I don't know. You may not believe it, Ko-yeda, and I would not like to confess it to my sisters even, but I have never yet been in love, though I am eighteen."

Ko-yeda laughed merrily. "You should be as I am. Some day when come a good Christian somebodies to my father and mother and say I wish Ko-yeda for my son, then perhaps I think, but I shall wait till that day. I will not marry any but my own countryman, I suppose, and I do not wish other, but I wish Christian."

"Of course you do. Will you have to wait on your mother-in-law, then?"

"Oh, yes. My mother do the same. I will do unless perhaps is adopted a young mans to my family. I think will be this for we have no son. Then is my mother my mother-in-law." She laughed merrily.

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"Oh, I hope it will turn out that way," said Jean who had her own opinions of Japanese mothers-in-law, and who would have been sorry to see her little friend occupy the position that some young wives must.

Ko-yeda was a dainty, pretty little person, with small oval face, very dark brown, not black, hair, a clear skin over which sometimes crept a soft rosy tint, soft dark eyes, a small mouth and delicate little hands. Her dress was of pale blue crape with a handsome *obi*, or sash confining the kimono. The sash was subtly brilliant but not gaudy. Altogether Jean thought her a charming figure, much more so in her native costume than she had been at school in European dress. So much could not be said of the grandmother who looked shrunken and yellow, whose teeth were blackened and who wore a sombre robe of gray. "I wonder if Ko-yeda will look like that some day," was Jean's thought as she was escorted in to take dinner.

This was served to her upon a little lacquered table about a foot high while she ate seated on a flat cushion laid upon the matted floor.

There was cold soup and stewed fish and rice into which raw eggs were broken. There was raw fish, too, served with soy, and there was chicken and some queer sort of meat which Jean did not recognize. Indeed the sweetish sauces served with nearly everything rendered most of the dishes unpalatable to her, but she could eat the rice and the chicken and managed to taste the other dishes. In consideration of her preferences, there was real bread, and Ko-yeda had prepared with her own hands a pudding which she presented anxiously. Of course Jean praised it and really but for this quite substantial dish, might have fared rather badly. There was tea, of course, and various sweetmeats, not very attractive to a foreigner.

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"If you show me I make some of the American somethings for you," said Ko-yeda.

"Where is your kitchen?" asked Jean.

Ko-yeda laughed. "We have not like you, for we use the *hibachi* much. I show you our cook place and the go-down and all that."

So they went on a voyage of exploration. The go-down or *kura* Jean saw to be a sort of storehouse where many things were placed for safety against fire, only too frequent in the cities of Japan. The *kura* was built of bamboo and wood and was covered two feet thick with clay so that it was quite fire-proof. The little garden which Jean first saw led into another and she was surprised to see how many rooms were in the rambling house, or at least how many there could be when screens were drawn. There were numerous little maids at work here and there and, as Ko-yeda led her guest this way and that, she caught glimpses of cool, quiet, dimly-lighted places where different members of the family were squatting on the floor,—Ko-yeda's mother busy with some delicate embroidery, her grandmother arranging a vase of flowers, her father bending over a table with a brush and a long sheet of paper upon which he made deft marks with great rapidity. He was writing a letter, Ko-yeda told her. Upon entering the house from the garden, they took off their shoes and Ko-yeda provided Jean with a pair of *tabi*, a queer kind of sock, foot-mittens Jean called them, for instead of a place for the thumb was one for the big toe. As they went through the corridors and peeped into one after another of the rooms, Jean saw how very simple a Japanese home could be. Even the best room, the guest room as it was called, had in it only a number of flat silk-covered cushions to sit or kneel on, a couple of small chests of drawers, lamps with pretty shades, some folding screens, a shining mirror of steel, and a few of the small lacquered tables. In several of the rooms were alcoves which Ko-yeda called *tokonoma* and *chigai-dana*.

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"In the day of old," said Ko-yeda, "the great gentlemans of the house would use to sit before these. We place here our decoration for the day, in the one, our *kakemono* and the flowers; in the other a something pretty which we like, a vase, a carvings, what you will. I show you. To-day because of your coming I am wish of our best. I think you like it maybe." She took her into the room where a panel picture hung; it showed a pair of birds exquisitely painted upon white satin, the branch upon which they sat being perfect in detail and the birds' feathers wonderfully wrought. "I remember you teach me 'Birds of a feathers flock together,'" said Ko-yeda.

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Jean laughed. She had forgotten, but how well Ko-yeda had remembered a little joke of theirs. In front of the *kakemono* was a slender vase in which was a single spray of flowers. In the other alcove stood a beautiful piece of carved ivory. This room was shaded from the outside glare of the sun by sliding windows covered with paper through which the light fell softly. Beyond were smaller apartments and above stairs were still more, bath-rooms among them. The place seemed very cool and spacious and peaceful. Every one was kindness itself and all tried in every way to make Ko-yeda's guest feel at home.

The next meal was a more elaborate one. There were several kinds of soup, eels, lobster, more fish, vegetables and then rice served from a large lacquered box. There were odd sweets and some very delicate and delicious cakes. The sweetmeats were in various forms, lotus flowers, and little brown twigs, green leaves and the like, among them. It was all very odd and pleasant. Jean was glad that she and her sisters had experimented with chop-sticks as she felt herself less awkward with them. They were really not so very difficult to manage and they all praised her use of them. Of course the honorable tea had to form a part of the meal, and after this was taken and the obsequious servants had removed the dishes, the girls went out into the garden where Mr. Sannomiya was walking around, a paper umbrella over his head and a large fan in his hand. "My father, he dress European and my mother too, when they go out," Ko-yeda explained, "but at home we all feel more comfort in the native dress."

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"I think it is much prettier than ours," said Jean. "I wish you would not give it up."

"But my father so ashamed to have Western man say he what you call a rear number."

Jean smiled. "A back number, you mean?"

"Oh, yes, a back number. I thank you. I am forgetting my English. He say we must not appear like the old Japan which shut the door upon all progress. If we wish be like the rest of world we must do as the other nations and so we wear the dress so to show that we are not behind in things." [Pg 263]

As the girls came up Mr. Sannomiya bowed very low and said that he was honored that Jean should come to his poor mean house to see his ugly and uninteresting daughter. Jean was a little startled at the remark as translated by Ko-yeda, but her friend laughed and said, "It is but the way we speak; you must not mind; I know you are not accustomed."

"Do please say something nice to him in your own way," returned Jean. "Tell him how pleased I am to come and how flattered I feel that you have invited me."

This was quite sufficient material for Ko-yeda to make into a very gracious speech, and then with much ceremony each took a different path around the garden.

Later on came callers—Ko-yeda's elder sister and her husband who bowed low and bumped their heads against the floor upon being presented. Jean tried to respond in like manner, but felt her bow was very awkward. Mrs. Sanzo, as well as her husband, was in regulation European costume, but Jean thought Ko-yeda much more charming in her delicate pink crape kimono and *obi* tied in an immense bow at the back. The funny little hunchy manner of walking which the little Japanese woman displayed was not suited to French gowns and hats, Jean thought. However, most gracious and sweet was Mrs. Sanzo, with a lovely voice and the most charming smile. She could speak a little English and made her sister promise to bring Jean to see her. During the hour that followed the arrival of these visitors others came and Jean had fairly to pinch herself to discover if she were not dreaming as she sat curled up on a little cushion listening to the unfamiliar language in such a very unfamiliar kind of house. Not any more familiar was the appearance of the little maids who came in from time to time to bring refreshments, and who knelt whenever they slid open the *fusuma*, or screen, between the rooms and who presented their trays of sweetmeats, or the pipes and tobacco for the gentlemen, still kneeling. [Pg 264]

But at last bedtime came. Mrs. Sannomiya clapped her hands and the maids again appeared to slide the *fusuma* while Ko-yeda led the way through the corridors to an upper room where piles of comfortables, or *futons* as they were called, had been laid on the floor. A little pillow had been provided for Jean in place of the hard wooden bolster usually considered proper for a lady. This because her hair would be disarranged by the use of anything different. [Pg 265]

It was a warm night and the *shoji* and *amado* were both open toward the garden, though down-stairs Jean heard them putting up the wooden shutters called *amado*, and knew the house was thus being closed for the night. She could hear the murmur of talk around her, and the splash of water from the fountain in the garden. There was a queer scent of incense in the air and this mingled with the odors of the garden and the smoke of her lamp made her realize that this was indeed a foreign land. She lay under her canopy of mosquito net, a very necessary protection, and wished that Jack were there and that she could fly across the great city to where her mother and sisters were, that she might kiss them all good-night. "Well, I am glad I am not further away," she thought. "Suppose they were across the ocean. I might have reason for feeling homesick."

The next day came a round of entertainments. A visit to Mrs. Sanzo where there was a fat, laughing, slant-eyed, cunning baby, exactly like dolls Jean remembered having had as a child. There was a little glimpse of the city, and a call at one of the mission schools where it seemed pleasant to find American women teachers and gentle little girl pupils. Then there was a drive to the country to see the silk spinners. [Pg 266]

"This is the time when the cocoons are ready," Ko-yeda said. "You will like to see?"

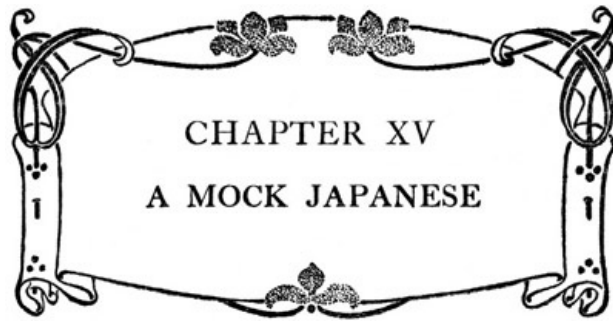
Indeed Jean would and so they drove on to where some lowly little cottages made a village. The doors, even the fronts of the houses, were all open, and inside Jean could see fluffy piles of pale yellow or white stuff before which sat withered, brown-faced old men or women with rude little hand-reels upon which they wound the delicate thread. More than once the girls alighted to watch the process, Ko-yeda speaking and evidently telling about Jean, for they eyed her with eager interest and one gave her a soft puffy ball of the silk and would take no return.

There was more than one stop, for no excursion is complete without a cup of tea, and then back to the city to another meal at a foot-high table, more ceremonious bows and visits, another night upon the *futons* with the insects shrilling outside in the garden to the accompaniment of water trickling over the stones, and the mosquitoes buzzing outside the net, then Jean was ready for her own people and her own way of living. She would see Ko-yeda? Oh, yes, many times before she left Kyoto, and they would have many more pleasant talks.

She went away laden with presents, with all the servants prostrating themselves at each side the door, and with an impression of having lived for two days in an Arabian Night story. [Pg 267]



GLAD SHE HAD EXPERIMENTED WITH CHOP-STICKS



CHAPTER XV
A MOCK JAPANESE

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A MOCK JAPANESE

"Sit right down and tell us all about it," said Mary Lee as Jean appeared before the family after her visit. "Did you have a good time?"

Jean took off her gloves and folded them neatly. "I had a most interesting time," she said. "I never knew kinder, more hospitable people, and when I came away they loaded me with gifts till I was so embarrassed I didn't know what to do. Of course I gave all the servants something, but I have got to do something for Ko-yeda after all this."

"Where are your presents?" asked Jack. "Fetch them along; we want to see what they are like."

"You know it is a custom to give presents to a departing guest," said Nan. "They always do it, and it is in accordance with the station and wealth of the entertainer. I know it is very overwhelming sometimes but it has to be endured."

"I'll get the things presently," said Jean. "Tell me what you all have been doing since I left you."

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"We'll do that when you have told your tale, which will be much more interesting. How many are in the family and did you see them all, and what were they like?" Nan asked the questions.

Jean began to count off the answers on her fingers. "In the family there are Mr. and Mrs. Sannomiya, Grandmother Sannomiya and Ko-yeda. There was a son but he died two years ago and that is why Ko-yeda was called home. There is a married sister, Mrs. Sanzo; she is very nice and has a darling baby. I went to her house. She is very tiny and looked like a little doll in her dress quite like ours. Her husband is tiny, too, and dresses like any of our men. The others adopt our costume when they are out, but at home they go back to kimonos and all that. It was very funny to see Mr. Sannomiya in the garden with a big fan and an umbrella. The old grandmother has blackened teeth and is the most important person in the house. Mrs. Sannomiya waits on her hand and foot, and they all hang on her words as if she were an oracle. She is rather a nice old person but I can imagine that a daughter-in-law might have a very unpleasant time of it in some households."

"Poor Ko-yeda," said Jack, "I hope she won't have any hard time."

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"I don't believe she will, for she told me that if she married it is probable that her husband would be adopted into the family to take the place of her brother who died. In that case, he will take her name and be considered a true son. His own people won't be anything at all to him."

"There are cases not unlike that in our own country," said Eleanor. "I have known men who were completely weaned from their own families as soon as they were married. I think a woman is a horrid selfish pig to completely absorb a man that way. If any one steals Neal from me and makes him indifferent to his people, all because she is such a jealous pig she wants him all to herself, I shall have my opinion of her."

They all laughed at Eleanor's vehemence, but only Mary Lee noticed Nan's heightened color. Mary Lee was taking notes these days.

"What did you have to eat?" asked Jack.

"Oh, all sorts of queer stuff, some of it perfectly impossible," Jean told her; "but some of it was very good, the cakes especially. Ko-yeda tried to have some English food. We actually did have bread, and the fish was served me without that awful sweet sauce. I didn't starve." She went on with her account, Jack taking notes rapidly while her twin talked.

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"What on earth are you doing?" queried Mary Lee as Jack scribbled away.

"Oh, I am just getting it all down so I can use the material in the future. Jean may forget some of it. It is much easier to get hold of it now when I have nothing else to do; it may save me lots of time later on. I can make a daily or a weekly or some kind of theme of it."

Jean told about her drive to the little village where she had seen the silk-spinning, of her callers, of the routine in the house and much that the others found interesting. "They do things in the most contrary fashion," she dilated upon her subject. "They push the eye of the needle on to the thread; their keys always turn in the opposite direction from ours, and the other day I was watching Mr. Sannomiya writing a letter. Will you believe it? He did it all backwards."

"Go on and get your things," urged Nan. "We are crazy to see them."

Jean retired and presently came back with her treasures. "This," she said, unrolling something from its wrapping of first soft paper and then an under covering of fine silk, "is what Mr. Sannomiya gave me." She displayed a beautiful silken panel charmingly painted. "It is a *kakemono*, you know. After seeing those lovely cool rooms ours do seem overcrowded. When I get home I think I shall fit up a room in the wing and that shall be a Japanese room."

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"Oh, let us do it," cried Jack. "We can do just as the Japanese do and can have different decorations for different days. We can have tea there sometimes and wear our costumes, just as you were planning, Nan."

"I think that will be a lovely idea," agreed Mrs. Corner; "then you will all have a chance to display your treasures."

Jean carefully put away her *kakemono* and took from a box, sweetly smelling and prettily decorated, a beautiful Satsuma vase. "This is from Grandmother Sannomiya," she announced.

"Such a beauty," said one and another as it was passed around.

"And this," Jean next produced a silken scarf of wonderful tint and beautifully embroidered, "is from Mrs. Sannomiya."

"How perfectly gorgeous," cried Jack. "Oh, Jean, I am green with envy."

Jean was very complacent at having aroused all this admiration of her gifts. "I am sure you will be more so when I show you what Ko-yeda herself has given me," she said as she drew forth a small bag or pouch to which was fastened an exquisite carving of ivory. "It is a real *netsuké*," said Jean with pride. "I learned something about a *netsuké* from Ko-yeda," she went on. "It is really just the thing that keeps the pouch from slipping through the sash. It used to be used on all sorts of things, pipes, tobacco pouches, medicine cases and, Mr. Sannomiya says, originally on shrine cases. This one is quite old, but the very oldest are made of wood instead of ivory. There used to be very celebrated carvers of *netsukés* who signed them and their work is very valuable. Mine isn't signed but I think it is a love."

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The gift was passed from hand to hand and was pronounced a prize worth having. Then Jean carefully replaced it in its pretty box and carried off her presents. She was a most particular little person and very exact about all her belongings. Not so striking as merry Jack she, nevertheless, had her own good points, a neat figure, small hands and feet, a gentle expression and good features. Her eyes had not the depth and expression of Nan's nor the changefulness and sparkle of Jack's but they were soft and clear.

"And what have you been doing?" asked Jean when her own affairs had been discussed sufficiently.

"Seeing the town," Nan told her.

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"What have you seen?"

"The great Yasaka tower, for one thing, the Mikado's palace for another. We haven't been to the temples yet, at least not to the principal one," Jack told her.

"I believe it is said that there are three thousand temples in Kyoto," remarked Nan.

"We couldn't possibly see them all," returned Jean.

"Oh, yes, we have seen them all," declared Jack with a twinkle in her eye.

"What perfect nonsense," said Jean disgustedly. "How could you in two days?"

"We could and we did, from the top of the Yasaka tower. They must have been all there before us even if we couldn't distinguish one from another."

"Now, isn't that just like you, Jack?" retorted Jean. "What is the tower for? It was pointed out to me yesterday, but there were so many other things to see I didn't learn anything about it."

"I think it was built by an emperor that his children might view the whole city. In the former days royalty was so sacred that no one was allowed to look upon the emperor and empress. When they gave audiences, they were concealed by a purple curtain down to the knees, but the present ruler has done away with all that; he and his wife appear among their people quite as any European monarch would do," Miss Helen told them.

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"And how their people adore them," said Jean. "I heard no end of tales of their goodness. The empress is so very charitable and is so kind to the sick and the poor; so is the emperor for that matter. Ko-yeda could not say enough about them."

While they were talking Jack had slipped away. She could not get over the fact that Jean had been having adventures in which she had no part. "Very well," she told herself, "I will make an adventure for myself." In this city of beautiful brocades and embroideries the girls had found the shops most fascinating, and had made several purchases. Jack had provided herself with an entire Japanese costume, a pretty kimono, a gorgeous *obi*, a pair of *geta* or clogs, and all the other paraphernalia. She had carefully studied the arrangement of hair and since her own was no lighter than Ko-yeda's she could arrange it to look quite like that of a Japanese girl. While the others were still busy talking, she donned her costume, arranged her hair as nearly as possible like Ko-yeda's, stuck many pins and ornaments in it, slipped on the *getas* and sallied forth with fan and umbrella. Both she and Jean had often before this practiced walking on the queer little shoes and could shuffle along fairly well, though when Jack was actually on the street, she felt awkward and a trifle uneasy.

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But she was determined to carry out her adventure and went on trying her best to toddle along in imitation of the women around her.

Passers-by looked up at her curiously, for she was so much taller than the usual run of persons on the street that she could not but attract attention. She had made herself up very well, but her eyes and her height gave indubitable evidence of her being a foreigner, yet no one did more than smile as she went along. The scene was a gay one, *jinrikishas* hastening hither and thither, street criers, venders of all sorts of wares, workmen, strollers, crowded the way. Shops displayed many kinds of rich wares, little wooden houses with gray roofs were surprisingly many. Jack, entertained at first, at last thought it time to return. She looked about her. It was all very unfamiliar, but she decided she knew the way. All at once she found herself in a narrow labyrinthine street and surrounded by a curious crowd of little urchins who began to jeer, to point at her, to jabber uncomprehended words. Finally one, bolder than the rest, came up and tweaked her sleeve. This was the signal for further disagreeable attentions. One jerked away her fan; another poked a hole through her umbrella. She tried to take it as a joke and to smile upon their naughtiness, but they were excited with the chase and meant to run their prey to cover. So unpleasant did they finally become that poor Jack looked this way and that for a way of escape. She had long ago exhausted her vocabulary of Japanese speech and had not a word left to suit the occasion. There seemed no one in sight but the boys and she fervently wished they

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were not there.

But presently, to her great relief, she saw some one approaching, and, as good luck would have it, the figure was that of a woman in plain garb but it was the familiar dress of her own country. At sight of this individual, the boys scattered. Jack stood still and waited. She was sure if she spoke her own tongue she would be understood.

The newcomer soon was at her side. "Will you please tell me where I can get a *jinrikisha*?" asked Jack.

The person so accosted started. "Why——" she looked Jack over, surprise giving way to amused interest. "Why, my child, what in the world are you doing over in this part of the city dressed like that, when you don't know the language?" she asked. [Pg 281]

Jack colored up. "I was out for a walk," she said. "I didn't realize how tall I was and that I would attract attention. I thought I could pass along and no one would notice very particularly, for I am sure I have my things on quite properly and I can walk on the *getas*, though not so very fast."

The lady listened with still an amused expression. "Come along with me," she said. "I can soon set you all right. I am a teacher in a mission school in this part of the city. I am going there now."

"Oh, I should love to see a mission school," declared Jack, gladly accepting the invitation. The two walked along together both asking many questions and becoming on good terms by the time they had reached the door of the school. As they went in, an older person came forward, but stopped in surprise as she saw the tall girl in Japanese dress.

The circle of little girls sitting on the matted floor looked up also, their serious faces broadening into smiles as they beheld Jack. "This is Miss Corner, Mrs. Lang," said Jack's companion. "She has lost her way in this big city and needs to be sent home." Then she gave an account of Jack's escapade and the elder teacher laughed merrily. [Pg 282]

"I suppose I ought to have known better," said Jack ruefully. "It is a downfall to my pride. I thought I looked so lovely and Japanese. I even put little dabs of red on my cheeks and my lower lip, you see."

"But that didn't lessen your inches nor slant your eyes in the right direction," Mrs. Lang said. "Of course you slipped out without your mother's seeing you."

"Yes, of course," returned Jack rather meekly. "If it hadn't been for those horrid little boys I should have had no trouble. Of course people laughed and one or two men said something to me but I just went on and didn't answer."

Mrs. Lang shook her head. "Don't do it again. It wouldn't be exactly safe for you to go alone into the native part of the city in your accustomed dress and as a mock Japanese you might expect some trouble."

"But I thought they were always so gentle and polite here that I would be quite safe."

"There are circumstances when it doesn't do to trust too much to theories," Mrs. Lang replied.

"Miss Corner would like very much to hear the children sing," said Miss Gresham, Jack's first acquaintance.

Mrs. Lang turned to the little group and said something, then she started a song. Jack listened attentively and with perfect gravity, but the children, whose voices were so sweet in speech, sang execrably, with very little idea of tune, and so raucously as to make one wonder how they could do it. "Nan would curl up and die if she were to hear them," she said to herself. [Pg 283]

The children then went through several exercises for her benefit and at last subsided in order with solemn set little faces.

"I thought them so expressionless and unresponsive when I first came," said Miss Gresham as she conducted Jack to another room, "but you have no idea how receptive they are and how attentive. We are doing good work here and I wish you would bring all your party to see us and some of the other classes which are more advanced."

Jack promised and was told the name of the street, and how to reach Miss Gresham herself and then she took her leave with a feeling of thankfulness that she had been so lucky as to come across one of her own people. "It was truly a missionary act," she said with a smile as she bade Mrs. Lang good-bye. "I begin to realize what a debt of gratitude I owe you."

"It was only what the veriest stranger might do in any place," protested Miss Gresham, though Jack felt it was more. [Pg 284]

"I might have been any kind of a horrid person," she said, "and you were just as nice to me as could be."

"My dear," said Miss Gresham, "I knew as soon as I looked at you that you were not a horrid person."

"With all this powder and rouge on my face?"

"I could see under that," responded Miss Gresham with a smile.

Miss Gresham insisted upon going all the way to the hotel with her in a *jinrikisha* which carried them swiftly through the streets to the place in no time.

"I wish you would come in and see them all," urged Jack.

"Not to-day; perhaps another time, but you will be sure to come to see us."

Jack was earnest in her promise to do this and went on feeling rather shamefaced. It had been easy to slip out but the coming back was quite a different matter. She could not but be observed, she reflected, and it might not be as pleasant for her to be pointed out as the flyaway girl who masqueraded as a Japanese. She hesitated so long on the steps that Miss Gresham came back to her. "What is the matter?" she asked.

"I wish you would go in with me," she begged. "I am afraid the servants will discover me, or, if they don't, that they won't let me go up without questions. If you were to ask for Mrs. Corner, I could go along with you and no one need notice particularly."

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"I understand," responded Miss Gresham, "and of course I will go." So the matter of entrance was effected without undue remark. If any one observed the tall Japanese girl, she passed by so quickly that it gave but a momentary interest, and so was forgotten.

The adventure was frowned at of course, but in the presence of Miss Gresham and in the interest her account of the mission aroused, Jack was allowed to escape with less of a scolding than she really deserved. It was her first serious scrape since she had arrived in Japan, and perhaps that was one reason why it was treated with some degree of mildness. "Jack was bound to do something," said Nan, "and we are lucky to have her do nothing more serious. I am sure she won't venture forth again in such a get-up." And it is safe to say that Jack did not.



CHAPTER XVI

A PROSPECTIVE SERVANT

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Although Jack's escapade was the talk of the hour, the excitement it brought died away in a day or two, while Jean's experiences continued to be discussed for a longer time. Every now and then would crop up something funny or, at least, interesting, which she had to tell about.

"I found out why the people here make such a noise in that piggy way when they eat," she told her family. "It is to show appreciation of your food. It is particularly desirable to do it when you are dining out, the more succulent the sound the more polite."

"Oh, Jean," protested Mary Lee.

"It is a fact, really it is. Ko-yeda told me and I noticed it myself."

"Let's all do that way the next time we go over to Jo's," proposed Jack. "She won't know what to make of it, but after a while we will tell her it is a custom we learned in Japan."

The girls laughed and agreed to try it. "Poor old Jo," said Jean. "She is out of it this time. I really miss her once in a while. She has always been around when we were having our good times." [Pg 290]

"Don't you believe but that she would a thousand times rather be where she is." Nan spoke with conviction.

"I wonder if I shall feel like that ever," said Jack thoughtfully. "I can't imagine myself so devoted to a husband as Jo is to Dr. Paul."

"I wouldn't trust you," returned Jean. "You will quite as likely outdo her in your abject devotion."

"I hope I shall at least not be abject," retorted Jack stiffly. "That is one thing I shall not care to learn from the Japanese."

"Is Mrs. Sannomiya abject?" inquired Eleanor.

"Well, she is a little bit, but I have seen American women with big bullies of husbands quite as much so," Jean replied. "Not that Mr. Sannomiya is a bully, far from it, but I suppose it is the Japanese woman's prerogative to be humble as it is the man's to be lordly. The girls are all trained from the beginning to be meek and gentle, to exercise self-control under all circumstances, to smile and be agreeable no matter how mad they feel inside."

"Humph!" ejaculated Jack. "I'd like to see me."

"You would have to if you were a Japanese," insisted Jean. [Pg 291]

"I think we will leave Jack here for a year in a Japanese household," remarked Mary Lee.

Jack made a face at her. "I'd run away," she said.

"Where?" said Mary Lee teasingly.

"Oh, I would throw myself upon the mercies of the American legation and get the chief to let me marry one of his nice attachés," returned Jack.

Mary Lee did not pursue the subject, but turned to Jean to ask, "Does Ko-yeda do anything about the house?"

"Oh, yes, though there isn't so very much to do; not near so much as in our homes. She always serves tea when there is extra company, and when her father has a particular guest she waits on them, not because there are no servants nor because they don't know how, but because it is considered the thing to serve the two, or three, or whatever number of men with their meal separately, and it is more hospitable and courteous to have it served by one of the ladies of the family."

"That is something the way they do in provincial districts at home," remarked Nan.

"What do the maids do?" inquired Mary Lee.

"Oh, they roll up the beds and store them away for the day in the closets, take down the mosquito nets, sweep and dust the rooms, wash the porches, and the dishes, maybe. The market people come with baskets to the door sometimes. Ko-yeda or her mother or grandmother used to go to the go-down and select what was to be the decoration for the day and one of them spent a long time arranging the flower vases. Then there always seemed to be some kimonos or something to be ripped up or dyed, for they use them over and over while there is anything left of them, and whenever they are washed they must be taken apart." [Pg 292]

"Again like the primitive methods of our grandmothers and our thrifty New England women," said Nan.

"Just what class do the Sannomiyas belong to?" asked Mary Lee.

"I think that they must have been in the *daimio* class," Jean told her, "for they showed me some wonderful embroidered robes that had been in the family for years. I asked Ko-yeda why she didn't wear them, and she said that there was no class distinction nowadays, that the castles were done away with, for Japan is quite democratic."

"What has that to do with the robes?" asked Jack.

"The handsome embroidered robes were worn only by nobility," Jean told her. "The *daimios* were proud as [Pg 293]

Lucifer and their establishments in their castles must have been very much like those we read of in old feudal times. I believe there are still very exclusive households who keep up many of the old traditions."

"And the *samurai* class?" interrogated Nan.

"They were the military who had their special lords, and served them and the Shogun to the death. They were what we might call retainers, and they were the class between the upper nobility and the common people."

"And what were the *ronin*? Don't you know we are always hearing that tale of the 'Forty-seven Ronin'?"

"They were the masterless *samurai*, who wandered about, owing no special allegiance to any master."

"Oh, I see. This is all very interesting," declared Nan. "You certainly have learned something from your stay with the Sannomiyas, Jean. Tell us some more. What about the classes below the *samurai*, the common people, 'po' white trash' as it were?"

"So far as I could learn, the peasant class are called either *eta* or *heimin*, though it seems to me that the *eta* is lower than the *heimin*, for they are the ones who are considered very unclean, as they slaughter animals, tan skins, and are sometimes beggars." [Pg 294]

"But tanners are quite respectable persons at home," put in Jack.

"They are not so here, for the having something to do with dead animals puts them quite without the pale. The *samurai* would be disgraced if he married into an *eta* family and would be considered an *eta* himself, although they maintain that there is no such thing as any difference in class nowadays. Mr. Sannomiya told me, through Ko-yeda as an interpreter, that the *samurai* despised trade and all that. The merchant class is considered, or used to be so, below the farmers; in fact they were not up to the mechanics, and were very low down in the social scale. That partly explains why there is so much talk of the dishonesty of tradespeople in Japan; it is the lower class who carry on the shops and all that, or so it was. The *samurai* try to keep to the professions and such employments, for it was formerly thought very low down indeed to barter in any way. All this is passing away, Mr. Sannomiya says, and many of the *samurai* are going into mercantile life, adopting Western standards and trying to establish a reputation for honest dealing which the merchant class have not always had."

"Did you make any dreadful mistakes?" inquired Jack. [Pg 295]

"No, I don't think so. I wasn't quite as bad as the lady who wanted onions for dinner and told the cook to serve up a Shinto priest. The two words are almost the same, only one has a very different meaning from the other. The worst thing I did was to sit in front of the tokonoma when I went in. It was like planting yourself at the right hand of your host without being asked."

"How did you find out it was not the thing to do?" asked Mary Lee.

"I begged Ko-yeda to tell me if I had made any mistake. She was overcome with confusion at the idea of saying anything to the discredit of a guest, but I just insisted and she told me that."

"It was like Nan's taking her seat on the sofa in Germany," remarked Jack.

"Just about the same thing," Jean answered. "I imagine that American free and easy manners often shock the Japanese. Ko-yeda says that when she first came to Rayner Hall she was overwhelmed by the rudeness of American girls, and I can well believe it when you consider her point of view. I think you can set it down as a safe rule that it is well to apologize to a Japanese for anything and everything, that is, if you are using their language."

"Dear me," Jack sighed, "I suppose I have said dreadful things when I have tried to speak the language." [Pg 296]

"I haven't a doubt of it," Jean was ready to agree. "When you are speaking of doing anything yourself you must say 'I humbly do thus and so,' but when you speak of another's doing the same thing you must say they do it honorably. If you give a present it is poor and insignificant, but if you accept the same thing it at once becomes magnificent."

"Well, I don't see how a foreigner ever learns," said Jack. "I shall never become a missionary or a teacher or anything that leads me to study the language."

"They insisted upon my entering the bath first," Jean went on, "and I soon saw that it would be very much out of place if I didn't. It may be the family all used the same water; I didn't inquire; I only know that it is the custom, the servants coming last, and they all do it in the frankest way. At the Sannomiyas' they were quite as particular as we would be, but I know it is not always so. The Sannomiyas are becoming quite Americanized. I am sure Ko-yeda has been teaching them our manners and morals. She thinks she may become a teacher; it was with that idea they sent her to us to be educated, but I have a notion that she will marry, though she said she meant to keep on with her studies here." [Pg 297]

"Don't you wish she would have a wedding while we are here so we could see how it is done?" said Jack.

"I don't imagine it would be very different from our own ceremony," Jean rejoined, "for you know they are a Christian family, and her father says she shall marry none but a Christian. He is devoted to her and thinks we treat our women so well that she must have the same consideration."

"I am glad he thinks that," said Jack heartily.

This ended the conversation for the moment, for Nan, who had been looking up the attractions, announced that they must certainly see Lake Biwa. "It is the largest," she said, looking up from her guide-book, "and must be very beautiful."

"I heard some interesting things of Fuji," said Jean. "A beautiful goddess is supposed to make her home there. She has such a pretty name, 'The Princess who makes the Trees to Blossom.' I think a great many people think that the mythological stories are wicked because they are those of a false religion, but I really don't think that they ought to be frowned upon any more than those of the Greek heroes."

"I suppose," said Nan reflectively, "that the reason some persons condemn them is because the temples and the old rites are still present, while the Greek ones are a thing of the past." [Pg 298]

"Well, they certainly can't hurt us," declared Jack, "and I want to hear them all."

"If you were to do that you would spend most of your time listening, for their name is legion," Jean told her. "I think they are perfectly fascinating, and so are the rites, and many things the people still do. I don't see why we shouldn't study all these things as curiosities, not as a religion."

The rest quite agreed with her and as Nan began to hurry them off, they went to get ready for their trip to Lake Biwa.

This, however, was interrupted in a manner entirely unlooked for. It was decided to take *jinrikishas*, as the country through which they would go was exceedingly lovely and they could enjoy the journey quite as much as the final view of the great lake. Past palaces and temples, long rows of gray-roofed houses, gay shops, parks and gardens they were carried to where the high hills arose above them on each side. In this warm weather and beyond the limits of the big city, little naked babies, and larger children scarcely clad, rolled about in play in the village streets through which they went. Jack and Nan were in the first *jinrikisha*, behind them came Jean and Miss Helen, while Mary Lee and Eleanor occupied the third. Mrs. Corner had decided to stay at home being rather afraid of the heat. Generally when the runners gave their call of "Hi! Hi!" the little ones scattered but there was one little youngster who, if hearing, did not heed and was bowled over completely, directly in the path of the runners. These stopped short nearly upsetting Jack and Nan who looked out to see what was the matter. [Pg 299]

"What in the world are they jabbering about?" asked Jack looking out. "We seem to have stirred up the community, for, see, the people are coming running."

"We'd better get out," decided Nan, "and see what is wrong."

They suited the action to the word and presently found themselves on the edge of a group where there was much talk and gesticulating going on. The two tall girls could easily see over the heads of the nearest bystanders and discovered that the centre of interest was a small chubby little lad whose plump brown body bore evidences of having been hurt in some way, for blood was streaming from his head and he was quite limp and helpless. A woman was kneeling on the ground holding him while the coolie who had been the unfortunate cause of the accident was squatting near looking most unhappy. [Pg 300]

"Oh, dear," cried Jack, "the poor little tot is hurt." She pushed through the crowd and reached the child. "What is the matter?" she asked the runner who knew a few words of English. But his vocabulary was not equal to the occasion and Jack could learn but little. However she made out that the child was hurt, and when the man took him in his arms to carry him to the nearest little cottage, she followed with the rest.

By this time the occupants of the other *jinrikishas* had alighted and, as one of their runners knew more English than the rest, they were able to get at facts. The little boy had been knocked down, had hit his head against a stone, was slightly stunned but was recovering.

"Where are his parents?" Jack inquired.

"He have none, honorable lady," replied the man addressed, who was the runner speaking English.

"Poor little rabbit!" exclaimed Jack compassionately. She stooped to pick up the little fellow and to set him on her knee where he sat looking at her unblinkingly with his queer little slits of eyes. Whether it was surprise or fear which made him so still she could not tell. She smiled down at him, but not a quiver passed over the little face. Jack took a coin from her purse and put it in his chubby fingers but he only looked at it gravely and made no response. [Pg 301]

"He is like a graven image," remarked Jean who stood by. "Did you ever know such immovable gravity?" Presently Mary Lee who wore some flowers in her belt drew them forth and held them out to the little fellow, and then he smiled.

Jack gave him an ecstatic hug. "Isn't he the cunningest ever?" she cried. "I wish we could take him home. I would so love to have him."

"Oh, Jack, what an idea!" exclaimed Jean. "What in the world would you do with him?"

"I'd train him to be a cracker-jack of a servant and when I am married, I would take him into the house and he could live with me always."

"I never heard such nonsense," returned Jean. "I think he is all right. We must go on or we will never get to the lake."

Jack was very unwilling to give up her little brown boy, but knew that she could not keep the entire party there any longer, so after seeking out his proper guardian, who proved to be an aunt by marriage, they gave her some money and went on their way. But all the beauties of the lake and the mountains were of small interest compared to the little naked child they had tumbled over on their way. [Pg 302]

Jack talked of little else. She had a baby bee in her bonnet as Nan expressed it and it was like her to become completely possessed with the idea of taking him home, once she had decided that she wanted to. "I am going

to talk to mother about it," she declared, "and I am going to hunt up Miss Gresham and get her to come out here again with me to talk to the aunt. No doubt they would be only too glad to get rid of him, for you see they are such a poor looking set of people. We upset him and we ought to do something for him. Besides," she added after using all other arguments, "we could do some missionary work and make a Christian of him, so I am sure it would be worth while."

She was so in earnest that Nan did not laugh, but it was a habit of Jack's to make her duty wait upon her desires, and Nan knew that the missionary spirit was aroused for the occasion.

However, in some way or other Jack did get around her mother to a degree sufficient for her to give consent to a second visit to the village in Miss Gresham's company. Whether Jack had pictured the child's condition as so pitiful as to arouse her mother's commiseration or just how she had managed no one could exactly tell, but sufficient to say that Jack and Miss Gresham did go a day or two after and to the dismay of every one came back with the little lad, whose brown nakedness was covered by clothes fitted to his estate. These Jack had bought, with Miss Gresham's help, and the two had very much enjoyed their mission.

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Miss Gresham had a way with children and, knowing Japanese fairly well, could manage the conversation without difficulty. She found that the child had no special claim upon any one. Both his parents were dead. His mother's sister had taken him but she, too, had died and those who now cared for him were no blood relation, but were too charitable to turn him away.

"Miss Gresham says she can keep him at the school as well as not," Jack informed her mother eagerly, "so we need not be bothered with him while we are traveling, and when we are ready to go she can find a way to send or bring him to Nagasaki when we sail for home."

"You seem to have bewitched Miss Gresham completely," said Mrs. Corner.

"She is the nicest kind of missionary lady," returned Jack heartily. "She is so different from my idea of such. Her brother is a medical missionary, and she has been out here ten years. She has been home but once in all that time. She has told me the most interesting things about her work. I shall always be interested in missions after this; I used rather to think them a bore, but after seeing the work in her school, and hearing what has been accomplished by the medical missionaries, I have changed my mind."

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The small boy continued to remain under Miss Gresham's care, and was the loadstone which drew all the girls to the mission school more frequently than any one of them could have prophesied. Little Toku was quite placid during this change, the only objection he made being to clothes, which, in the state of the weather, seemed perfectly reasonable to every one. He was serene, well cared for and happy.

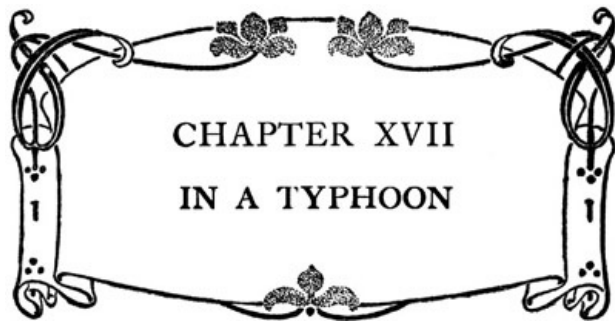
"At all events," Jack said to Miss Gresham, "if I can't take him home with me I shall see to it that he is provided for. Nan says she will help me, and I know you will see to it that he is brought up properly."

"I will certainly do that," Miss Gresham promised. "He is a dear, bright little fellow, and the girls all make a great fuss over him. He is the youngest in the school, you see."

"I hope to persuade mother to let us have him," Jack went on, "but if I can't I shall feel a stronger interest in Japan than ever."

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And so the small Toku remained at the school while the Corners went on with their sightseeing.



CHAPTER XVII
IN A TYPHOON

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IN A TYPHOON

"Time is growing short," said Jack one morning in August, "and we have not seen the Inland Sea nor Kobe nor have we climbed Fuji."

"There is a Japanese proverb which says that there are two kinds of fools," remarked Nan; "one has never climbed Fujisan and the other has climbed it twice."

"Set me down for the first kind," said Jean, "for I don't intend to do any such fool trick as to climb a mountain nearly thirteen thousand feet high."

"If we are going to do a lot of other things, I don't see how any of us are to undertake that stunt," said Eleanor. "I vote we pick out the things we cannot reasonably pass over and then take the leavings as we can."

"Good girl," cried Jack. "That is the ticket. Tell us, Nan, oh, honorable lady of the guide-book, what is it up to us to see?"

Nan spread out her map, propped her two elbows on the table before her and began making investigations while the others chattered away about Fuji, Lake Biwa and other things that had lately interested them. [Pg 310]

"I wish I could remember all the stories about Fuji," said Jean looking at her neat note-book. "I know that Biwa is called the Lake of the Lute on account of its shape. There is a legend that tells of its having been formed by the sun-goddess at the time of a great earthquake. The rice-fields of the poor people were all destroyed but in their stead was seen this lake full of fish."

"It was at the same time that Fujisan was formed," Mary Lee went on with the tale. "It has so many pretty poetical names; one is the Mountain of the White Lotus, because it rises, all snowy white, from out the stagnant fields at its base."

"And Japan is called the 'Islands of the Dragon-Fly,'" put in Eleanor; "I wonder why."

"There is a story of that, too," said Jean. "I have it somewhere in my note-book. It was when the god Izanami shook from his spear bits of sand and mud that stayed among the reeds of a watery place and became dry land. It was in the form of a dragon-fly that the dry part spread out and so the god called it the Land of the Dragon-Fly."

"Fuji is called the Holy White Mountain, too," put in Jack.

Here Nan looked up. "I think I have puzzled it out," she announced; "we can go from here to Osake, and then to Kobe. We must see Miyajima and Sakusa; they are so interesting. There is a great *tori-i* at Miyajima which is fine. They say the beauty of the Inland Sea is beyond anything, so we can stop along its shores and get to Nagasaki in time to sail when we have planned to." [Pg 311]

"What is at Susaki, or whatever the name is?" inquired Eleanor.

"It is Sakusa, and it is not very far from Matsue; we ought to go to Matsue, for it is a very old and very interesting city. We could go to Kitzuki from there. Let me see how it would work out." She turned again to her map. "From here to Kobe and then to Matsue. I think we could manage it, but there would be some cross-country going. It would make a tremendously interesting trip. I will see what Aunt Helen says. For my own part I should like the cross-country trip, but perhaps mother wouldn't."

"She might take an easier route and one of us could stay with her," suggested Mary Lee.

"I would be perfectly willing to," spoke up Jean, who loved her ease and was not so keen for variety as to sacrifice comfort to it.

"I don't care a rap about those old stuffy places. Just because they are old doesn't recommend them to me. I would really rather stay in a pleasant bright city and go about in a 'riky when I want to see anything." [Pg 312]

"Very well, that lets us out," remarked Jack. "I am in for anything, Nan, the wilder and queerer, the better."

"So am I," responded Eleanor.

"Me, too," put in Mary Lee.

"Then if Aunt Helen will go, we shall be all right," rejoined Nan closing her book with satisfaction.

As a result of all this, Kyoto was left behind and the party turned toward the south. At Kobe they left Jean and her mother while the rest went on to the marvelous temples at Nara, then back to pick up Mrs. Corner and Jean and to travel on along the shores of the beautiful Inland Sea to arrive at last at the sacred island of Miyajima, where a wonderful *tori-i* rising out of the water appeared mysterious and strangely picturesque under a sunset sky. A little further on, they left Jean and her mother, the others taking the trip across country to the ancient city of Matsue.

"Well, it was something of a jaunt, but I don't believe we shall regret it," said Nan looking from her window upon a fair lake and a range of mountain peaks which made a background for the queer old town. "I am crazy for a short turn about the place, a view of Daisen, which they say is much like Fuji." [Pg 313]

"You certainly are enterprising, Nan," said her aunt. "Aren't you tired?"

"A little, but not so much but I can walk more. The city looks quite flat, Aunt Helen, but the hills beyond are

beautiful. It was a feudal stronghold until quite modern times and it must still show remnants of its use-to-be-ness. There are three special quarters, the shopkeeping part, the temple and the residence section. There is a great castle, too, about which there are the grimmest kinds of legends. There are ever and ever so many temples. I wonder if we shall have time to see them all."

"Not if we do all the other things your energetic mind has planned."

Miss Helen was quite right, for a fierce typhoon came sweeping up the land that very night, and before it every one trembled and thanked heaven to be under shelter. The day had been so depressingly hot as to be most uncomfortable in the lowlands. By evening all were gasping for breath and then came a queer sensation as if one were unsteadily trying to keep his balance. The girls arose from their beds, groped their way to one another and sat huddled together in Miss Helen's room to which they went with one consent.

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"Do you suppose it is an earthquake?" queried Eleanor shakily.

"I shouldn't be at all surprised," returned Miss Helen. "There!" As she exclaimed, the whole house seemed to rock from side to side, then came a sweep and rush of rain, a perfect deluge, which threatened to engulf everybody and everything in its furious attack. There had been much running back and forth before the storm broke. The wooden shutters were secured, the doors bolted. There were weird sounds outside, gusts that went shrieking up the hills, thunderous sounds of lashing waves and roaring streams, heard once in a while between the dashing rain which never ceased. At intervals was felt the alarming tremor which made the girls all huddle closer together with white faces and nervous clutchings of one another's hands.

"There is one thing," whispered Nan trying to be encouraging, "if we go we shall all go together."

"But I wish mother and Jean were here," said Jack chokingly.

Mary Lee gave a convulsive sob, and Eleanor broke down completely. "I wish I had never come," she wailed. "I wish I had stayed home with my mother, and I wish Neal were here. Oh, dear, why did I come to this dreadful place?"

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"My dear children," spoke Miss Helen from her bed, "don't get hysterical. I imagine the worst is over. Do try to calm yourselves. No doubt they have had storms like this before and the house has stood, as you see. It sounds dreadful, but I do not believe we shall have a truly upheaving earthquake. Some slight unsettling always accompanies a typhoon, I have been told."

"Do you think this is a typhoon?" asked Eleanor trying to stop her tears.

"I imagine so; it seems very like the descriptions of such storms as I have read about."

"I verily do believe it is not quite so furious," remarked Nan.

"But we can't be sure." Eleanor was still apprehensive. "I could never go to bed this night."

"Nor I," came from one and another.

They all sat in silence till Jack spoke. "I wonder if poor little Toku is all right. I expect he is scared to death," she said mournfully.

Eleanor giggled hysterically. "I don't believe he knows anything about it. He is probably sleeping the sleep of the innocent," she said.

Somehow Jack's remark relieved the tension, and, as it was evident that the gale was less violent, they all began to be more cheerful though there was no sleep for any of them that night. At last only the lashing waves and the rush of water along the streets remained of the noises of earth and sky, and by daylight the girls crept back to their beds to sleep uneasily till it was time to get up.

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The typhoon had left its mark behind in the overthrow of trees and the snapping of wires, the tearing down of signs and the wrenching off of roofs. Later on came accounts of damage in the hills, of the washing away of bridges and the complete demolition of paths.

"So we shall have to give up Kitzuki altogether," Nan announced after an interview with the proprietor of the hotel. "It would not be safe, they say. But it is not so very far to Sakusa, and if we wait long enough we may be able to get there, though we shall have to walk even then."

"You don't catch this child walking." Jack spoke with decision.

"Well, we don't want to go to-day anyhow," Nan answered, "and as it is pretty bad everywhere after the storm we'd better just hold our horses till we can decide what is best. There are enough excursions to satisfy us, probably, though I am awfully disappointed not to go to Kitzuki."

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"What is its particular vanity?" inquired Eleanor.

"It is first of all a very holy place, according to Japanese creeds, then it is a very fashionable seaside resort."

"The latter appeals to me more strongly than the former," Eleanor declared, "but I can resign myself to leaving it out of our itinerary if there are any dangers. What is this Sakusa that you are so keen about?"

Nan hesitated before she answered. "There are some interesting ceremonies take place there, and there is a temple."

"A temple!" said Eleanor scornfully. "I have seen temples till I am worn out with them. What are the ceremonies?"

"I know," spoke up Jack as Nan again hesitated. "I have been reading up. Sakusa is the place where lovers make a pilgrimage and tie wishes on the trees. The wishes are supposed to come true and there are queer charms sold there and all sorts of funny doings."

"Oh!" Eleanor gave Nan a swift look, which Nan, seeing, resented.

"Oh, I am not so very anxious about it," she said nonchalantly, "though I think those odd customs are always interesting to see. If you all don't care about going or if there is anywhere else you prefer, why just let us leave it out." [Pg 318]

"I am crazy to go," said Eleanor. "I suppose we can join any band of pilgrims that we see going up and down the breadth of the land. They really have a pretty good time of it, I fancy. The old folks particularly. I haven't a doubt but some of those old ladies get no other outing; you always see them moseying along as cheerful as the next, although they may have walked far and have not had much to sustain them on the way. You get up the excursion, Nan, and we will be your happy band of pilgrims."

"I'm going out to see what it looks like after the storm," announced Jack. "Come along, any one who wants to go."

Mary Lee and Eleanor decided to accept this invitation and Nan was left to her guide-books. "You'd better join us," were their parting words.

"Tell me where you are going and perhaps I will come and hunt you up," returned Nan.

"We shall go to the great bridge," Jack told her. "It is always interesting there."

So they passed out and it was a couple of hours before they returned. In the meantime Nan had occupied herself in various ways, but had found no time to go to the bridge to meet the others. They came in hilarious from their walk. [Pg 319]

"Why didn't you come, Nan?" asked Eleanor. "We waited for you ever so long. Neal wanted to come back for you but Jack said he might miss you, as you would probably be on your way."

"Neal!" Nan looked up startled. Then she recovered herself. "Oh, your brother," she said with too great a show of indifference. "What is he doing here?"

"He came to see if we were all alive after the typhoon. The papers reported a great deal of damage in this part of the country and so he rushed over to see whether we were sound in life and limb."

"And where is he now?" inquired Miss Helen, to Nan's relief asking the question she would have put but for a self-consciousness she could not overcome.

"Oh, he has gone off with Jack. She is showing him the town, but we were tired and wouldn't go."

Gone off with Jack, very willingly of course, thought Nan. He was so little eager to see her that he had not even returned for a moment's greeting. She wondered how many letters Jack had received from him during this interval, and again she began to build up the altar of sacrifice upon which she would lay her heart. "Was it worth while going out to see the havoc?" she asked. [Pg 320]

"Oh, I don't know. Yes, it was rather interesting to see what was going on down by the wharves. We saw a good many funny things."

"Suppose we go, Aunt Helen," proposed Nan suddenly. "We have been cooped up all morning and I have been reading about a little temple of Jizo which they say is worth while. These others don't care about temples, so we won't insist upon their going. What do you say?"

Miss Helen agreed to the proposition and they began to make ready.

"Aren't you going to stay for lunch?" queried Mary Lee.

"No, we will get something at a tea-house on the way," replied Nan, and was off without further remark.

As Nan disappeared from view, Eleanor turned to Mary Lee. "Well," she exclaimed, "what do you make out of that?"

Mary Lee shook her head. "It is beyond me. I really thought she cared, but it looks as if she didn't. I wonder if, after all, she likes Rob Powell. There may have been a misunderstanding or a quarrel or something like that."

"Maybe, but I'll stake my best hat that she is in love with some one, and I really did hope it was Neal. Do you suppose by any accident that she has gone off in this way because she is jealous of Jack, is miffed because Neal didn't come back with us?" [Pg 321]

"She would have some reason to, it seems to me."

"It seems so to me, too. You don't suppose Jack has been putting notions in Neal's head, do you?"

"What kind of notions?"

"Oh, making him think Nan has a single steady at home or something of that kind."

"I am sure Jack wouldn't do it with any malicious intent, but she may have done it inadvertently. You see we are rather in the dark ourselves and cannot swear to anything. Nan is expansive enough about some things, but she is the most elusive person when it comes to an affair of the heart. I have been puzzled a score of times myself about her. She gets very high-flown romantic ideas about sacrifice and all that kind of thing, and

if she took it into her head that Jack must be interested in Neal she would go the whole length. I know she did have some such fancy a while ago, but I said enough to disabuse her mind of it, I thought."

"Well, I must talk to Neal," decided Eleanor.

"What will you tell him?"

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"Goodness knows. What can I tell him? That Jack is fond of Carter and that Nan is not pledged to any one?"

Mary Lee shook her head doubtfully.

"What we do must be done quickly," declared Eleanor. "Once you are all out of this country, good-bye to Neal's chances."

"How long is he going to be here?"

"Don't know. I haven't had a chance to ask him. He can often stay till he is recalled, but no one knows the hour or minute that may be. This much is certain; he was certainly more interested in Nan than I have ever known him to be in any one. He didn't say so in so many words, but he said enough to make me sure of it, and I am convinced that he wouldn't have been so eager for opportunities of getting her off to herself if he hadn't been pretty far gone."

"Then why under the sun did he march off with Jack to-day without a word with Nan?"

"That is where you have me, my child. There is something queer and we have to find out. Suppose you tackle Jack and I will get at Neal. Between us we may be able to find out the truth."

Mary Lee agreed to this, but her opportunity did not come that day nor the next. Nan and Mr. Harding met with a polite greeting, much less effusive than that which had passed between the young man and Jack on his arrival. But for the furtive glances which he gave Nan, when he thought no one was looking, Eleanor and Mary Lee would have been convinced of his absolute indifference. Nan, herself, did not once look his way unless compelled to.

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"There is this about it," confessed Eleanor, when the two conspirators got together. "They are entirely too deadly indifferent for it to be altogether natural. It is my opinion they have quarreled. Have you noticed how Neal watches Nan when he thinks no one is looking?"

"And how she never looks at him at all?" returned Mary Lee. "I have not seen them exchange a dozen remarks since your brother came, and Nan has scarcely mentioned him to me. When she has, it has been because I dragged his name into the conversation."

"It is vastly more suspicious than if there were not this studied ignoring the one of the other."

"Of course it is," agreed Mary Lee.

"Poor old Neal; I hate to have him unhappy," said Eleanor.

"Poor old Nan; I can't bear to have her unhappy."

They both laughed. Then Mary Lee exclaimed, "I have just thought of something that makes me sure it is all on account of Jack and that Rob isn't in it at all."

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"Do tell me."

"Nan asked me a while ago upon a certain occasion, don't ask me when it was, please, Nell, but she asked me then if I didn't think it was almost as hard to give up one whom you loved to another as to have him taken from you to another world. You know, Nell, I can't talk of such things very much, and this was a sacred hour, but I thought I would tell you."

Eleanor put her arm around her friend. "It is dear of you to tell me. I understand, Mary Lee, and because it was a sacred hour you can be sure that Nan spoke from the very depths of her heart."

"That is exactly it. It doesn't prove anything, but it meant more than I realized at the time, of that we can be sure. Yes, we must get some light on this subject and do it soon." Here Nan herself came into the room and the girls, in a very lively manner, tried to appear as if they had been talking over their days at college.



CHAPTER XVIII

JACK'S EYES ARE OPENED

Mary Lee's opportunity came sooner than she expected and in a manner she had not looked for. Jack brought a pile of mail to her one morning and then went off to distribute other letters, but she had espied one letter whose contents she much desired to know, although she did not show the least curiosity at the moment. Later in the day she took pains to seek out Mary Lee at a moment when she knew she would be alone in her room. "Well," began Jack, "what did the mail bring you to-day?"

"Oh, a lot of letters," returned Mary Lee. "One from Jo, and Cousin Mag's usual nice fat one, and one from Rita; she doesn't often write to me because Nan is generally the favored one."

Jack waited, but Mary Lee did not mention the correspondent in whom she was specially interested.

"Rita say anything of Rob Powell?" queried Jack to make conversation.

"No, not to me; she may have mentioned him to Nan. I notice that Nan had a letter, too."

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"What do you think Mr. Harding asked me the other day?" said Jack suddenly. "He wanted to know if Nan were engaged."

"What did you tell him?" Mary Lee asked quickly.

"I told him I didn't know. I knew there was some one greatly interested in her and in whom we thought she was interested, but she had never told any of us that she was actually engaged."

"Why did you tell him that?"

"Oh, because I wanted to let him know that blessed old Nan could have attention even if she were getting on."

"Oh, Jack, you ridiculous little goose; as if a girl only twenty-three could be said to be getting on. Nan is a mere child."

"Oh, Mary Lee, she doesn't seem so to me."

"She does to every one who has any sense. Just because she is the eldest you have fallen into the habit of thinking of her as an elderly person; the sooner you get out of it the better. Did Mr. Harding ask if you were engaged?"

"No."

"What would you have told him if he had asked?"

"I would have hedged."

Mary Lee determined to press the question home this time. "But aren't you?" she asked.

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"Has Cart been telling you anything?" queried Jack with a quick glance at the pile of letters on the table by her sister's side.

"I know what his feelings are without his telling me. Is there something to tell, then?" she asked diplomatically.

"Nothing for him to tell, nothing he has any right to. If he should tell, there would cease to be anything existing to tell."

"What a very mystical remark. Japan has laid its spell upon you. If there were anything he should not tell it oughtn't to exist, of course. I can make that much out."

"Oh, there is nothing so very dreadful about it, only——" Jack paused.

"About what, Jack? You might tell your own sister."

Jack shut her lips resolutely and shook her head.

"Poor old Cart," said Mary Lee reaching for the letter which lay on top of the heap.

"Why 'poor'?" jerked out Jack.

"I've just had a letter from him."

"It's more than I have had, then," returned Jack.

"I imagine he believes you don't care for one. When did you write to him last, Jack?"

Jack answered reluctantly. "Not since we left San Francisco to come here."

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"Why, Jack Corner, I think that is cruelty to animals. Why haven't you written?" Mary Lee spoke indignantly.

"Oh, just because."

"That's no reason. Have you quarreled with Carter?"

"Not exactly. He is so tiresome about some things."

"What special thing?"

"Oh, just a soft, silly thing."

"Well, I think you ought to write. He is mightily discouraged. He is ill and wretched, poor boy."

Jack leaned forward, her eyes fixed on the letter which Mary Lee did not offer her. "It isn't—it isn't—his old trouble, is it?" she questioned, a note of anxiety in her voice.

"No, I don't think so, but he seems tired and heart-sick, somehow as if the world were all awry. I never had such a doleful letter from him, and Nan's is about like it. It isn't Carter's way at all to be bitter and talk of giving up and going to the uttermost parts of the earth."

"Very likely he doesn't mean it," said Jack regaining her hard manner.

"We might think so if Mrs. Roberts hadn't written to Aunt Helen that Carter was looking wretchedly and that he had overworked and they were urging him to go abroad, and to spend next winter in Egypt." [Pg 331]

Jack made no reply but left the room and a moment later was at her Aunt Helen's door. "May I see Mrs. Roberts' letter, Aunt Helen?" she asked. "Mary Lee said you had heard from her."

"Why, yes," was the answer, "you can see it, of course."

Jack took the missive which her aunt hunted up and went over to the window, keeping her back turned. She stood some time pretending to be still reading when she had really come to the end of the last page, but the truth was, her eyes were full of tears. She did not see a body of gallant troops go marching bravely by, nor did she notice a band of pilgrims carrying staves, girt about the loins, and wearing great straw hats. She presently wiped one eye in a manner as if a mote were in it, then after a while she furtively did the same to the other, and when she considered that all undue moisture must be removed, she handed back the letter saying cheerfully, "She writes quite a newsy letter, doesn't she? Too bad Cart isn't feeling up to the mark." She made a few more light remarks and then went back to Mary Lee.

"Do you mind my seeing Cart's letter?" she asked meekly. [Pg 332]

"Certainly you can see it," Mary Lee responded. "I would have offered it to you before but I didn't gather from your manner that it would interest you."

Spunky Jack made no reply to this, but took the letter and sat down. Once or twice Mary Lee glanced at her, and noticed that by degrees Jack had swung her chair around so that her face was almost hidden. "She cares a lot more than she pretends," Mary Lee commented inwardly.

After a while Jack returned the letter with a backward movement of her arm, her face being more turned away.

Mary Lee got up to take it but did not stop there. She came around to face her younger sister, whose eyes were wet and whose lips were trembling. "Jack," said she, "suppose you should never see Carter again."

Jack started up with a cry and pushed her sister from her. "Don't, don't," she said fiercely. "How can you say such cruel things?"

"But if you don't care, Jack, and if you make Carter think you do not, it is you who are cruel." Then her voice became very gentle and sad as she went on. "Jack, you poor little child, you don't know what it means to lose one you love very dearly. I do know, and so I can tell you this that it is my greatest comfort to remember all the loving things that were said to me, and to feel that Phil knew that I loved him as dearly as he loved me. If he had died without knowing, I couldn't have stood it. We were separated all those last months but his letters to me are my life now and I know mine were the greatest joy to him. I was no older than you when he told me what I was to him. We kept it a secret because we were so young, but, oh, Jack, think what I should have lost if I hadn't my memories." [Pg 333]

By this time Jack was crying softly, but with no effort at concealment, her head buried in her sister's lap as she sat on the floor. "I am all you say, a wicked, cruel girl," she sobbed. "I do love him, and I told him I would marry him when I was through college, but I wouldn't let him mention it again because he wanted to kiss me. That was what made me mad, and this last time he wanted to kiss me good-bye and I didn't write just to punish him for it. The first time it was because I thought he took too much for granted, and the last time it was because I wanted to show him he couldn't break the compact."

"What was the compact?"

"He was not to say a word of love to me or mention that I had made him any promise. If he did, I said I wouldn't marry him." [Pg 334]

"And has he?"

"No, but he did ask me to kiss him good-bye."

"I think it has been pretty hard on him, for it gave you a chance to do as you please and yet it bound him."

"I know, and I was very selfish, but I didn't want it known, Mary Lee."

"No, of course not, and it needn't be known now, although I wish you would tell Nan."

"Why?"

"Because she thinks you like Mr. Harding, and I am pretty sure if it were not that she believes she must not stand in your way, she would like him mightily herself."

Jack lifted her tear-stained face.

"Oh, Mary Lee, have I been twice a selfish pig? Poor, dear old Nan. I never once thought of her in the matter. I was mad because Carter didn't write and I told myself I would have a good time and I would go back and tell him about it. I never thought of hurting Nan. Of course I will tell her, and what is more I will tell him, if you say I ought."

"I don't think you need do that, but I do think you ought to show the same grace Nan has shown you whenever you walked off with Mr. Harding." [Pg 335]

"You don't think then that it is Rob Powell whom Nan likes?"

"No, I am pretty sure she doesn't care a rap for him except as a friend."

"What a blundering idiot I have been, to be sure. Well, I will make up for it to Carter, and to Nan, too, if I can. Thank you, Mary Lee, for bringing me to my senses. You don't really think I shall never see Cart again, do you?"

"I hope you will, and I think the very best way to cure him will be for you to write him a letter such as you know he is longing for."

"I will, I really will, and what is more I will do it this minute."

Jack never did anything by halves, though it must be confessed that she made it an excuse to write that she wanted to interest Carter and the Robertses in Toku. She wanted him trained as a good servant so that when she had her own home he could live with her. What did Carter think of that? Wasn't she far-seeing? They had been telling her that he was not well. He must hurry and chirk up for her sake. She was looking forward to seeing him on her return and then—The rest was left to the imagination, but at the end of the letter there was a funny little scalloped character which was not explained at all, and away down in one corner of the page was written in very fine letters, almost microscopic, "If you love me you may tell me so once when you next write." Altogether it was a very Jack-like document, yet never before had Carter received one which gave him such assurance of Jack's real feeling for him. [Pg 336]

Her letter finished, Jack proceeded to hunt up Nan whom she found quite alone in the garden. "I've just been writing to Carter," she announced cheerfully. "Why didn't you show me his letter, Nan?"

"Because it was so dispirited and I didn't want to spoil your good times," returned Nan.

"Poor old Cart," said Jack. "Do you think he is really ill, Nan?"

"I think he is more heart-sick than body sick."

"All because of wicked me, do you reckon? I am a beast, Nan. I am free to confess it, but I am not going to be so any more. When Carter and I are married, I am going to have Toku for our very best servant."

"When Carter and you are married?" exclaimed Nan. "I thought that was all over and done with, Jack, that it was only a childish idea."

"It isn't," returned Jack with decision. "I shall never marry any one but Carter, and he knows it, or he will know it by the time he has read my letter. I know I seem like a skittish, heartless creature, and I do like to jolly around with the boys, but Carter is my single steady and always will be. I wanted you to know, Nan, because I know Carter writes to you oftener than to any of the others, and I don't want you to tell him things that are simply figments of your brain, as I might give you reason to do sometimes if you didn't know the bona fide truth. You mustn't always trust appearances, you know. They are deceptive. Are you glad, Nan, you old dear?" She looked at her sister mischievously, so that Nan checked her impulse to hug her. [Pg 337]

"Of course I am glad," she returned. "You know that Cart is already just like a brother, and I have felt so awfully sorry for him of late that I could almost have cried. I did want you to be happy," she said wistfully, "even if Carter were sacrificed, but it seemed pretty hard on him."

"You blessed old thing," cried Jack, herself giving the caress Nan had withheld. "You are about the most loyal and faithful darling out. I don't deserve such sisters."

With this remark she walked off, leaving Nan uplifted and yet at the same time strangely apprehensive of facing her own future. She had driven Neal Harding from her by her coolness and indifference. Would he ever return? Had he not already learned to prefer Jack? She shook off these doubts at last and went back to the house with a determination not to interfere with fate again. [Pg 338]

In the meantime, Jack had continued on with her performance of duty. She had met Mr. Harding, and had asked if he didn't want to go with her to mail a very important letter. He acquiesced, of course, and on the way she let it be known that the letter was to an especial somebody who must have it by the very earliest outgoing mail, and then craftily she let him know that Nan was sending no such letters, and that she, Jack, had discovered that Nan's interest in a certain individual was purely a friendly one. Then with a virtuous feeling of having done all that could possibly be expected of her, Jack returned to the hotel not even hinting at such a proposition as extending the walk.

"You won't say anything to Eleanor, will you?" said Jack to her sisters. "It is a family secret, remember. Of course I shall tell mother and Jean as soon as I see them. I suppose I ought to have told them before, for it isn't nice to have even one secret from your bestest mother and your own twin."

"Yes, you must tell them," agreed her sisters, Mary Lee adding, "Mother was the only one I told when I had my secret, and she never so much as hinted it to any one." [Pg 339]

Jack sighed. "I think we'd better be getting back to those two pretty soon, and I don't care how soon we sail for the States." Her sisters understood that she could not reach California too soon, and that she would not mind in the least a little delay there before starting for her own home.

"You'll not tell Eleanor," she repeated.

"Oh, no," promised the others, "but we cannot help her forming her own conclusions."

What these conclusions were, Mary Lee found out that very evening when Eleanor enticed her off into the garden. "I have tried to pump Neal," she said, "but he is mute as a clam, and I can get nothing from him but that he has no right to poach on another's preserves."

"He knows there is no other and that there is a free way to the preserves," Mary Lee told her.

"What do you mean?" cried Eleanor.

"Jack has taken it upon her contrary little self to inform him that nobody has any claim on Nan."

"What made her do it?"

"Oh, she took the notion after my having impressed it upon her that Nan was not thinking about Rob. To give Jack credit she assumed that Nan was, and moreover," Mary Lee laughed, "she thought Nan quite too antique to form any new attachments." [Pg 340]

Eleanor laughed too. "The point of view of eighteen. Isn't it funny?"

"I don't suppose she would have looked upon Nan as such a fossil if she were not the eldest of the Corners," Mary Lee went on, "but all her life Jack has been accustomed to look up to Nan and to have it dinged into her that she must regard her eldest sister as second only to her mother."

"I see, and what do you suppose will happen now?"

"Don't know. It is getting a trifle exciting, isn't it?"

"I shall lose all my respect for Neal if he doesn't take advantage of his opportunities," Eleanor went on. "We must consent to that walk to Sakusa to-morrow if we fall by the way, for it will be such a great chance for confidences. I want to tell you something, Mary Lee. Mr. Montell is coming to-night."

"He is? Aha, my young miss, so there will be chances for more than those other two."

"Oh, I didn't mean that," said Eleanor in confusion. "Don't allow your unbridled fancies to roam too far afield." [Pg 341]

Mary Lee shook her head sagely. "I think my own thoughts," she remarked.

She and Jack contrived to interest Miss Helen in such a way that Nan was not missed that evening. Jack made her confession which Miss Helen received as they knew she would. She was very fond of Carter who was the son of one of her old school friends, and she had long ago formed her own opinion of the affair.

"I couldn't ask for a dearer nephew than Carter Barnwell," she told Jack, "but you are nothing but a baby yet, Jack."

"I have been so informed more than once to-day," returned Jack. "I knew you would all think I was too young, and indeed, Aunt Helen, I haven't a notion of being married till I have left college. I wouldn't have told only Mary Lee thought I ought."

"You certainly ought if there is really an understanding between you," said her aunt.

"I suppose there is," Jack responded, "though I had intended to keep Cart guessing for some time yet, but now that he is so miserable I can't do it. I had to give him just a wee little twinkling of encouragement in thinking I meant what I said, but it must be a dead secret to all but the family."

In spite of her cheerful exterior, Jack was the least happy of the group that night, for while Nan lay blissfully making plans for the morrow and Eleanor was beginning to ask herself searching questions which her evening with Mr. Montell had created, Jack was wondering if Carter were really ill and would he be worse before her letter reached him. Alas! that it took so long for the mail to span the distance between them. If she could but visit him in spirit to whisper all that her heart would say. That night Jack's chickens came home to roost if they never had before, and of all who were to make the pilgrimage to the sacred grove on the morrow no wish more fervent than hers would be offered up at the shrine for lovers. [Pg 342]



CHAPTER XIX
VOTIVE OFFERINGS

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VOTIVE OFFERINGS

By the next day it was considered safe enough to make the trip to Sakusa. It was a tortuous way, and one that required the services of a guide, but a young Japanese, whom Mr. Montell knew, consented to make one of the party. He could speak English, and, being an intelligent, educated gentleman, was much more desirable as an adjunct than the ordinary interpreter. By bamboo forests, and rice-fields, past many a temple and shrine, they trudged, part of their journey being indicated by a stone path difficult to walk upon yet necessarily used. Here they must go single file.

"It is getting rather tiresome," said Jack over her shoulder to Mary Lee who followed closely, these two walking in the footsteps of their guide while the others lagged behind, the two couples separated by a perceptible space.

"We'll get there after a while," returned Mary Lee. "It is all for the cause, remember, Jack."

"I feel precisely as if I were doing penance," Jack answered back.

"Perhaps you are," replied her sister with a little smile.

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Jack said no more, but toiled on till at last a small cluster of houses indicated that they were nearing a village.

"Is it Sakusa?" Jack asked Mr. Tamura, their guide.

"Sakusa," he replied with a wave of the hand toward where a *tori-i*, a high pointless structure, stood, and in another moment they had left their rough stone path to step upon the pavement of the temple's court. Here they waited for the others to come up. Meantime they could observe the fine old trees, the quaint monuments and the gateway itself.

"This is the temple of Yaegaki," Mr. Tamura told them. "It is a very noted shrine, small as it is. We will go to the main temple which is the most interesting."

The group, now complete, went forward and presently, with one accord, stopped short. "What are they?" inquired Eleanor wonderingly looking at myriads of tiny flags inserted in the ground all around the base of the shrine.

"Those," Mr. Tamura said, "are tokens of gratitude. They mean that many lovers' prayers have been answered."

"And those white wisps upon the gratings of the doors?" Eleanor continued to question.

"Those are the prayers of the lovers who have made the pilgrimage."

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"So many, so many," murmured Nan.

"And what is that which looks like hair, there with the little knots of paper?" Mary Lee put this question.

"It is hair," she was told, "most of it, though some is seaweed, probably brought from a long distance. These are votive offerings. A maiden making a vow, a wish, a prayer, will often cut off her hair and hang it upon the shrine that she may thus show her strength of desire, her faith, her intention to propitiate the deities of love and marriage who preside over this shrine."

Mr. Harding stepped nearer to see the many names carved upon the doors and the woodwork. These he could in some instances read, but as they were written in the Chinese characters, the girls could not make them out.

"Now," said Mr. Tamura, "we must see the famous Camellia tree which is supposed to be inhabited by the beings who answer lovers' prayers. It is very ancient and much revered. We will look at it before we go to the sacred grove."

They all stood a few moments before the gnarled old tree and then followed on to where their guide again paused. "Here you can find the talismans and the charms, if you wish to buy," Mr. Tamura informed them.

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"Oh, we must have some of them," declared the girls, and though neither Mr. Harding nor Mr. Montell said a word, they did not hold back.

"Which are considered the nicest?" inquired Jack.

Mr. Tamura smiled as he answered. "If you are in love this *mamori* is supposed to be the most wonder-working, and will assure you a blessed union with the object of your affection." He picked out a long folded paper with queer characters and a seal upon it.

"Can I open it?" inquired Jack. "Will it break the charm?"

"Oh, no, you can see what it holds within the interior," Mr. Tamura told her, and Jack did not delay in opening the paper.

"Oh, look," she cried, "aren't they cunning?"

The others gathered around to see two tiny little figures in ancient costume. One enfolded the other in his embrace.

"It is the small wife enfold to the heart of the small husband," their guide explained. "If you marry the man of

your ambition, you must return this charm to the temple. It does not promise you the happiness of after marriage, but only the marriage."

"I would run the risk of the happiness," said Mr. Harding in a low tone to Nan who for some reason blushed furiously. [Pg 349]

"If you wish the love of after marriage you must purchase another. It is the leaf from the tree we have just seen, but you see it is of the most preciousness." And of the whole party there was not one, with the exception of Mary Lee, who did not buy one of each of these two charms. Mary Lee contented herself with some little amulets which she declared were more worth her while.

"Of course," said Eleanor lightly, "we don't believe in them at all and have no special use for them, but we may be able to make presents of them to some of our friends."

"That is just it," echoed Nan.

"And the little lady and her husband are so cunning," declared Jack, "I just had to get one to show Jean."

Mary Lee smiled wisely but said not a word.

"They are really great curiosities," remarked Nan airily. "I do not remember ever having seen their like. I know mother and Aunt Helen will be greatly interested in them."

Again Mary Lee smiled and kept her counsel.

They went on further till they came to a great grove of cedars, pines, and bamboo with other trees, making so deep a shade that they seemed in a sunless world. When their eyes became accustomed to the half light, they observed that wherever possible upon the bark of the bamboo trees names were written. "Names and wishes," said their guide. [Pg 350]

"How weird and mysterious it all seems," said Nan to her companion.

"The very Court of Love," returned he, "and you are treading it with me," he added softly.

Nan's heart beat fast but she made no reply. It all seemed so intangible, so unreal an existence, that even his presence began to appear unreal.

"There is a little pond further on, Tamura says," Mr. Harding remarked after a period when silence was upon them both. "There are water newts in it, and one tests his fortune by sailing a small boat in which he puts a *rin*. If it sinks to the bottom and the newts touch it all will be well, but if it does not sink and if the newts disregard it, then it is an ill omen. Shall we go and sail a boat?"

"It might be amusing," returned Nan, trying to hide her confusion.

They found the rest of their party already on the brink of the pond where others were launching tiny crafts of paper. Mr. Tamura was showing Jack how to make one. He seemed to surmise that more than one would be required for he soon had a little fleet of them ready, and himself set one afloat with a *rin* in it. He watched it gravely as it went on its course. Mr. Harding launched his, giving Nan a smile as he did so. It drifted out upon the clear water and became so saturated as soon to succumb to the weight of its freight of copper coin, then down it sank. It could be seen distinctly through the limpid water and presently the newts were observed to approach it. Mr. Harding rose to his feet, and waved his hat gaily. "A good omen," he cried. [Pg 351]

Most of the other boats acted in the same way, although they did not wait to see the fate of all that were launched, but turned to wander about and look up the remaining strange evidences of superstitious faith.

Nan and her companion allowed the others to put some distance between themselves and this lagging pair.

"Let them alone and they'll come home bringing their tales behind them," whispered Jack to Mary Lee. "Their love-tales, I hope they will be. What a self-absorbed, blind ninny I was not to see things before. Why, they are simply daffy about one another. I don't believe any one else exists at this present moment for them. Did you ever think dear old Nan would be so far gone?"

"Oh, yes, I knew when Nan did really let herself go that there wouldn't be any question about it," returned Mary Lee with a half sigh. [Pg 352]

"I hope he is good enough for her," said Jack a little jealously.

"Nobody is good enough for any of you sisters," returned Mary Lee.

"Oh, Carter is entirely too good for me," declared Jack frankly. "All the same I would scratch any one's eyes out who tried to take him from me."

"I haven't a doubt but that some one will try to if you don't treat him better," Mary Lee said teasingly. "You can't expect a man to stay forever faithful to a girl who behaves as if he were an old shoe to be picked up and cast aside at will."

"You don't mean that," Jack averred. "If you did, I would take the next steamer home and marry him before any of you reached there to stop me. When he gets my letter he will understand, so don't you go trying to stir me up. Where in the world are those two?"

"Oh, never mind them," rejoined Mary Lee. "There are Eleanor and Mr. Montell just ahead and we can get along for a while without Nan."

Meantime Nan and Mr. Harding were lingering in the deep grove. They stood by a bamboo tree upon which [Pg 353]

were cut many names. "There is just a little space here where I can cut a dear, small name," said Mr. Harding, "the name of the dearest, sweetest girl in the world." He began to carve the letters while Nan stood by with half-averted face. "N-a-n," he wrote, with the N much longer than the other letters. After he had finished, he came to Nan. "Will you look?" he said, "and will you tell me if I may put my name there too? The same initial does for both, you see. Dear Nan, sweet Nan! this is the Court of Love and you are my queen. You have been so kind to me these last few days and I may be called away any moment, so I am daring enough to tell you that I love you."

Nan took from him the knife he still held. She went up to the tree, and upon the smooth bark she began to trace the letters which, following the initial of her own name, became that of her lover:

N^{A-N}
E-A-L.

"Is it true? Is it true?" breathed he close by her side.

"I am afraid it is," returned Nan in a whisper.

"Afraid, you darlingest girl?"

"No, no, I don't mean I am afraid, I mean—oh, what do I mean?"

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"You mean that all the queer little charms have nothing to do with you and me, because you loved me, didn't you, before we even started out to come here? You did love me yesterday and the day before, didn't you, Nan?"

"And even so far back as last week," admitted Nan.

"When you wouldn't even look at me?"

"Yes."

"Why wouldn't you?"

"Because you wouldn't look at me."

"I did look when I could steal a glance at you. I wanted to look at you every minute and I was afraid, for I loved you from that very first time in the grove of Kamakura. I tried to keep away from you, and I couldn't. I was so unhappy and so moony and headless that the chief noticed it, and said I'd better take a rest for I was ill. He didn't know what was the matter, but I did."

"Oh, dear," sighed Nan, "and I was unhappy, too. I thought you liked Jack."

"And I thought you liked a miserable somebody whom I could have annihilated."

Talking on in the strain which so pleases lovers the world over, they neared the group waiting for them by the temple gate. "Please don't tell any one," said Nan hastily. "Mother must be the first to know."

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"And I hope I may go to her myself that I may ask her for your precious self. Will she give you to me, Nan?"

"She will, when she knows that it is for my happiness."

"And you will be willing to go to a strange country with me? You will wait for me till I can feel I have something more than myself to offer?"

"I will wait years if need be, and——" She hesitated. The strange country away from all those she loved best did seem appalling, but she bravely went on, "Strange countries do not seem so distant as they used to be."

Seeing them approaching, the others started on their stony way. "It is a rough road," said Neal, "but for me it was the way to Paradise."

Nan could have echoed the words, but she did not. They must walk single file for a time, but she might have been side by side with a heavenly host, so uplifted was she. Of all queer places to find her happiness; in the grove of a Shinto temple in a distant and difficult part of Japan. It all seemed like a dream from which she awoke to reality only when she saw a beloved form striding along behind her when she turned her head. He must keep her in view, he said, lest some accident befall her.

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On their way through the streets of the old city which they reached foot-sore and weary, but so glad at heart they had no thought of bodily aches and pains, they passed a little shop. "Let us stop here a moment," proposed Neal. "I want to get you something as a reminder of this day."

"Do you think I will ever forget it?" asked Nan with a shy glance.

"You adorable girl, no, I don't, but all the same I want to get something."

They entered the small establishment and from the carvings Neal selected a little figure of Hotei, the God of Happiness, whose counterpart Nan declared she must buy to give in exchange. Then they went on, arriving at the hotel long after the others.

"And did you have a happy day?" asked Miss Helen who had passed the hours of her nieces' absence in the quiet garden and in the streets of the old city. "Was it worth the hard trip?"

"Well worth it," was Nan's reply given with emphasis though not a word did she tell of the joy the day had brought her.

"The others seemed pretty well tired out," Miss Helen went on, "and have gone to lie down, but you appear fresher than any of the party." [Pg 357]

"I am a little tired, for it was rather far and quite rough, but it was so very interesting," Nan vouchsafed, and then began to describe the temples and shrines, but of that carving of her own name on the bark of the bamboo tree she said nothing.

Mary Lee and Jack looked at her glowing face questioningly when she went in to where they were, but she gave them no confidences beyond explaining for her tardiness by saying that she and Mr. Harding had stopped at a shop on their way.

"It will have to be 'boots and saddles,' as soon as we can manage it," Mary Lee announced. "Aunt Helen thinks we should start as soon as we get rested, so we shall pack to-morrow and the day after begin our journey across country. Eleanor will go with us, she says, though I didn't think she would, for she could easily go back with her brother from here and save herself the longer trip."

"Is her brother going back from here?" asked Nan.

"You ought to know. Is he?" queried Mary Lee.

"No," Nan replied with a laugh.

"Oh!" Mary Lee gave Jack a little prod with her elbow and Jack responded with a soft pinch which expressed her understanding. [Pg 358]

"Is Mr. Montell going back from here?" asked Nan.

"I don't believe he is. You see he is free to come and go as he may see fit and I understand that he thinks he can gather profitable material by joining our caravan. Nell vows that she means to see the last of us and will stand by till we are fairly off. Ergo Mr. Montell follows suit."

"Good old Nell," remarked Nan apropos of what she did not explain.

"Well, what do you make of it?" inquired Mary Lee as soon as Nan was out of hearing.

"I think it is very, very near the climax," responded Jack.

"I go further than that. I think the hour and the man have arrived this day, and that it is all settled."

"Oh, Mary Lee, do you really?" Jack propped herself up to look at her sister. "Then why didn't she tell us?"

"For the same reason another young person of my acquaintance did not tell until it was forced from her," rejoined Mary Lee.

Jack sank back again. "Oh," she ejaculated in a discomfited way. "I am crazy to know, aren't you?" she asked presently.

"Of course I should like to know, but I can wait. Nan has such a telltale face and I never saw such a radiant expression as she has. Oh, dear me, Jack, I don't feel happy over it myself, for do you realize that it means we shall have to part with our dear old Nan, and that she may go goodness knows where to live? Neal Harding is hoping for diplomatic service for keeps, you know. He hopes for an appointment as consul somewhere, and that means that Nan may have to go away off from all her kinfolks." [Pg 359]

"Mercy me, I hadn't thought of that. Oh, dear, I wish now I had kept up my little game, then perhaps this would never have come about."

"You mean child. I don't wish that, and after all it would not have done any good, probably, for if Neal Harding were in real earnest, he would not have allowed the thing to stop here. Eleanor would have seen to it that he knew of Nan's comings and goings, and then the evil day would simply have been put off. Meantime poor Nan would have been wretchedly unhappy." Jack agreed that this was all very true and that they must make the best of it. Later on they conferred with Eleanor who had nothing more to add to what they already suspected.

"I quite agree with you, Mary Lee," she said, "that it is all right, and I will tell you why. When Neal came in he came up and kissed me as if he had not seen me for a long time. I said, 'Why this unusual effusiveness, my dear?' 'Oh, just because I feel so jolly happy,' he said. I take that to mean something, whatever you may think." [Pg 360]

But they were kept in the dark for several days longer, and in the meantime, the journey was undertaken which would bring them to the Inland Sea again and to the spot where they would find Mrs. Corner and Jean waiting for them.



IS IT TRUE?



CHAPTER XX
IF IT MUST BE

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IF IT MUST BE

The long journey from the Sea of Japan to the Inland Sea was over and Nagasaki was reached at last.

"The end of our travels in Japan," sighed Nan. "Won't it be queer to see no more tea-houses, no more rice-fields, no more odd-looking men with mushroom hats and women tipping along on their *getas*?"

"I shall not miss those things a bit," averred Jack. "It has been mighty interesting to see and I have enjoyed it down to the ground, but me for the old U.S.," she added slangily.

"I shall not be sorry, myself, to get back," Mary Lee agreed with Jack.

"I had seen all that I wanted before you all started off on that frantic trip to the western coast," Jean declared.

Nan smiled blissfully. She had yet to make her confession to the three. "I wouldn't have missed that for anything," she said. "I shall always remember it as the happiest time of my life."

Jean, who had not yet been given an inkling of what was in the wind, stared at her. "You must like hard travel, then," she remarked. "Jack has been telling me of that awful jaunt to Sakusa and how you were all used up afterward. I don't see where there was any great bliss in that." [Pg 364]

Nan smiled down at her. "Jean, dear, and all of you, I have something to tell you. I would have told you, Mary Lee and Jack, before, but I had a feeling that mother must know first. I am going to marry Neal Harding."

"Maybe you think we are surprised," scoffed Jack. "Why, you old fraud, the fact was written on your face on that very day of our wild trip to Sakusa, wasn't it, Mary Lee?"

"You certainly bore all the hall-marks of an affianced maiden," Mary Lee assured her sister.

"Never mind, Nan," Jean spoke up. "I am surprised, and I am pleased, too. It will be lovely to have a brother."

"What's the matter with Cart?" asked Jack indignantly.

"Oh, he's all right," responded Jean, "but you have been parading Cart before us ever since you were twelve years old; he is no novelty, and besides it is all talk on your part anyway."

"It isn't at all," retorted Jack, who felt that she must have some of the importance accorded Nan in her position of an engaged girl. "I always said I was going to marry him; you know I did, and I mean it now just as much as ever." [Pg 365]

"Does Cart have anything to say about it?" inquired Jean teasingly.

"Of course he does. Do you suppose I would be so sure if it were not all settled?"

"Do you really mean that it is all settled and that you never told me?" ejaculated Jean indignantly.

"I didn't tell any one," Jack asserted. "I am going to tell mother now; while such affairs are in the air. It won't be so hard for her to get used to two such things together as to have them sprung on her separately." And off she went. But she was back again in a minute. "What did mother say to you, Nan?" she asked as she slid inside the door closing it after her. "Was she very serious and—and—oh, you know,—overcome and all that?"

"She was perfectly dear," said Nan, her eyes shining. "I told her first and then Neal came and we talked it over together. I went for Aunt Helen and then we four—"

"Had a heart to heart talk," interrupted Jack. "I don't think I could stand that. I shall try to make short work of it, for I should collapse under a long session. There is this much about it, mother ought not to be much surprised for I always maintained that I meant to marry Cart, while you vowed you would marry no one but a Virginian." [Pg 366]

"That is all I knew about it," returned Nan. "I would marry Neal if he were a Japanese or a Chinaman."

Jack laughed. "Won't old Jo have it in for you when you have given her such digs about her devotion to her Dr. Paul?"

"You'd better go along and find mother so as to get it over," warned Jean.

"I fool so feelish," returned Jack using an expression of which they all were fond. "I am just making conversation so as to put off the evil hour. Well, I suppose I might as well go. Remember me in your prayers, girls," and this time she was really gone.

She hesitated before she tapped at her mother's door. To the invitation to enter she poked her head in the door and said, "I just thought I might as well tell you, mother, that I am going to marry Carter."

Her mother smiled. "I have been hearing that for the past six years, Jack. It isn't really a very great surprise to hear you say so."

"But I really mean it this time," declared Jack, coming a little further into the room. "I have been treating him like a dog and I feel like a crawly worm about it, so I thought if I told the family I might not be tempted to flaunt myself so outrageously hereafter." [Pg 367]

"Don't you think it is rather hard upon a mother to have two such announcements thrust upon her in one day?" inquired Mrs. Corner gravely.

"Oh, but just think what darling men we have chosen," replied Jack encouragingly. "Suppose I had fallen in love with Mr. Tamura, and Nan had picked up some crooked stick of an oily-haired musician who hadn't two cents to rub together and would waste the one cent he might have. Just think of that, and then look at dear old Carter and Neal Harding. Why, if you hunted the world over, you couldn't find two nicer men."

Mrs. Corner had to laugh. Jack's arguments were always of such a nature. "Well, dear, I quite agree with you," she said. "If I have to lose my girls, I certainly must commend them for having chosen wisely."

"Oh, but you won't lose us," rejoined Jack. "I don't intend to marry for years and years, and besides, you know they always say that when a daughter marries, a mother gains a son, but when a son marries, a mother loses him entirely. Aren't you glad we are all girls, mother? You may have three or four sons yet."

Mrs. Corner smiled. Who but Jack would take such means of smoothing over unpleasant facts? "Come in, dear," she said. [Pg 368]

"I will if you will say you think Carter will make an adorable son and that I am not a silly for thinking so much of him."

"I am ready to admit all that," Mrs. Corner replied gravely.

Jack sidled in, ran to her mother, snuggled her face for one moment against her mother's shoulder, gave her an ardent kiss and then backed away. "I can't stand any more just now," she said with a distinct quaver in her voice. "I am such a bally ass, you know. I'll come back again some other time," and she was out of the door before her mother could reprove her for using such expressions.

When she had finished mopping her eyes and had resumed a palpably don't-care manner, she returned to her sisters.

"Well, did you get it over?" inquired Jean.

"Oh, yes," was Jack's reply.

"Of course mother was lovely." Nan made the remark.

"Of course. She always is. It would be out of all reason to expect anything else. There never was such a precious mother in all the world."

There was unanimous agreement to this, then Jean said gaily, "I suppose then that Miss Jacqueline Corner is open to congratulations." [Pg 369]

Jack warded off a precipitate advance upon her person. "Don't you dare," she cried. "Why don't you all fall upon Nan? She is in a tighter box than I."

"Just what do you mean by that remark?" asked Nan coming nearer threateningly.

"I mean that not a soul outside the family is to know about Cart and me, but you will have to tell Eleanor, at least, and Jo, of course, and so it will go."

"I won't have to tell Eleanor, for Neal is going to do that himself," retorted Nan.

"I will venture to say that is she now," cried Mary Lee as a tap was heard at the door.

She was right, for they admitted Eleanor who came in buoyantly. "Where is that dear old Nan?" she exclaimed. "I can scarcely wait to get hold of her. Neal has told me and I can't tell you how glad I am to have a sister, and such a sister! You blessed old dear, if you don't like me for a sister-in-law it will not be for lack of love on my part."

"How sweet you are to say such things," returned Nan with feeling. "I hope the rest of the family will be as kind as you."

"Oh, they are bound to, and you know we are not so many, just the two boys and myself after father and mother. Oh, girls, if I hadn't promised to stay out here a year, I should be inclined to go back with you, but Aunt Nora would think it mean of me after she has been so good as to let me have these weeks with you all. Wouldn't it be fine if, at the end of a year, Neal and I could go back together and that he could then have an appointment not so far off?" [Pg 370]

Her question was interrupted by a summons which came for Jack. Some one wished to see her.

"It couldn't be Carter, could it?" whispered Jean to Mary Lee.

The latter shook her head. "I don't believe so," Mary Lee returned in the same lowered tone. "He hasn't had time to get her letter yet."

Jack was gone some time and when she returned she broke into a laugh. "Who do you think has come?" she said.

"Carter," cried the girls with one accord.

"You're way off," returned Jack. "It is Ko-yeda and her father with Toku. Miss Gresham couldn't come and so Ko-yeda said she would, at least Mr. Sannomiya was so good as to bring her. They know Miss Gresham and all the missionary people of her church, you remember, so here they are. Toku looked so cunning." [Pg 371]

"Are you really going to take him back with you?" queried Mary Lee.

"Yes, for there are two Japanese girls going to the States and they will take charge of him on the ship and be

glad of what I can pay them for doing it."

"But when you get back home what then?" asked Jean. "We can't take him to college with us."

"No, I shall hand him over to Carter and let him find somebody to bring him up in the way he should go."

"Poor Carter," said Mary Lee compassionately.

"You needn't 'poor Carter' him," retorted Jack. "He will just love to do it when I tell him that Toku is to be reared in such a way as will make him a good servant for us. It will give him a new interest and besides——" She broke off but added, "Oh, well, I understand Cart better than any of the rest of you do, and besides I would be pleased to pieces to do that much for him."

And so it was settled that little Toku should sail the seas over with his future planned out for him. Ko-yeda herself looked after him during the few days that they all remained in Nagasaki, for Mr. Sannomiya was contented to stay till these American friends should take their leave, and made himself useful in many ways. Neal, too, took upon himself all the difficult matters relating to their departure, and was so attentive and considerate that Mrs. Corner confessed to Nan that it would seem a very pleasant thing to have a son.

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These last were happy days for them all. With three such intelligent guides as Mr. Sannomiya, Neal and Mr. Montell, they were able to do their final sightseeing with more ease and celerity than if they had been a party of women alone. Jean and Ko-yeda had many good times together, the tractable little Toku being left in charge of the two Japanese girls who had agreed to see to him during the voyage. Neal and Nan received consideration from every one, and Nan, who had always been the one to take the heavier burdens in traveling, for once in her life threw aside all responsibility and gave up her days to the companionship which grew dearer and dearer as the moments flew. "Sayonara—If it must be," the Japanese farewell, came to their lips with more and more meaning as the hour approached when they must be separated.

Mary Lee and Miss Helen showed their tender sympathy in a hundred ways, for both knew to the fullest what a good-bye may contain for those who must leave one another in the height of their devotion.

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More than once Mary Lee came upon her sister watching with trembling lips the form of her lover as he went down the street. "And soon, soon, I shall not be watching for him to come back," she said on that last day before they should leave.

"I understand," whispered the younger girl. "I know how hard it is, dear old girl." Nan gave a squeeze to the hand that had sought hers and the two went in together.

At last the morning of departure came. The big steamer was crowded with a motley throng of people. Flags were flying, men were calling, women and children were crying. The bright blue waters were dotted with queer looking crafts. Placid-looking little girls with even more placid babies were trotting up and down the wharf, their bright costumes adding to the brilliancy of the picture.

"They are a contented folk," remarked Miss Helen to Mr. Montell who, with Eleanor, stood by her side.

"Yes, and I hope ambition will not alter that fact," he returned. "A love of the beautiful with a simple life go a long way toward making content. If they lose those two things, I am afraid we shall not observe such contentment in ten years from now."

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"What is gained in one direction must mean loss in some other," said Miss Helen looking over to where Nan and Mr. Harding were standing with no eyes for the scene before them.

"How can I let you go?" the young man was saying. "You will not forget, sweetheart?"

"Not a day, not an hour," was Nan's answer.

Little Toku, with his two attendants, was walking up and down, vastly entertained yet a little afraid at all this confusion and these strange faces, but as he looked up into the faces of those who led him by the hands, he smiled, for these were friends and would not leave him to the unknown.

Ko-yeda and Jean were having last words together, while Mr. Sannomiya talked as best he could to Mrs. Corner, both appealing to Ko-yeda whenever there was absolute need of an interpreter.

Mary Lee and Jack were leaning over the rail to see the bustle below. "What a queer, queer summer it has been," said Jack musingly. "It passes before me, such a jumble of strangeness and yet with some things standing out so clearly. That dreadful day in the boiling mud when Neal snatched me away and probably saved my life."

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"You never told me about that," said Mary Lee.

"No, but I will tell you now, because it accounts partly for my appropriating Neal when I had no business to. I felt so grateful to him." Then she gave her sister an account of what had happened. "Another day," she went on, "is that one when you had the letter from Carter. I think I shall remember that to the day of my death. I think my heart really woke up that minute. I didn't quite realize how much I cared till you showed me. And today," she continued, "I am going back to him."

A little further off, Nan was saying, "Suppose I had never come to Japan. I cannot bear to think of what I might have missed."

"You mean?" Mr. Harding spoke.

"I mean you, dear boy."

"You would not have missed me, nor would I have missed you. Fate could not have been so unkind. Somewhere, somehow, sooner or later we would have met. I can't think otherwise."

Here a deep whistle sounded warning for all, who were not passengers, to be going ashore. Then were seen low bows, frantic embraces, shakings of hands. "Sayonara! Sayonara!" the air was filled with the sound of the parting word. Nan clung to her lover's arm. "Come soon, come soon," she whispered. "This is good-bye."

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"Nothing shall keep me from you, nothing," he said with grave earnestness. "God bless my darling girl." He held her hand while the others crowded around for a last farewell.

"Good-bye, my sister Nan," whispered Eleanor. "Write as often as you can. Yes, yes, of course I will. I will take good care of him, and I will let you know if anything goes wrong? Why certainly, only nothing will go wrong. It is going to be all right and the first thing you know, you will be coming to meet us both."

"Sayonara! Sayonara! If it must be!" Another hoarse blast from the steamer, a last hand-clasp, a scramble to get ashore by those tardily lingering and in a few minutes the great vessel began to move out.

Nan strained her eyes to watch for the last glimpse of the beloved figure who, standing on the dock, was waving farewell. Her eyes would dim with tears which she wiped away from time to time quite reckless of observers.

"Sayonara! Sayonara!" the words came very faintly now, and then only the churning of the water, the throb of the engine, the queer junks sailing by, the flecks of foam. "Farewell, dear Japan, I have left my heart with you," Nan sighed. "Every moment takes me away from the loveliest dream, the sweetest memories that ever girl had."

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Jack standing where the fresh wind blew in her face watched the vessel's prow rush through the blue. On and on and on. "Every minute takes us that much nearer. We're coming, Cart, old boy, we're coming. It won't be long now," so sang her heart.

"Sayonara! Sayonara!" sighed the little Japanese girls by Nan's side.

"Sayonara!" piped up Toku smiling into Nan's face.

Transcriber's notes

The book has been re-bound with a plain green cover. The title page was used as cover.

Clear printer's errors were corrected.

Original spelling was not modified or harmonized.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE FOUR CORNERS IN JAPAN ***

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