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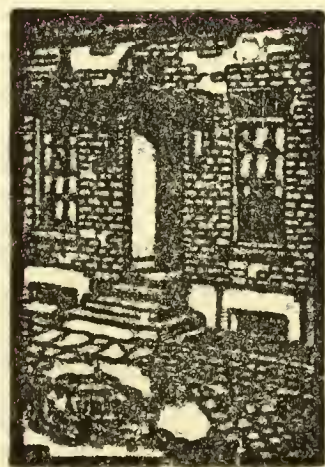




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THE STORY OF  
THE GEISHA GIRL



## THE NIGHTSIDE OF JAPAN

By T. FUJIMOTO. Very fully illustrated in colours and half-tone. Demy 8vo. 7s. 6d. net.

This is a book full of interest, combining as it does an account of modern European life in Japan which is still strongly mixed up with the quaint primitive customs of Old Japan. The author is a native of Tokyo, with a knowledge of English, and he describes both town and peasant life with much quaintness and vivacity.

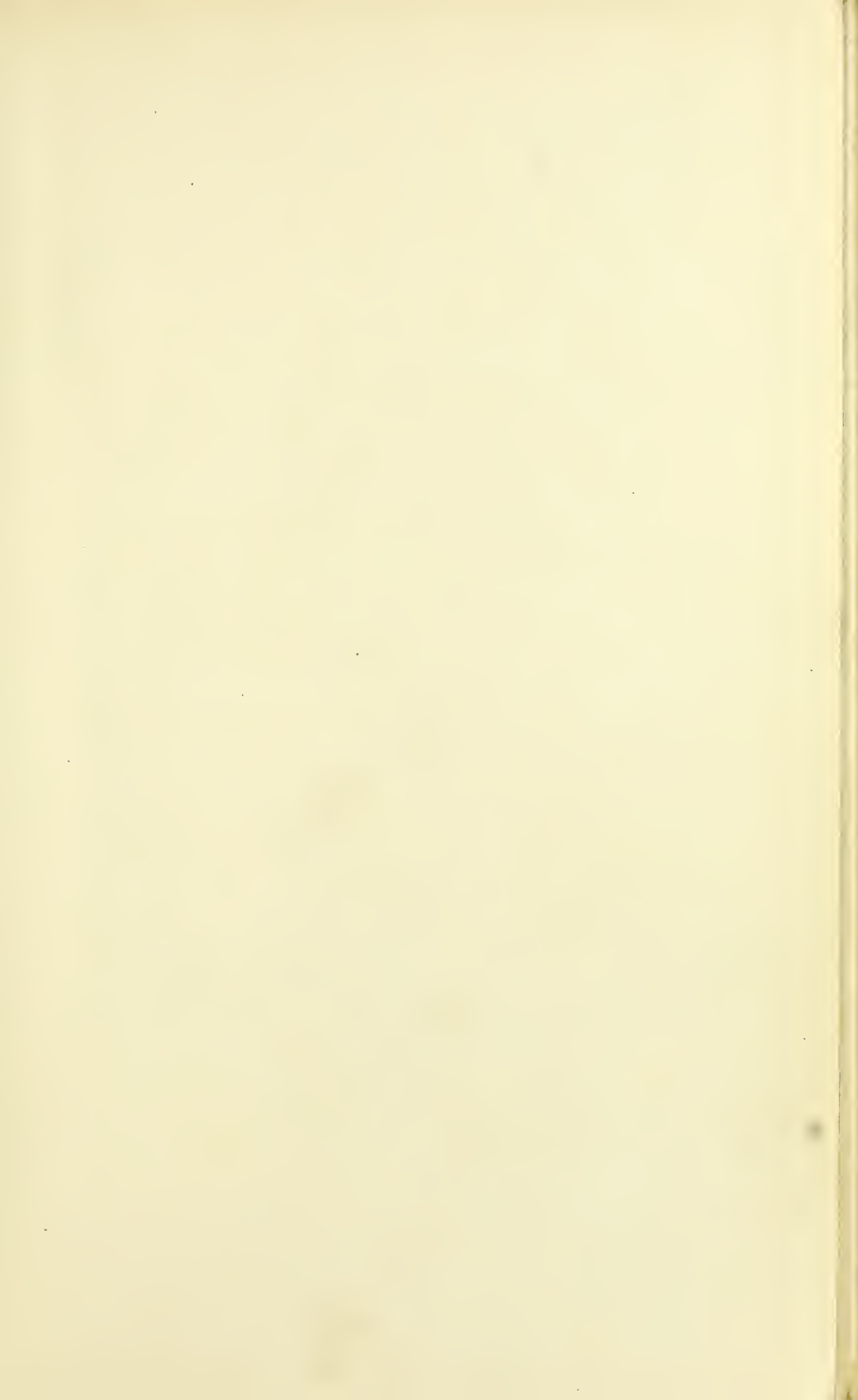
The theatres, variety halls, streets and parks — the Yoshiwara and the country life are all described from the Japanese point of view, thus giving the book a very special interest.

One great feature of the volume is a number of illustrations drawn specially for it by a Japanese artist.

*The Times*, in a long review, said that the author was most successful in suggesting the vital landscape of the country. It congratulates the publishers on allowing the manuscript to be published in the author's own English.

"It is not our English, but in its reticences and simplifications it fits what is described as exactly as the Japanese style of drawing fits the national subjects."







A GEISHA GIRL IN HER STANDING FORM.

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# THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

BY

T. FUJIMOTO

AUTHOR OF

"THE NIGHTSIDE OF JAPAN"

*Illustrations in colour and tone, specially executed  
by Japanese Artists.*

LONDON

T. WERNER LAURIE, LTD.

8 ESSEX STREET, STRAND

[c. 1914]



## PREFACE

The European gentlemen who visit Japan generally wish to see the *geisha*, who are very famous throughout the world as a special class of singing and dancing girls.

Some of the new visitors, however, seem to misunderstand these girls to be equivalent to those in a lower kind of the female professions. If anybody believes them to be so, he is decidedly in a great error; on the contrary, they are a kind of *artistes* almost indispensable in the society of Japan, if not for ever, at least in the present age.

Of course, there may be some exceptional groups among their circles, who are of low character and in base conduct, just as there are exceptions in all classes of human beings. We do not call them the true *geisha* girls.

As the women in the *geisha* calling are generally young girls, they often talk of love, but there are no young women, throughout the

## PREFACE

upper and lower classes, who do not embrace love in their bosom.

We hope the readers of the book would understand the true features of our *geisha* girls.

THE AUTHOR.

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# THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

## CHAPTER I

### ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF *GEISHA* GIRLS

#### *A.—Down to the Age of the Kamakura Govern- ment (A.D. 1300)*

IF we are invited by our friends to a restaurant in a city of Japan and take *sakë* (national wine of Japan) and dishes under the flowery electric lights in a nicely decorated room, we will find some beautiful young girls who attend upon our party. They fill our cup with golden wine, pouring out of a small white porcelain bottle, and sing or dance, accompanied by performance on the *samisen* (banjo of three strings). These girls are called *geisha*.

If we go to a garden-party of a merchant prince, we will find a great number of finely dressed young girls guiding and helping the ladies and the gentlemen who appear in the garden. When the guests are to take refreshment these girls wait upon them, serving them with any dainties they prefer. The girls are *geisha*, and their duty is to help the host and the hostess in entertainment of the guests.

It is a custom of the Japanese that a class of

## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

young girls under the familiar name of *geisha* makes their appearance wherever people take dinner or open a meeting in their usual way. So popular and indispensable creatures are they in the social life of Japan.

Then what are the duties to be taken by the girls under the class of *geisha*?

A.—Singing, dancing, and musical performance. These three are the fundamental and professional business of the *geisha* girls. The dancing is generally taken by smaller girls; the singing and the music are done by rather older ones. There are various kinds of songs. The *Nagauta*, the *Tokiwazu*, and the *Kiyomoto* are the most common songs sung among them, and the *Utazawa*, the *Itchū*, the *Katō*, the *Sonohachi*, the *Ogiě*, and the *Utai* are the different poems often performed by them. All these songs except the *Utai* are always accompanied by the corresponding tunes of the *samisen*. Common musical instruments used by them are flutes, drums, and larger and smaller *tsuzumi* (drums in shape of an hour-glass and beaten with the right hand), of course the *samisen* being the most important arm for them at any time. Besides, some girls are trained in the *Gidayū* (lyric), the *Biwauta* (lute), the violin, the sword-dance, or the *Shigin* (singing of the Chinese poems).

B.—Reception of guests. The duty of entertaining the guests is generally taken by the older girls. Those who are experienced for years in their business are very skilful in the art how to treat their customers in every different case, how to amuse them, and how to help them not to get tired in the meeting of a long time. If the guests are fond of music they would play on the *samisen* or other instruments; if they like dancing they would dance; some play the *ken* (a game played with the hands: its explanation will be given after-



## ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT

wards); and their treatment of guests by talking is said to be very difficult above the rest.

C.—Elegance and beauty. *Geisha* who wait upon the guests are the flowers and decorations among the social party, and must be elegant in figure and beautiful in complexion. So the younger girls are dressed in gaudy habiliments of colours, purple, scarlet, etc., and the older ones in their most fashionable and neat style.

The *geisha* girls in Japan are one of the celebrated productions in the Island Empire, well known throughout the whole world. Japan is the country of *Bushido*—the country of Mount Fuji—the country of cherry blossoms—and at the same time must be said the country of *geisha* girls!

Now let us see when the special profession for the female sex sprang up, and how it has developed from its beginning down to the present time.

The class of girls named the *Geisha* is said to have made their first appearance in the age of the Tokugawa Shōgunate, and the first girl of the profession in Yedo (Tokyo) to have been Kasen of the brothel Ōgiya in Yoshiwara, the licensed prostitution quarter in A.D. 1762. She was a good singer and expert player on *samisen*. After her a number of the *geisha* girls appeared in the nightless quarter, and on the wall of the hall in the greater brothels there could be read a placard as follows:

“Singing and Dancing Girls; Engagement to Other Houses Accepted.”

Thus the *geisha* in each brothel were not only hired by the guests in their own houses, but also they could attend on the customers in restaurants or other brothels. We are told that Ran and Toki of Tamaya shop and Mondo of Iseya shop were most famous among great numbers of these girls in this age.

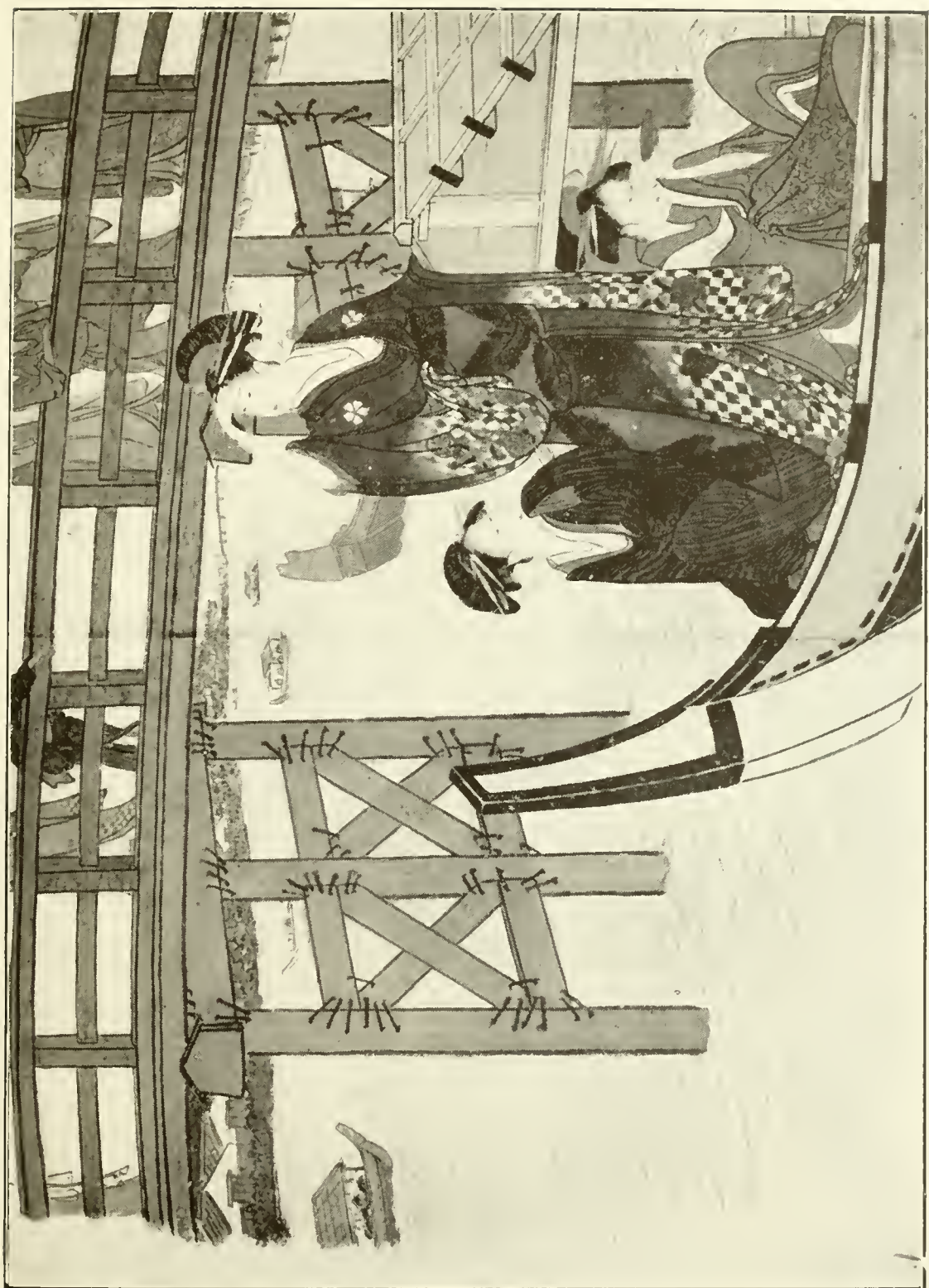
## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

Although the origin of the class of girls called *geisha* in its strict sense is attributed to the age of the tenth Shogun of the Tokugawa family, as above mentioned, yet we can find out girls in the similar situation if we go back to the far earlier period in the history of Japanese manners and customs. In consequence, we can say that the singing and dancing girls in Japan in their wider meaning already existed at the beginning of the twelfth century.

In A.D. 1115, under the reign of the Emperor Toba, there first appeared a kind of dancing girls called *Shirabyōshi*. In this age Kyoto the capital was very prosperous, and both the *Samurai* and the merchants, who were enjoying the long peace of the period, gave themselves up to pleasures and merriments. All the beautiful girls famous in their local provinces gradually assembled into the central city and competed one another for her charms and accomplishments. They were well taught in poems and dances; all of them in this age were of good descent, and Wakanomaë and Shima-no-Senzai were the most renowned among others. Wakanomaë, who was the daughter of Kyōgoku, a court noble, was often summoned to the Imperial Palace, and sang and danced in the presence of the emperor.

They put on *tatē-eboshi* (a kind of cap, high and straight up) and *suikan* (a kind of robe), and carried a fan and a sword with a white sheath. As they were dressed in such a male form, they were commonly called the *Otoko-mai* (dancing girls in male form), but subsequently when the two noted beauties, Giō and Gijo, made their appearance, they were dressed with white *suikan* only, without taking the cap and the sword, and began to be called the *Shirabyōshi* (white dancers).

Among young and nice girls who concentrated in Kyoto from the localities, Hotokē, favoured by



GIRLS IN PLEASURE BOATS,



## ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT

Kiyomori, the head of the Taira clan of *Samurai*, came from Kaga, and Jijū, cherished by Munemori, one of his sons, was the native of Mikawa province. Thus Gojō and Rokujō streets of the capital were crowded with these singing and dancing damsels.

There is an interesting story about the relation between the two girls, Giō and Hotokē. Giō was the favourite of Kiyomori, and lived in his palace at Nishihachijō of Kyoto. One day a girl named Hotokē visited the palace and requested to see the great lord, telling that she had come from the remote province of Kaga. Kiyomori was very angry at the sudden and impolite application of the unacquainted girl, and ordered his retainers to drive her out of the gate.

Giō, who was waiting on her patron by his side, advised him, "They say the girl is very young; it would be merciless to turn her out at once, who came from so distant a country. Please be kind to her to afford an interview, my lord."

Having been introduced into the room, Hotokē performed a dance. The lord was entirely enamoured with the wonderful beauty of the newcomer, and commanded that she should stay in the palace, and that Giō go home instantly.

The latter, bursting to tears, was compelled to recede from the presence of her lord to her own apartment, and, after leaving on a paper-slide of the room a poem as follows, returned to her mother's home:

"On the field some grasses are sprouting and some fading,  
Yet there is none of them that does not die out in  
autumn."

She led a lonely life together with her old mother and her younger sister Gijo, and did not accept any engagements from other nobles. One day she was sent for unexpectedly by Kiyomori, and,

## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

accompanied by her sister and two other *Shirab-yōshi*, attended in the presence of her old patron.

“Hotokē feels solitary,” said the lord, “make a dance for her comfort.”

Being disgraced by such a cruel order in the presence of her enemy, Giō could not help weeping, but at last was compelled to obey the command.

When she came home she decided to kill herself rather than to live and suffer such a great shame, but being arrested by her tender sister, all the three, the two sisters and their mother, turned to be nuns at last, cutting off their long hair.

One night in the next autumn they were surprised by the sudden visit of Hotokē to their retirement at Sagano, the suburb of the city. The young girl apologised for her crime committed upon her defeated rival. “I saw your poem written on the paper-slide,” said she, “and being heartily moved with it, I took my leave from my lord this evening. Now I will cut my hair too, and ask your permission to live together with you.”

Giō was satisfied to hear the repentance of her enemy, and, taking her into her room, both wept through the night, embracing each other. Next morning Hotokē cut her hair, and the four nuns lived there together all their lives peacefully.

When Giō cut her hair and retired to Sagano she was twenty-one, her sister Gijo nineteen, and their mother forty-five years old. Hotokē was in her youth of only seventeen at the time when she ran into the refuge of the three nuns, after the service of one year in the palace of Kiyomori.

In the age of the Kamakura Government (after A.D. 1192), when the Minamoto clan took the military power over the whole Japan in place of the Taira family, a part of those girls belonging to

## ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT

the class of *Shirabyōshi* was said to have degenerated in their morals, and yet the behaviour of the most of them was in general rather virtuous and respectable. Let us see some examples of the girls in this age, and how chaste they were in their conduct, or how faithful to their lovers.

Shizuka was a daughter of Iso-no-zenshi, a *Shirabyōshi*, who lived at Kita-Shirakawa in the capital. Once when there happened a great drought over one hundred days, and the ceremony of prayer-for-rain was held at the Shin-sen-yen, a courtyard in the Imperial residence, one hundred *Shirabyōshi* performed the *Imayō* dances, partaking of the ceremonial, and Shizuka, a girl of fifteen years old, was one of them.

Among the nobles and the *Samurai* who were present in the prayer-meeting, there was Yoshitsuně Minamoto, the brother of Yoritomo, the head of the Minamoto family. Being captivated by the beauty of Shizuka, he took her to his mansion at Horikawa, and kept her as his favourite chambermaid. While she was serving her lord very faithfully, misfortune fell upon them, who were compelled to part from each other at last.

Being jealous of Yoshitsuně's braveness and reputation, Yoritomo, his elder brother and the Shogun of Kamakura, schemed to assault and kill him at his palace at Kyoto. Yoshitsuně was now obliged to run away from the capital, accompanied by his retainers and Shizuka, and when he was to pass over Mount Yoshino he ordered his favourite to leave him and go back to her own home. She wept bitterly, and begged earnestly to follow him to anywhere her lord would go. But his firm decision compelled the virtuous young girl to part from him and go back to her mother living in the capital.

After she returned to Kyoto she was discovered by the retainers of Yoritomo and sent to Kama-

## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

kura, together with her mother. Though she was strictly inquired in the court of the Kamakura Government after the whereabouts and particulars of Yoshitsuně, she did tell nothing about him. Then Yoritomo ordered her to perform dances on the veranda of the Hachiman Shrine; unable to refuse the order, she consented. The four sides of the veranda were crowded with the *daimyō* and the retainers of the Shogun, and, by the assistance of her mother, she performed some three or four artful dances, her beauty and graceful skill rousing the admiration of all "the men of the east."<sup>1</sup> Again she stood up to try another dance, and sang the following songs:

"Turn, turn! The spool, turn!  
And to turn back the present  
To the old prosperity of my lord."

"I yearn after the man who went far off  
By treading on the white snow of Mount Yoshino."

She was bold enough to pronounce her feelings of pining after her late master in front of his enemy and the Kamakura warriors. In her age of nineteen she became nun and died next year.

. . . . .

The revenge of Jūrō and Gorō, the two brothers of the Soga family, on their enemy, Suketsuně Kudō, who had assassinated their father, is highly admired by all the Japanese, just equal as they do for that of the Forty-Seven Rōnins, so that these two are called a pair of the great honourable revenges in the history of Japan.

At this time (A.D. 1193), there was a dancing girl named Tora, who loved Jūrō Soga, and helped him as a wife did for her husband. She was a

<sup>1</sup> Kamakura is situated in the eastern province of the country, and the military men under the Yoritomo's Government are called by the name.





A GIRL PLAYING PUPPETS.



## ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT

*Shirabyōshi* at Oiso, a town near Kamakura, and once, before the revenge was yet carried out, when she was engaged for a banquet held by Yoshimori Wada, a retainer of Yoritomo and a fellow-*daimyō* of her lover's enemy, Kudō, she refused to go to it, in spite of her mother's advice to comply with the order. Soga the senior, who was present here on this occasion, persuaded his sweetheart to obey her mother's direction and attend Wada's entertainment too.

“There is nothing more sorrowful than the life of the girls in our profession,” complained she, weeping. “If I wish to be true to my lover I must disobey my mother, and if I shall be obedient to her I would be looked down as the flatterer to the influence of the time. I can't know which way I should prefer; confusion of my mind is like the hairs in entanglement!”

In the meantime another messenger came again and forced her to follow him to the mansion of Yoshimori Wada.

Though she was compelled to appear in the banquet and wait upon Wada, Kudō (lover's enemy), and other guests, she did not behave to amuse them as did other girls present in the room, owing to her hostile feeling to Kudō and other *daimyōs* of the Kamakura Government.

When Tora heard that the two brothers of Soga had succeeded in their revenge and been killed afterwards by the retainers of the Shogun Yoritomo, she ran to the temple of Hakonē and performed the Buddhist mass for one hundred days for her late lover and his brother. Then she converted herself to a nun, and taking Shōshō, her fellow-girl and the lover of Soga the junior, together with her, went to Zenkōji, the famous Buddhist temple at Shinano province, and stayed there for two years; next they went up to Kyoto, the capital, and pursued their religious studies

## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

under Hōnen-Shōnin (*Shōnin* is similar to Rev. or St) for one year.

After this they came back to Kamakura and prayed the blessings of the dead for all their lives. We are told that the two young nuns, wrapped in the black sacerdotal robes, often visited and condoled their lovers' old mother, who had been bereft of her two sons and was leading her solitary life at the village of Soga.

Since the time when the girls *Shirabyōshi* first appeared (A.D. 1115) down to the age of Kamakura Government organised by military clans, the principal places where the singing and dancing girls established their business were as follows:

At the time about A.D. 1156-59, the official inns called *Honjin* were set up in all main stages through all the highways of Japan, and the governors of provinces and other officers and officials who came up and down the road were to pass a night in these houses. Gradually these inns employed young beautiful girls of the localities and let them wait upon the travellers. This was the origin of the girls in local towns.

However, the most prosperous quarters for the girls were the banks along large rivers and the harbours on sea-coasts. Eguchi and Kawajiri in Settsu province were situated along the bank of the River Yodo. The passengers from the western provinces and Kyūshū Island were all to leave their ships and take the river-boats here; thus these places having been the ports for these ships it was natural that they were very flourishing in this age.

We are told that Kanzaki in Settsu, too, was the largest and most busy harbour throughout the whole country in this period, and that there were a great number of girls in the profession here, some of them having been so noted that their fame was well known by men in Kyoto.

## ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT

Asadzuma in Ohmi province was a good town on the bank of Biwa, the largest lake in Japan. The girls here used to present themselves in passenger vessels by rowing their own small boats.

Teradomari was a town in Echigo province and a port for vessels to the island Sado. Passengers—officials among others—were very abundant here, and all of them who were to go over to the island had to stay one, two, or sometimes several days in the hotels while they were waiting for a favourable wind for sailing vessels.

Kashiwazaki was another town near Teradomari, and the girls here, as well as those in Teradomari, were welcomed by the passengers who were compelled to kill time before they could sail out for the island.

Ikeda and Akasakā were two famous stages in Mikawa province on the eastern highway (*Tōkaidō*). The former is specially noted for the native town of a girl, Jijū, who was the favourite of Munemori Taira, the *Naidaijin* (the high official next to Prime Minister), in the age of the supremacy of the Taira clan.

Shimonoseki was an excellent port at Nagato, as it is at present, and Kaminoseki that at Suō province. When the Heikē clan (Taira) was destroyed by the Genji (Minamoto) army at the decisive battle of Dannoura all chambermaids of the Heikē families took refuge in these two ports and at length were compelled to carry on their miserable life by attending on the guests who assembled to the ports from various quarters. They are said to have appeared before the customers in their old uniforms, dressed at the time when they had been the noble's female attendants.

Kewaizaka and Ōiso were popular and celebrated among the *Samurai* of the Genji clan's Government, as they were situated near Kamakura. The more prosperous became the city of Kamakura, the

## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

more were the number of the girls in these two places increased.

Besides them, Yahagi in Mikawa, Tomo-no-tsu in Bingo, Mikuni in Echizen and Ashigara in Sagami province were famous for girls; and in a word, the gaiety circles in Japan had founded their first basis on the banks of the River Yodo near the present commercial centre, Osaka and on the northern coast of the inland sea of Seto, and then gradually made their development through the country on the mouths of rivers and near the harbours, most of the customers for the girls having been officers and officials who had to travel up and down through these parts.

Now let us see how the girls' fashion of dressing, their dancing and music, and the state of the banquet hall were in this period. As already mentioned, at the time when the dancing girls were called the *Otoko-mai* (male dance), they wore *suikan*, a thin silk robe, and a high cap named *tatě-eboshi*, carried a sword with the scabbard wound with white silk thread, hung down the hair over the shoulders, rouged the lips, and powdered the face, with the eyebrows painted.

The girls living near the water at Eguchi, Kanzaki, and Asadzuma put on a garment called *ko-uchigi*, with the long hair hanging down at the back; they carried in their hand a drum called *kotsuzumi*, and went to the passenger vessels by their small boats. When a noted girl was to pay a visit she was followed by her two waiting-maids, one holding up the paper sunshade, and the other handling the oar.

After they came to be called *Shirabyōshi*, *Giō* and *Gijo*, having been the representatives of the class of girls, they danced by the white *suikan* robe only, and on the occasion they were to go out of doors the first-class girls took carriages and were always accompanied by one or two junior *Shirab-*



SHIRABYŌSHI IN A BOAT.





## ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT

*yōshi* as attendants. If they were to go afoot, however, they were covered from head to foot with *katsugi*, a kind of veil in the shape of clothes, and put on a large hat named *ichimēgasa* on the head over the *katsugi*, and carried *sōri*, a pair of straw sandals under the feet.

The girls in this age all were well disciplined in making of poems (*uta*). Whenever they appeared in a hall of banquet, the first thing to be requested upon them by the guests was making of new poems in their presence. After composing poems the next performances to be done by them were to sing and dance; the musical instruments used by them were *biwa* (lute), *wagon* (harp of six strings), *sō* or *koto* (lyre of thirteen strings), *kotsuzumi* (small drum to be beaten with hand), *shō* (wind instrument), and *fuě* (flute).

When a girl was called to the banquet given by a high court noble, and succeeded in composing a new excellent poem as her first duty in presence of gentlemen, she would be at once rewarded by the host with a suit of *uchigi* (a kind of garment) and *hakama* (a kind of loose trousers) in order to show his admiration for her eminent work. She was not only favoured by the master of the banquet, but also she would be bestowed upon with several presents by all the guests who were invited to the feast.

Then she would dance and sing *Imayō* songs or *Rōei* verses, or perform on lute, thus helping the pleasure for the party present.

In this age there was no fixed fee for these girls, but various kinds of valuable articles were given to them as gratuity. Sometimes girls were regularly employed in the mansion of some higher *Samurai*. In Kiyomori's palace at Nishihachijō, Kyoto, the chambers were specially provided for Giō, his favourite. We often find that girls were engaged even into the war camp; if the war was

## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

protracted the camps were generally enlivened by these white visitors. In the headquarters of Koremori Taira, who was defeated by the Genji army in the battle of Fujikawa (near the River Fuji), a number of girls had been brought for the purpose of opening a great feast. When the two brothers of Soga revenged on their enemy near the camp of Yoritomo at the plain of Mount Fuji, it was a rainy night, given a banquet by him for his retainer *daimyōs* who had been summoned together for the purpose of a great hunting for several days; the splendid entertainment was, of course, attended by selected beauties living in Kamakura and vicinities.

Thus in the age of *Samurai's* influence or predominancy of military power, girls were taken as objects necessary to entertain the guests, and naturally their number made a great increase. The relation between the military clan and the girl circle, therefore, was inseparably connected in the age of the military government at Kamakura.

### *B.—Down to the Age of the Tokugawa Shōgunate* (A.D. 1850)

When Hideyoshi Toyotomi established his Government in Kyoto the capital (A.D. 1585), he officially recognised the girls' quarter at Yanagimachi, and in the age of Tokugawa (1603-1867) their circles made a remarkable development.

In Kyoto the most famous quarter for singing and dancing girls was Gion, as it is at present too, and its origin is worthy to be explained:

In A.D. 869 the Gion Shrine was first built at the foot of Mount Higashi (East), which borders the eastern side of the capital, and as it was crowded by worshippers day after day, a number of tea-



A GARMENT CALLED SUIKAN AND A HEADGEAR NAMED  
TATĒ-EBOSHI WORN BY SHIRABYŌSHI.



A GIRL IN KATSUGI (OVERHEAD GARMENT),  
ICHIMĒ-GASA (HAT), AND SANDALS.



## ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT

houses were gradually opened near the shrine to meet the requirement of visitors who wished to take a rest and make a refreshment.

Although the shrine was burnt down by a fire in A.D. 1243, and destroyed by fires caused by war in succeeding ages, yet the more popular became the shrine, the more prosperous were the streets of the capital. After it was repaired by the Tokugawa Government people who visited to worship the shrine were multiplied far greater, and the shops where tea and cake were sold began to provide wine and dishes. The tea-houses having turned to the drinking-houses and restaurants, they employed nice young girls to wait upon the guests who came to take tiffin or to drink *saké*. This was the origin of "Girls" at Gion, and by and by they became to sing songs and perform dances, the establishment of licensed *ochaya* (tea-shops or merry-making houses) having first taken place in A.D. 1732. At first the tea-houses officially recognised were only eight, and in A.D. 1761 were increased to thirty-three. Ichiriki, the famous tea-house where Yoshio Oishi, the chief of the Forty-Seven Rōnins, led his extravagant life in order to deceive the enemies who were paying their keen attention upon his conduct, was one of these *ochaya*, though it was not yet the licensed restaurant at his time, and the house still exists under the name of "Mantei" at present.

In Osaka, the commercial centre of Japan, Shim-machi is the oldest seat of "Girls." In A.D. 1662 Horié began to be another quarter of pleasure; at first some tea-stalls were permitted to open their business, and gradually they turned to restaurants provided with nice maidens. Sonezaki was first established in A.D. 1708, and the principal officials who came up from their native provinces and were staying in the city to take charge of the granaries for their lords and the rich mer-

## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

chants of the town, who were to supply them with all the necessary articles, were the habitués to the quarter. Koharu Kinokuniya and Oshima Temmaya were the two beauties most celebrated at the quarter under the Tokugawa age.

In the age of the Tokugawa Shōgunate, Tokyo was called Yedo, and the quarter of Fukagawa was the first and most flourishing place of *geisha* girls in A.D. 1781-1800; all the streets around the Hachiman Shrine were always noisy with the sound of *samisen* and the voice of singing every night. It is said that it was about A.D. 1772 the *geisha* girls first appeared at this part of the city, and a girl named Oroku was a noted one, well known by all citizens at this period. People who were to visit Fukagawa used to go by a house-boat called *Yanebuně*, the route being on the river and the water along the seashore.

Owing to the custom of boat-letters' wives, who always put on *haori*<sup>1</sup> (a Japanese coat) over their clothes, the girls here imitated to wear it too; hence the *geisha* of Fukagawa in this age became to be called by the nickname *haori*.

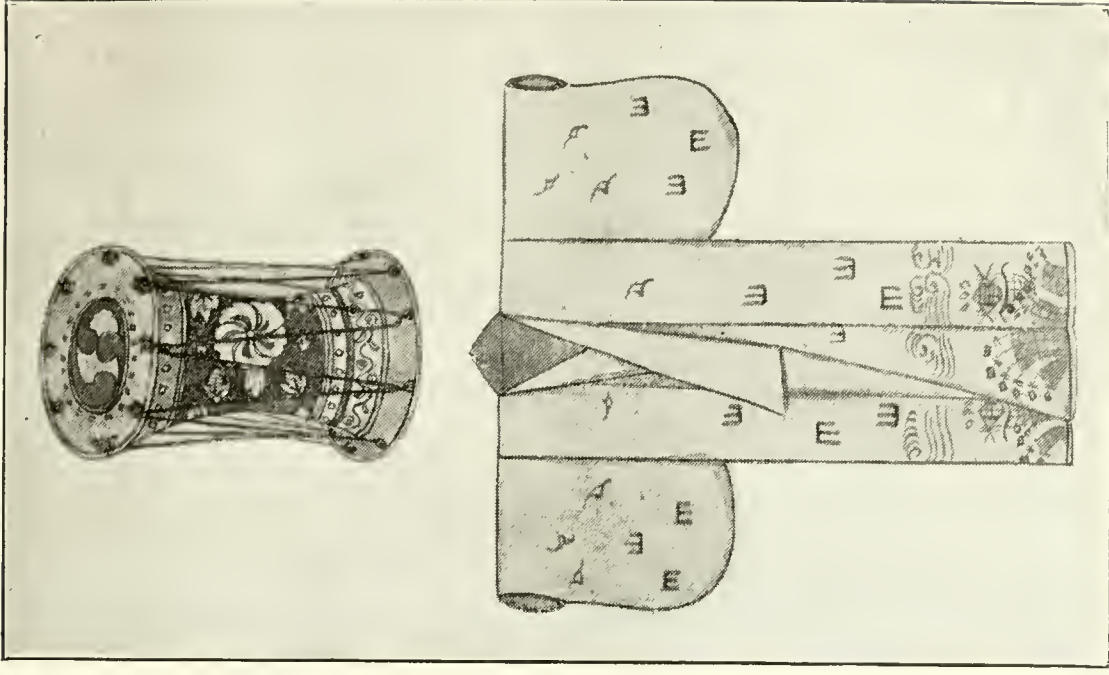
On the banks of Yanagibashi most of the boat-letters of the city lived in their stylish buildings, their business being cleverly managed by their hostesses; house-boats for customers to Fukagawa and *choki-buně* (light and swift boats) for visitors to Yoshiwara were rowed out by boatmen employed by these boat-letters.

Thus Yanagibashi having been the centre which men-of-pleasure were pouring in, the quarter became so prosperous that a number of restaurants were established, and that most of the *geisha* girls who lived here to meet the demand of these restaurants consisted of those removed from the Fukagawa circle since A.D. 1801.

<sup>1</sup> It was an etiquette for *geisha* girls not to use *haori* in presence of the guests, as it is at present, too.



A SHIRABYŌSHI.



A TSUZUMI (HAND DRUM), AND A GARMENT  
NAMED KOUCHIGI USED BY SHIRABYŌSHI.





## ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT

The girls of Yanagibashi were not only engaged to the restaurants, but also they went to the upstairs rooms of the boat-letters' houses, as the customers often were fond of making merry in a narrow, stylish room of the latter rather than in a large, splendid hall of the former. There were over fifteen boat-letters at the district, Masudaya, Shinkazusaya, Kawachō, Umegawa, and Omotoya having been most famous among them, and about two hundred girls were living in new narrow side-streets around the restaurant and boat-letter quarter, every door of the girl-houses being lighted with a paper lantern. Yanagibashi and Fukagawa were the two great girl quarters in the city of Yedo.

As to dancing and music of the girls, the old manners of *Shirabyōshi* still remained among them down to about A.D. 1600, and the dances called *Komai* and *Rambu* were yet in prevalence. *Ko-uta* or ditties came in vogue early in this age, and were sung after playing on *samisen*. Then the following songs began to be rife among gay circles: *Yedo-nagauta* about 1635; *Gidayū-bushi* and *Bungo-bushi* about 1730; *Tokiwazu* about 1735; *Tomimoto* and *Shinnai* about 1745; *Sonohachi* about 1765; and *Kiyomoto* about A.D. 1800.

At first these were the songs simply sung by accompaniment of *samisen*, but after about A.D. 1810 the new dances for *Nagauta*, *Tokiwazu*, and *Kiyomoto* were invented, and thenceforward several different schools of dancing under the titles of Fujima, Hanayagi, Yamamura, and Nishikawa were produced.

The most popular and vulgar song welcomed by the girls of gay circles was *Dodoitsu*, which was spread throughout Japan since about A.D. 1830. At this time there was an orchestra called *Gionbayashi* which was performed by a band of girls with *samisen*, gongs, and drums, and the noisy

## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

concert was more liked by citizens of Kyoto and Osaka than by those of Yedo.

As we already explained, a class of girls called *geisha* in its strict meaning appeared in the Tokugawa age. Near the end of the sixteenth century a musical instrument named *samisen* was first imported from the Loochoo Islands, and soon adopted among the girls as the most convenient one, together with drums, *tsuzumi*, flutes, and bells, all of which were in use since the old times. In Osaka and Kyoto the girls who could play on the *samisen* were at first called *Taiko-jorō*, which were forerunners of the *geisha* girls in the western cities. The so-called *Taiko-jorō* made their first appearance in Kyoto in 1675 and in Osaka in A.D. 1683.

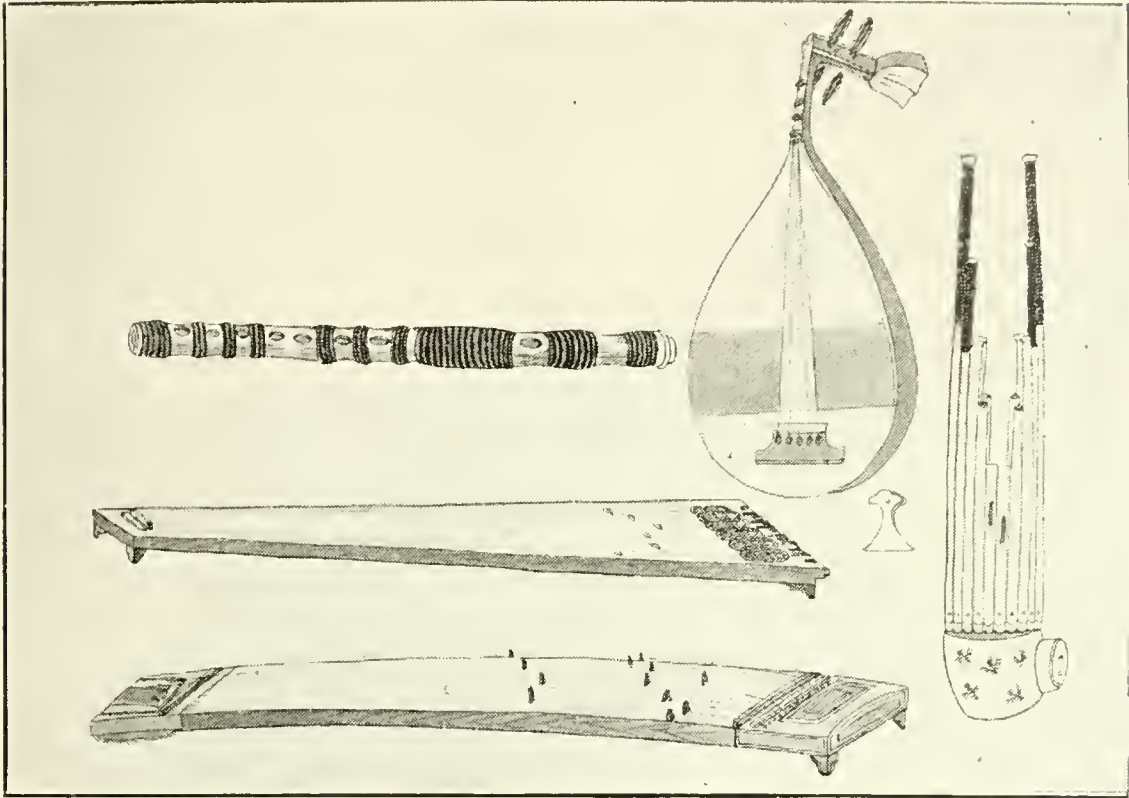
In Yedo the forerunners of the regular *geisha* were a class of girls called *Odoriko* (dancing girls) which already existed before the end of the seventeenth century. The girls who first handled the *samisen* in the city of Yedo were the *odoriko*, and in the flowery period of famous Genroku (1688-1703) their business was most prosperous.

Since Kasen of Ogiya the first *geisha* appeared in Yoshiwara in A.D. 1762 by her distinguished accomplishments in songs and *samisen*, the number of girls of same profession gradually increased, and their fixed accoutrements by which they appeared in the presence of their customers were as follows: They put on an under-garment with a white tucker, and a suit of plain silk dresses marked with their family crest, all at once tied up with a broad girdle made of a woven fabric; the hair was bound in a *coiffure* called *shimada*, wearing on it a *kōgai* and two *kanzashi* (both are kinds of hairpins) and a comb.

In A.D. 1778 there were fifty *geisha* girls in the Yoshiwara quarter. Yoshichō was one of the most flourishing places for *odoriko*. A little after Kasen

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MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS PLAYED BY GIRLS.

1.—A BIWA (LUTE).

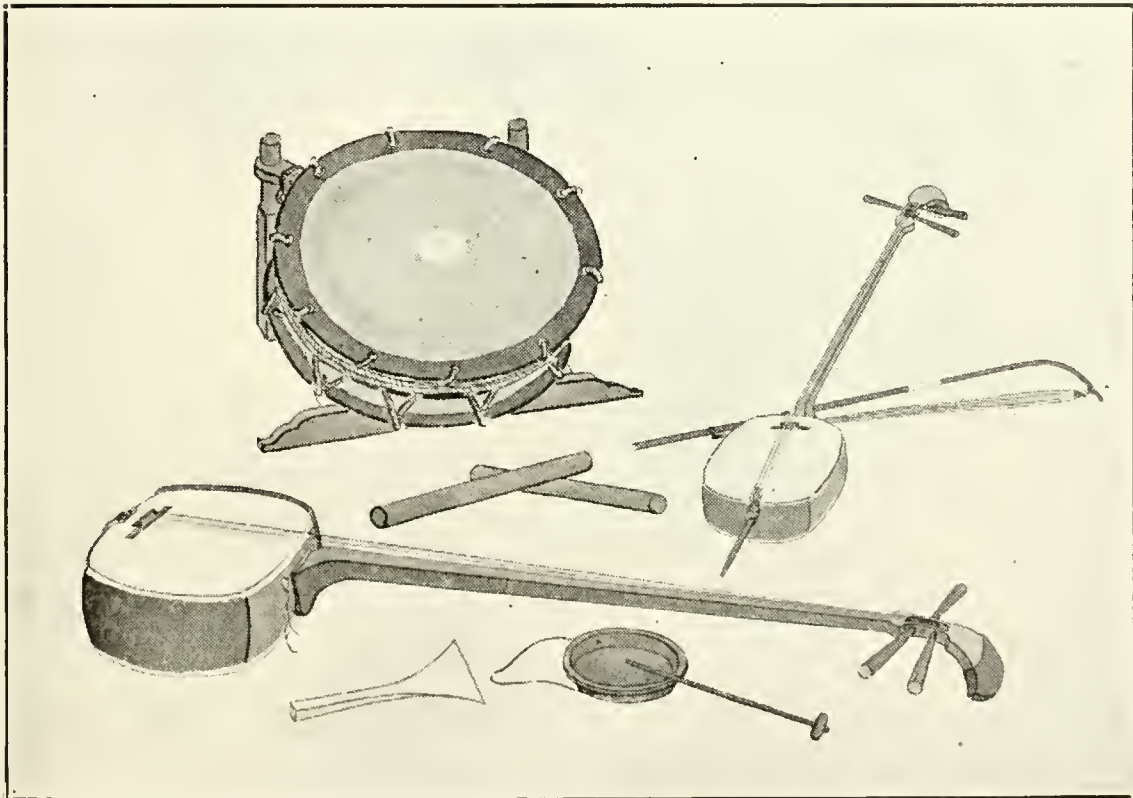
4.—A SHŌ (FLUTE).

2.—A WAGON (HARP).

5.—A FŪE (FLUTE).

3.—A SŌ (HARP).

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MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS PLAYED BY GIRLS.

1.—A DRUM.

2.—A KOKYŪ (THREE-STRINGED FIDDLE).

3.—A SAMISEN (THREE-STRINGED GUITAR).

4.—A KANĒ (BELL).



## ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT

appeared in Yoshiwara there was a girl named Kikuya at Yoshichō; she was admired among the guests as an ideal girl both on her beauty and accomplishments, and her high fame gave encouragement on the prosperity of *odoriko* at various parts of the city.

The girl famous next to Kikuya was Oroku Motoya at Nakachō of Fukagawa, of whom we have already referred. In Osaka a girl called Kosan, who became very famous by the love-affair with her lover, Kingorō, at this period, was a forerunner of the Osaka *geisha*.

As there were some girls who degenerated to carry on misconduct, the profession of *geisha* or *odoriko* was often prohibited since A.D. 1720, and once thirteen girls at Takanawa in Yedo were arrested and severely punished in A.D. 1790; but soon the circles of girls again appeared and prospered at Yoshichō, Kokuchō, Nakachō of Fukagawa, Jukkendana, Honchō, and Shimmei. The time when *odoriko* came to be generally called *geisha* was after A.D. 1788.

On the occasion when the girls were engaged to their customers they went to restaurants escorted by their mothers, but since about A.D. 1810 they were followed by men-servants called *hakoya*, who took the place of the old women. The get-up of *geisha* in this period was to put on the garment of long sleeves called *furisodě*, but afterwards they used to wear the wadded silk garment (*kosodě*) made of striped stuff called *meisen* in winter, and the hemp garment (*katabira*) with the interwoven minute marks called *kasuri* in summer. They were always bare-footed throughout the year, and put on a pair of clogs called *azumageta*.

They never used *haori* (Japanese coat) in presence of the guests, except the girls of the Fukagawa circle, who exalted themselves by imitating the queer fashion of the boat-letter's hostess. But

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coming down to A.D. 1830-40 the so-called *haori-geisha* (coat-girls) ceased to wear the coat, and adopted a new fashion to put on a silk garment, plain or with printed small figures, the ends of their broad belt hanging down as long as to cover their lower back, the face powdered thinly, and the hair bound in *shimada*. As the *geisha* in the room wore their garment so long as to trail its skirt, they had to pull it up with their left hand when they were to walk the street, hence *hidari-zuma* (skirt in left hand) a nickname of *geisha* in general.

In Kyoto and Osaka the *geisha* girls, most excellent both in art and beauty, were those lived at Gion in the former and at Nanchi (south quarter) in the latter. Those in Kyoto made their first appearance at Shimabara in A.D. 1751; but preceding them there was a girl named Kawachi in a brothel Kashiwaya of Shimabara, and being very skilful at singing of songs *Nagēbushi*, she became the first *taiko-jorō*. Next another girl, Yoshimatsu, of a brothel Sammonjiya, was an expert singer in the same quarter too (A.D. 1711-15). Then they were followed by the so-called Gion *geisha*, who turned the banks along the River Kamo into the paradise of singing and dancing.

In A.D. 1843 all the *geisha* of Gion were removed to Shimabara by order, but having been restored to their old position in 1851, their prosperity at Gion was redoubled. The summer costume of young dancing girls (*maiko*) of Gion was a purple gauze garment with the skirt lined with pink silk, or a thin hemp dress of superfine quality, together with a large belt made of red brocade; and that of singing girls (*geiko*) generally consisted of hemp, thin silk crape, or dark purple gauze, with figures dyed at the part of skirt, their belt made of greyish satin—they walked with the skirt pulled high up near their breast by the left hand.

In Osaka the *geisha* girls at the Shimmachi



THE SHIMADA CHIGNON, A COIFFURE GENERALLY WORN BY GEISHA GIRLS.  
Side View.



THE SHIMADA CHIGNON, A COIFFURE GENERALLY WORN BY GEISHA GIRLS.  
Back View.





## ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT

quarter competed their influence with those at Nanchi, and the rises of these two circles are attributed in the age A.D. 1716-35. The musical instruments treated by them at this time were lyre, *samisen*, and fiddle. The Nanchi girls, the essence of Osaka *geisha*, put on their fashionable habiliments with the short skirt hardly covering the ankles of feet, never taking *haori* (coat) of course. When they were engaged they went by palanquin called *Iro-kago* or *Chaya-kago* carried by two men.

Both in Nanchi and Shimmachi we could see a showy procession of a girl's palanquin called *Hoi-kago* every year. The procession of Shimmachi took place on the twenty-fifth of January, which was the first festival day of the Tenjin Shrine; on this day a girl in full dress—her head tied round with a coloured crape piece—got in a decorated palanquin, the scarlet skirts of her garment hanging down over its two sides, and ran for the shrine, followed by a number of buffoons, running and dancing on the way, their head tied round with a long piece of cloth and their body covered simply with a short under-garment only.

The day for the Nanchi palanquin procession was the tenth of January, on which the festival of the Ebisu Shrine (God of Wealth) at Imamiya was celebrated. A girl dressed in black or purple, the inside of collar being lined with scarlet crape, sat on a heap of three or five beautiful cushions in a palanquin; the suit of dresses on the day was called *kago-ishō* (palanquin costume). Her hair was bound in "front *coiffure*," and decorated with a tortoise-shell pin over her forehead. The roof of the palanquin was covered with red woollen fabric, over which a long white crape was twined. Besides the two bearers of the palanquin, it was pulled by twenty or thirty buffoons, who caught the long end of white crape hanging down from the roof. The bearers and the buffoons ran and ran

## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

for the God of Wealth, crying “*Hoi, hoi, hoi!*” To send out a girl for worship to the Ebisu Shrine in such a foolish and extravagant way, her patrons were quite generous to spend three or four hundred *ryō*<sup>1</sup> for a single palanquin.

Besides, there were several ceremonies of girl's visit to the festivals of different shrines.

Near the downfall of the Tokugawa Shōgunate, *rōnins* from local *daimiates* came up to Yedo and Kyoto and selected the quarters of gay circles in these cities for the seats of their private meetings. The *geisha* girls at this period were esteemed for their spirit of chivalry or gallantry, and when they had to wait upon the party of these *rōnins* they always had a resolution to be killed at any time, so violent and bloody was the temper of the homeless patriots and loyalists at this epoch.

Yoshiwara of Yedo was visited by *rōnins* of Mito, and Gion of Kyoto crowded by those of Satsuma and Chōshū clans, while a great number of *Samurai* in the immediate vassalage of the Shogun slipped into these quarters for the purpose of assassinating them. There were not a few noted girls who discussed with these *rōnins* on the affairs of state.

The girls in this age were generally well conducted. The sanction was very strict among themselves in Yoshiwara, especially against anyone whose misconduct had been discovered; she was expelled from her circle at once, and her dresses which she had worn at the time of miscarriage were all hung down and exposed to the public at the very shop of the *geisha*'s guild office for several days.

<sup>1</sup> A *ryō* in this age cost almost one pound sterling at present.

## ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT

### *C.—Down to the Present Time.*

After the Great Restoration of the Meija era (A.D. 1868), Tokyo, the new name for the old Yedo, became the *point d'appui* of gay circles, and a great number of new *geisha* quarters came to existence, while old ones made further development at the same time.

Shimbashi *geisha* could be found already before the end of the feudal age under the Tokugawa Government, but at the beginning of the Meiji era they were rather insignificant in comparison with the old and prosperous circles at Yoshiwara and Yanagibashi. However, gradually the quarter began to flourish, and at present has become one of the greatest circles in the capital.

At first the girls of the district were called the *Komparu geisha*, and the situation being near the bridge Shimbashi, afterwards came to receive the name of Shimbashi girls. About the time when the new Government of Meiji was established, most of customers to the quarters were higher officials, and lately the members of Parliament are welcomed among the circle during the session every year. As the houses in this quarter under a general name of Ginza were reconstructed to the brick buildings by the Government in 1872, the girls of Komparu were fortunate to live in the new houses of nice appearance.

Akasaka is the largest *geisha* quarter, covering all the extent of Tamachi and Tameikě. In January of 1869 a girl-house called Iseya was first opened in a street Shimmachi of the district, and then Toyokuraya in March, and Harumoto in May, 1872, and Hayashiya in July, 1875, these four houses only answering the demand for girls at the

## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

quarter up to 1885. In 1890 the number of girls were increased to one hundred and twenty-five, and in 1895 to two hundred.

There are three great and famous *geisha*-houses in Akasaka at present:

Harumoto, situated at Sanchōmē of Tamachi Street, was first established in 1872, and keeps over forty singing and dancing girls at present, Manryō, Kanoko, Kikuryū, and Fukuzuru being most noted for beauty and accomplishments among them. Tama-Harumoto, Mitsu-Harumoto, and Tsuta-Harumoto are its branches.

Hayashiya, at Nichōmē of the same street, is an old and popular shop since 1875. About thirty larger and smaller girls of the house are pushing their business in competition with those of Harumoto. Rinko, Misao, Kotatsu, Inē, Toyomaru, and Korin are selections among all the beauties, and Takabayashi, Shinbayashi, Shimēbayashi, Yonēbayashi, and Chiyobayashi are the branches.

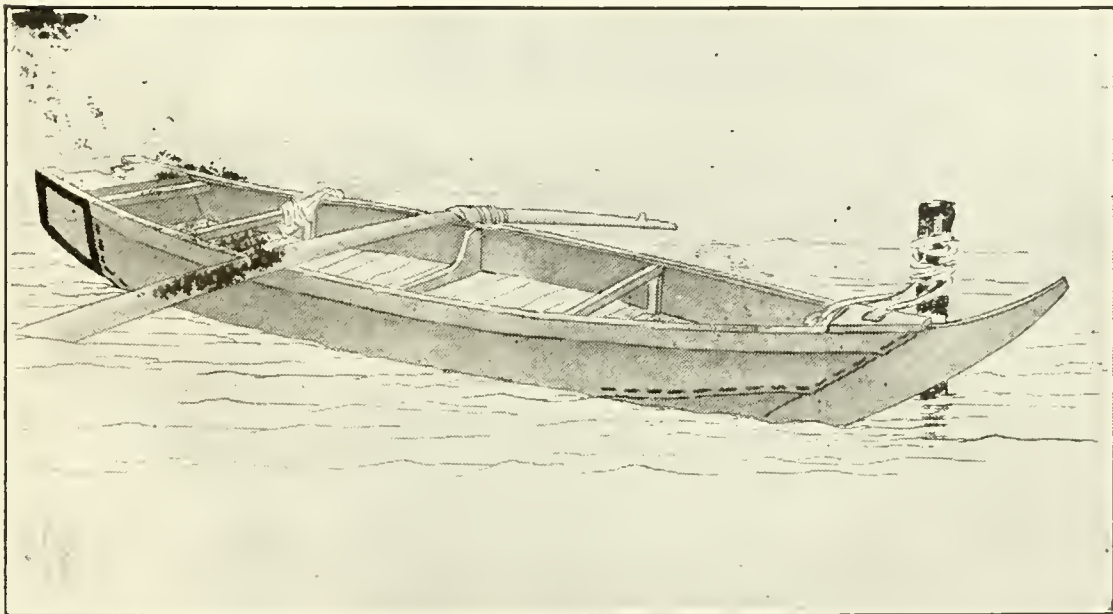
Kiyotsuchi, in Tameikē Street, commenced its business in 1899, and at present over thirty girls of the house are attracting the guests who visit restaurants and waiting-houses of the quarter.

The two circles of Sukiyamachi and Dōbōchō in the Shitaya Ward are known by a general name of the "Shitaya *geisha*," and were reputable under the name of Sukiyamachi girls among citizens since A.D. 1804-29, when the Fukagawa circle was at its height of prosperity. At the beginning of the Meiji era, however, there were only ten girls at the Sukiyamachi quarter, and being gradually increased they became fifty-two in 1885; at present there are one hundred and fifty singing and twenty dancing girls, the number of *geisha*-houses amounting to sixty-five.

The Dōbōchō quarter contained only twenty-five girls in 1890, and made extension to one hundred and sixty singing and fourteen dancing girls, in



A HOUSE BOAT.



A CHOKI BOAT.



## ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT

1910. At present we are told that one hundred and sixty-three singing and fifteen dancing girls are living in seventy-four houses.

The customers to the Shitaya circles comprehend all ranks of people, and it is a speciality of the quarter that the girls here are often hired to the meetings of artists and scholars; hence the Shitaya girls have many more acquaintances among these kinds of gentlemen than those in other quarters. The reason may be ascribed to the existence of two great establishments, the Fine Arts School to the north and the Imperial University to the west, the former on the hill of Park Uëno and the latter on the upland of Hongō.

Yoshichō is one of the large gay quarters in the Nihonbashi Ward. It was about one hundred years ago that *geisha* girls span their webs at the quarter, and there were not more than thirty girls before the time of the Meiji Restoration (1868), but near the end of 1871 they were increased to more than one hundred. At present the total number of the singing and the dancing girls are said to have amounted to over five hundred! All the streets surrounding the quarter are the seats of banks, firms, and big merchants, and moreover the Rice and Stock Exchange is standing near it; naturally enough most of the customers here are business men.

Karasumori *geisha* is a general name given for the girls in the quarter to the south of the bridge Shimbashi, just on the opposite side to the position of the so-called Shimbashi circle.

Besides those above mentioned, Nihombashi, Kōbusho, Tenjin, Kagurazaka, Shintomichō, Mukōjima, Konnyakujima, Fujimichō, Shibaura, Asakusa, Hakusan, and Dōgenzaka are the quarters of *geisha* girls in Tokyo, and several interesting stories with regard to the girls in these places will be given in the following chapters, as well as

## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

those relating to the beauties in other cities and towns of the country.

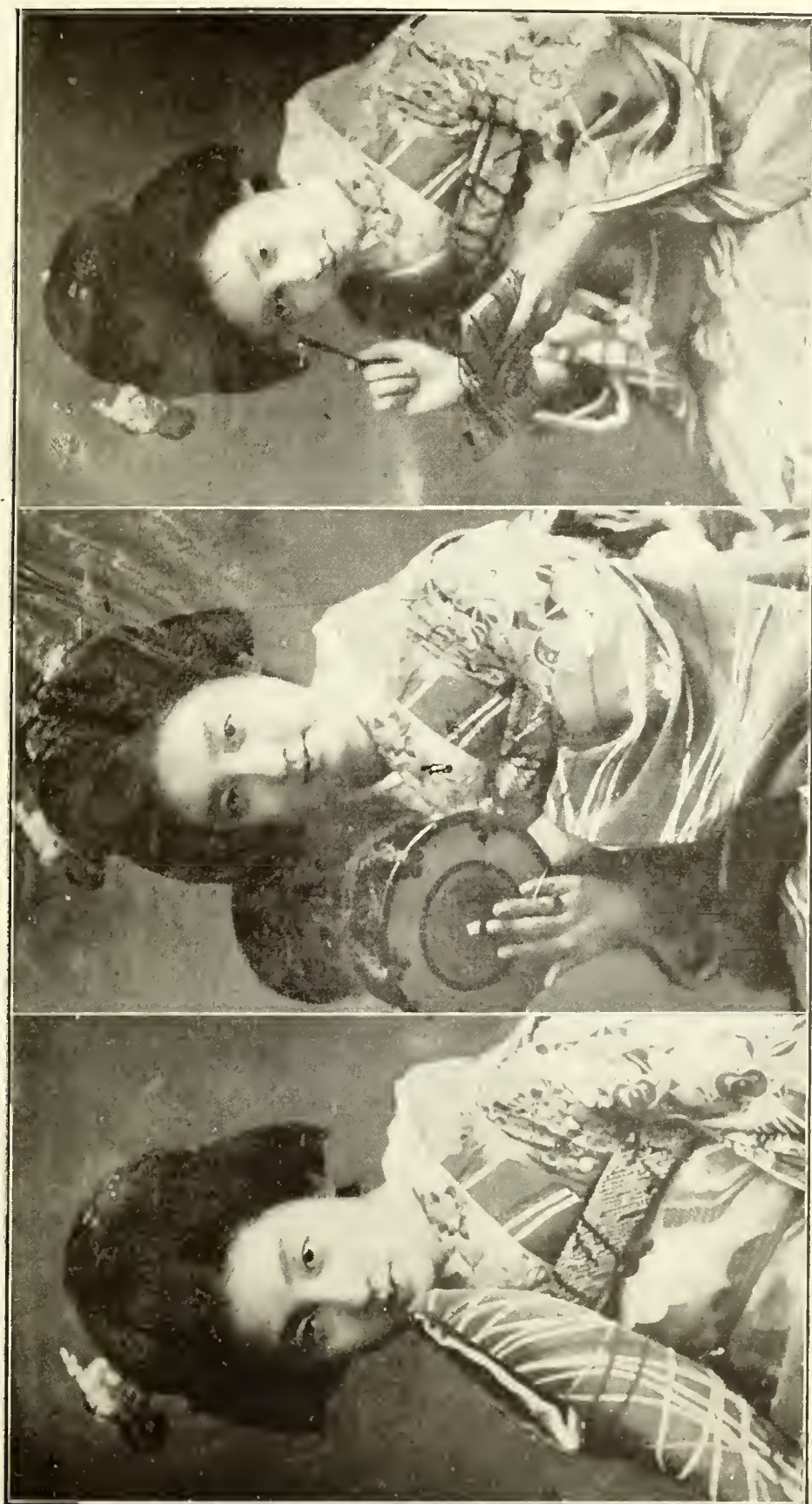
Chief events and general customs in this period were as follows:

In A.D. 1873 a girls' training school called Jokōba was first established at Gion of Kyoto, which was at once followed by Osaka and other chief towns. In the school, girls were trained in music and dancing on one side and taught in reading, writing, and even sewing on the other.

A few years ago in Osaka there took place a queer examination for girls at the south quarter. The guild office of the quarter was selected the examination hall and the examiners consisted of a certain number of male members of the guild, together with eight old singing girls under mutual election. Courses of the examination were two kinds of songs called *jiuta* and *edouta* for girls over twenty years old, the songs and dancing for those over seventeen, and the drum added for those below seventeen. By the marks given on each course by each examiner the result of the examination was settled. The system was put in force every year, and could attain a good success for selection of girls.

Their dressing was rather simple, owing to the interference of the authorities; they were prohibited to use pattern cloth or any extravagant way of tailoring; adornment for their head was limited to a comb and a long pin (*kōgai*) of tortoise-shell and a short silver pin. Even on a ceremonious occasion they could not put on the clothes of figured skirts and the belt embroidered with gold thread. They never used the socks (*tabi*), but carried a pair of clogs called *azumageta* under their bare feet; their hair was generally dressed in the *coiffure* of *shimada*, and they were proud to be gallant or stylish themselves by wearing a black





A DANCING GIRL.

A DANCING GIRL  
PLAYING A  
TSUZUMI (HAND-DRUM).

A DANCING GIRL  
LOOKING ON  
A HAND GLASS,



## ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT

crape underskirt (*juban*) directly over their naked body.

After about A.D. 1885, however, the European way of dressing the hair under the general name of *sokuhatsu* came to be in vogue, and then the Genroku style having begun to prevail since about 1905, there were a good few girls who dared to appear in presence of the guests putting on their head the curious 'cues of *katsuyama* or *hyōgo*, which were in fashion in the Genroku period (A.D. 1688-1703).

As to dancing, several different schools had their influence in different societies of girls: in Tokyo the Hanayagi school controlled the Yoshiwara circle, and the Fujima the Shimbashi; in Kyoto the Katayama was popular among the Gion girls; in Osaka the Yamamura trained the Shimmachi *geiko* (girls), while the Sato and the Nishikawa taught those in Sonezaki circle; and girls belonging to the gay circles in the city of Nagoya were adherents of the Nishikawa school.

In A.D. 1872 the Kyoto Ballet or Cherry Dance called *Miyako-odori* was first organised by the girls of Gion under the auspices of the governor and the councillor of the time. A party of the dance consisted of thirty-two dancing and eleven singing girls accompanied by four for hand-drums, two for flutes, three for smaller drums and gongs, and one for a larger drum, fifty-three girls in all. As there were seven parties, each of which was to perform the dance for a week by turns, total number of girls for the dance amounted to three hundred and seventy-one.

On the tenth of December, 1873, the governor of Tokyo promulgated the disciplinary rules for *geisha* girls, which was the first regulation specially with reference to the singing and the dancing girls.

In November, 1888, the Osaka Ballet, named *Ashibō-odori*, was first formed by girls of the south

## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

circle of the city, in contrast to the *Miyako-odori* or Cherry Dance of Kyoto.

In 1902 a Great *Geisha* Union was organised by the circles in Tokyo, Yokohama, Hachioji, Shizuoka, Maebashi, Sendai, Mito, Yokosuka, and Odawara, all these cities being situated in the east half of Japan.

## CHAPTER II

### TRUE FEATURES OF *GEISHA* GIRLS

#### *A.—Dancing Girls*

To make a deductive reasoning from a Japanese saying, "There is no foolish business in the world, but there are many foolish customers," we can conclude that the existence of *geisha* girls is to be ascribed to their customers. The greater part of these girls are not wise and educated ladies, but on the contrary they are born in poor and ignorant families, giving no good influence to them in their childhood. When little girls some fourteen or fifteen years old, born among such families, come first to be trained as *geisha*, they are called *oshaku* or dancing girls for one or two years; during the term as *oshaku* their fee is one-half of that for a mature *geisha* or so-called singing girl, hence they are often called *hangyoku* or "half-fee."

In the evening when they are engaged to restaurants they appear in presence of guests as apprentices of *geisha*, and in daytime they are strictly trained in all accomplishments necessary for the profession. On the termination of the hardest study and severest training for one or two years they are scarcely enlisted as the singing girls. During the apprenticeship they must get up very early every morning, and, rubbing their sleepy

## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

eyes, dust and sweep all the rooms of the house; towards the evening again they must clean the rooms and light the lanterns at the door. No sooner have they finished supper than they are taken by senior girls to bath, and painted in preparation for the engagement to restaurants.

Little girls under training by a passionate hostess or elder *geisha* are said to have their body whipped with a long bamboo tobacco-pipe almost every day. Even in the time when they are engaged by guests in a restaurant, how pitiful it is to see them kneeling down rigidly and casting timid, stealthy glances at the faces of their seniors and maid-servants present in the room rather than to take care of the guests themselves. While the customers are pleased to look at them in dancing, the little dancers themselves are pleasant in no wise. Yet dancing and drumming, accompanied by singing songs and playing *samisen* of elder girls, are their duty as *oshaku*, and by this they can earn a certain sum of money, though the fee is only one-half of that for their elders.

If, however, any of them are grown up to the girl in the flower of maidenhood, some seventeen or eighteen years old, the little finger of her right hand having been stiffened with callosity as the result of frequent touching with the plectrum of *samisen* and her neck blackened with constant applications of powder—we would be surprised by her beautiful complexion and elegant style; certainly her external appearance is entirely changed at every inch, so that even her parents themselves doubt whether she is their own daughter! A girl in full dress, without a bit of defects from the top to the toe, comes striking her charming attitude, casts a glance and smiles on us—wouldn't even women be enchanted by her loveliness and beauty at the moment? And all of these belles to be called the incarnation of Venus were once those poor little

## TRUE FEATURES OF GEISHA GIRLS

girls who wept bitterly to be separated from the parents and were at last brought to the *geisha*-houses never seen before.

### *B.—Employment of Girls*

Lately the method of adopting girls in *geisha*-houses in Tokyo made a great change. The apprenticeship system of little girls was almost given up among the gay circle, but in lieu of it they employ those girls who have been already taught and trained in some local towns on their preliminary lessons necessary for *geisha* business. Girl agents, who are called *zegen* generally among the circle, visit local provinces, and out of the girls who are found in a rural restaurant or *geisha*-house select a number of girls appreciated by them to fit for adoption in the metropolitan girl-shops. We are told that these country girl-houses or restaurants are complaining for deprivation of their living treasuries which they have hardly made up from their primitive state to the situation somewhat hopeful for utilisation in future.

The cunning but wise method of picking out the girls are not limited for those in local provinces, but even the daughters of poor citizens in Tokyo are preparing themselves so as to be able to be adopted for *geisha* at any time when money is necessary for their parents; that is, after they come home from school every day they go to teachers of *samisen* and dancing, the fundamental acquirements most important for the capacity as singing girls.

### *C.—Classes of Girls*

The employers of *geisha* girls generally are old and experienced singing girls, but often we find

## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

those kinds of hostesses who are *ex-geisha*, or wives of story-tellers or actors.

To classify *geisha* girls according to the terms of employment, there are three kinds:

1. *Marugakae* or absolute employées are those who are agreed to borrow a sum of money in advance, some one or two thousand *yen*, and to be taken into service for three or five years; and while expenses for dresses, meals, and pocket-moneys of girls are borne by the employers, all the incomes of the former within the term are taken into the hand of the latter.

2. *Wakē* (one-half) and *Shichisan* (three-tenths) or participators in gains are those who borrow some five hundred or one thousand *yen*, which shall be paid back to the employer by the end of the fixed term of service, and responsibility for expenses on dresses, meals, etc., being properly agreed between the two sides according to the case, money earned by the girls is divided between the two by the rate fixed in the agreement.

3. *Misē-gari*, *Kamban-kari*, or title-renters are independent girls employed in no girl-houses, but pursuing their business in the name of some reputable *geisha*-shops; they pay some ten or twenty *yen* per month for the rent of the house-title.

### D.—Income of Girls

It is very difficult to know the exact amount of income of a *geisha* girl, but it is probable that the most popular and noted girls of the first rank in Tokyo can earn one hundred and fifty to three hundred *yen* per month on an average, with the exception of January, in which they seem to make money of four or five hundred to over one thousand. As exceptional cases, there are some girls who are receiving monthly allowances of some hundred *yen* from their kind and rich patrons. Anyhow, it is





A DANCING GIRL  
WEARING A VEIL.



DANCING GIRLS  
IN KYOTO.



A DANCING GIRL  
AND PLUM FLOWERS,



## TRUE FEATURES OF GEISHA GIRLS

true that the income of a girl of the first rank is much more than the salary or earnings got by a Government official of the higher rank or a director of a smaller firm. What a profitable and interesting business for the females is the profession of *geisha* girls!

If we wish to hire a girl of the first rank on a certain day and give an order to a restaurant or waiting-house to call her at a fixed time on an appointed date, we pay *yen* 5.10, of which *yen* 4.20 is paid to the girl, 60 *sen* to the restaurant or waiting-house, and 30 *sen* to the manservant who escorts the girl from her house to the restaurant, carrying her *samisen* at the same time—it is the sum of the fee for a No. 1 girl, and such is the rate of its distribution among the party concerned.

If we request her to play some performance specially difficult or troublesome, or keep her for the time unusually long, we must give her an extra of two or three *yen*; and again if we have to engage her at a place beyond the scope of her circle we should pay six or seven *yen* for herself and fifty *sen* for her escort.

Lately it has become a custom that the number of *geisha* girls is greater than that of the guests in a big party held by people of the higher rank, so that the payment for the girls is far more than the total amount of expenses for dishes, wine, tobacco, tips to the restaurant and maidservants, etc.

If a girl is hired temporarily without a previous notice her fee is not more than two *yen* and fifty or sixty *sen*, and if she pays a visit for a short time, some ten or twenty minutes, to her acquainted gentlemen who happen to be present in another room of the same restaurant where she was engaged by other guests she is bestowed by them with a tip of one *yen*, the short visit being called *go-aisatsu* (compliments) of the girl.

# THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

## *E.—Expenses of Girls*

Next let us see the expenditure of a girl. Suppose that her family consists of her mother, brother, a maidservant, and a seamstress, five persons in all including herself. Unavoidable expenses for house-rent, telephone charge, business tax, petty moneys, social outlays for theatre and others, wages for employées, provision, fuel, charcoal, light, and so on amount to over one hundred *yen* per month at least; and she must pay another hundred *yen* for dry goods stores and *rikisha*-men. Moreover, it is a habit among the girl circle that she should give presents to restaurants, waiting-houses, and their maidservants twice a year, in July and December, the amount of consumption by a most celebrated girl of the first rank for the semi-annual gifts attaining to a wonderful sum of over five hundred on each occasion.

In January she should put on a New Year's dress newly made every year, and a suit costs two or three hundred *yen*. Summing up all these current and temporary expenses, how expensive is the life of a *geisha* girl, and how hard is it to earn such a big sum by a young weak woman!

*Geisha* girls are always squeezed by demons of several kinds. The first demon is the tax-officer who levies one hundred *yen* per annum upon the first-class girls of Tokyo, and next they are coerced to be members of some public females' associations or to contribute for charity bazaars. On the occasion when a great festival of a principal shrine in the city is to be celebrated, they have to attend the ceremony dressed in a costly costume specially made for the festival, and in a certain fête the expenses of a girl for the costume and its appendages amount to over three hundred *yen*.

## TRUE FEATURES OF GEISHA GIRLS

We often hear that some of the *geisha* girls are pursuing their business for the purpose of earning money necessary for their husbands who are abroad to study, or getting educational expenses for their brothers.

### *F.—Characteristics of Girls*

The following interesting story was given by an old and experienced singing girl, and it will give us a good knowledge on the true and inner features of *geisha* girls at the present time:

“Certainly among the girls at present we cannot trace cleverness, activity, strong will, and courage, which were the characteristics peculiar to the girls of the Yedo age. What a pity it is! The cause of the degradation of girls at present should be attributed to the downfall of taste on the side of guests. For example, look at a girl most popular in the Shimbashi circle. What a countenance she has!—short, round, of swollen cheeks, and dull. Such a face is called *Marupocha* (round and fat), and generally welcomed by guests.

“*Marupocha* may signify perfection and obedience in a meaning, just contrast to sharpness and graveness of the Yedo girls, which is not liked by boastful blades of the present day. Most of the guests in these days are people who come up from local provinces and know no tastes on true merry-making of the metropolitan inhabitants. What a nonsense to expect absolute obedience and perfection for the professionals like *geisha* girls!

“The inexperienced fellows presume the girls to be liars, or despise them against craftiness in the art of enchanting men. In the world there is no one who does not use some tacts in his business, and yet men are as cruel as to blame us only, as if to be a metamorphosis of lies and deceptions.

## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

Our motto is 'Neither to deceive guests nor to be deceived by them,' and nothing more in tacts and tricks.

"If we treat them all times with sincerity only, we should be ruined by dishonest or inhuman reprobates and ridiculed by fellow-girls, and on the contrary, if we dare to make a fool of them with cheats and lies only, we would be knocked down by upper hands and consoled with no sympathy of our comrades. Men in general are pleased to trap girls since old times, and it was wisely said by a noted girl that 'A girl does not speak lies so much as her guest does.'

"In treatment of customers, the very important art for us is the clever disposition of truth and falsity, and its most abstruse principles cannot be easily mastered by us. Consequently if a girl does not understand the way how to treat her guests she cannot be called an accomplished *geisha*.

"We are women and have passions as equal as other girls do; we may fall in love with men whom we like, but when we are attending upon guests in a restaurant, we are on duty to carry out our business, and have no relaxation of mind to think of other matters. Lovers of *geisha* girls are not limited to young, handsome men, but it is funny indeed that we are often attracted by the ways of smoking, speaking, dressing, or such a kind of trifling matters which are a little different from or rather stylish than those done by common people.

"Girls of our circle detest the men who boast themselves of spending money lavishly, or who affect to be men of the world. Then what kind of men are liked by *geisha* girls? 'Tis a very difficult question! Yes, a simple, kind, calm, and tasteful gentleman is the ideal lover of all girls, I am sure!

"In a word, girls of the gay quarter do not

## TRUE FEATURES OF GEISHA GIRLS

love men thoughtlessly or out of fickleness, and if they have once fallen in love they are glad even to sacrifice their lives for the lovers. Our business being to meet various kinds of men every night and day, we have best conveniences to select out lovers coincident with our characters. We dare say the holiest love is ours, absolutely true and honest at every case and always with the burning affection, more serious than that of the females belonging to any other classes.

“Some of the people look down upon us without discrimination to be the faithless and cold-hearted creatures living in the dishonourable society. Our circle is a poor body of unlucky girls, each member of which is far deeper in love and humanity than any girls of other ranks. Competitions among our fellow-girls are fierce; even among the hostess and girls in the same house we cannot be off our guard. When engaged to a restaurant, constraints for waitresses or maidservants of the house, cares for guests, and ostentations and emulations against other *geisha* girls present in the same room are governing our brains at all times.

“As we are always troubled in and out, we are used to be vigilant at any time, but as it is impossible to strain the attention permanently, we seek for some consolers. Almost all girls who have no lovers yet have one or two bosom friends among their fellow-girls to whom they can open themselves on all their anguishes and complaints. Thus our troubles and pains could be temporarily tranquillised by the special affection and consolation between the friends.

“By the way, the features of the *geisha* girls in Yoshiwara or ‘Nightless City’ will be told, as they are the essence of girls in Tokyo. The Yoshiwara *geisha* are bare-footed throughout all the seasons, and in winter when it is very cold they walk up and down through a long corridor with

## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

the upper part of their feet wrapped round with the skirts of clothes. They are always too busy to be concerned in love-affairs; every morning they have to go to the teachers of dancing, songs and music, and as to the kind of songs, they must know *Hauta* (short songs), *Naga-Uta* (long songs), *Kiyomoto*, *Tokiwazu*, *Gidayu*, *Itchū*, and *Katō* at least, each of these lessons being taught by different instructors respectively.

“Training of singing in the coldest season is the hardest work done by younger girls. Every morning at dawn in the dead of winter, young girls sit down on an open platform on the roof and recite songs in the highest tone of their voice, so that it is not rare that blood is shed from their broken throats.

“The annual performance most important and enjoyable for the Yoshiwara *geisha* is the Niwaka Dance held in spring season when cherry blossoms are in full bloom (see ‘The Nightside of Japan’ for particulars of *Niwaka*). All girls are in fervent competitions among themselves to have their own parties engaged by customers; a sign-paper is sent from the guide-houses to the girls as a tally for each engagement, the names of each girl engaged and of the guide-house where her party is to attend being written down upon it. The girls tie up all these pieces of sign-paper to their hairpin, and as popular girls receive engagements of many customers, a bundle of so many sign-papers is seen on the head of each girl like a large white flower which pliantly flutters when she dances on the stage.”

### G.—Curses and Conjurations

Trifling events or phenomena which attract so special attention for common people are generally taken by the girls of the gay circle as the



## TRUE FEATURES OF GEISHA GIRLS

matters of great importance, surprise, or fear; and it is no wonder that curses, conjurations, and ghost-stories are usually welcomed by them.

Charming, cursing, or conjuring is sneered by us as a foolish superstition, but if a girl's aim or desire could be attained by any of these means how happy would she feel for her success! Specially in the gay quarter, where love is their soul, the superstition is most prevalent throughout its whole extent since ancient times. Even in these days when the God of Thunder is captivated by human beings to serve as the electric light, instead of tiny paper lanterns lighted with vegetable oil some fifty years ago, we often find a paper doll hanging headlong on the lattice window of a saloon, or a heap of love letters, each twisted into a string, in front of the altar of a certain shrine; the doll represents the invocation for fine weather, and the letters contain girls' supplications to the god for attaining their objects in love-affairs.

Now several interesting ways of charms, conjurations, and curses in regard to love-affairs usually executed by *geisha* girls will be explained:

1. "Fox."—There are several ways of charm adopted by a girl for drawing her lover to her side, but the one most efficacious among others is utilisation of "fox."

A girl could not see her lover for one or two months, and, as she had many things to talk and consult with him, she resolved to try the charm of "fox" for him. First she wrote the word "fox" on a small piece of paper, which was pasted at a corner of the third step from the top of a staircase in her house; then she had to wait for somebody to stumble down from the staircase. It is said that if anyone is fallen from the third step as expected she is successful in her secret charm. What a mishap for one who is doomed

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to fall down from the high staircase for the girl's folly!

On the morning after three days an old maid-servant of the girl's house was coming down the stairs, lost her footing just at the third step, and, having fallen over the staircase, lay down senseless on the floor matting downstairs. Startled by the sudden cries and sound, all the family ran up to the spot, and after a short tumult on administering medicine and water the old woman could recover her breath.

Towards the evening of the same day she was engaged to a restaurant, and when she found her lover waiting for her in a room of the restaurant, how startled she was to witness the miraculous virtue of the conjuration so quickly!

2. "Needle."—If a girl wishes to see her lover she takes his name-card, and, concentrating her ardent love upon it, pierces a needle through it; and next she sticks it very secretly at the inside of the entrance door of her house, facing to the north. It is generally believed by girls that the lovers would come to them within five hours after the charm was faultlessly performed, and that there is no effect if it is tried more than once in a month.

3. "Mirror."—On a small piece of paper various abusive languages for the lover are written down, as many as possible, and it is stuck on the back side of a pocket looking-glass in such a way that the written words are read upside-down. The lover will soon visit his girl, who is yearning to see him.

Another way with the looking-glass is to write down on a small piece of paper his name and address in the most regular script, and then to add the incantatory words "He is dead!" below them; the paper is pasted upside down on the back side of a mirror. He is attracted soon to the girl by this way too.

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4. "Razor."—A girl wishes to know the real intention of her lover for herself, or she doubts whether his kind words given to her in their last meeting were spoken from his heart. On this occasion she calls him to her house and waits until he falls asleep in night. At the dead of night, about two or three o'clock, she brings a large glass or porcelain bowl filled with water, which a sharp razor is lain on, and puts it near the head of the lover in the bed so stealthily as not to be perceived by him. Then, moving the razor along the brim of the bowl, she whispers to him in sound sleep, "Now tell me your real intentions for me." He begins to talk in his sleep, confessing everything he has in his mind.

5. "Hair-Washing."—A girl is yearning after her lover who is travelling in a distant quarter, or she wants to speak with him about some important matters which occurred upon her during his absence. On such a case, if she carries out a conjuration of "Hair-Washing," he would come back soon to her.

First she unties her hair and washes it in the water of a pond—the water of a well, river, or water-works being of no use for the charm—then she stands by the side of a well near her house, letting down the hair over her shoulders, and looking down on the surface of the water with her whole heart, states everything she has to tell her man for the bottom of the well. By this the girl's desire is said directly to reach him, who comes back to see her instantly.

There is a fearful story in connection with the effect of the conjuration performed by a *geisha* girl. After washing the hair she stood near the well, and while she was expressing her desire a comb on her head slipped out of the hair, and, falling into the well, sank down deep to the bottom of the water, but she did not care of it at the time.

## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

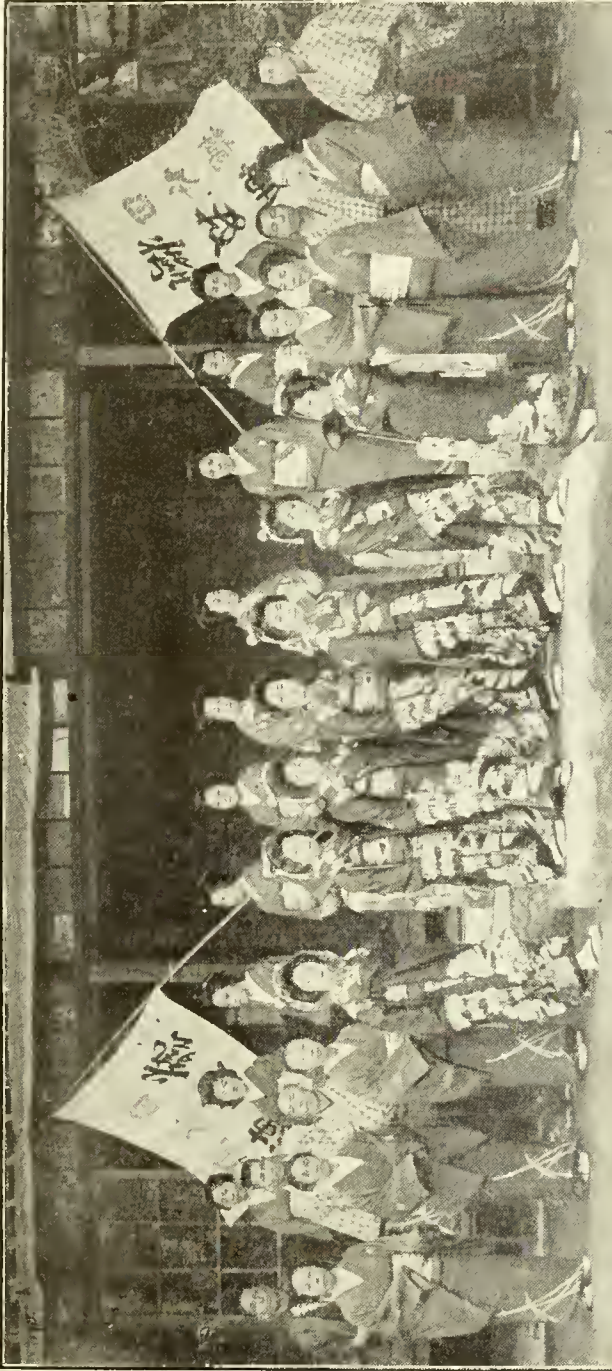
How remarkable was the effect of the charm! Her paramour, whom she had been on tiptoe for, came back after a week. Transported with joy, she hastened to the house assigned by him. When she entered the room where he was awaiting her, she was stunned with horror by finding his face scarred with a distinct trace of a comb.

6. "Photographs."—A girl intended to avenge upon a man whom she had been cruelly tortured and insulted by. A horrible curse, which she was taught by one of her friends and decided to carry out, was a method of boiling a photograph of the hateful chap. First she got his portrait and threw it into a boiling oil pan; then she continued to boil the photo on the blazing fire as long as she could keep. A few days after she was satisfied to find the face of her enemy blistered up like that of a drowned man.

7. "Visionary Method."—There is a mysterious method of reading the thought of a man often experienced by *geisha* girls. A girl is in sleep at her home, and her soul visits her lover; thus she can hear from him what she wants to know. To try the method, first she must be acquainted with particulars of his address, arrangements of the rooms of his house, and the position of his bed. Then she sits down on her bed in her own room, all the doors around the room being shut up, next she composes the mind, shuts the eyes, puts the hands on the knees, and is absorbed in meditation as follows:

"She gets out of bed, changes her clothes, opens the door of the room, and gets out of the house. By taking a *rikisha*, carriage, or motor-car, she passes such and such streets, and arrives at the gate of her man's house. Now she writes the word 'fox' thrice on her left palm with her right forefinger; and then the gate and doors open of themselves. After passing through rooms, she

1.



2.



1. SINGING AND DANCING GIRLS BELONGING TO THE GAY  
QUARTER OF NIHONBASHI, TOKYO.

2. GEISHA GIRLS DISGUISED AS FIREMEN.



## TRUE FEATURES OF GEISHA GIRLS

approaches the bed of the lover. She sits down near his head, and calls him by a low voice. Getting his reply in trance, she expresses what she wants to ask, and is distinctly answered by him for everything she inquires. After she satisfied herself by having his true intentions confessed in response to her inquiries, she comes home by following the course just contrary to that taken on the way to him."

If, however, she thinks any other matters during the meditation, or opens her eyes even for a moment, she fails to attain her aim; and besides, if she meets in vision with any person on the way during her journey it is said no effect can be obtained.

### *H.—Spectral Traditions*

Out of many ghost-stories got about among *geisha* girls, some of the most interesting or curious ones will be given here:

Until all the buildings in the North Gay Quarter of Osaka were burnt down by the great fire in A.D. 1910; there was a public-house well known by the name of "Ghost Tea-house" in a street of the quarter. The hostess of the house was an old widow over forty years old, and was often talked among girls of her love-affairs in connection with young actors or *samisen* players. It was rumoured among them that when she was angry her ears stood upright and vibrated sharply like those of a cat. More than the mystery of sticking up of the hostess's ears, there on the upstairs of the house was a dancing stage, upon which a man saw a wonder:—

One dark night near the end of a year he went up alone to the upstairs on business, and, looking toward the dancing stage unintentionally, he found

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on it a very large head of a woman smiling for him. He was not frightened at the apparition, but bold enough to jump at it on the instant. The head disappeared, and the stage remained as peaceful as usual.

Wonders of the house were not limited to those above mentioned, but all the *geisha* girls told several strange events which they met with in the house. A girl assuredly said that once she saw the neck of the hostess elongated by five inches at least, and another reported that a man and a woman, both very old and with silvery white hair, were sitting down and looking at her in the innermost detached room after twelve every night, in spite of the fact that there were no such old persons among the family of the house.

Among some five or six large and first-rank girl-houses in the Horië Merriment Quarter of Osaka, there was a famous one named Hanafuji, and the customers to it generally were citizens of the higher class. Of all the *geisha* of the house, the girl called Komatsu was most popular among the customers; she had a beautiful complexion, and was rather fat and white in her skin.

One evening in the spring of a year there happened to come in the house a tall and handsome young gentleman, some twenty years of age, and Komatsu was appointed to attend him. As she was refined in her accomplishments and treated him very kindly, he seemed to have been infatuated with her.

After the first meeting of the two, the young dandy visited the girl every second or third day, always late in night. He was very liberal to spend a big sum of money every time; for his new sweetheart he bought dresses, ornaments on hair, and everything she wished for. Thus the fame for the good fortune of Komatsu having come to resound throughout the whole extent of Horië quarter, she



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was respected as the first and most popular girl among all *geisha* in the quarter.

As she was bound under the engagement by her lover every day from morning to night, no man could enjoy the happiness of being waited upon by the famous and prosperous singing girl. The young gentleman often took her to picnics, excursions to noted sites in Kyoto, theatres, and all pleasure resorts in and around the city of Osaka, so that singing and dancing girls, waitresses of restaurants, and all females living in the quarter envied her good luck.

After the full there follows the lack, and a tall tree in the wood is always blown by the wind stronger than the others. When the prosperity of the girl Komatsu attained its extreme, some bad rumours about her patron began to sprout and spread throughout the whole quarter; he did not come to Hanafuji, the girl's house, until it was past twelve every night, and went back sneaking away very early every morning before dawn; and though he was spoken of to be a very handsome young gentleman, there was nobody who saw him but the family of her house, and the girl Komatsu, who had been fat, healthy, and active, became pale and faint day after day since she had been first visited by her lover.

The hostess of Hanafuji did not know these disputes, but on the contrary she was much satisfied to see the great profit earned by her favourite girl, who was also glad to have abundance of costly dresses and other articles given by her young guest as much as she wished for. At last the hostess built for Komatsu a new detached room, which was profusely decorated with valuable furniture and articles, and its use was limited to the girl only any time when she was to receive her lover.

In a street near the Horië quarter there lived a chivalrous boss named Tatsuyoshi, who had been

## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

often told about the strange young gallant in love with Komatsu, and now began to doubt his reality judging from his actions so far. Being acquainted with the hostess, one summer evening he visited Hanafuji and ordered wine and dishes, hiring some *geisha* girls at the same time. At length he got so heavily drunk that he could not stand up himself, and was compelled to pass the night in the house.

Near midnight he rose up from his sham sleep and crept out of his room. While he was skulking at a corner of the yard near the detached room specially built for Komatsu, he saw a man secretly approaching the room; by the starlight in the summer night he recognised him to be a young, tall and handsome fellow, covering the lower half of his face with a fan. When the young man opened a low bamboo wicket in the yard and came at the room, the girl, who was waiting for him, opened the door, took his hand and accompanied him into the room after shutting up the door again.

How surprised the voluntary investigator was when he saw the girl, once with so fat and healthy body and with so lovely rosy cheeks swollen at the lower part, but now so wonderfully emaciated within less than half a year that she appeared like a person who had gone to that bourne from whence no traveller returns! His suspicion upon the youth became deeper and stronger now. He came back to his own room, and fell in deep pondering how to make out the real character of the monster. When the clock on the wall struck three he again stole out into the yard, and, arriving at the entrance door of the girl's room, he locked it up firmly from the outside, so as nobody could come out of the room.

Next morning he went round the house to wake all the family, then he told them the bad rumours spread throughout the quarter, and next the state

## TRUE FEATURES OF GEISHA GIRLS

of things witnessed and the arrangement taken by him last night. The hostess did not believe him, but being forced to follow him, she went out together with him for the detached room. The door was unlocked by him, and at the instant when they stepped into the room both were frightened at finding a large, old, and black-spotted badger lying dead, with its eyes widely opened, near the steps of the entrance. By the side of the corpse of the fearful animal the poor girl Komatsu in all skin and bones lay swooned, grasping her hands as if to have fallen after great writhing. By the effect of medical treatment she could hardly recover her breath, but, having been too much frightened, she fell seriously ill, and at last died at the end of autumn of the same year.

In the Inari gay quarter of Moji port, at the north end of Kyūshū Island, there was a singing girl called Kimiyo, in a girl-house, Asakawa-rō. She was a young, beautiful girl, eighteen years old, and very obedient to her employer, as well as kind to her customers.

One day at the beginning of a summer she took cold, and, as she got worse day by day, she took leave from her hostess and returned to her parents. Though she was under medical treatment by some noted doctors, yet her condition became dangerous. One evening in June she asked her parents to come near her bed, and very secretly told the following strange dream :

“ While I was half-asleep in daytime a golden serpent appeared in my presence and said to me, ‘ If you will build a new shrine for me, I shall relieve you from your serious illness.’ ”

The parents, however, took her to be in delirium as the result of heavy fever, and did not care her saying at all. Next evening again she told them that she had seen the same dream as she had explained last night. As they could not be

## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

indifferent for their daughter's repeated dream, now they built and dedicated a small shrine to the serpent in dream at a corner of the yard. In the same night the large serpent appeared before the girl and expressed his joy for her kindness in establishing his shrine. Since the next morning she began to get better, and after some two weeks was completely recovered. How glad her parents were to see their daughter rescued from death, and a great and pompous festival was held by them for the preserver of her life after reconstructing a larger and more splendid shrine.

Kimiyo, the girl revived by the serpent, now lives in Tokyo as the wife of a merchant. If one visits her, he will find a fine shrine of God Serpent on the miniature hill in the large yard behind her house, and it is worshipped by her every morning.

Near the end of the Tokugawa age, the streets of Yedo city, and especially those within the limits of its gay circles, were haunted by spectres, generally called the Hair Cutting Demons, and in consequence no trace of girls could be seen through these streets in night.

One dark evening a girl named Hanakichi (Lucky Flower) was to follow her lover, who was going home from a restaurant after their happy meeting; they were walking side by side, with their hands clinched to each other, and exchanging their honey talks. At the moment when they were to turn a corner of the street, suddenly they felt at their necks a cold touch of something, and though the two instantly put their hands at the spots to find what the matter was, there was nothing to be noticed. But as they felt uneasiness somehow by the sudden queer cold touch, and did not like to go on farther in such a veritable pitch dark night, they came back to the restaurant again.

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Looking up at the heads of the guest and the girl, the hostess and maidservants of the house were all in consternation, and, making inquiries of them, the two were told to look in the mirror anyhow. How surprised they were to find their hairs cut off at the roots of their<sup>1</sup> *coiffures*! The hair being the second life for girls, the girl Lucky Flower lost her senses on seeing her hair cut off so cruelly.

Early next morning the crop-haired paramour and menservants of the restaurant went out to explore the spot where he and his mistress lost the crowns of their heads, and could discover the two beheaded black masses rolling by one side of the street.

It was in February five years ago. One day a funeral was to be performed at a large public-house called Ohsatorō, in the Shimmachi gay quarter in the city of Osaka. It was for the late old singing girl named Mamēkichi (Lucky Pea), over fifty years old, very popular among her old customers, and famous for her excellent accomplishments; in her puberty she was very beautiful, and was looked up to as the best flower among the great number of beauties blooming in the Shimmachi garden. She now closed her life of luxury and prosperity, having been awaked from her long dream by a cold wind of the early spring.

From early morning the street where her house was situated was full of the bundles of natural and artificial flowers, wreathes, green branches of *sakaki* (*Eurya Japonica*) and *shikimi* (false star-anise) trees, coolies for carrying them, and *rikisha* for mourners; and near her house and surrounding these flowers, a multitude of singing and dancing girls, waitresses and men and maidservants of neighbouring restaurants were standing

<sup>1</sup>In the feudal age a man had his hair tied to a queue at the top of the head.

## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

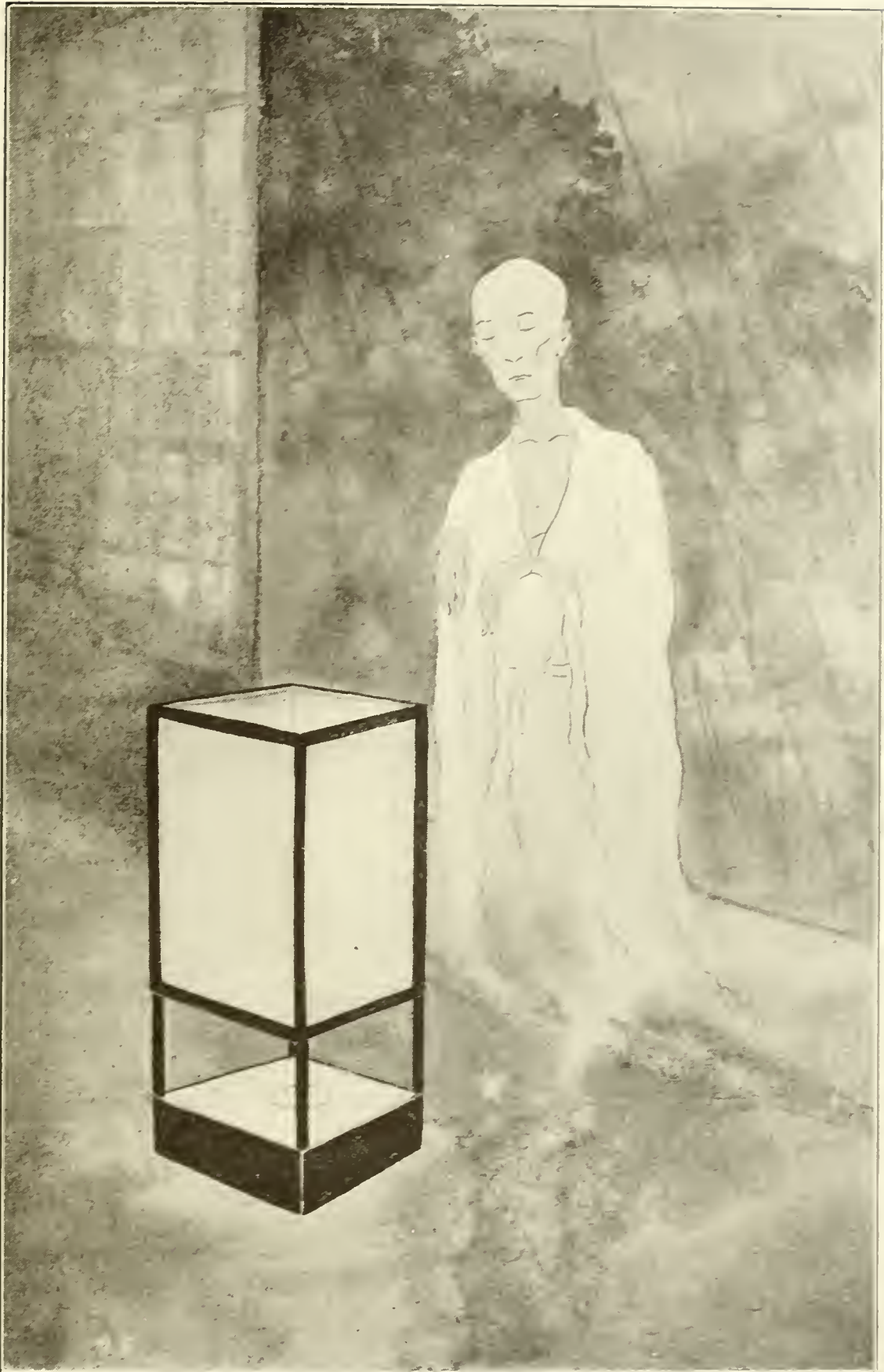
in groups and waiting to see the showy procession of the funeral.

The hour for the departure of the funeral arrived, but no sign of it! How stood matters? After about thirty minutes passed, suddenly it was announced that the funeral of the day was suspended, and at the same time the entrance of Ohsatorō was led to great disorder with the crowd of employées and acquaintances who came in and out of the house. What was the cause of suspension of the funeral, a wonderful event never experienced among the people of the quarter?

According to the report from a reliable source, there was a strange anecdote hidden behind the gorgeous life of the deceased. More than thirty years ago when the girl, Lucky Pea, was still an owner of the blushing cheek and downcast eye, and her influence governed the whole extent of the Shimmachi quarter, there took place an interesting love-affair about her, just as if to be read in a novel.

In the spring of a year when the paper lanterns under the night cherry flowers in full bloom were attracting the customers and spectators into the gay quarter, a young man who happened to visit Ohsatorō was utterly fascinated by the beauty of the lovely girl, Lucky Pea; he was a handsome priest, very famous for his skilful sermon. Although it was strictly prohibited by the religious commandments to be interested with the female sex, yet he could not vanquish the strong temptation, and haunted the house to see his dear night and day.

At last he ransomed her with a tremendous sum of money, and lived together with her. It was not long before his dream of a temporary pleasure and prosperity was broken, and punishment for the violation of precepts came upon him. He took cold, became worse gradually, and died after only



THE GHOST OF A PRIEST.





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one month. All the property belonging to his temple was taken into the hand of the girl's house, Ohsatorō.

After the young wife of the priest was parted from her husband, she returned to Ohsatorō, and appeared as a singing girl again. What career of life she pursued afterwards we have no need to explain here. However, there spread a strange rumour of Ohsatorō soon after the death of the priest; singing and dancing girls who had been engaged to the restaurant were often trembling to talk that they had seen a horrible figure worn in a white priest's robe standing on the first floor of the house at about one in the night, and looking malevolently into the girl Lucky Pea's room facing the courtyard.

We don't know whether the girl saw the spectre or not, but since she lay in the sick-bed, by and by, her action became eccentric; sometimes she would run about in the room, brandishing a knife or razor in her hand. Day after day her maniacal conducts became furious, and at length she died raging about till the last moment of her miserable end.

In addition to this, at the moment when her funeral was to be executed, another wonder took place. Her coffin was about to be taken out of her room when suddenly the dead body stood up in the box, throwing her long black hair to the outside of it, and next instant it lay down motionless in the coffin again; this was the reason of the temporary suspension of the funeral.

## CHAPTER III

### ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF GIRLS

IN restaurants and other houses we often see a game played with hands between girls and their guests. It is generally called *ken* (fist), which is a kind of *mora*. The game *ken* is one of the accomplishments necessary to be trained by *geisha* girls; if guests are weary of singing, dancing, or talking, girls would challenge them to fight the game and enliven the dull air of the room.

The hand game was transmitted from China, and most popularly played among the Japanese near the end of the Tokugawa Shōgunate (A.D. 1867), but the whole country having soon fallen into the great confusion of the revolution war, the game, as well as all other light accomplishments, went almost out of fashion. After the Great Restoration of Meiji was completed, and people came to be happy by enjoying the peace, the game began to sprout again among the citizens of principal towns, and at last has become popular as it is at present, though not so prevailing as it was in the feudal age of Tokugawa.

We can note a revolution in the game itself too at the same time. Before the Restoration, the *Hon-ken* (fist proper), or sometimes called the *Nagasaki-ken*, which is played with six kinds of the hand forms, was in vogue, but in the age of Meiji, as well as in the present time, another

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system called the *Tōhachi-ken* or *Kitsuně-ken* (fox fist) took the place of it; the latter is played with only three forms of the hand, particulars of which will be explained hereafter.

About the period (A.D. 1804-29), in the Tokugawa age, the game of *ken* was welcomed at all banquets and played by both men and women mingled each other. On the occasion when it was ceremoniously played, a small arena specially made for the game was prepared, four pillars standing at its four corners, just as seen in the arena for wrestling matches (see "The Nightside of Japan" for particulars of the Japanese wrestling), and by one side of the ring there sat an umpire carrying a commanding fan in his hand. Being called forth by the umpire, two fighters took their seats on the opposite sides of the arena and bravely fought against each other, waving their hands and beating time by their loud cries. How courteous was their conduct and how grave their attitude on such a regular combating!

The table of combatants was made, the first, second champions, etc., being selected and mentioned in order. The game was not limited to be a pleasure in the drinking-bout, but merchants played it at their shops, artisans at their works, farmers at their fields, and cooks at their kitchens.

The *Hon-ken* or fundamental mora was first introduced to Japan by a Chinese, who came to Nagasaki and held a great entertainment at a restaurant in the gay quarter of Maruyama in A.D. 1592; hence the *Nagasaki-ken* another name of it. When the pleasure of the party attained its high time, the party was divided into two parts, each of which sat down in a regular row facing against the other, and then the members of each party began to try the game against those of the opposite side.

After fierce fightings, those who were defeated had to drink two or three big glasses of wine as

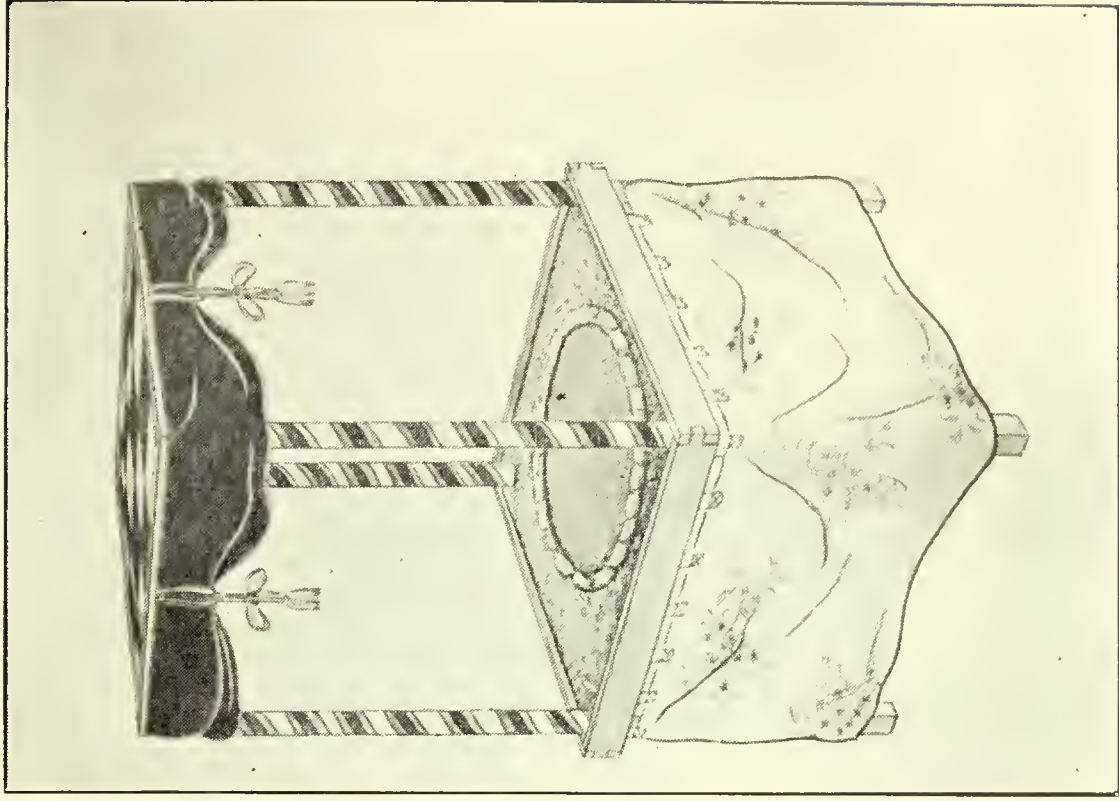
## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

forfeit. The girls, who were present in the hall on this occasion, were greatly pleased with the hand game entirely new to them, and, having thought that it was an art very interesting and most suitable for a sport in the room of a drinking party, they were taught by the Chinese of the new game, and studied it very earnestly. Propagation of the new art was so quick that it was already popular among the citizens of Nagasaki, Kyoto, Osaka, and even Yedo (Tokyo) in A.D. 1600, only eight years after the first importation by the Chinese.

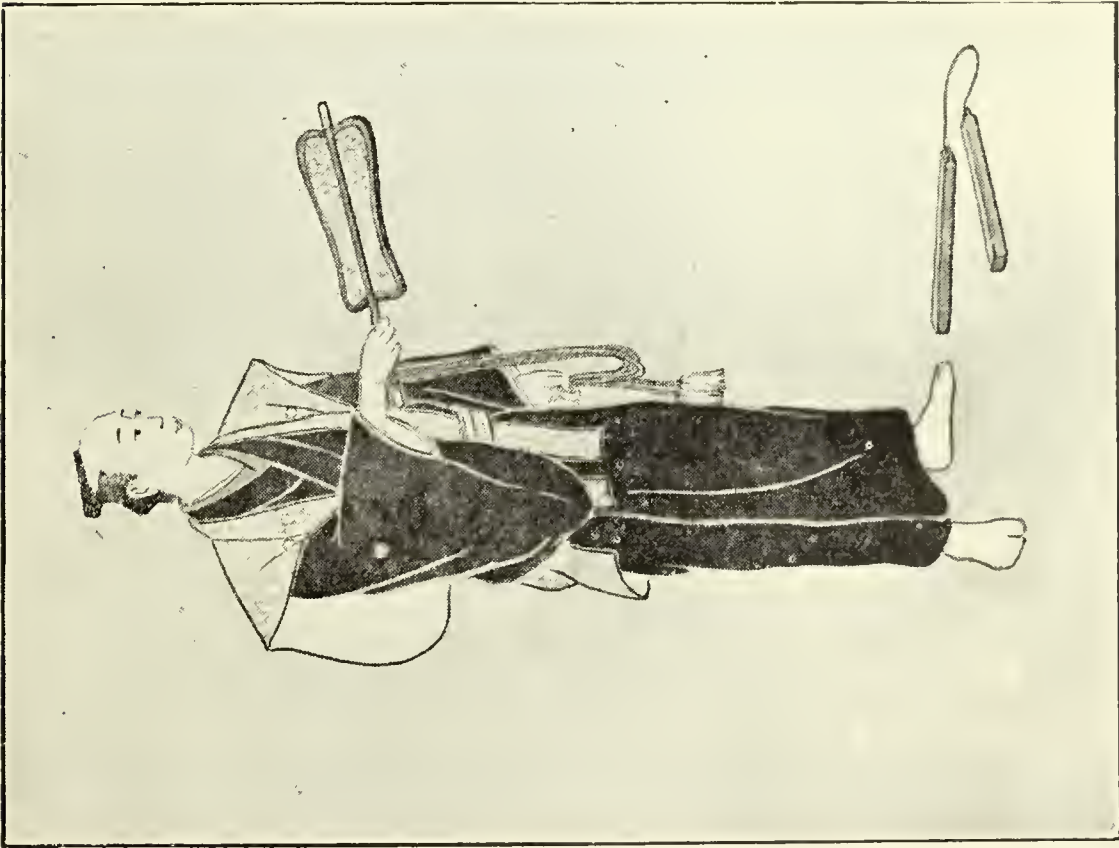
In Japan at present there are many kinds of the fist game, each of which differs from the others in the variations of the hand form and in the degrees of interest. They are *Hon-ken* (fundamental), *Mushi-ken* (insects), *Yanagi-ken* (willow tree), *Uta-ken* (songs), *Tsuru-tsuru-ken* (harmonious), *Tora-ken* (tiger), *Sukui-dama-ken* (scooping), *Mazē-ken* (mixed), *Taihei-ken* (peaceful), *Tōhachi-ken*, *Ishi-ken* (stone), and many others peculiar to different localities. We, however, cannot give particulars for all these kinds of the game, but after briefly describing "fundamental" first, will explain the *Tōhachi-ken*, which is most popular at present among the society of *geisha* girls.

The *Hon-ken* is played with the fist of the right hand by changing its form into six kinds; when only the thumb is opened it shows one, the thumb and index-finger two, the middle, ring, and little fingers three, the thumb bent and the others opened four, all the fingers opened five, and if all bent the fist represents naught. In playing the game, one of the eleven numerals, one to ten and zero, is to be called out by each of the two fighters, summing up in anticipation the numbers of the fingers to be thrown out by them at the same time.

A kind of light accomplishment as it was, yet the



A RING FOR THE KEN GAME.



AN UMPIRE OF THE KEN GAME.



## ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF GIRLS

arena, the umpire, and the helpers were regularly prepared for its ceremonious match held in old times, as already explained. On the arena there were erected the four pillars about five feet high, each of which was wrapped up with yellow, blue, red, and white cotton cloths, and its roof was covered with the cotton cloth too, checkered in white and black. The centre of the ring was a heap of sand, which was enclosed with gravels. In a word, it was a miniature imitation of the wrestling ring.

First of all the umpire, who was dressed in the costume *Kami-shimo*, appeared near the arena and called forth a combatant from each of the two parties, the east and the west. Then, after loudly naming the heroes, he withdrew his commanding fan which had been put between the two hands on the arena; this was the notification for commencement of the match. He must be very attentive to the progress of fighters' hands, and give decision for each game. The beginning and close of each match was noticed with the clappers.

The way of the *Tōhachi-ken*, which is most popular at present, is simpler than that of the *Hon-ken*, the former being played with only three different forms of hands, while those of the latter consist of six; but the *Tōhachi* is showy in its appearance, and far deeper in its interest, because the game is played with both hands at once, instead of a single hand in the *Hon-ken*.

The three forms in the *Tōhachi* game represent the fox, the gun, and the gentleman; the fox is shown by the two hands, each with all five fingers quite opened and raised high up near one's forehead, the gun by the two fists clinched tightly and stuck out towards the enemy, and the gentleman by the open hands put on one's own knees. Now the fox can bewitch the gentleman, and the gun shoot the fox, but not the gentleman; thus gain and loss

## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

between the two fighters being clearly distinguished by these three forms. The three variations in the forms of the two fighters—the fox showing the vertical action by opening the hands high above the head, the gun giving the cross section by stretching out the arms to the front, and the gentleman moulding the plane by haughtily placing the two hands flat on the knees—are very interesting; that is, the positions of the combatants are incessantly changed in bewitching, shooting, or sitting down proudly, their hands being opened or grasped, raised high up or taken low down.

One game of the *ken* is settled by three successive gains got by one of the fighters; if he is beaten once or falls in the same form with the enemy in the course of a game, his one or two gains previously got are cancelled, so that the game is to be renewed from the moment of nullification. No matter to obtain three gains by either different or same successive forms against the enemy, but if one and same form is used three times successively, he cannot be victorious unless he gets another fourth gain in addition to the three former; and if defeated in the fourth, unfortunately, of course, the former three gains are cancelled at once. Experts of the *ken* avoid to gain by use of the successive same forms in a game.

In playing the fist game we should first take care of the style of the body and the make, positions and progress of the hands, and next make plans on victory; as men are interested in playing it during the feast in general, they must not forget the beauty of their style and form at any time, and specially so are lovely girls who try the game mingled among their guests.

The motions of the hands have to be always accompanied by the calls; if there is no call for each motion, the greater part of the life and interest of the game is cut off. Consequently the calls are

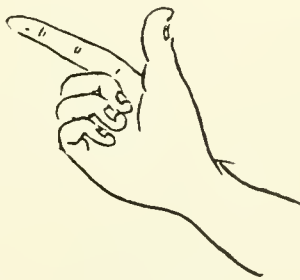




THREE FORMS OF THE TŌHACHI MORA.



ONE



TWO



THREE



FOUR



FIVE



ZERO

SIX FORMS OF THE HON-KEN.



## ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF GIRLS

studied together with the forms of hands and the style of body.

A call should be short and simple, lively cried out at each motion of hands. As a game is settled by three successive gains, the calls consist of three words: one, two, three; Tokyo, Kyoto, Osaka; Berlin, Paris, London; deaf, dumb, blind; plum, apple, cherry; junk, boat, steamer; tiger, lion, elephant; etc., etc.

If the game is accompanied with the *samisen* performance it is far more interesting and enlivened, and the girls are as well trained in playing on the musical instrument as to harmonise with the motions of the combatants.

The regular accomplishments necessary for *geisha* girls are singing, dancing, music, tea ceremony, and floral arrangement. They learn each of these arts by its special teacher. As often explained, the musical instrument most commonly used by the singing girls is *samisen*, the others, such as a drum, a flute, a hand-drum (*tsuzumi*), a violin, and other European instruments, being rarely used. Hence we can say that singing of *geisha* girls is always followed by playing on a *samisen*.

Now let us see the features of these teachers on singing and *samisen*, in which chickens of *geisha* are generally trained in their very early age, while they are still at their own homes together with their parents. Of course we should not confound these teachers for little girls with those for the independent and professional girls; the latter being the experts of the art, they make and teach new songs, or have to train and improve the girls' accomplishments which they had learnt in their childhood.

We can study in Japan the European music at the public or private music schools established in

## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

Tokyo or other cities, but we must go to those *samisen* tutors or tutoresses if we wish to taste the interest, to make a study, or to get a pleasure on our national music. Not only for the *samisen* music, but also for all other light accomplishments, there is the head for each art, and all men and women must first get his permission to be tutors and tutoresses on the accomplishment under his influence. So all of them who are teaching an art independently at their own houses are treated as the disciples of its head.

In the city of Tokyo these tutors and tutoresses on *samisen* and singing are so numerous that their number can be compared with that of public bath-houses or hairdressers. Moreover, the greater part of them are tutoresses, only a part consisting of males. We can find a female teacher of *samisen* living in a small fashionable house situated in a narrow side-street; the entrance to the house is shut with the doors of lattice-work, delicately made of slender pieces of wood and cleanly washed and wiped every morning. At the inside of the lattice doors there hangs a large round paper lantern, upon which the name of the tutoress and the crest representing a school of songs are mentioned. The ways of playing on *samisen* and the kinds of its songs are divided into many schools, each of which has a fixed crest or badge to distinguish its own school from others.

A little girl some seven or eight years old comes to a tutoress's lattice door, accompanied by her mother, and, opening it, they approach the step-stone inside. The tutoress herself appears and receives the new-comers with hospitality. Being asked to teach the little girl, she is very glad to accept the proposal, and at once, on the very day of admission, tries to teach a first step of singing and playing on *samisen*. The entrance-fee costs fifty *sen* to one *yen*, and the monthly fee is one to

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF GIRLS

two *yen*. As the rehearsal of pupils is held monthly, it is common that each of them pay fifty *sen* to one *yen* as the present to the tutoress on the occasion.

Pupils of a *samisen* tutoress, however, are not limited to little girls, but young and sometimes older men are found, generally after dark, studying these arts under guidance of the weak female. For instance, a young man in the appearance of artisan and dressed in his stylish clothes enters the lattice door, saying "Good evening," and the young tutoress, some twenty-five years old, bids welcome with a charming smile. He is shown to a room and served with a cushion (*sabuton*), tea, and tobacco. If another pupil is learning a song at this time, the new-comer has to wait until the former finishes his lesson. Then the artisan is invited to take a seat near a lectern at just the opposite side to the beautiful teacher.

At first he is only to mimic the tutoress in singing, and, after two or three days, comes to understand the accent and interest of two or three lines of a song. The lesson hour spent for a person is twenty or thirty minutes every evening. After the lesson is finished some of the pupils are pleased to gossip with the young chic mistress. We are often told that a tutoress has married one of her disciples, to the great disappointment of all other ambitious dandies.

The relation between a *samisen* teacher and the pupils seems to be entirely different from that of those in school; a tutoress treats her pupils like her guests or customers, entertaining them with smiles at any time, though she may feel sometimes disagreeable in her mind for some of them.

As we have said that there are different schools of *samisen* and its songs, poems or songs sung with accompaniment of *samisen* are so many that we cannot easily enumerate them at once, and if

## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

we classify them by tune, the difference of schools can be understood of itself. The songs very common among the *geisha* girls are *Hauta* (short songs), *Nagauta* (love songs), *Kiyomoto* and *Toki-wazu*, and then there come *Tomimoto*, *Shinnai*, *Katō*, *Ogiye*, *Itchū*, and *Sonohachi*. If we wish to know these several kinds of songs we would be satisfied by hiring elder girls of the first-class among *geisha* circles of Yoshiwara, Yanagibashi (Willow Bridge), and Shimbashi (New Bridge).

Next we have to explain other accomplishments of *geisha* girls, such as dancing, music, tea ceremony, and floral arrangement, but we are afraid that if they are described as much as they can be wholly understood by you, they would take a big bulk of pages, so they are left here, and the full particulars of them will be given in another book.



THE HON-KEN IN PLAYING.





## CHAPTER IV

### A GIRL ROYALIST

AN autobiographic sketch of an old *geisha* girl will be given here:

I was born in Yedo (old Tokyo), and am fifty years old now. Yet I am taking the profession of *geisha* girl in this old age; the reason is that, on one side, a daughter of mine being the hostess of a restaurant, its customers are glad to hire me to be a superintendent over young girls, and that, on the other, my old customers and acquaintances, who are now risen to cabinet ministers, merchant princes, great statesmen or generals, always send for me to attend in their entertainments, and are pleased to talk with me about old events in their youth. If I give up my business I cannot see my old friends, and, moreover, unless I am pursuing my business and meet them often, I could not have been happy to enjoy those interesting gossipings with them by recollecting my old memories.

My father was called Tahei Kyōya, a rich and famous wholesale merchant of lacquer, who lived in the Nihonbashi Ward in Yedo, and after the great restoration of Meiji era, ventured to carry on the foreign trade. I was born between him and a *geisha* girl of the Fukagawa circle, one of the most noted girl quarters of Yedo in this period.

When I was three years old his wife died, and

## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

I was to be taken to his house together with my mother, but as she did not accept his kind proposal regarding the name of his shop as well as his relatives, I was alone taken to the side of my father.

Although he was a merchant, he had a close connection with the Government officials of the period. The time when I was born was the crisis for the Tokugawa Government, and my father had intimate but secret intercourse with those enthusiasts who had come up from their local provinces of their feudal lords to the city and contrived to upset the foundations of the Tokugawa family, which continued its reign for three hundred years; indeed he was loyal to the emperor, and much interested in intimacy with these *Samurai*.

My mother was not an ordinary coquette usually found among the society of *geisha* girls. Her name was Nakakichi Obanaya, well known as one of the most flourishing girls at the Middle Street of Fukagawa. Long before she was patronised by my father, the lacquer merchant, there was an interesting love story regarding herself.

. . . . .

About A.D. 1818, when she was young and celebrated for her beauty and accomplishments as one of the first-class girls in Fukagawa, she always betrayed her dauntless character peculiar to the natives of Yedo, and was very famous by the name of "The Chivalrous Girl of Fukagawa." The Fukagawa girls of the first-class in this age were very high-toned, and generally did not like to attend on the guests in the rank lower than the *daimyō* or feudal nobles.

At this time she was under the favour of a patron, Sakakibara Awaji-no-kami, who was a powerful noble as the regent of the Tokugawa Government. In the meantime there sprang up

## A GIRL ROYALIST

a great and difficult question on the succession of the lord in the Mito family, one of the cadet families of the Tokugawa. In spite of the existence of the legitimate heir, Keizaburō, in the Mito house, the Shōgunal Government intended, out of their policy, to adopt a son of the Hitotsubashi, another cadet family, for the new lord of Mito, and there took place a severe strife between the two parties, Mito and Hitotsubashi. The head of the Mito party was Heihachirō Udonō, one of the chief retainers of the Mito family, and that of the Hitotsubashi party, Sakakibara, the patron of the girl Nakakichi.

Udonō of Mito had been told of the chivalrous fame of Nakakichi, and at the same time her being favoured by his enemy, Sakakibara, but had had no occasion to meet her as yet. Now he thought that if he could utilise her he could crush the plot of his adversary, though it was not easy to approach her, the favourite of his foe. After great cares and troubles, and by the help of a purveyor to the Mito house, he could manage to meet her in a restaurant, Hiranoya at Ryōgoku.

In a clean and stylish room of Hiranoya a man and a *geisha* girl sat opposite to each other; the man was Udonō, the chief of the Mito party, and the girl Nakakichi, the sweetheart of Sakakibara, the head of the Hitotsubashi party. Silence was first broken by the firm but suppressed voice of the man:

“I have a serious matter,” spoke he secretly, “which I ask your help for; it was long I wished to see you and tell the matter to you, because I well know your chivalrous spirit. If you understand that it is an important affair of State, will you help me and carry out your duty for the country even by giving up your dear patron? First let me know your firm resolution.”

At first the girl was surprised by an unexpected

## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

requirement of the *Samurai*, but after a moment thought that the question must be a very important matter, otherwise the leader of the opposite party would not have applied to a girl like her. At once she decided in her mind that she would accept his request if the question could be settled by her weak hand.

"I cannot imagine what the matter is, sir," replied the girl in her composed attitude, "and being in necessity to be told to a *geisha* girl like me by a man of quality as you are, it must be an extraordinary case. If I could serve somehow for the State I would be glad to do my best even by giving up my benefactor and sacrificing myself."

"Much obliged for your brave acceptance," thanked he with a satisfactory smile. "Your manliness is far more than your fame. Now I will tell you particulars of the affair; and can you swear to help me?"

"I'll swear, sir, if the matter is not beyond my power," responded she briskly. "I will be glad to hazard my life for it."

"It is within your power," continued the loyal *Samurai*, "and there is nobody but you to execute the great deed. Now listen to me carefully, Nakakichi. As you know already, our lord of Mito died and left his testament, appointing Mr Keizaburō, his son, to be his successor, but his dishonest retainer called Tajima Iwami stole and gave it to the regent Sakakibara, your patron. The two are now in contrivance of appointing a son of Hitotsubashi for the new lord of Mito. If the project be realised, there would follow a great confusion which should disturb the social order in the peaceful reign of the present Shōgunate. Consequently we are troubling ourselves night and day how to take back the testament of our late lord. As you are in the intimate relation with Sakakibara who keeps it in his pocket, we ask you to steal it from

## A GIRL ROYALIST

him and give it back to us for the sake of the peace of the country. I, Heihachirō Udonō, humbly beseech you to help us in the name of the lord of Mito."

However manly and undaunted was the character of Nakakichi as the specimen of Yedo *geisha* with an unyielding spirit, she was puzzled for some minutes how to manage the matter. Though she was proud herself of her spirit, yet she was nothing more than a *geisha* girl, for whom the burden now brought out was too great and heavy. It seemed to her that it was doubtful whether she could be successful in such a tremendous undertaking even by betraying her kind and benevolent master. She reconsidered, however, that instead of being slighted as a mean professional girl, she was told by the loyal *Samurai* with a great secret and serious affair, relying upon her chivalrous spirit; and having been now affected by his loyalty to his lord and his confidence upon herself, she at last made a firm determination upon the question.

"I understand you, sir," was her staid answer; "it must be absolutely necessary for you to employ me for the solution of the present question. I cannot assure you whether I can succeed or not, but I would try to do my best."

"Many thanks," said Udonō, in his rapturous state on hearing her words. "Succession of the Mito family will be legitimately carried out by your kindness, and no disturbance of the peace for ever! Now you have a strong mind even to stab your patron if necessary?"

"I shall do the work by hazarding my life," replied she most seriously. "The testament will be taken back and sent to you within three days, but if it will not arrive to you by the end of the term you would take me to have been killed!" She swore with her brave and manly resolution.

Though she had firmly promised Udonō to

## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

accomplish his object, yet she cogitated on the means how to deprive her patron of the testament of the Mito lord; she thought that as the document was a very important *pièce de conviction* for settlement of the question of succession he would not keep it at any place easy to be discovered, and that whether it was concealed in his library or always carried in his pocket it was almost impossible to get it into her hand by any ordinary step. But if she breach her oath she should have been robbed of her fame as the chivalrous Nakakichi, and at the same time the peace of the State broken. Now she fell in great troubles.

While she was in a deep rumination there occurred to her a matter by which she was revived to her animation—she recollected that she had been told by her patron, Sakakibara, as follows:

He had to invite Tajima Iwami, the chief retainer of Mito, to the restaurant Ryūkōtei at Hachiman Street, Fukagawa, this night, and she should come immediately to entertain the guest, as she would be sent for at the appointed time. The two men had a secret to be discussed most privately, by keeping away all the *geisha* girls and waitresses, but she alone would be allowed to be present in the room in order to treat the guest most hospitably.

The deliberation with Tajima, the chief vassal of Mito, she thought, should have some connection with the testament, and her man, Sakakibara, would bring it there in his pocket. Her aim could probably be attained if he *had* it; she might intoxicate him with *sakē* (wine) and cheat him with her experienced tricks, or if failed in this step, she had no other resource but to stab him! With this formidable decision she prepared a dagger in her bosom.



A LOYAL GIRL LOST IN THOUGHT  
ON A SERIOUS MATTER.



TEA PICKING IN UJI.





## A GIRL ROYALIST

Soon after getting dark, a messenger came to her from Ryūkōtei, and after dressing quickly she went to the restaurant. As expected, the guest of the evening was Tajima-no-kami Iwami, invited by Sakakibara, her patron. At once all sorts of delicacies were brought into the room by seven singing and dancing girls, assisted by waitresses of the house.

As the host of the banquet, Sakakibara was very attentive to treat the guest, and Nakakichi, conducting herself very cleverly, never missed a chance to cheer up both the host and the guest, as much as they would get drunk quickly; in the meantime the younger girls were singing and dancing, while the elder ones were playing on *samisen*.

After a round of merry-making, Tajima Iwami opened his mouth, "Mr Sakakibara, we shall speak about the matter now?" Then the latter ordered his girl to have all the girls and maids withdrawn from the room except herself alone.

The two men edged up and took to a secret deliberation. After about half an hour Sakakibara took out a note from his pocket-book and showed it to Iwami. At this moment the heart of Nakakichi throbbed, but feigning herself to be unconcerned, she stole a glance at the note. Lo! it was the testament of the Mito lord, with the announcement appointing his son, Keizaburō, to be his successor.

Resolving that she should not miss the opportunity of the evening, she thought there was no means for her better than to entrap them into the state dead-drunk. She came out of the room, and, after ordering new wine and dishes, told other girls and maidservants to be very attentive and to endeavour for merry-making as much as they could, because the guest of the evening was a very important gentleman for her patron.

## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

Clapping hands<sup>1</sup> was heard in the room of the two gentleman, and Nakakichi hurried immediately for it. Coming into the room, she found that the private consultation between the two had been already finished, and, as she expected, her patron ordered her to bring *saké* and call all the girls again. She was glad in herself that she might be successful in her plan.

Then there followed a new revel assisted by younger and elder girls, Nakakichi making efforts to let the two men drink hard, to drive them into the state of intoxication and insensibility, of course on one side stirring them up with noisy sound of songs and music, or loud talking and laughter of girls.

Late in the night Tajima Iwami at last lay down dead-drunk, and was sent home by a palanquin. Next the patron of Nakakichi laid his head on her knee in place of a pillow, and at last fell in sound sleep, snoring loudly. After dismissing all girls, she tried to wake him, shaking his body and saying, "My lord, don't take cold; awake, my lord, awake!" But his snoring was like thunder.

Having ascertained that she could do anything upon him now, she put out all the candle lights in the room and tried to say once more, "My lord! My dear!" but no response at all. Out of his bosom slowly she took out his pocket-book, and no sooner had she plucked out the note than she slinked off from the room. When she got out of the door of the restaurant she ran away for the north at the top of her speed.

On the way she could hire a street palanquin, and it was about dawn when she arrived at the residence of Udono at the Shitaya Ward, the bell-tower of the temple on the hill Uyeno tolling four

<sup>1</sup> Clapping hands was a custom in Japan as a way for calling a servant in the place of ringing a bell, as it is often found even at present.

## A GIRL ROYALIST

on the morning. Being introduced into the parlour, she handed the note to Udono, who on the spot opened and looked over it together with his associates, who were all the loyal retainers of Mito and staying in the house of Udono. When it was acknowledged by him that the note was the very testament written by their late lord, they unanimously expressed their hearty thanks to the gallant girl, the eyes of all the brave *Samurai* being filled with the tears of joy.

In consequence of the bold attempt of a weak and young *geisha* girl, the question of succession in the Mito family was at once settled. A friend of Udono acting as a go-between, Nakakichi became the wife of Heihachirō Udono.

. . . . .

After my mother, Nakakichi, married Udono, she gave up her gallant habit, and was a very obedient and faithful wife to her husband.

It was in this period that the American and the European vessels appeared near the coasts of Japan and that the conflicts between the Imperialists and the Shōgunalists were raging through the country. Udono being one of the Imperialists, his house was the resort of chief loyalists who came up from local provinces, and most of the expenses for the Mito *rōnins* were supplied by Kyōya, a rich merchant in Yokoyamachō, Yedo—the patron of my mother afterwards and my father. Udono often told his wife, “Kyōya is a chivalrous fellow though he is a merchant. I don’t know when and where I may be killed or die, and after my death you would rely on him.”

My mother appeared in Yoshiwara as a dancing girl in her thirteenth year of age, and after ten years of her brilliant life as a chivalrous singing girl at Fukagawa, she became the wife of Udono

## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

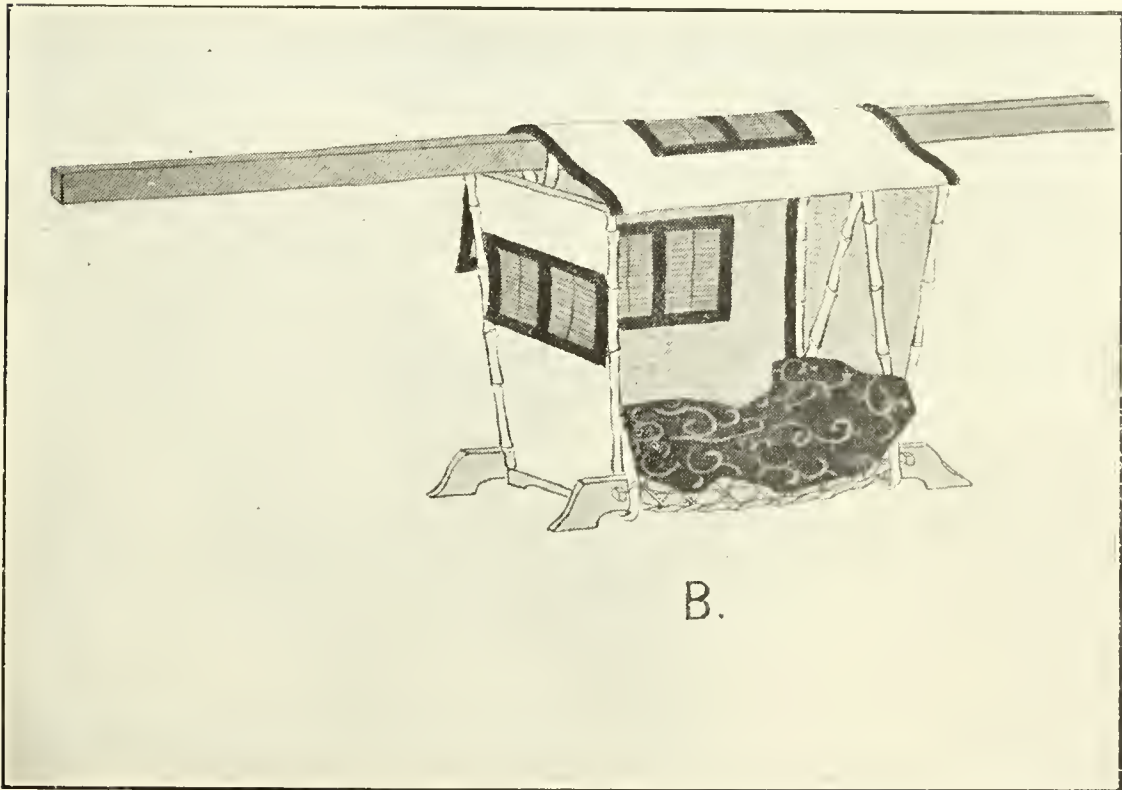
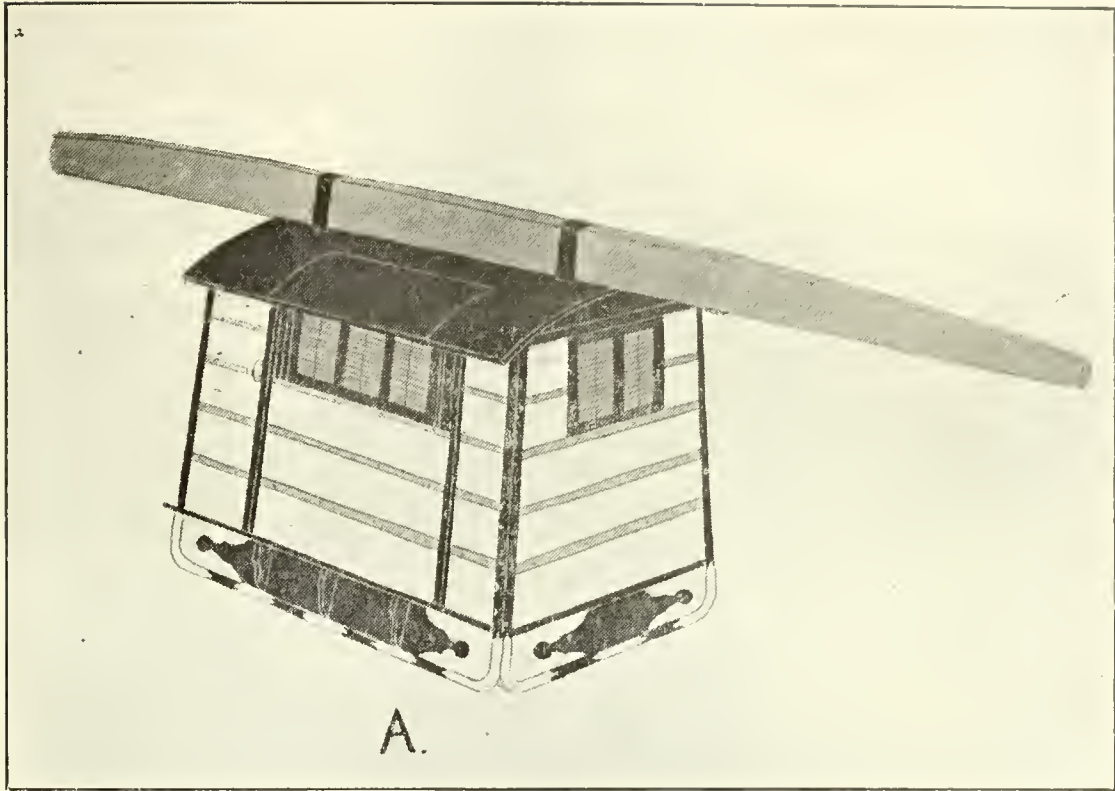
at her age of twenty-three. She could not, however, be long to enjoy her life of the happy home, for her husband died in prison next year.

Upon his sudden death she grieved so bitterly that she would have converted herself to a nun if she had not had the heavy burden to sustain her old mother and younger sister. She did not like, however, to resume her experienced business as a singing girl in the city of Yedo, because she was afraid to disgrace the name of her late husband. After pondering in several ways, the three removed to Kyoto, the capital of the age and the site of the Imperial Palace, and she again appeared as a *geiko* (*geisha*) girl of the name Hisaei from a girl-house Yamadaya of the Gion quarter.

Her excellent beauty, her refined accomplishments, and her being a pure Yedo girl immediately attracted the attention of the Kyoto fops, and at once she acquired the fame of the No. 1 girl in the Gion circle. She became so famous and prosperous that there were no gentlemen who visited a Gion restaurant and did not know the name of Hisaei.

Conflicts between the two parties, Imperialists and Shōgunalists, having been fiercer in Kyoto than in Yedo, the *Samurai* who came up from their native provinces into the capital increased in their number more and more, and almost all meetings of these loyalists were held in the restaurants of Gion.

Among loyal *Samurai* staying in the capital, there was a young man called Kogorō Katsura; he was a retainer of the Lord Mōri in Chōshū province, and was taking charge of the palace of his lord in Kyoto. Lord Mōri having been a most powerful anti-Shōgunalist, Katsura was also an enthusiastic loyalist, and made efforts to induce the *rōnins* of various clans into his party by utilising the frequent meetings at Gion. Hence all



A.—A KAGO OR PALANQUIN FOR A DAIMYŌ  
(FEUDAL LORD).

B.—A TSUJI-KAGO OR PUBLIC PALANQUIN FOR  
CITIZENS.



## A GIRL ROYALIST

chief restaurants and public-houses in Kyoto were well acquainted with Katsura, and in the entertainments held by him every day and night Hisaei was always engaged by him.

In consequence of Katsura's special favour for her, at length she fell in love with him. Being the chief Imperialist and the leader of *rōnins*, he was always tracked by assassins sent out by the opposite party; in these days there were many loyalists who had been arrested and put to death by the spies of the Shōgunal Government. The danger upon Katsura's life became imminent day after day, and he troubled himself where to take refuge safe to escape the strict researches of the enemy. At last he resolved to consult Hisaei, though he felt that it was too shiftless to rely on a female in the class of *geisha* girls.

Late in a night Hisaei was unexpectedly visited by her lover, and received him with great joy. After he told the particulars of his present situation, he added, "I am in such a dangerous situation at present, and I shall be much obliged if you will be kind enough to shelter me at your house for the time being."

"If you can be generous to bear discomforts to stay in such a hut," replied she heartily with no hesitation, "I shall be glad to shelter you for my heart."

Thus Katsura took refuge in the little house of the *geisha* girl who had been once famous for her chivalrous spirit in Yedo.

It seemed, however, that the men of the Shōgunal party had not searched long before they were informed of Katsura's new concealment. In daytime he lay down and slept on the mattings spread under the floor, and in night went out to reconnoitre the condition of the enemy or to attend the secret meetings of his confederates. But lately, as it was very dangerous to go out even in

## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

the night, he confined himself in the house, his only consolation being to drink and eat together with his girl late in night.

One night he crept out of the under-floor as usual and was tasting cups of *saké*, waited upon by his kind sweetheart. At the time when he drained two or three cups, suddenly the noise of footsteps was heard near the door of the house. At an instant he blew out the light and hid himself into the closet of the room. Though the door was so furiously knocked that it was almost to be broken down, and the loud cries of a number of men were heard threatening to break into the house, the girl was watching the state of the matter in the outside, sitting down near by the closet and making no sound.

“Open the door,” cried one of the men outside; “if not we shall break it down and force in!” And violent knockings followed again.

“Who are you?” asked Hisaei in her calm tone as usual. “This is the dwelling-house of a *geisha* girl called Hisaei. If you have any business for me please come to-morrow morning. I cannot see any unacquainted man in such a midnight.”

“No need of ‘who’!” cried one. “If you delay the door shall be broken!” At the same time it was about to be destroyed by some of them, and as soon as she stood up and unlocked the latch, saying, “Why are you so violent?” a body of more than ten *Samurai* pushed in the house. At once they encircled the girl, all of them carrying naked swords in their hands.

“Don’t move, bitch!” cried one of them. “Where is Katsura? Show us to him or you shall be punished.”

“He doesn’t come to me in these days, sir,” replied the girl.

“Don’t tell a lie!” rebuked another *Samurai*. “We have come here after having ascertained his



## A GIRL ROYALIST

presence in this house." At every word he spoke his white blade glittered near her face.

"However you may accuse me, he is not here," declared she persistently in spite of their threatening.

They thought it was useless to make further inquiries to her, and crying "Search, search!" they lighted *andon* (a Japanese standing square paper lantern) which they could hardly find by groping.

When a female gathers up her courage she is bolder than a man. As Hisaei had resolved herself to care nothing whatever, she did not fear their menace with the naked blades, but she was afraid that if her house was searched all over her lover would be discovered at once.

On the point of going to search, she caught the sleeve of a *Samurai* who appeared to be the leader of the party. "It is unreasonable to search my house in spite of my presence," twitted she gravely. "Though I am a *geisha* girl, yet I am the hostess of the house. If you insist to search, let me know your reason for it."

"We search," replied he, "as we think Katsura is here. Don't trouble us or you shall be tied up."

"Tie or kill me as you please!" retorted she, "but remember that the bone of the Yedo girl is strong!"

"Let go the sleeve anyhow, you jade!" cried the chief, and, catching her hair at the same time, he pulled her over. All the men began to search every corner of her house.

The girl did not loose her firm hold of his sleeve, and controlling her tears, she questioned him, "If Mr Katsura was not here how would you do for me?"

"I am sure he is here," replied he, "but if he were not we will give you our heads."

"Give your head? That's funny! Well, search anywhere!"

## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

“Of course we shall!”

“Are you sure, the head?”

“Sure!”

The chief and others were surprised by the girl who expected to have them beheaded, some of them gazing at her face for a few moments. Soon they set about searching again, and her heart throbbed high when one of them opened the door of the closet. In the closet they found a heap of beddings, but no trace of Katsura. They went through every part of the house, up the ceiling and down the floor, but could not discover him after all. Hisaei wondered how her lover had escaped from the crisis, and at the same moment thanked for heaven's blessings.

Being disappointed by the miss, the party of *Samurai* was about to withdraw from the house when she stopped the chief and said, “Give me your head, sir.”

“Don't joke,” replied he, laughing.

“No joke,” said she earnestly. “You promised me to give it, and now should not be double-tongued!”

He was silenced and ran away together with his men.

Katsura had slipped out of the closet and slunk away over the roof through the dark, while his enemies outside were disputing with his girl inside and threatening her to break the door. After they went away she felt relieved, but next moment there sprang up in her mind the uneasiness for his welfare; she wondered how he could get rid of the enemy's capture, in spite of his having confined himself in the closet. To verify the matter herself, once more she searched all parts of the house, but could not find even his trace. As she began to feel uneasy more and more, she prayed an earnest prayer for his safety.

Kogorō Katsura, who had escaped by the skin

## A GIRL ROYALIST

of his teeth from the hands of the assassins, took refuge at various places, disguising himself; at a time he obscured himself among groups of beggars under the bridge Sanjō, at another night transformed into a shampooer, whistling through the street, or sometimes acted a servant at a public bath-house.

The girl Hisaei endeavoured to search him out, and at last could find him disguised as a porter at the stage of Awadaguchi on the highway west to the capital. Though she took him to her house, it was very dangerous for him to stay long here, and she entrusted him to Ikuzō Ota, a *Samurai* of the Tsushima clan and one of her well-acquainted customers, to shelter him temporarily.

Once when there had taken place a trouble between the Shōgunate Government and the Tsushima clan, it had been peacefully settled down by the efforts of Katsura, and now at the crisis of their benefactor, Ota, a retainer of the Tsushima lord, willingly accepted the confidence of Hisaei. Katsura was soon taken into the house of Ota late in night, but in a few days, the fact being known to neighbours, the strict precautions were taken by him against the sudden intrusion of the officers of the Shōgunal Government.

One night, at last, they broke into the concealment, and at the moment when they were about to catch their victim, he could hardly escape from the peril by the help of his smart girl again. Having been obstructed again by her, they were furiously enraged, and, after binding her up, took her into custody to their station at Shijō. There she was cruelly tortured by them to confess the whereabouts of her lover, but as she insisted on ignorance of anything regarding him, at last they were overcome with her iron will, and set her free after a few days.

After she was released from the station she went

## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

to the mansion of the Tsushima clan, and was under protection of Ota. She was anxious of Katsura's fate, and though she had made inquiries through his confederates, she could know nothing about him.

In the meantime half a year passed and her old mother, over sixty years old, and her younger sister having fallen in heavy sickness both together, her living gradually became hard up. One day in the eighth month after she parted with her lover she unexpectedly received his letter brought by a courier from Tajima, a province north-west to the city. His address was not given, but only "In a mountain" was mentioned in it.

The letter ran as follows:

" . . . I beg your pardon for my long negligence to write you. I have to lie low for half a year more here, as it is very dangerous still for me to make appearance in the city nowadays. You should not come to Tajima or I shall be discovered by the enemy soon. I regret to say that even if I could succeed in my plan in future, yet it is doubtful whether we can make a happy home and live together. Consequently I advise you that it would be better for you to carry on your business again or rely on another kind gentleman; my body being sacrificed to the State, you should anticipate that I may die a violent death at any time.

" Enclosed please find a sum of money as the allowance for the time being, and I shall send more at the next opportunity. . . ."

She found fifty *ryō* wrapped in the letter. Though she was very glad to have heard of her lover's safety, yet she rued on his cruel instructions; in spite of her firm resolution that she would wait for his return, after he had succeeded in his plan on behalf of the State, she was unexpectedly offered by him with the separation of the two.



A SINGING GIRL  
READING A BOOK,

A DANCING GIRL WITH A  
BATTLEDORE & SHUTTLECOCK,

A DANCING GIRL.



## A GIRL ROYALIST

How bitterly she wept, putting her face upon the letter when she had read it through!

One autumn night, about three months after she had got the sad communication from "In a mountain" of Tajima, she was secretly visited by one of the friends of Katsura. In the night rain was falling in torrents, and, being awakened by the knocks on the door, she opened it and found there a young man named Shunsukē Ito (late Prince Ito) standing along the doorway. Though she was surprised to see him disguised into a mendicant priest, she could not help to shed tears of joy, expecting to have any recent news of her lover from him. She introduced him into her room, and served him a *futon* (cushion) and tea.

"I am very glad to see you," said she, wiping her eyes with her sleeve. "You are very kind to call on me, in spite of the heavy rain. But I wonder why you are in such a form."

"Yes, yes, you are quite right," replied Ito, smiling. "If I go about the city careless I shall be killed, but I should not yet die until our great undertaking has been attained."

While the two were talking on the matters relating to the disturbance between the Imperialists and the Shōgunalists in the city, not touching even a bit of Katsura's subject, she entertained him with wine and dishes.

After a time Ito referred to her lover at last, and began to tell her gravely, delivering her a letter from him.

"Please read the letter," said Ito, "and you will well understand his real intention very kind to you."

Hisaei opened the letter and read as follows:

". . . I believe that you have seen my letter which was sent to you by a messenger the other day. In order to relieve the State from the great

## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

troubles at the present time I should sacrifice myself and enter a family as an adopted son upon a policy. I am not so dishonest as to deceive a girl like you, but we should separate now when it is necessary to do so in consideration of the affairs of State; you would give up our relation up to date to have been a dream. If I be fortunate to survive and could succeed in my plan, I would not fail to reward you for your kindness and fidelity.

“I advise you that hereafter you would rely on a man called Tahei Kyōya, who lives at Yokoyamachō, Kyobashi, in Yedo. He is a rich merchant with the chivalrous spirit very rare among business men at present. As I have written him already, you would be better go to him and consult him about your future. . . .”

In the letter one hundred *ryō* was enclosed too.

When she read it through her look changed suddenly. “I understand,” said she briefly, and fell in the deep meditation.

“Did you understand?” asked Ito. “Many thanks; I admire your manly spirit!” Tears were in his eyes when he said so, sympathising with her in her sorrow and disappointment.

“He says we must part on account of the national troubles,” replied she; “and I shall do so without hesitation. But please tell him only that whatever life I shall have to live in future I am always praying for his rise in the world. And as I cannot accept this money you will kindly return this to him.”

“Don’t trouble yourself of the money!” said Ito, pushing the money near her. “This is his present to you, but never means a solatium for severing relations; if you don’t receive this I shall be much troubled.”

“No, I can never receive this!” insisted she, pushing it back to him.



## A GIRL ROYALIST

It was near dawn when Ito left the girl's house, and he ran away after leaving the money between the lattice-work of the door.

Hisaei was in bed and did not eat for a few days, but her manly soul awakened herself to think of the future of her family. Her old mother and younger sister were in their sick beds, and if she would not work now all the three should be starved to death. Though one hundred *ryō* was left by Ito, it was not hers, but should be sent back to Katsura whenever his refuge would be known to her. What course of life should she take? At last she determined to be a *geisha* girl again, and reappeared from the girl-house Yamadaya.

Being famous by the nickname of "Royalist Girl," her new and old customers were afraid of hiring her, because anybody who called her was suspected by the Shōgunal officers to be one of the party of Imperialists, and in consequence she could not prosper even by one-tenth comparing to the time when she had been popular before she was taken under the favour of Katsura. Yet she had to spend a big sum of money for her two invalids, and her debts from her employer Yamadaya were redoubled.

Being hard to lead the life at Kyoto, she thought whether she would go back to Yedo or run far away to the flourishing trade-port, Nagasaki in Kyūshū Island, but the two at her home being heavily ill, it was difficult to remove to a distant place.

One evening she was engaged to Ichiriki, the first restaurant of Gion, and she saw in the hall a gentleman about forty-five or six years old, alone sitting down upon a cushion (*zabuton*).

"Don't you remember me, Miss Hisaei?" asked he in the Yedo dialect when she knelt down and saluted him.

On the instant she recollected that he was Tahei

## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

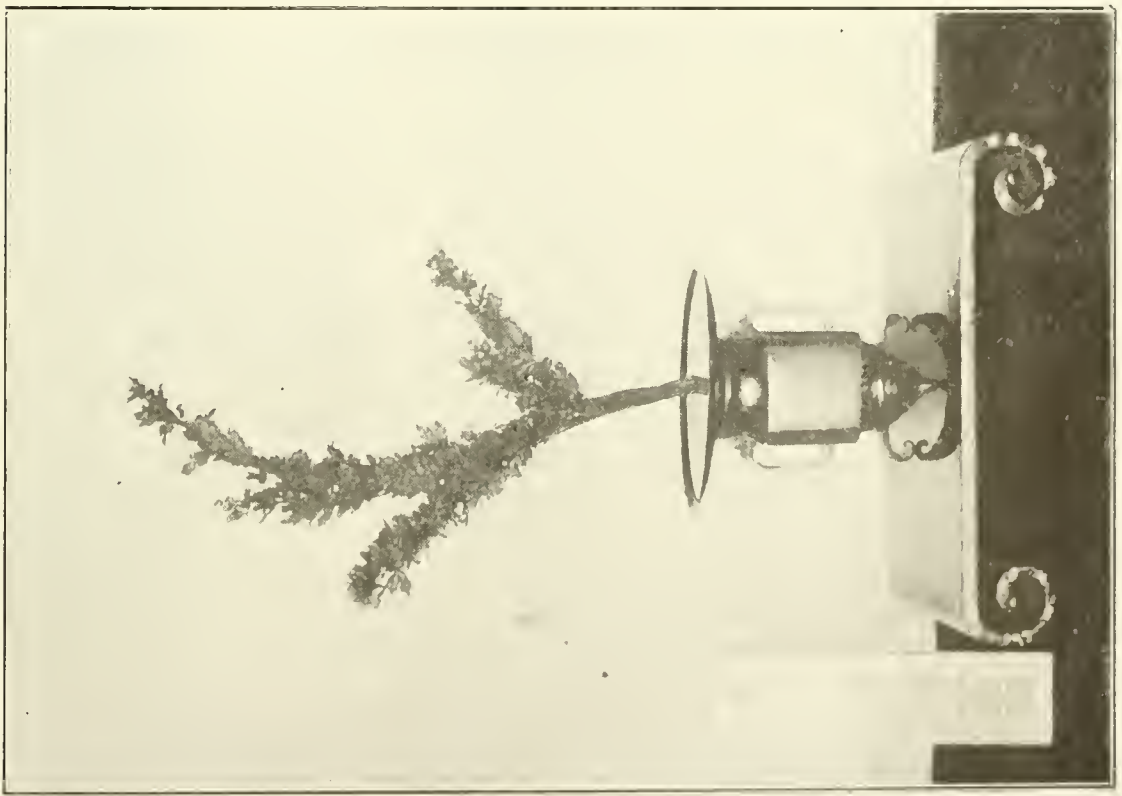
Kyōya, whom she had often seen when she had been the wife of the late Udono in Yedo.

“I beg your pardon for not having recognised you,” replied she, blushing her face. “I am much ashamed to meet you in such a situation again.”

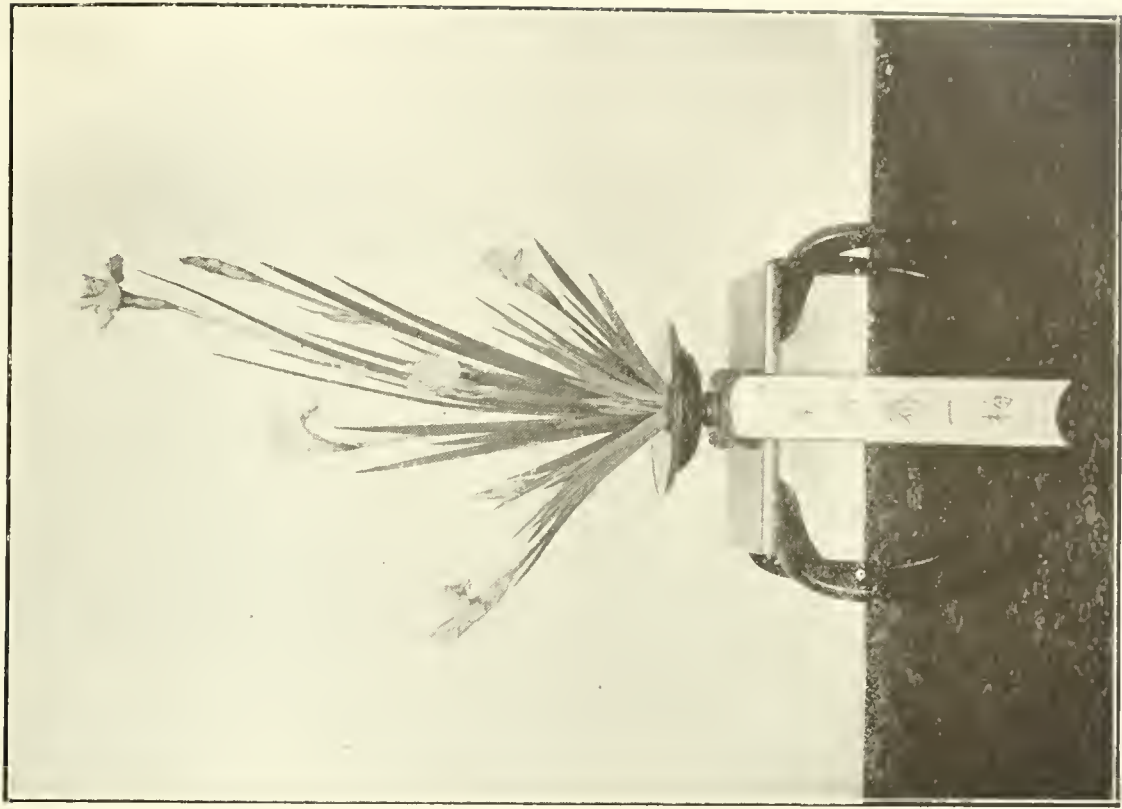
“Never mind, miss,” said the kind merchant; “I have come to Kyoto, having received a letter from Mr Katsura.” Then he told her that he would take charge of her mother and sister as well as herself.

She was very glad to hear his kind words, but reconsidered that it was regretful for her to be favoured by a man without any special reason. Again she reflected upon her hard situation, and at the same time remembering the personality of Kyōya and the instruction of Katsura, she resolved to rely on his kindness. After a few days she left Kyoto and settled her home at Hamachō, Nihombashi. She was twenty-eight years old then, and I was born after three years.

I have told half the life of my mother, and next a story of my experiences as a *geisha* girl will be given.



CHRYSANTHEMUM FLOWERS ARRANGED IN A VASE.



IRIS FLOWERS ARRANGED IN A VASE.



## CHAPTER V

### A STORY OF AN OLD WOMAN WELL EXPERIENCED AS A *GEISHA* GIRL

WHEN I was twelve years old my father, Tahei Kyōya, failed in his foreign trade, and was compelled to shelter himself temporarily in my mother's house. How discouraged was he who had been once so gallant and enterprising! His property, which had amounted to more than three hundred thousand *yen*, was lost within less than ten years only.

One evening he complained, "If I had one or two hundred *yen* at least I could have tried a speculation."

Hearing this my mother's chivalric soul was raised on the instant.

"Never mind, my dear," said she, "I shall make the money you want."

"How can you make it, my love?" asked he, wondering at her words.

"If I had been younger I would have been a *geisha* girl again, but now my age is too old for a girl profession. In lieu of me I think to send out Oryū (my name) on service as a dancing girl."

At first he did not consent to her proposal, being afraid of disgracing his honour, but at last agreed in her opinion on condition that his name should never be mentioned to my employer. Thus I was sent to a *geisha*-house in Yoshiwara, and it was

## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

in my fourteenth year when I made my first appearance as a dancing girl (*oshaku*) by the name of Sakae (prosperity).

Since the time when I was seven years old I had been taught by my mother on singing, dancing, and *samisen*-playing, and learned the songs which even the singing girls at present do not know. So, young and childish as I was, I was always welcomed by guests as well as by elder girls.

One moonlight evening in autumn a large house-boat (*Yane-bunē*) was rowed out on the stream of the River Sumida; in the boat there were Prince T—, Baron E—, the dramatist F—, the poet K—, and the host of Yaozen, the first-class restaurant in Tokyo, attended by thirteen singing and two dancing girls (I was one of the two). In this night they were to make merry by giving a genteel sport called "Floating Fans," one of the most fashionable plays in this period.

The banquet was already opened in the boat, and when the clear, full moon rose near the centre of the sky, small fans gilded with silver leaves were given to each of the girls. At a command of one of the guests, all the girls at once threw up the open fans against the moon; the silvery faces of fans, reflecting the moonlight, went up and down, fluttering in the air, and, falling upon the silvery ripples of the stream, they were seen drifting away, some floating and some sinking. What a beautiful scene it was!

"How do you think, Sakae?" inquired Prince T—, smiling on me; "I think you have first seen 'Floating Fans.'"

Actually it was the first time for me to see the merry sport, and I cannot forget the beauty and pleasure on the night even at present.

After about one year and a half of my life as a

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dancing girl in the nightless quarter (Yoshiwara), unexpectedly I received lucky news from my mother. I was told that my father had fortunately succeeded in his speculations and got five thousand *yen*, and that I would be taken home by paying my debt to my hostess.

While I was very happy to live together with my parents as their dear daughter again, I was sent to a girls' school and studied three R's and English. But after a year misfortune caught me again—my parents died of the epidemic in succession. To make matters worse, my father, who had failed in his late speculation, left no property to me. Now I, the young orphan, was compelled to find the means to lead the life myself. At first I made money by selling furniture, one after another, and could hardly continue to go to school. But as it would take three years more to finish the whole course of the school, I had no prospect of keeping my study for so long time.

In the spring of my seventeenth I went to my schoolmaster, and, after frankly telling my present situations, consulted him what course I should take for my future.

“In front of the Imperial University in Hongō there is a stationer well acquainted with me,” told he very kindly, after a short pondering. “He wants a shop-girl, and if you will go to his shop I shall tell him to give you a spare time for two or three hours every evening. Then you can come to my house and study your lessons, and I shall make a special treatment for you to give you a diploma of my school, just equal to those to be conferred on regular graduates.”

I was very glad for the kindness of my schoolmaster, and at once went to the stationer's shop to be employed as a shop-girl—or rather as a decoy-duck for young customers. The greater part of the customers to the shop consisted of students of

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the Imperial University in the main and other colleges and schools. At first I felt bashful to be spoken to by these young men, but being accustomed to business day by day, I became so bold that I could even joke at them.

It may sound foolish to speak of my own countenance, but as I had been often spoken of to be beautiful in the time of my life as a dancing girl, I had a self-reliance that I possessed the power to charm the other sex. If I cast a simper for young students they were instantly caught, and came frequently to buy various articles, perhaps unnecessary for them. I often received love-letters from them. If I had not been bound by the chain of education I should have been ruined early in this epoch of the shop-girl.

After about one year's service in the stationer's shop my salary was unexpectedly increased by the master. I was heartily moved with gratitude for his kindness, but soon found that he had acted it from his unworthy motive. After a few days I determined to leave the shop, and at the same time a strong feeling of hostility and contempt against men was roused in my mind.

My next profession was an editress of a magazine, and I had to call on ladies and gentlemen to collect interesting materials for the periodical. At first I presumed that all scholars, statesmen, educationists, religionists, and poets were great, respectable, reliable, honourable, and agreeable persons, but meeting frequently with them by and by, I was surprised to discover some of doubtful personalities among them. The noble images which I had been dreaming in my mind disappeared in an instant, and the value of learning, the power of religion, and the authority of education having been entirely destroyed, there were left no ideas but the hatred for such hypocrites. As I had already read their mind and was not tempted by



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their honeyed words, on the contrary they began to abuse me to be a cunning and diplomatic girl; but I did not care whatever names they called me.

Ants gather upon a lump of sugar and men run after a young beauty. Whenever I was courted by a man, no matter whether he was young or old, I always made eyes at him and affected to have inclinations for him, but at the moment when he pressed upon me to take my hand, a snub was my last sentence to the fool.

Though I despised men of base intention, I was a young girl of passions, and must confess that I did not detest the male sex absolutely; nay, not only I did not hate it, but on the contrary I had good experiences on the love-affair with some men. Moreover, I was utterly ignorant of their deception upon me, while I became absorbed in the dream sweeter than honey.

I gave up the editorship when I was eighteen years old. About the time I fell in love with a student of the university. He was a handsome young gentleman, twenty-two years old, and he was a son of a rich merchant in a local town. He was very kind to me, sympathising with me in my poor situations.

“You may spend a part of my monthly expenses,” said he to me, “until you will finish your school.”

A year passed in a happy dream, and I could advance to the third year class. Punishment for my misconduct came soon in the autumn of the next year. I found myself in the fifth month of pregnancy, but as my school and class-mates were not aware of my condition luckily, I presented a report of absence to the school, and took refuge in a house at the suburb, living here together with my dear lover.

About one month after our removal to the soli-

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tary cottage his affection towards me began to lessen day by day. My kind protector changed into a merciless tyrant; I was knocked and kicked by him at trifles every day. I wept night and day, but could not part from him. In the meantime a baby was born, but died soon, perhaps owing to its father's cruel treatment upon me. On the third day after the funeral of the dead baby took place he at last gave me up and concealed himself. I cannot describe now how I sank with tears of sorrow and repentance on this occasion. Having fallen into the valley of disappointment, next I went farther to the bottom of desperation.

Though I was penitent for my loose conduct and made up my mind never to believe men, yet I was much troubled how to find my way of livelihood in future. As soon as I recovered my health I ran to a register-office and could find a position of governess in a merchant's home. One month passed peacefully for me in the house of the old merchant, who was very kind to me, and his old wife too treated me so mercifully that people took me to be her true daughter, who had been sent out to nurse and taken home lately.

It was my duty to attend a boy and two girls, from eight to fourteen years old, after they came home from school, and while I was carefully working my part every day there happened an event for my misfortune again. They had a brother and a sister both older than themselves; the brother, about twenty years old, was the eldest son of the merchant, and the sister, in her eighteenth, was his eldest daughter, who was a warm-hearted damsel, and whom I became very intimate with, as if she was my true sister. It was my habit in these days to talk with her in her room after I finished my business of the day, and her elder brother often came in the room and was pleased

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to gossip with us—no remarkable behaviour in him at all in these occasions.

One evening after I finished the reviews for the younger son and daughters I withdrew into the room allotted for my private use, and sat down by the side of my desk on which I used to read newspapers or novels before I went to bed. When I took down a novel and opened it I unexpectedly found a letter between the leaves—a letter addressed to me from the eldest son of the merchant! I felt my heart beating high; I opened and read it, but tore it to pieces on the spot. I gave up the novel, and soon went to bed, but could not sleep.

In the next night I found another letter in a drawer of the desk again, and thus his letters came to me night after night. Now I was very anxious that the secret might be discovered by somebody if I would leave the matter as it was. One night I received a new letter again as I anticipated, and after I read it through I determined to meet him and to admonish him of his errors.

As appointed in his letter, I stole out of my room at the dead of night and hardly arrived at his room, my body trembling with fear. He was not yet in bed, and received me with joy. I remonstrated with tears against his misdemeanour, but he never listened to me. To tell the truth I did not expect his love for me to have been so ardent and hearty as I was first convinced of this night. “Frailty, thy name is woman!” What was the result of our meeting in this night?

About two months after the secret meeting in midnight I was dismissed from my service, and at the same time expelled out of the merchant’s house. I could have no words to complain about the sudden and cruel treatment of the employer. As it was the retribution for my misconduct, I left the house in silence, though the younger son and

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daughters were very sorry to part from me. Now again I must find the means to sustain my life.

Throwing myself into the depth of extreme desperation, I resolved to be a *geisha* girl, which I had experience of in my youth as a dancing girl in Yoshiwara. I ran to a girl-house of the first rank at Yanagibashi (Willow Bridge), and made my first appearance as a singing girl by the name of Koryū (Small Willow). As I had a little knowledge of light accomplishments from my childhood, I was not defeated by other girls on this part of my business, and moreover my poor learning, which I had received in my schooldays, having been much talked about, I was soon elevated to be one of the first-rate girls in great request in the *demi-monde* quarter of Willow Bridge.

In those days a part of the customers to the Yanagibashi girls consisted of students. As I had many cases naturally to wait upon these young guests, it was not rare that I was fallen into great troubles for their payments to restaurants. Yet I liked the disposition of students, and often emptied my purse for them, sometimes even by borrowing money from my friends, of course they being neither lovers nor patrons for me.

My curiosity for the students led me to be surnamed "Student Girl" or "Chivalric *Geisha*" by them. But among those who gave so much trouble to me, there were only a few who graduated from their colleges and visited me to express their gratitude for my assistance during their student days. What a fool I was to have been a benevolent contributor for such ungrateful fellows, though some of them have afterwards advanced to great positions in the world!

Having sifted out of these many youths, however, I selected a lover, whom I supported throughout his school life for four years. I loved him

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1.—A FUKAGAWA GIRL WEARING ON A HAORI (COAT).

2.—A DANCING GIRL DRESSED IN A FURISODĒ (LONG-SLEEVED GARMENT).

3.—A GIRL WEARING ON A GARMENT MADE OF KASURI CLOTH.

4.—AZUMA-GETA, THE CLOGS PUT ON BY THE GIRLS OF YEDO (OLD TOKYO).



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heartily, and was so infatuated with him that at last I gave birth to a girl.

However beautiful and accomplished a *geisha* girl may be, she can be no more popular among customers if she is known by them to be in the family way. So was I in the same condition now, and, having been abandoned by my heartless lover in addition, now I could not live in Tokyo. Leaving the capital, I ran far west to Shimonoseki, and appeared there again as a *geisha* girl from Shumpanrō, the greatest restaurant hotel, well known as the meeting-place of the peace committee between Japan and China in A.D. 1895.

After staying here about two years, I came back to Tokyo again. Then I was twenty-nine years old, and, after consulting with some of my old friends on my new life in the capital, I opened a tea-house near Asakusa Park. I employed three or four young girls, and worked most seriously in my new occupation. The endeavour of three years having made eight hundred *yen* for me, I gave up the business, and, removing to the Willow Bridge quarter again, established an independent *geisha*-house named Sakaeya (prosperity). I am still pursuing the business, employing some young, beautiful girls, though I am very old now.

Next I shall tell you what I have seen or felt during my long life as a *geisha* girl.

## CHAPTER VI

### TALL TALKS OF AN OLD *GEISHA* GIRL

#### *A.—Men Liked by Geisha Girls*

A GIRL well experienced in our profession, as I am, takes the customers to be machines for us. Being an eccentric woman, as you know, however, I always take care to gratify my guests, even if they are the first visitors never met before. Some of them assume their appearance of being very kind to us, and flatter us with these honeyed words: "It may be a great hardship to pursue such a business as you are in, attending men of different characters night and day. Heartily I sympathise with you, etc., etc." Their real object is not to console us, but to entrap us into love by their cunning policy. I think such a kind of men cannot be called the gentlemen experienced in the *geisha* spree.

Fools are they that hire *geisha* girls with the intention of catching them at every chance; these ambitious guests are always despised by us as the disagreeable fellows. Of course I have experiences in love, and if you ask me what kind of a guest I like, I answer that he must be a man of innocent appearance, open-hearted, and in a stiff attitude rather difficult to humour. On the contrary, if we find a man in the base intention our characteristic spirit of insubordination is excited, and we wish to spit on his face.



## TALL TALKS OF A GEISHA GIRL

In general, *geisha* girls may love the money of guests, but it is rare to fall in love with them for their character or fettered by their kindness. I often hear young girls complaining: "It is strange for us that guests whom we are fond of and endeavour to treat kindly cease to come again after their first or second visits only, and that, on the contrary, those whom we dislike even to see their faces pay their troublesome calls in succession almost every other day."

### B.—Men Disliked by Geisha Girls

Among one hundred guests it is hard to find out one whom we wish to fall in love with. All girls detest disagreeable men: a man finely dressed up in glittering silk clothes, a man with a cigar cost one *yen* per piece in his mouth, and with his hair immoderately brightened with cosmetic, or a man who visits a restaurant out of his foolish ostentation by an automobile or *rikisha* drawn by double *rikisha*-men—if we are compelled to attend in presence of any of such guests, we feel to shiver as if a black caterpillar was thrown at our nape!

A young dandy who could hardly graduate from a college and has such a poor knowledge of a foreign language that his heart throbs if he is addressed by a foreigner on the road, who lavishly spends money which was not earned by his own ability but inherited from his father—such a fellow in contradiction between his appearance and character is always despised by the girls of our circle, even if he gives them a sum of one thousand *yen*.

In general, the physique of the Japanese does not become the European dresses; if we see an odd-shaped man in the European dress, speaking "When I was in Paris . . ." we would run away though we are brazen-faced quite enough to meet any monster!

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Compare a fat gentleman neatly dressed in a suit of easy Japanese silk dresses with a slender wretch in a poor frock-coat, pocketing its uncomfartableness! No need to speak which is better in their appearances. Yet a greater part of guests in these days put on the European dress, and we cannot understand the reason.

### *C.—Kinds of the Geisha Spree*

As I already told you, my daughter is the hostess of a restaurant, and the majority of her customers are gentlemen of the higher class. When a party of noted men is to visit the restaurant, they first send telephone on the morning, ordering to engage such and such girls, and come in the evening; after spending two or three hours in merriment, they go home. On this occasion ten or fifteen girls of the first class are summoned, and the guests are pleased to hear songs or see dancings of these girls according to their tastes respectively.

It is very rare that a guest of the higher class comes alone to a restaurant, but generally he invites his friends or customers, with a certain aim in his mind to renew the old friendship or negotiate on the business.

Those of the middle class come in a party of three or four, and call four or five girls, the expense being generally paid in shares.

A customer belonging to the lower class comes alone and hires a single girl; he drinks by only one or two kinds of dishes, and goes back after three or four hours. Simple is the way of merry-making with the singing girl taken by such a kind of guests.

A man in mutual love with a girl pays the expenses for wine and dishes, while the girl herself pays her own fee. He is called a "lover-guest"

## TALL TALKS OF A GEISHA GIRL

for the girl, and generally belongs in the class of much lower quality.

In a word, we hope that guests who hire *geisha* girls would act for them always in a genteel manner; then the girls would receive them with their hearty welcome and serve them with their best treatment. On the contrary, if they look down upon them as the females of the mean profession, they would be coldly treated and disappointed, the girls' spirits of counteraction being stimulated. Remember that the amount of money spent by their guests has no concern for their hospitality.

The season most prosperous for *geisha* girls is the spring when cherry trees are in full bloom, and their excursions to spas or distant sights, taken by their customers, are generally done in spring and summer. It is, however, very expensive to take girls to distant places, and consequently most of the guests who like to try the excursions with girls are those not experienced in the *geisha* spree or thrown themselves into desperation by some causes. Such a kind of guests do not continue long to come, and most of them cease to appear in one or two months.

### *D.—Kinds of Guests Classified by Geisha Girls*

Men who frequent the gay quarters are classified by the girls into the following three kinds:

#### I.—Men cautioned by the girls.

Those who belong in this class are:

##### 1. Spendthrifts.

Shopmen, clerks, or other employés often fall into the fault of extravagance, and the consequence of their debaucheries is very miserable. The master of a house or the chief of a firm never spends useless money.

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2. Guests who run after the fashion too much.

Men who are always stylish beyond criticism in their dresses and things carried are worthless fellows. True gentlemen or rich people are not nervous about their person.

3. Guests who give too much tips to the girls at the beginning of their attendance.

4. Nameless men who visit restaurants by motor-cars, carriages, or *rikishas* drawn by two or three men.

5. Guests who are restless in their speaking and actions. Most of them have something remorseful in their mind.

6. Guests too affable to the girls.

7. Guests striking the attitude of actors.

8. Speculators or stock-jobbers.

They are most welcomed in the gay circles, but at the same time most warned among the girls.

9. Guests who leave their seats too often for telephoning during the feast.

10. Guests who stay too long in the restaurant.

### II.—Men loathed by the girls.

1. Guests talking big in presence of the girls.

2. Swells carrying a handkerchief strongly perfumed and with the hair glittering with cosmetic.

3. Too jestful and too chattering guests.

4. Guests of extreme taciturnity and niggards.

5. Guests with a gold plugged tooth, a gold ring, a gold chain, and everything brilliant with gold.

6. Guests boasting of the things carried by themselves.

7. Guests vain of their accomplishments.

8. Disorderly men.

9. Guests of vulgar character.

10. Guests haughty by money.



A GEISHA SPREE AT THE TOP OF MERRIMENT.



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## III.—Men welcomed by the girls.

1. Guests of manly manners.
2. Men in quiet.
3. Guests kind but not effeminate; compassionate but not tedious.
4. Guests not much experienced in the *geisha* spree.
5. Guests sympathising with the girls.
6. Guests liberal but not loose.
7. Guests in a good humour at any time.
8. Men indifferent to the personal appearance.
9. Men not awful.
10. Men who spend money worthily.

## *E.—Are Men of What Age Most Liked by Geisha Girls?*

The girls some twenty-four or five years old, well experienced in their business, generally prefer men over thirty years old. As women truckle to a stronger power, they cannot heartily rely on men younger than themselves. Superficial observers may say that young men from twenty to thirty being not so much experienced with the female and retaining something pure and innocent, they are liked by the girls of our circle, but the presumption is utterly wrong. Young and childish dancing girls dressed in red clothes may fall in love with those lads, bashful on meeting a charming girl, but mature girls believe that it is unworthy for them to love such green fellows.

Men below thirty are poor of experiences in connection with women after all, and if they are welcomed by the girls or entertained with their sheep's eyes, they instantly love them no matter whatever girls they may be. The girls of our society cannot

## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

be grateful for the kindness of such a kind of men, however hearty and earnest their love may be.

Men over thirty are already buffeted by the world's tempest and have some experiences with various kinds of the girls. So if they meet with any kind of the girls they can coolly criticise them, comparing to the other girls; hence they do not readily love any girls. If any of these men have fallen in love with a girl, we may presume that he recognised a certain speciality of the girl, excellent above the other girls.

It is the extreme pleasure and pride of singing girls to be loved by the men who do not love the girls easily. Men of the world understand the nature of the females very well, and as they treat them in the way as appropriate as there is nothing left for them to be desired, they are loved by them retributively. Moreover, how glad is a girl when she thinks that she has been selected out by her new lover among so many girls, and loved by him for her *forte* which she was secretly proud of herself!

Then are all men over thirty, whatever appearances they have, welcomed by *geisha* girls? Oh, no! Of course there is a certain type of features and person liked by them. The professional girls do not esteem a smooth and beautiful face like dolls, but they like men with something awe-inspiring about the face; and they prefer the fat figure better than the slender one. In a word, a man of dignity is generally liked by them.

Men with big and thick eyebrows pressed upon the eyes or with a loose mouth might not be popular with the girls; and men of long hair or a pale face or dark-brown skin are not good too. The face of light grey colour attracts the girls, for it was the ideal tint of the male features in the gorgeous age of Yedo, and on the contrary the light



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pink colour is sometimes valued by them, being taken to represent the active character of men.

If the girls are treated by their lovers as the good companions, they are much satisfied; they feel great pleasure if men keep company with them very frank and simple. If a girl understands that her man has not taken her for his temporary amusement, but that he is getting something gratifying himself from her, and making up a part of his ideas by her, she receives him with her sincerity at any time. Men should be neither too kind nor too cool for the girls, but the secret of success for them is to flash the sparks of love and kindness occasionally upon their mind.

Men who are frowzy or particular cannot be willingly received by the girls, and those with dishevelled hair or soiled collars have no fear to be loved by them after all; cleanliness of clothes and everything is one of the essentials for entrapping the expert *geisha*. The girls do not like men who always tell auspicious matters or only of the bright side of the world, but rather welcome those who are well acquainted with the unfortunate or dark side. Those who talk of difficult matters which cannot be easily understood by the girls are not liked by them too. Vague or abstract subjects or scholastic narrations should be avoided in presence of the girls: if you speak of the relation between music and theatres or tendency of the present literature they would be disgusted at once. It would be wiser to talk of actors or criticise novels popular among them. If the girls hear a man who speaks of a woman or, more than that, tries to admire her, they do not rejoice at it. Avoid to tell of other females in presence of the girls, or, if inevitable, never praise them or rather abuse them.

Men over forty-four or five years old lack the colour and fragrance of the life and become egoistic generally. Being in company with these

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old men, the girls cannot get even a bit of pleasure from them. Although the women in *geisha* profession exist in order to give pleasure to men, yet it is unbearable for them to have no consolation or recompense for their labours and troubles. In consequence, men over forty-five are not liked by them; men from thirty to forty-five may be said to be in their flower of life or in the golden age in connection with the kingdom of the *geisha* girls

### F.—*The Waiting-House (or the Assignment-House)*

By the way, I will betray the true feature of the so-called waiting-house (*machiai*) or assignment-house, which is the most popular haunt of the *geisha* girls' customers.

Business of the waiting-house is very difficult to be successfully carried on by ordinary people unless they are well experienced in the gay circle. Originally being an unsteady profession, of course, they do not expect to earn a big sum of money and lead an upright life from the first. On one side a dear tax is not only exacted, but also they must take into account the loss inflicted by bad customers who do not pay the bills, and on the other, they should exactly pay to restaurants and wine-dealers, from which wine and dishes are supplied for the guests, no accommodation of cookery being provided in the house. If everything goes off smoothly, however, they can unexpectedly live in ease, and may possibly save up a certain sum of money. At present there are more than three hundred waiting-houses in and around the gay quarter of Shimbashi, and those to be reckoned as the rich among them are very few.

The hostesses of the assignment-houses are generally limited to *ex-geisha* or women who were

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once waitresses in other houses, much experienced in the business. There are many girls who were redeemed by their patrons from their *geisha* life, and have opened, by the patrons' help, the business of the waiting-house.

The regular income of the *machiai* consists of the room rent, which costs from two to five *yen* one evening, the shops being closed at twelve, but the tips to the houses as well as to the waitresses, given by their good customers, amount to a big sum every month; hence the waitresses and maid-servants of these houses receive no wages from their hostesses, and yet can sustain themselves by the customers' tips only, some of them saving a good round sum, as much as they can be independent hostesses in future.

Business of the waitresses is very important in the waiting-house. The fame of a *machiai* depends upon the way of their treatment for guests, and men who visit the house in night being generally drunken, the reception of them is left to those experienced maids. So in the waiting-house waitresses are much more necessary than *geisha* girls for treatment of customers.

### G.—*Learning of Geisha Girls*

I believe that there is no business for the females which requires so great efforts as that of the *geisha* girls. They must learn all kinds of accomplishments which are necessary to meet the tastes and demands of guests of every rank; needless to say of the floral arrangement and tea ceremony they must sometimes perform even the sword-dance. As they have to attend upon foreigners recently, their knowledge for English must be much more than "Thank you" and "Good-bye."

Being sometimes engaged to appear in presence

## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

of nobles, it is necessary for them to study the etiquette in the higher rank. In these days the most popular lessons among the first-class girls are writing and poem-making. Some girls could compose very good poems, and, after corrected by their teacher, they send them to their customers, who are struck with admiration at the *chefs d'œuvre*.

Most of the younger singing girls are fond of novels or magazines, reading them in daytime when they are generally unengaged, and it is funny and pitiful at the same time to see some of them who are shedding tears in sympathy with heroes or heroines in some tragical stories, while the others, who are boasting themselves of their poor literary knowledge, are pleased to criticise the books from their girlish point of view.



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1. SINGING AND DANCING GIRLS ON THE VERANDA OF A RESTAURANT.

2. A THEATRICAL DANCING BY GEISHA GIRLS.



## CHAPTER VII

### GEISHA GIRLS IN GENERAL

IN Tokyo, the capital of Japan, we find numerous circles of beautiful *geisha* girls, their natural beauty being heightened by their artificial beauty. Their faces are gaily painted, and though they have a light pride for themselves, yet their beauty is not prominent. The time for their prosperity is very short, just like the flowers of morning glory—their business is limited to their youth only, occupying a little part of their whole life. They may be called a kind of artistic product appearing in the cities of the “Country of the Rising Sun,” and it is natural that the sight-seers from Europe wish first to see these *geisha* girls.

They dance and sing well, and are skilled in talking too. In Japan of the present day it is not easy to find out in any other classes of women the beauties so well accomplished in these arts as they are. In old times there were many distinguished girls, and the so-called *Yedo-geisha* in the feudal age of the Tokugawa Shōgunate were far more respected by citizens than the Tokyo *geisha* of the present day.

The singing girls must be always beautiful as long as they carry on their business, and at the same time must not be occupied by any special guests, or in other words they must be cosmopolitan. We have the following proverb for the

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girls: "Don't pick up the flowers into your hand, but leave them in the field as they grow." All the girls must be the flowers which can be looked at and admired by all people.

We often read in newspapers or magazines that there are some *geisha* girls who are fond of literature or were educated in a female high school, and that they are esteemed by guests among other girls who are generally in a lower degree of education. But men do not hire the *geisha* girls for the purpose of being educated by them or listening to their lectures on literature. No, *geisha* girls have their own functions for making up deficiencies among the male society. They should have good accomplishments, affection, and beauty, and they must be ready to impart the pleasure to anybody who meets them.

We are told that a girl gave a clever treatment to her three guests at once, singing a song for the first guest, serving the second with wine from the bottle held in her right hand, and leaning her left on the knee of the third.

Ladies of respectable families despise *geisha* girls as the inconstant women of the ignoble profession, and yet if they see a beautiful daughter of a friend of theirs, they often use such a phrase to admire her, as "What a pretty damsel she is, just like a *geisha* girl!" How funny is the contradiction between their ideal and real! We recommend them that if they find any fine points in the custom of *geisha* girls they would better to adopt it for themselves.

It is an undeniable fact that the Japanese women are not well trained in social manners and toilet. When we call on a friend we are often received at his door by his maidservant, poorly dressed, her manners of receiving, of course, being disagreeable at the same time. It is a bad habit to ignore dressing and toilet by reason of being a maid-



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servant. We hope to encourage the sociality in the Japanese family, and to be more careful for toilet and dressing of maidservants.

Toilet is not to be monopolised by *geisha* girls only, but ladies and daughters in the higher class should always have a new taste for it much more than they have. What a nonsense it is if a gentleman is moved by beauty on meeting a *geisha* girl!—he must be provided in his family with a taste of beauty far superior to that offered by the singing girl.

Upstarts of the present day are proud of collecting curios and old pictures and writings, or of some light accomplishments privately learnt by some professionals, but their true hobby is a *geisha* spree. Then are they always satisfied by those girls? No, many of them are complaining of their cold treatment, in spite of a big sum of money which they spend on every occasion. The reason of the inhospitality is that those in the class of parvenu are generally boasting of their riches and behave in arrogant manners not only towards the girls, but also against all people, and that their insolence provokes the girls' hostile feeling. If they do not treat the girls in a contemptuous attitude, they would be always saluted cheerfully and gratified with their best entertainment.

The native girls in Tokyo are dignified and social. We often find those who are naturally beautiful in their unpainted face and whose burning passion is overflowing out of their strict character. The beauties in Kyoto attract men by their thick charms and graceful actions; and their transparent, snow-white skin and their timidity in talking should be said the characteristics of the Kyoto girls.

Some people say that Osaka is a city abundant in beauties, far more than Kyoto. It is a fact that

## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

we find many beautiful singing and dancing girls among so numerous gay quarters in the city. In a word, if the European belle is the rose, the Japanese is the chrysanthemum, and the Chinese the peony.

Gentlemen who were noted for the good conduct during their schooldays are often found to be very generous for the *geisha* spree. Both the mind and body having been worn out with the hard studies through their school life, we may admit that it is a way of their comforts to drink and eat together with beautiful girls as their companions, and moreover it is not rare that we see actual examples of young men who had once been unsociable but afterwards became experts in *savoir-faire* by frequent associatings with the *geisha* girls.

A man may be accused or sometimes sent to Coventry by his friends against his keeping company with the *geisha* girls, but if he looks back upon his course of life, how would he think of his knowledge on the secrets of getting on in the world, whether he got it much more by his wife educated in the school, or by the girls despised by the friends?

While the daughters grown up in the families of a rich or higher class are rarely found among the candidates of the *geisha* girls, those born in a back-court tenement house flow into the door of a *geisha*-house if they are of a somewhat hopeful countenance and have a poor knowledge of light accomplishments. The simple reason of the difference is that the former can buy their fineries at will, but that the latter, being incapable to satisfy their vanity, are always envious of the others.

Girls doomed in a gloomy cottage are hopeless for life to wear fine dresses unless they go to a business like *geisha* girls. Although there may be several works for them, such as a factory hand, a

## GEISHA GIRLS IN GENERAL

telephone operator, or a needlewoman, yet they can earn only a little sum of money by any of these tasks. Besides, there may be a greater business for the female as an authoress or a schoolmistress if she makes a great effort and studies hard, but it cannot be easily attainable for ordinary girls; or a daughter of a poor family may apply for apprenticeship of a midwife or a nurse, but a long study under great difficulties is necessary for her before she could sustain herself by the profession.

Living in a poor home, where there is an unthrifty mother or a drunken father and they cannot subsist even a day unless helped by the work of their daughter, how could she expect to put on a fine clothing desired eagerly by all young girls?

What a great difference of life between the daughters living in a splendid mansion and those moaning under the broken roof of a humble cottage! There is no shorter cut than to be a *geisha* girl for a poor family's daughter who hopes for fine dresses and to associate with gentlemen. When she is employed under the hostess of a *geisha*-house, she could at last attain her aim though she would be severely trained by her employer and elder girls. Well, she may be satisfied to wear nice dresses in presence of her customers, but if we look at the other side of her life, what a pity she is!

When she is in her employer's house she never puts on any good clothes nor eats any dainties which she can sometimes taste in restaurants. She does not forget her poor life which she led together with her parents, and can bear any inconveniences long experienced in the back-court tenement house. Moreover, she has many troubles and pains afflicted by her fellow-girls or waitresses of restaurants and waiting-houses.

## CHAPTER VIII

### GLIMPSES OF THE *GEISHA* CIRCLE AT PRESENT

#### *A.—A Kitten and a Dancing Girl*

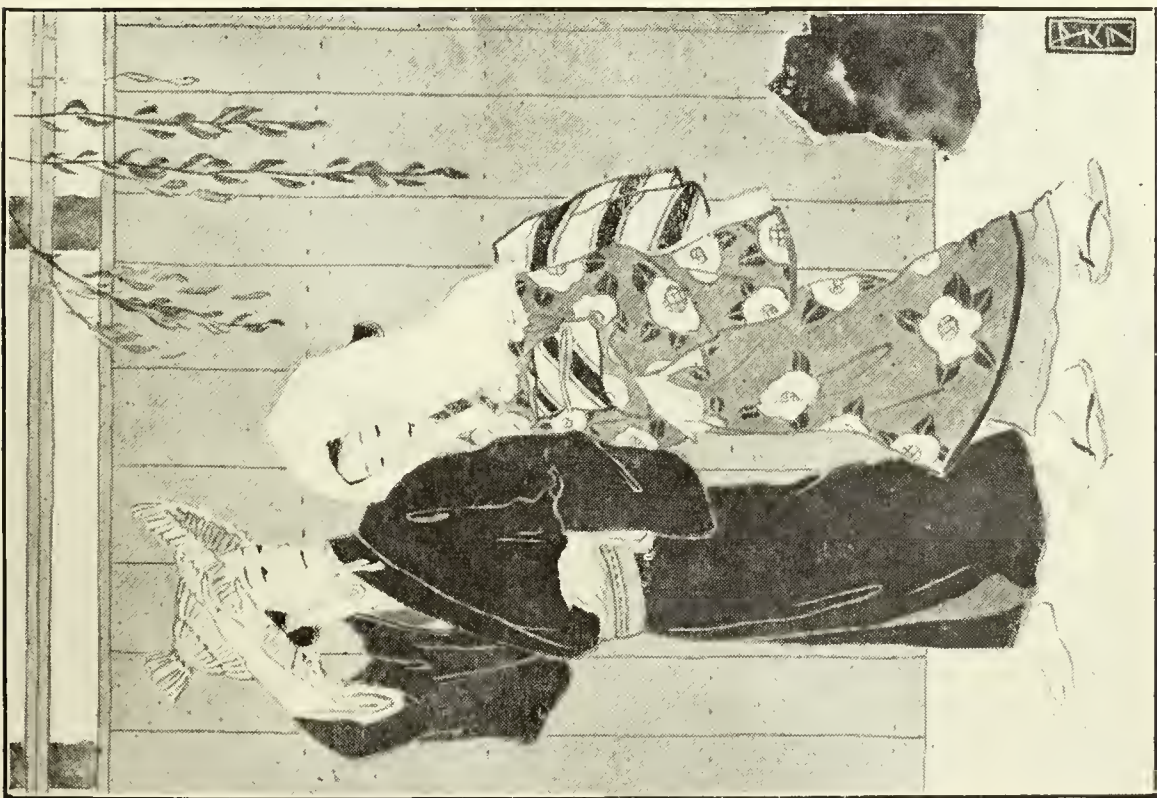
I AM a little dancing girl called Hanamaru (Flower Ball) living in a *geisha*-house. In this house there live four singing girls and a kitten named *Mikë* (three-coloured fur) which is the pet of all girls.

Miss *Mikë* is my good companion always when I am at home. Miss *Koyuki* (Little Snow), one of the elder girls, obtained her from somebody while I was out under engagement the other day. The cat has a round body and a short tail—I like the short tail though it is said among our circle that a cat with a long tail promises a good luck—big eyes and long ears, a small mouth and a large backside, not so large as to appear ugly. Her round body, just like a hand ball, is very fat and deep furry; her white fur is dotted with small black dapples on her head and left shoulder, and mixed with brown spots at her right two paws. Mewing faintly, she goes upon the knee of anybody. What a lovely little creature she is!

When I asked my hostess to be a kind nursemaid for the kitten she told me that I should be very careful to treat the pet, and Miss *Kotaka* (Little-High), another elder girl, added that if I treat her very kind I would be loved by guests. I thought, however, that I don't care whether I would be liked by them or not, but that I should fondle



A DANCING GIRL TAKING  
A KITTEN IN HER ARMS.



LOVERS IN ELOPEMENT.



## THE GEISHA CIRCLE AT PRESENT

her with all my heart, as I am so fond of the little thing.

Miss Little-High made for the pet a little red necktie, attached with a small bell at its end. When it was tied round her neck she was very glad, and ran about the room, the little bell tinkling at her every motion. That night I went to bed carrying her in my bosom, and gave my arm for her pillow, as I feared that she might feel headache if her head was lain flat. She lay along at ease, leaving herself as I did, and soon began to snore in a very weak noise. It seemed that she felt no fear even in the very first night she was brought to the unacquainted house, and I thought she fell asleep so soon, as she was tired out. I could not, however, understand the reason of her fatigue, because she had worked nothing hard in daytime. As for me, there is no leisure time every day; in the morning I must dust and sweep the rooms, and then go to the teachers of dancing and singing, and in the afternoon go on messages for the hostess and elder girls, while busily engaged in reviews of the lessons learnt in the morning; in the evening I must take my business, attending the restaurants and waiting upon the customers. In spite of such a pressure of business every day I don't get tired so much, and why was my pet so worn out? Does she like to sleep as she is a baby yet?

Late that night Miss Little-Snow came home from a restaurant, and I fell in sleep soon, hearing in a trance her idle talks on amours.

Next morning I was awaked by chirping of sparrows in the garden, and next moment my ears were assailed, as usual in every morning, by the noisy sound of tramcars and the whistling of automobiles running in the main street next to the lane where our *geisha*-houses stand in two rows facing each other. Still lying in the bed and looking round I could not find Miss Mikě, my pet, and,

## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

feeling anxious where she went, I sprang out of bed and hastened downstairs to search her, but soon I was relieved by discovering her there, sitting and eating on the knee of the hostess. After washing the face, I dusted the rooms and carried a tobacco-tray to the upstairs room where the elder girls were in bed awaiting the fire for smoking.

While I was very busy for my morning tasks, my kitten was romping about the rooms, playing with the skirt of the hostess or rushing out towards the entrance door, almost to fall down upon the step-stone in the porch.

After half an hour all the singing girls in the upstairs came down, and I sat at table together with them. What a glutton Miss Mikě is! Notwithstanding she had already finished her breakfast by the hostess, still she was glad to devour a big piece of fish-flesh given by one of the girls.

After the breakfast was over one of the girls tried to touch Mikě's body and cried, "What a big stomach this little kit has!"

"She shall be surfeited if you give her too much," warned the hostess in her own room.

Being anxious of her health I tried timidly to touch her stomach, and was surprised to find that it was hard like stone. Asking one of the girls whether I might give her the peptic which I used to take, I was laughed at by all of them.

I went together with one of the girls to the morning visit to the shrine of Inari (the God of Rice) in a back street not far from our house, and, parting from her on the way home, I went to the teacher of *Kiyomoto* songs to learn a new lesson. In the afternoon I was very busy in reviews of *samisen* and songs and in going on messages for the elder girls. At the tea-time the hostess gave me two cups of *mitsumame* (a favourite sweet for young dancing and singing girls, see "The Night-



## THE GEISHA CIRCLE AT PRESENT

side of Japan " for its particulars) as the prize for my good working of this day.

I wished to give my pet a share of the sweet, but finding that she was sleeping on the balcony of the upper story, I thought that she might be dreaming of me and that it was cruel to wake her; then I determined to lay it by until she would awake herself.

Now I lay down too, facing Miss Mikë on the balcony, and while gazing at her in sleep, I wondered to find the long whiskers around her little mouth.

" You are a baby cat and grow whiskers! How funny you are! You should get rid of such ugly, needless things. My hostess often tells me that a little dancing girl like me should always look like the dancing girl, and so a baby cat like you must appear the baby cat too."

Saying so, I cut off all her whiskers with my little scissors. Next, finding the long claws at her paws, I feared she might be hurt, and tried to cut them off, applying the scissors again. But as they were very hard I pressed the cutting tool with all my strength; it slipped and hit one of her paws.

" Gya-un!" cried she; she sprang up and ran into the room. I, astounded too, dropped the scissors from my hand.

" What a pity!" apologised I to her. " You feel pain? I beg pardon."

She was looking at me with her frightened face, hiding herself between a toilet-stand and a chest of drawers.

" Got hurt, my darling? I beg your pardon. I have not done it out of malice. Beg par'n, beg par'n!"

Yet she did not come out and said nothing; she must have been angry. Having been suddenly attacked in her snug sleep, it was reasonable for

## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

her to get angry. If I had been she I would have got angry too.

“I have done it by my kindness for you. Don't be angry so long. What a fool you are!” I dragged her out, and, taking her in my arms, stroked her cheek with mine. She mewed, and we were chums soon.

This evening I was engaged three times, each to a different restaurant. The guests in the last house were all heavy drinkers, and I was much troubled by their playing pranks till late in the night. When I came home it was past twelve, and soon went to bed, carrying Miss Mikë in my arms again, as I had done on the previous night.

### *B.—Sympathy of the Hostess*

In an upstairs room of a *geisha*-house there are two girls sitting opposite to each other; one is the hostess of the house, still carrying on herself as a singing girl though she is now over thirty years old, and the other a young girl employed in the house.

“There are no other ways for you now,” continues the hostess, soothing her girl, “and this is a matter common in the world. The mind of Mr Mori, your lover, is never changed, but both you and he have chanced upon such an unlucky event. There is nothing for you to regret, and you shall leave your fate to heaven. It is wise to listen to my advice and to wait quietly for the better days to come. You see, my dear? I know very well it is a great hardship for you to part with him.”

“Many thanks for your kindness,” replies Kohina (Little Doll), the young girl. “But I——”

“No but!” interrupts the elder girl; “that's no good for you. Wait for a good chance and I shall

## THE GEISHA CIRCLE AT PRESENT

not fail to make an arrangement satisfactory to you. Patience is important in everything."

"Thank you very much. I understand your kind advice. My dear hostess, I am——"

"Yes, my dear, go on. Why you weep so like a little child? See, crows are laughing at you!"

"I am very painful to part from him. But according to your advice, I have made up my mind not to see him until a good luck turns to us again."

"Oh, I am glad to have you understood my words," says the old singing girl. "Then you shall have the last meeting with Mr Mori this evening."

"No, *neisan* (hostess or elder girl)," replies the young girl, "he cannot come out of his house because the manager of his father's shop is strictly keeping watch over him."

"Then I shall go and see the manager, and by playing a trick get his consent to set his young master free for this evening. Now go and take bath before the evening comes; meanwhile I shall make arrangements for reception of your lover."

"Thank you very much. I shall never forget your kindness."

"After bathing, you will do your best for your toilet, for he cannot see his beautiful love for some time after this evening. Ha, ha, ha!" The hostess chaffs and laughs.

Kohina, the young girl, goes out for the public bath, and the hostess, sitting down alone by the side of a large oblong brazier in the downstairs room, has a smoke and then wets her throat by taking a cup of tea. The maidservant, who went out for shopping soon after the lunch, does not yet come back; perhaps she may be loitering about on the way. It is now past two and the girl-house lane is rather quiet about this time. The boiling kettle on the fire in the brazier is breaking the silence of the room.

## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

The hostess begins to ponder over the new event concerning her girl, and compares it with the past course of her own life. She is an old *geisha* girl now, in her thirty-fifth year of age, and still preserves the temper that never acknowledges a defeat since her youth. When she was about twenty years old she had a lover, but is now leading a celibate life for a long time. Ruminating on the past sometimes, she may not be without feeling lonesome, but on such an occasion she goes early to bed after taking some glasses of hot wine.

It seems to her that lately she could understand the true state of things, specially concerning love, and that she has now attained the age of mature discernment. She thinks also that when she was young or in the age of her first love, it was pleasant for her to be totally absorbed in the love itself; that when in the mature age over twenty, it was interesting to be troubled in jealousy; and that now as the old girl, it is funny to look at the love-affair of young girls without getting in the way. She believes that all girls are going on their course of life in such an order; nay, if others may not be so, she is sure that she is satisfied with it.

As she has been long to live in the gay circle since she first became a dancing girl in her very youth, she does not wish now to give up her present business, but likes simply to lead a lively life and end it prosperously. In a word, she does never look for a strict household.

She is very fond of girls in the flower of maidenhood, no matter whether their face may be long or round, but if she happens to meet any of them with the bright and transparent skin, lustrous black hair, and dressed in the stylish gay clothes, she feels to see that the blood circulating through the veins of their body is boiling for love at the bottom of their tender breast, and she hopes that they could



A ROOM IN A GEISHA HOUSE.



## THE GEISHA CIRCLE AT PRESENT

enjoy themselves for their holy love without being prevented by others.

She has the same idea for her own young girl, Kohina. Kohina, who is now seventeen years old, has fallen in love with the son of a rich mercer in a neighbouring street since the spring of the last year. Not only the hostess did not blame her, but helped her how to show her sincerity for the new lover. But lately, his dissipation having been discovered by his father, he was compelled to be driven away to his relative in the country. If the hostess of the young girl were an ordinary woman of the *geisha* profession, she would have railed at her in foul language, but on the contrary she was kind enough to provide them with the farewell meeting in a room of her own house.

At first when Kohina attained her beautiful prime the hostess prayed that she would change *mitsumamě* for a lover, and often told her that as the palmy days of womanhood pass away soon she should have a honey dream as early as possible, and enjoy it as long as she could. It was in January of the last year when the young lovely girl like a doll first fell in love with a young, handsome gentleman. When she came home late in evening from her service to a New Year's dinner-party, held by the chief merchants in vicinity, how glad was the hostess to find by her bashful face and different attitude that she could first understand the sweetness of the pure love!

. . . . .

It is now late in evening, and a faint sound of *samisen* played in a distant restaurant is barely heard.

In a room upstairs of the *geisha*-house, Kohina and her lover sit down face to face, but both can speak nothing. An electric lamp on the ceiling is shining drearily over their heads, and silence of

## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

the room is only disturbed by secret sobbings of the girl.

To avoid troubles, the hostess sent out her maidservant to a *yossé* (variety-hall, particulars of which are explained in "The Nightside of Japan"), and, after preparing herself the table for the two, carries it to the upstairs.

"*Hina-chan* (Miss Hina)," calls the hostess, standing on the upper step of the stairs, "here are the table and brazier."

"Thank you, *neisan* (my hostess)," replies the girl, wiping off her tears and coming to the staircase.

"I have some business to go out," continues the old girl; "as there is nobody downstairs, please take care of it." And she goes out.

When the hostess comes home after about two hours, Kohina asks her permission for visiting a shrine near the house together with her lover. The hostess gives her consent to the proposal, and, after sending them out, takes her seat alone in her own room.

The maidservant comes home from the *yossé* and serves for the hostess a bottle of hot *saké* (wine), which she is pleased to take leisurely. She finishes drink, and then goes to bed furnished with a foot-warmer. Though she lies in bed she cannot go to sleep, the affairs of her girl Kohina weighing on her mind. To suddenly cut off the relation between the two, she thinks, is too cruel for them in puberty, and though his father does not like women in our profession, yet the *geisha* girls are recognised by gentlemen even of the higher rank to be useful for society; and whatever social standings may men or women be in, the people should deal leniently with them if there were any faults in their youth.

She continues still to think: Now in this very



## THE GEISHA CIRCLE AT PRESENT

night the two are in great troubles for their temporary parting. What a pity for them! For their present happiness they may be better to elope somewhere. It must be a great regret for herself to lose Kohina whom she has so well trained in the accomplishments and everything, but it is too pitiful to see her weep after she was separated by coercion from her man.

She recollects her own elopement once experienced in her bloom; she blushes herself, and next a smile peeps on her face. It is a great pity to force them apart! Elopement, elopement in this very night, and nothing else for them!

At length she goes to sleep.

### *C.—A Faithful Girl*

Matsuko (Miss Pine), a singing girl, was conscious herself of her growing thinner and thinner, but she could not take a rest even a day. She had not only to sustain her old mother and weak brother, but also was faithful enough to aid her ruined lover, Miyoshi, who, having failed in his enterprises, now shut himself up in a little room of a poor block in an alley.

When the business of her lover was prosperous she was very happy, and her family could lead an unconcerned life by her profuse monthly supplies. But in these days after he has fallen into the bottom of his misfortune she was compelled to run into debt, whatever efforts she made in her calling.

One day her hostess advised her: "As you know very well, we often see a miserable end of the relation between a girl and her customer, and it is no wonderful event in our gay circle. It is a common usage that when a guest has money he comes to take pleasure, and hires *geisha* girls who make efforts to please him. I think you have no

## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

duty at present to support Mr Miyoshi, who was your patron once. Yes, you may have received no little benefits from him, but even if you will not trouble yourself about his present situation, I am sure he will not complain to you. Mind that you have a great burden to sustain your old mother and sickly brother; and if there will arise any troubles by washing your hands of him we would not fail to settle them for you."

Similar advices were given by her fellow-girls too, but as she did not listen to them she was given up by them as well as by the hostess, all of whom now looked unconcerned at her pains which she only brought upon herself. The fellow-girls in the same house turned to her backbiters, and those who had paid homage to her in her great prosperity only six months ago treated her very cold as if she were an unacquainted new-comer. She thought, however, that it was not unreasonable to receive such a treatment from them, and at the same time she acknowledged herself that she, in these days, was not the girl Matsuko flourished half a year ago.

Lately her beauty, which had been very famous among the girls and customers of the Shimbashi quarter, wonderfully declined, and her engagements by customers became less and less day by day. Though she did not attain the age to be generally given up by people as an old *geisha*, yet they were cool enough to be laughing at her fading beauty.

Of course if she, according to the advice of others, had given him up and done her best for her business only, there would have been no troubles for herself, as well as for the living of her family; but she could not be such a heartless woman. If, however, it was necessary to part from him for his own benefit, she would not deny to do so, however hard she felt about the parting.



GIRLS IN FRONT OF A SHRINE.



GEISHA GIRLS UNDER CHERRY FLOWERS  
ON THE BANK OF THE RIVER SUMIDA,



## THE GEISHA CIRCLE AT PRESENT

One evening she was engaged to a restaurant and waiting upon the guests very carefully, but feeling unpleasant for the cool treatment which she suffered from the other girls attending in the same room, at last she took leave from the guests, pretending that she felt ill, and alone left the restaurant. With her heart, which she felt as if to burst, she was hardly walking down a narrow side-street when a luke breeze of the spring eve stroked loose hairs of her locks. Through a hedge or bamboo fence along the street white flowers whose name was unknown to her could be seen floating in the twilight of the evening, and the lanterns near the doors of houses standing on both sides were throwing their feeble lights on the road, and a charming tune of *samisen* in a distant restaurant was at times brought by the wind to her ears.

In this evening the colour of her face was quite pale, though it was usual to her to be red after drinking, and her nervous eyes appeared more dreadful than ever. But when she was going on and turned a corner to another by-street, her heart, which had been beating high, became gradually calm, and she began to feel solitary now. She turned again into a small lane which lay between the shops of a tailor and a greengrocer. The long, dirty boards covering the sewer which ran through the middle of the lane were in the same colour with that of the wet ground, and the land here being much lower than the other part of the quarter, it was damp as much as it went to the inner.

When she went on along a well, evading a dust-bin put on its opposite side, her nose was assailed with an offensive odour almost unbearable. All the inhabitants in the backcourt were hardly managing to live on from day to day, and everything existing within the limits of the alley seemed to her to be almost rotten.

At the moment when she was about to turn

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another corner where noisy cries of a little child were heard within a room of the tenement house, unexpectedly she met with Chiyoko (Miss Thousand Ages), a dancing girl who lived in the same house with her and was very much favoured by her.

“Ain’t you Chii-chan (a colloquial for Miss Chiyoko)?” called Matsuko to the young girl.

“Oh, *neisan* (my elder sister), glad to see you!” cried Chiyoko, and ran up to her elder.

The young girl was dressed in the long-sleeved silk clothes of a showy texture, tied with the broad sash of figured satin, and had on a pair of lacquered high wooden clogs. Matsuko or Miss Pine was specially fond of her among other young dancing girls in her house, and while she had been prosperous half a year ago she had always recommended the girl to her customers, and when at home in daytime was very kind to give her the reviews on dancing and music; indeed she loved her like her true sister.

“You were engaged to Kagetsu (restaurant), I think,” said the elder girl, “and why are you rambling hereabout? If discovered you would be blamed by the mother (hostess).”

“No, my sister,” replied the younger, shaking her head, “I’m not rambling. The guests of Kagetsu already went away, and as soon as I took leave I came to bring him a box of dishes.”

“Indeed! Oh, my dear Chii-chan!” cried Miss Pine, and at the same moment her eyes were full of tears; she was sorry to think that the present condition of her lover was sympathised even by such a little girl.

Chiyoko explained her that all the girls who had attended to the restaurant had been gifted by the guests with some dishes. After the guests had departed, while the other girls had been taking the dainties, she had put her own portion in a

## THE GEISHA CIRCLE AT PRESENT

small box to present it to the man of her kind sister-girl, and was just on her way back from his house.

“My Chii-chan,” said the elder girl, wiping the tears with a handkerchief, “I thank you for your kindness.”

“Don’t mention, my dear sister,” interrupted the younger; “I shall go home soon. Good-bye!”

“If you are discovered by any of the other girls in our house you may be troubled. Go home at once.”

“Yes; and I shall not tell anybody that I have met you here. Good-bye.”

“No, never tell anybody about it! If known there may be some troubles for me. Good-bye, my dear!”

Miss Pine saw off her beloved young sister until the latter went out of the narrow alley. No sooner she entered the poor house of her lover than she threw herself upon the floor and burst to tears. In the middle of a small room Miyoshi, her lover, was sitting alone with his head hung down and lost in thought. The box which had been brought by the dancing girl was put, still unopened, on a table, by the side of which a small lamp was dimly lighted.

“Have you met with Chiyoko?” inquired he in a spiritless voice and without raising his head; but instead of replying to him she wept bitterly, and he melted into tears too. A mosquito flew away with its weak hum over their heads. The house being backed with a bamboo grove, it was comparatively quiet rather than other houses in the neighbourhood, and suited for a refuge of a man in great agony. Though it was old and almost dilapidated, yet in the cottage the two forsaken by the world were prevented by nobody to weep for their love.

## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

The wind passed over the bamboo grove, and birds that could not get roost were chirping faintly. The man raised his head and saw his girl, who was still in her whimpering. He said nothing and went to the sink to wash his face. After he washed he poured new water into the basin and said to her: "I say, don't you wash your face?"

She was moved with his kindness.

Near the little lamp which was covered with a piece of old newspaper for a shade the two were sitting lonely opposite to each other.

"I am very sorry to trouble you so much," uttered the man at last; "there is no promise for me to be here in such a state, and I thought it would be better to go to Osaka until I find some means for living. To-day I wrote to a friend there, and if his answer is convenient for me I shall go to Osaka."

On hearing his words she stared at his face with a dreadful look.

"I have not expected to trouble you so long," added he gently, avoiding her gaze, "but as my failures were so great . . ."

"What then?" interrupted the girl in a sharp tone.

"What? . . ."

"You will give me up, I know!" continued she in her quick and nervous tone. "A humble woman like me is to be abandoned by you after all, but . . ."

She threw herself upon his knee and cried. Though he tried to console her yet he could not top her from weeping. It was her habit to fall in such a fit whenever she became irritable, and there was no way for him but to wait for a good while until she got recovered. He thought it was a pity for her that this bad habit of her lately became violent more and more.



## THE GEISHA CIRCLE AT PRESENT

“Don’t cry, my dear!” said the man when he saw her, who hardly got quiet, “it was my wrong to speak such a matter on such an occasion. Pardon me—it was my fault, and don’t be angry. I have nothing in my mind but to feel sorry for you. If I see you weep I feel a great pain. Don’t cry, don’t cry!”

Giving a handkerchief to her who wiped her eyes with it, he added: “Here is a bottle of wine brought by your sister; will you drink it with me?”

“Yes, I will,” replied the girl.

“Chiyoko is a good-natured girl,” said he; “I heartily thanked for her kindness.”

“As I am a good-for-nothing,” moaned she, “I trouble even that little girl.”

“No, no, my dear!” tried he to soothe her. “Being helped by you I can live here very happy. That’s true.”

The bottle of wine was warmed in a kettle, and the forlorn couple took up a cup to cheer their spirits.

### *D.—A Girl and a Millionaire*

It was in October, 1914, when a man well known as a millionaire of four million *yen* and one of the five great landowners in Kōbē, one of the great trade-ports in Japan, suddenly disappeared from the city. Where did he go? The question was put all round by his friends and acquaintances. Some said that he had gone to Formosa, some that he had run to Korea, and the others that he was confined in a room of a certain insane hospital, but nobody could catch the true state of affairs. Anyhow, the fact that a noted millionaire had suddenly vanished was rumoured among the citizens of the port as an extraordinary event.

## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

Who was the millionaire in question? He was Goro Hayashi of a high reputation, under the nickname of Patron Crystal among the gay circle of Kōbē, and so the sudden disappearance of the rich patron was a great loss for the *geisha* girls living in the city. Where and why did he conceal himself? All his friends were again astounded by finding that he was chanting the Buddhist sacred books in a temple of Kyoto, having his head shaved and wrapping his body with a priest's black robe. Then what was the cause of his unexpected behaviour by giving up his prosperity and wealth of four millions and entering the priesthood all of a sudden?

Behind his religious awakening there was a beauty named Momiji (Maple), who had constituted a strange background for his strange life, and given a wonderful colouring in his half-life of forty years.

Ten years ago when he came back from London he became the director of the Hayashi Partnership, with the capital of one million *yen*. Then how was his connection with the *geisha* girl Maple?

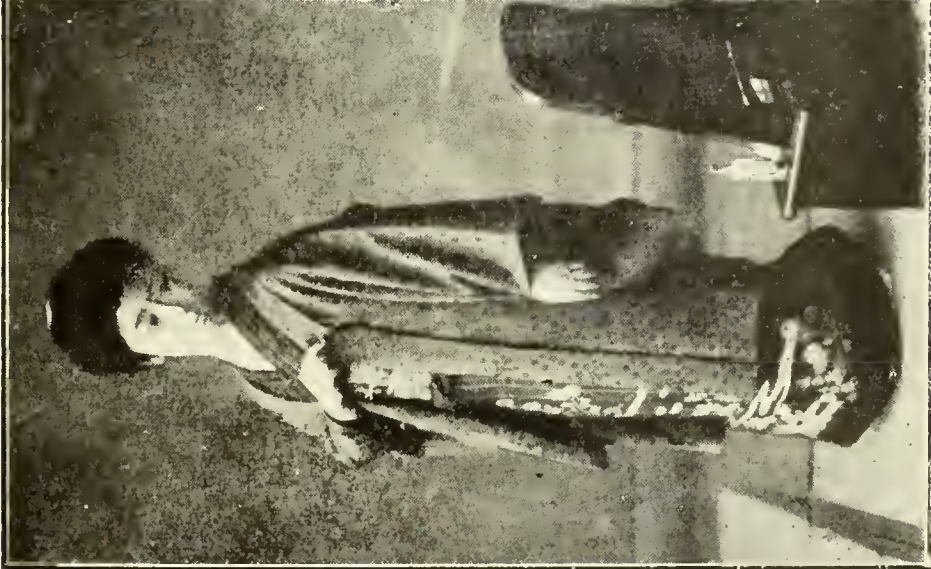
To have Patron Crystal enlisted in the priesthood and secluded from the world at last, there was something profound in the relation between him and the beauty. At the time when he came home from England she was a young girl in one of the gay quarters of the port and very noted as a bright belle among the Kōbē girls. It was in her sixteenth year of age when the young girl, shining like a new moon among many stars, was first engaged by her future patron; soon he ransomed her, and, having built a splendid villa at Mirumē in the outskirts of the city, took her in it as his lovely young mistress. We are told that the new villa cost more than one hundred thousand *yen*.



A SINGING GIRL TAKING  
OFF HER HAORI.



A SINGING GIRL.



A SINGING GIRL AGAINST  
A LOOKING-GLASS STAND.



## THE GEISHA CIRCLE AT PRESENT

Next year he failed in his business and lost more than five hundred thousand *yen*. He became desperate and ventured on speculations, but as the fortune did not turn to him everything he had done resulted unsuccessfully. At last he was compelled to withdraw from his partnership, the position of the director being taken by his younger brother, and to retire from all his business under the condition that one thousand *yen* would be paid to him as the monthly allowance.

One thousand *yen*! It is a pretty good sum for the monthly expense, but melted away like butter in the mouth for the Patron Crystal, who had been long accustomed in the luxurious life. His sweetheart in the villa of Mirumě reappeared as a *geisha* girl at another gay quarter of Kōbē. She was now twenty-three years old, but her beautiful complexion did not let her appear to be a girl over twenty. Soon she became one of the most popular girls in the port, and at the same time very famous for her excellent morals, so that she was generally believed by her customers, as well as by her fellow-girls, to remain chaste for her ex-patron.

The fifth of October, 1914, was the memorial day on which a new life was opened for Goro Hayashi, the millionaire of four million *yen*. On the morning of the day he went out of his house, telling his family that he was going to a barber, but he did not come back. Two days passed, three days passed, but he never appeared to his home. Being greatly anxious of his fate, all his family searched after, but no trace of him.

One evening, just a week after his disappearance, a letter arrived to his brother from a man named Meizui in the temple Manjuin, Kyoto, and when he opened and read it he was surprised to find that Meizui was the Buddhist name of his elder brother, taken after entering the priesthood;

## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

moreover, none of the family could utter a word when they saw a photograph enclosed in the letter of his standing figure, with his head shaved, and dressed in the black canonicals and carrying the beads in his hand.

Besides the family and friends of the new priest, one most surprised by the event was the girl Maple, who, on hearing the serious matter, remained stupefied for a while and could not take her business for a few days.

Lately the priest Meizui visited one of his old friends at Kōbē and said: "They may call me an outcast of the gay quarters or a ruined of the business circle. It is nothing for me. Since I secluded myself my spirit has been cheered. Some of my friends believe that I am not a man to remain as a priest to the end, and that I will return to the secular life sooner or later. But you can understand my firm will if you know that I brought out my villa at Mirumē for sale. In future, I intend to enter Mongolia and serve for life there in the propagation of Buddhism. I was told that some people are speaking ill of the girl Maple, attributing the cause of my retirement to her, but I assure that she is not a woman of such a kind as misunderstood by them."

### *E.—A School for Geisha Girls and Waitresses*

The following is a letter from a female student of the *Geisha Girls' and Waitresses' School* at Funatsu, a small town in the north and mountainous province Hida:

"I am one of the female students of the *Geisha Girls' and Waitresses' School* at Funatsu, and as I learned only a little in a primary school in childhood, I had no knowledge to read and write.

## THE GEISHA CIRCLE AT PRESENT

But since I entered the school I am learning lessons by our kind teachers every day, and very glad to have a new knowledge instilled into my brain week after week; very glad to find the window of my dark mind gradually shone upon with sunbeams of the events old and new, past and present, good and bad, and various reasons of all matters in the world.

“ It is not I alone that receive the benefit of the school, but all of some seventy *geisha* girls and waitresses are equally favoured with the new knowledges. While I am heartily feeling grateful for the school's kindness, I write you with the hope that the citizens of the capital will know the existence of such a special and laudable school in a small town at the ravine almost always covered with snow throughout the year.

“ As you know, it is our duty to sing and dance when we are hired by guests, and though we know many kinds of popular songs how to sing, but we did not understand their meanings. Our teachers select some good songs and give us the explanations of their meanings; thus we could find that there are good instructions for us among vulgar songs, which we are singing loud mechanically.

“ The town Funatsu is a small town, but being situated near the zinc mine of the Mitsui & Co., the hotels and restaurants in the town are always prosperous by the travellers from the capital and other cities.

“ The school was first established in the spring of 1915, and a big hall in the temple Eijō-in is used for the schoolroom. The subjects of study in our school are as follows: Popular lectures on morals and sanitation; reading, in the standard of a primary school and specially of those books important for the home-life; writing, ditto; arithmetic—addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division, generally calculated with the Japanese

## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

abacus; composition—a common letter-writing; sewing of all kinds of the Japanese clothes; etiquette for females and specially necessary for the reception and so on in home; cookery necessary in a common household.

“By the police regulations all the girls living in the town and carrying on the profession of *geisha* or waitresses must enter the school, and according to the degrees of knowledge in reading, etc., all the students are divided into three classes; at present there are twenty-one *geisha* girls and forty-eight waitresses in the school, making sixty-nine in total.”

### *F.—The Geisha Girl's Love Observed by a Geisha Girl*

My observation on the love-affairs of the girls belonging to our society? (said a beautiful young girl with a charming smile upon her face). That's a very difficult question for me, still young and inexperienced. Of course there must be the love questions among *geisha* girls, but the love is not their business, though it is generally thought to be an accessory to them. From the first and most noted girls down to the lowest class, those are rare that are not a bit spoken of their love-affairs.

People censure us by the reasons that the love of the *geisha* girls always absorbs money, that they love money but not the men, and that they live for nothing but money. But they take a glance at only the outside of a cake-box, without looking into the sweets contained in it. If they observe us with the eyes of sympathy they can find out many instances of the very earnest and holy love among the girls of our profession.

It is true that money is always necessary for the *geisha's* love, because it always acts as the go-



## THE GEISHA CIRCLE AT PRESENT

between for them and guests. In general, a lover of a *geisha* girl was once a new and unacquainted guest met first in a restaurant or assignation-house, and the two are better understood to each other as often as they meet. Now money is the only means for their meetings, or it is the thread which ties up the two whose connection can be never cut off as much as their love becomes deeper.

The girl too does her best to raise the money, but as the world never goes as we wish, she becomes troubled to find the means for meetings. When a stream is dammed up it rages; so is it with love too. At length both the girl and her lover become desperate and fall into the depth of pecuniary troubles. It is truly said that love is blind.

The *geisha* girls are not so philanthropic as to love all gentlemen they meet. Most of the girls paint their faces with the powder melted with their tears. Hence when a girl finds a man whom she takes a fancy to she becomes absorbed in him. Though her love is first brought forth by the go-between of money, yet her object is neither money nor honour, but only the love itself. So I can declare that the love of the *geisha* girls is purest and holiest.

There are a great number of the *geisha* girls who can be classified into many kinds according to their capacities. In lower classes there may be those who are wandering about from one to another in a shallow love out of fickleness, but this is not limited to the girls of our profession; we are told that the girls in a certain circle are used to change their lovers.

Owing to the situation of *geisha* girls, they have to meet men night and day, and are accustomed to the stories of love-affairs since the very early age of young dancing girls. Some of them take the love as their privilege, and are ashamed of their

## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

own incompetency if they could not discharge this duty.

If I, a young girl without much experiences in our circle, tell you such matters, I shall be ridiculed by the elder girls, and when I shall be an old stager I may be able to make a correct observation into the true state of the question. I believe, however, that the love must be intense, like a burning flame, taking no notice of all things but the love itself.



A SINGING GIRL WITH  
A BATTLEDORE.



A DANCING GIRL  
AND ROSES.



A DANCING GIRL WITH  
A BATTLEDORE.



## CHAPTER IX

### *SHINJŪ* OR THE DOUBLE SUICIDE

THE double suicide or *shinjū* is a special phenomenon in Japan. In Europe there might be some events similar to the so-called *shinjū*, but they are very rare, almost unworthy to treat of. In Japan, on the contrary, the question is very important, and if we study it up into its minute points, we are sure that we can make up a special sociology for Japan.

The original meaning of the word *shinjū* was faithfulness, single-heartedness, or fervour, and then it was applied to an action proving one's fervour. The examples of these actions with regard to the lovers were as follows:

1. A woman gave a written pledge to her lover.
2. She tattooed the lover's name in her arm.
3. She cut her hair.
4. She cut her little finger.
5. She tore off the nail of one of her fingers.
6. She stabbed her elbow or thigh.

In the Genroku period (A.D. 1688-1703), when the civilisation under the Tokugawa Shōgunate of Yedo attained its summit, the word was used to mean the lovers' suicide or double suicide, that is to say the joint death of a man and a woman who love each other and consent to die together. The meaning is still maintained for the word in the present days. Certainly the age of Genroku was

## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

the most civilised epoch in the old Japan, and at the same time the most prosperous period for the double suicide, a social phenomenon peculiar to Japan.

If we read novels, dramatic works, and other books which were published in this age, we can find how much was the *shinjū* looked with interest by the citizens of the time, and that at the same time the young and thoughtless lovers were as much influenced with these stories or news as to practise themselves in imitation of their preceding fools. The females who died in this unnatural way were mostly the girls in *demi-monde* quarters.

Let us see an example of the double suicide that took place in the Genroku age:

The death of the girl Ohatsu and her lover Tokubei was one of the most famous double suicides. The event took place at Osaka, and the heroine Ohatsu was a young girl nineteen years old, beautiful like a new cherry blossom just in its blooming, while the hero Tokubei was an honest clerk, twenty-five years old, in the shop of a merchant who was his uncle.

One day he told his girl: "My master being my real uncle, he is very kind to me, and I make efforts for his business. Having recognised my honesty, he lately told me that a niece of his wife shall be married to me. . . ."

But he did not like to marry any other women but Ohatsu. He owed his uncle a sum of money which should be paid back before he refused the uncle's proposal of marriage, but he was so unfortunate that he was swindled of the money, hardly raised himself, by a friend whom he mis-conceived to be very kind to him, and that he was slandered and knocked down as a forger of the bond in the presence of all the people.

He was a nervous and passionate youth, and though Ohatsu, his sweetheart, was passionate too,

## SHINJŪ OR THE DOUBLE SUICIDE

yet she had a will stronger than he. When he grieved at the parting which might occur to them if he was expelled from his uncle, she decidedly declared: "You are not a thief nor an incendiary, even if you are driven out by your uncle. Never mind, my dear, I can find any means to support you!"

And when Tokubei revealed his resolution to die, at once she consented, or rather encouraged him, by saying: "Oh, you are quite right! It is the same, however long we live, and better to clear ourselves from shame by death!"

The cause of the death was, on one side, in the situation of the man who fell in great troubles for the questions of both love and money; and the question of the social morality was included on the other. If he had given up his love he would have got rid of the troubles on money and morals, but his love was his life.

The girl was also complaining of things going contrary to her wishes, and specially when she grew pessimistic owing to frequent obstructions by others for their meetings, she was told by him about the situations of his great troubles. Now she made her resolution in her mind, and gave him a hint for death as follows: "If it is impossible for us to meet freely in this world, we would go to a better land. On Mount Death and in the River Styx there would be nobody that interrupts us."

Thus they consented to commit a double suicide. They ran to the woods of the Tenjin Shrine; the man cut the throat of his girl with a razor, and then killed himself with the same weapon.

Many were the instances of the *shinjū* in the Genroku age, following the almost equal course of life from their first falling into mutual love to their tragical end, after struggling long against the great difficulties of pecuniary, social and moral

## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

questions. In the succeeding ages after Genroku we are told that there were the events regarding the united suicide between young men and women. Even in the present time we often read in newspapers the paragraphs reporting the foolish and cruel death of couples in blind love, though the females are not limited to the professional girls only.

Now let us see the different kinds of the double suicide in this country. The most strange one was the joint double suicide of two couples. In the same room and at the same hour the two men killed their respective girls and committed suicide soon after.

Another marvellous event was the *shinjū* by coercion, and it may be suitable to call it the man's suicide after murdering his girl. We have never heard the suicide of a murderess who killed her lover. If we say that there was a double suicide by a single person as a kind of the *shinjū*, you would wonder what it means. But actually there were no few instances of a suicide given such a ridiculous appellation. A lover and his girl consented to commit a double suicide at a certain place, but either of the two broke the promise and did not appear to the appointed place at the appointed time; then he or she was compelled to die alone. What a great fool!

Another fool was a man who committed suicide after stabbing a photograph of his sweetheart. He loved her heartily, but could not bear to kill her, so he took her photo as the substitute for her. How funny is it that the fortunate girl did not know the death of the *kind* and *generous* lover!

Besides those above mentioned, the different kinds of strange *shinjū* were:

The double suicide of two girls (unconcerned in love).

The treble suicide of a lover and his two girls.



## SHINJŪ OR THE DOUBLE SUICIDE

The double suicide of a brother and his sister (unconcerned in love).

The tricky double suicide.—This was not a true *shinjū*, but they feigned to die as the means to escape from troubles or to attain a certain object—for example, to marry—which they could not accomplish by any other ways they had tried.

The double suicide in adoption.—A girl who had been given up by her lover was disappointed and resolved to die, but thinking it was foolish to die alone, she selected and entreated with crocodile tears one of her doltish customers to be her fellow-traveller to the Realm of Shades. How grateful did he feel for her sincerity!

The second double suicide.—A man tried to commit suicide together with his girl, but his life was fortunately (perhaps *unfortunately* for him) saved, while she died on the spot. On the same day of the same month in the third year after the event, he succeeded in the renewed double suicide, together with another girl.

The after-follow double suicide.—On the brink of death the man's mind changed and the girl died alone, but afterwards he again resolved, and died alone in pursuit of his lost girl.

The double suicides in three consecutive generations.—A man committed a double suicide with a girl. It is strange that his uncle had hanged himself together with a girl seventeen years ago, and, moreover, that the uncle of his father too had drowned himself in a river together with his love just seventeen years before the death of his uncle. Is there any mystic meaning on the equal intervals of the seventeen years, or may we infer any hereditary nature for the suicide of human beings?

The means taken for the double suicides from ancient times down to the present were as follows: Edged tools, drowning, poison, being run over by a train, hanging, firearms, dynamite, biting off

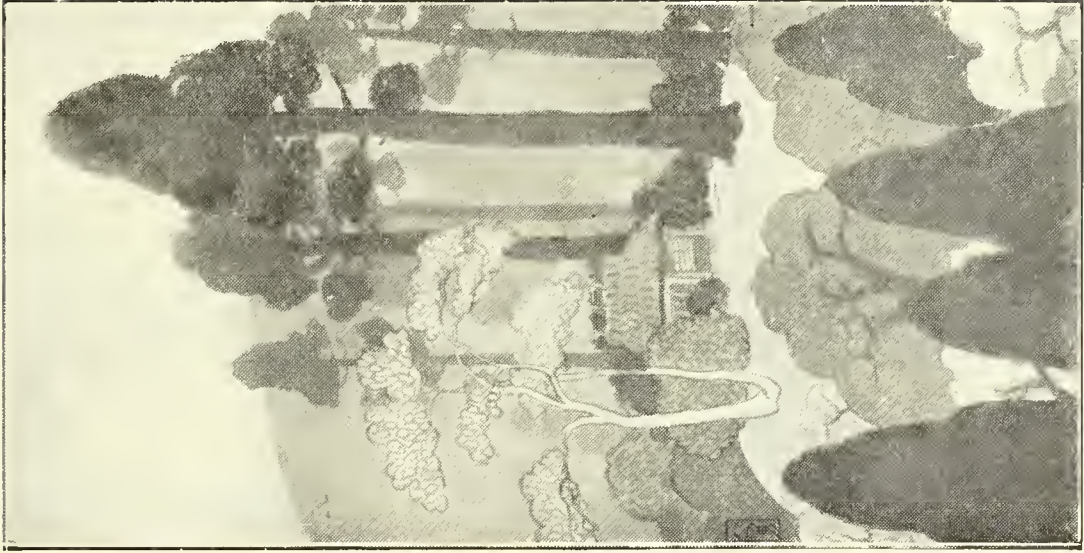
## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

tongues, etc., etc. Most of those died by drowning had the two bodies bound up tightly, embracing each other. A superstition for the double suicide was that the two could be together in the future world if they died with their clothes worn by exchanging each other.

Now let us say something more from the moral and religious points of view about the double suicide of a man and a girl in the ardent love like a burning flame. What degree of morality is the phenomenon of the double suicide produced at? We are sure that there is a close connection between the phenomenon and the morality; no double suicide can be found in the society of human beings who have no reflections upon morality. When the society developed to the age where the violation of morality was accompanied with strong pains and where the self-control practised by reflections and endeavours, we could see the first appearance of the double suicide. It does not take place in the human society of the rudimentary morale, and certainly it is a counter-phenomenon of the advanced morality.

The inspiration of Buddhism into the mind of the Japanese people contributed not a little to the occurrences of the *shinjū*. The religion can be classified into the two principal sects: one advocates the doctrine for the present world, praying the present happiness, and the other for the future, aiming for entering Nirvana. By suicide everybody expects the necessary death, and to cut off the connection from the present world; so he has no need for the doctrine regarding the present world. If he has any hope after death it is for the future, and the double suicide is generally carried out with some expectations for the future world.

The resolution for the *shinjū* is always, or at least mostly, attended with the idea of the soul and



A HUMBLE COTTAGE IN  
MOONLIGHT,



ON THE BRINK OF THE  
DOUBLE SUICIDE BY  
DROWNING,



## SHINJŪ OR THE DOUBLE SUICIDE

future, and we can reasonably conclude that the Buddhistic doctrine of the futurity sect gave a good fundamental idea, or became one cause, or helped the resolution, for commitment of the double suicide.

Before concluding we have to observe that at present it is very rare to have the news of the *geisha* girls' *shinjū*, but remember that we cannot say that the unworthy events are extirpated for the girls in all gay quarters in the country. I have told you much of my knowledge of the *geisha* girl, and I now make a work on "Home Life in Japan," in which I will fully describe the daily life of families together with marriages, funerals, servants, socials and religions, children, women, politics, work, and also ideals of the Japanese.

## APPENDIX I

### SONGS

We shall give some popular songs sung by the *geisha* girls:

#### FLOWERS

There are many kinds of beautiful flowers in different colours,  
But there is no flowers better than one which I am very fond of.

I left behind a flower yet in bud; it weighs on my mind whether it may blow without me.

#### A MAIDEN

Don't mind her innocence; she will soon arrive at puberty.  
See a humble cottage shined upon by moonlight;  
Or see beautiful flowers on a thorny rose-bush.

On her way home from the transplantation of rice,  
She is pulled by the sleeve and winked at for the meeting in the eve.

She listens for a Komuro tone sung as a signal for beckoning,  
And drops of dew remaining on the weeds are read by her to be spelled " My love! "

#### A SUMMER EVENING

By watering the garden the heat of daytime is melted away,  
And a green bamboo blind hanging near the window is waving by a cool breeze.

On a puddle of the garden moonlight is shining already,  
Though it is not yet dark in the eve.

## SONGS

### A NIGHT IN AUTUMN

In autumn swallows leave and wild geese come.  
How sad I feel to hear tolls of a curfew, alone waiting for  
the lover,  
And it may be a hint for me to get wet with the cold  
autumn shower.

### A SPRING EVE

Towards the eve of spring, when lying down with my arm  
for a pillow,  
There comes a vernal rain which blows wild cherry blossoms,  
And I hope the flowers may act as a go-between for my love.

### THE RIVER SUMIDA

In spring the River Sumida is crowded with visitors.  
On the bank green colour of the pine needles is deeper,  
Fragrance of the plum flowers drifts in the breeze,  
Over the pool of Love cherry blossoms bloom,  
And a pair of water-fowls is playing on the stream,  
Just as I am strolling with my love.

### CHERRY FLOWERS

Cherry flowers on a distant hill may be mistaken for clouds  
or snow;  
Oyster-catchers which take a nap on the water are aroused  
By ripples risen by a spring breeze.  
In a house-boat shut up with paper slides  
*Samisen* is played and songs are sung,  
Perhaps by beautiful girls, and we wish to peep into it.

### A CUCKOO

In a retired spot where we can hear cuckooing constantly,  
we have to go five miles for a piece of bean-curd and  
seven miles to get a bottle of wine;  
I am contented with the poor life in such an inconvenient  
rustic cottage, in which I pass night and day together  
with my flame;  
Having left myself to him, I don't care whether I may die  
on the wayside of a plain or starve near the stream of  
a valley.

A cuckoo! Let me hear you once more!  
The moonlight is bright in the sky, yet your figure cannot  
be seen.  
How provoking and how tiresome! Ah, what shall I do?

# THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

## A LOVER

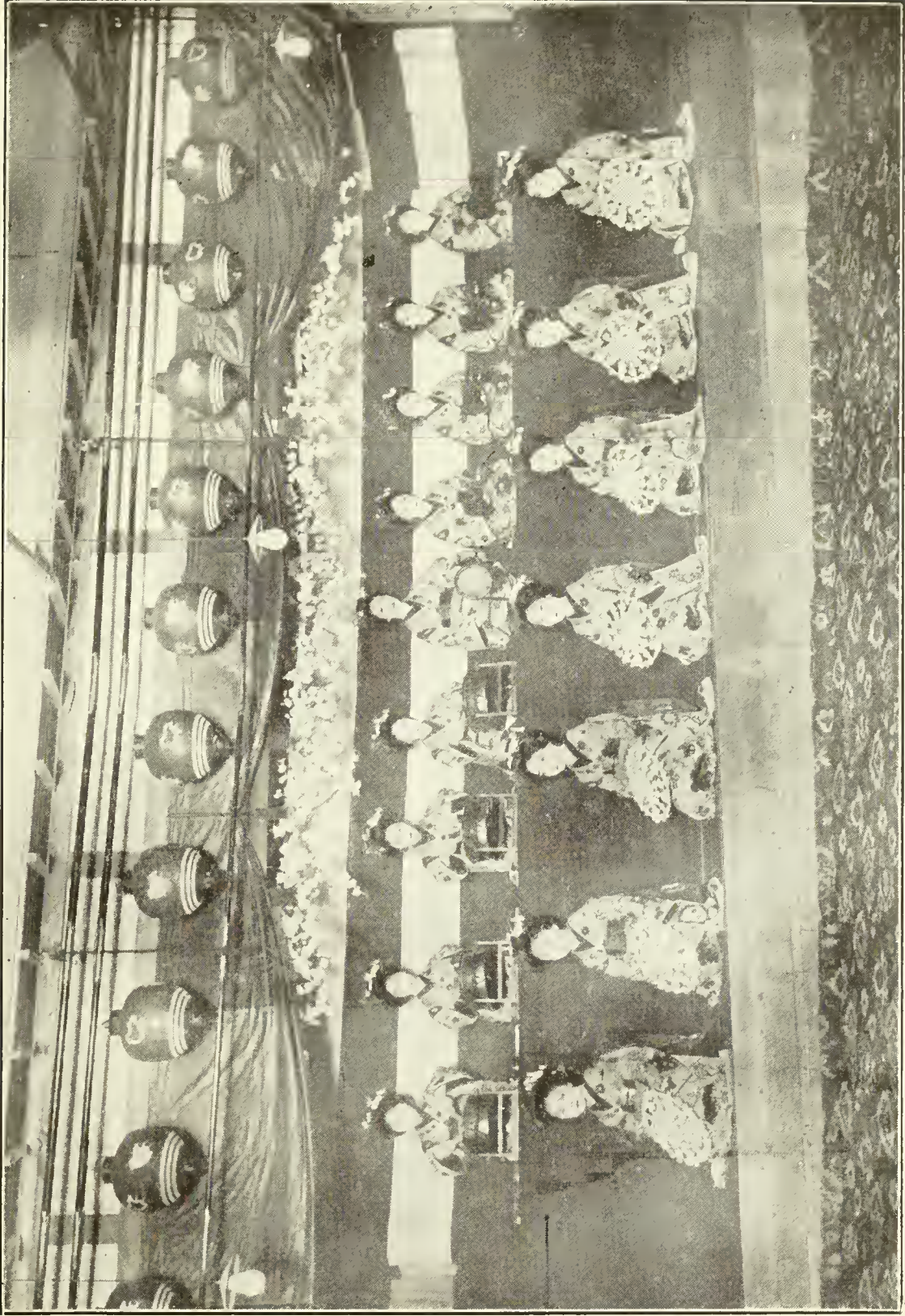
Deeper and deeper is my love for him day after day.  
Neither I care for the lapse of time nor for the slander of  
others.

If I don't see him even a day I am anxious all day,  
But if I see him, too selfish am I to be obedient to him ;  
So fond of him am I that I envy his loveliness.

## A MELON WATCHMAN

A farmer cultivates a melon patch. Being afraid of plun-  
derers, he keeps watch over melons every night.  
But after several nights on the watch, it happened one  
night that he fell asleep with a melon for his pillow.





THE CHERRY DANCE AT KYOTO,



## APPENDIX II

### GIRLS IN LOCAL CITIES AND TOWNS

JAPAN is sometimes called "The Island of Girls in the Eastern Sea." We know not whether the name has been given owing to abundance of the females or to express admiration for beauty of them. To treat of beauties in the country we must carefully observe them from two standpoints: one is the geographical and the other the historical observation. From the geographical point we must find and trace the veins of beauty throughout the country, and from the historical one we are to distinguish her different phrases specially esteemed in each epoch, or in other words to observe the æsthetic views on the beauty in the different ages.

To classify in general, the coasts along the Pacific Ocean are scarce of beauty, but on the contrary those along the Sea of Japan are rich in them; the chief causes of the difference may be attributed to the relation of climate and tide. We are told that beauties are produced in Ugo, Echigo, and those provinces on the highway of San-in-do, all these being the provinces along the Sea of Japan.

The veins of the beauty, however, are not limited to the coast-line, but Kyoto is celebrated for the white skin washed and polished with the water of the River Kamo, while Nagoya is noted for the production of belles too. The northern part of

## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

Shikoku Island and Satsuma province in Kyūshū Island are also the cradles of them.

Under the general denomination of so-called beauties there are differences in the type of countenance according to the dissimilitude of local tastes: the typical girls of Tokyo are of light brownish colour and slender body, those of Nagoya have the face with its lower part plumped out, Kyoto beauty's face resembles an over-turned isosceles triangle in its form, Osaka fat, and Echigo the fine skin.

The æsthetic views are different according to the human races. The types which gratify us do not please the Europeans; we tremble to see the barbarian's girls in the South Sea Islands, and do not take the Chinese ladies of round forehead as the beautiful. The difference of taste is not only found on the face, but also on dressing, comportment, and everything.

In a race we find that the taste on beauty differs in each epoch. In a certain age the Japanese women shaved off their eyebrows and blackened their teeth; the girls were glad to apply very thick rouge to their lips so that its surface appeared to glitter. Besides dressing, there were different tastes on the form of face in different ages, and there may be no objection if we say that the form popular at the present time is rather round.

In the eleventh century when the court officials of the Fujiwara family exercised their influence, the fat women with the eyes narrowly open and lower than usual at the external canthuses were loved by men; the shape of the face was somewhat round with the swollen cheeks and the double chin. In the Kamakura age (twelfth and thirteenth centuries) the simple warriors of the military clan in the east seem to have preferred the fine and slender beauties in contrast to the taste of troublesome court nobles.

## GIRLS IN CITIES AND TOWNS

In the Tokugawa age (sixteenth to nineteenth centuries) the Genroku epoch (A.D. 1688-1703) would be proper to be taken as the representative for the age on the points of fashions, tastes, and inclinations; indeed the Genroku was the period most prosperous, wealthy, and peaceful throughout the Shōgunate dynasty of Yedo.

Now let us refer to the taste on the beauty at this epoch more minutely: The roundish face in a little rosy colour, the eyes not narrowly opened, thick eyebrows, the nose high gradually downwards, the small mouth, the teeth white and in regular rows, the longish ears with narrow edges, the thick, black hair regularly combed above the forehead and round the long neck, the long and pliant fingers with thin nails, the small feet, the trunk longer than usual and the waist not big, dignified in the figure and tender-hearted, well trained in all accomplishments necessary for the female, and no mole all over the body.

If we refer to the pictures drawn by the famous artists in this epoch, such as Moronobu Hishikawa and Sukenobu Nishikawa, we can easily understand the type of the beauty at the period. For the types after the Genroku, the pictures by Utamaro or Toyokuni would show the reflections of the succeeding periods.

### A.—Yokohama

The gay quarter in Yokohama was first established at Minatozaki Street in A.D. 1860, a year after the port was first opened for the foreign trade. At first there were five or six *geisha*-houses in the street, and most of the girls were to attend the guests who visited the brothels of the quarter. The largest brothels at the time were Gankirō, Iwazatorō, Isosuzurō, and Shin-Gankiro, and the

## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

Gankirō was very popular among foreigners as a merriment place for them. A great gate stood at the entrance of the quarter, and, passing through it, there was a long street called the Nakanochō (Middle Street); on both sides of the street there we found six guide-houses, a guild office of *geisha*, and the largest brothels. Turning to the left there was the first street of Minatozaki Street, and here a row of the *geisha*-houses could be found.

Afterwards the quarter was removed to Sugatami Street, next to Takashima Street, and at last to Eiraku and Maganē Streets, as it is at present. The *geisha* girls are divided into two great circles, the Kan-nai and the Kan-gai; the former is in the central part, and the latter in the outer side of the city, the greater part of the girls living in the central part and amounting to over three thousands in their number.

In the east suburb called Kanagawa there lives a great body of girls, independent of the two circles of the city. In the pleasure quarter of the district there was a grand famous brothel called Jimpurō, well known among foreigners as the No. IX shop, but it closed business in A.D. 1903.

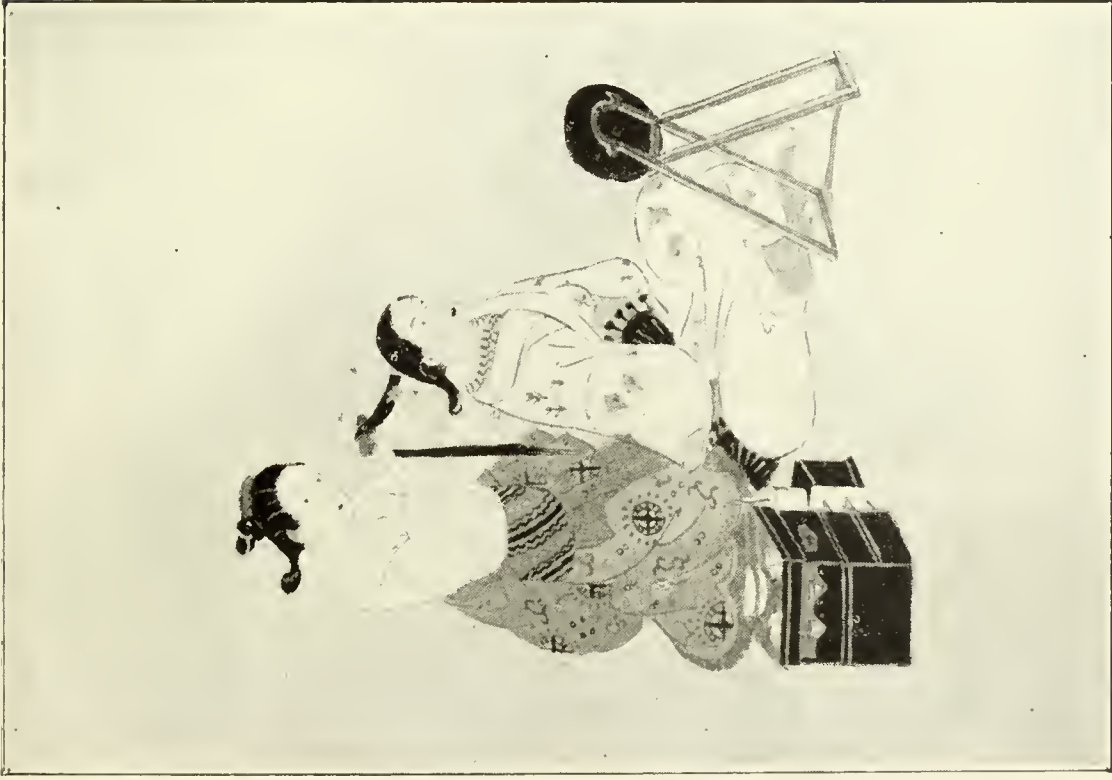
In the girls of Yokohama there are some who can hardly speak and understand European languages, and it is very funny to hear their Yokohamatic English or German, chattering boldly among young Japanese and foreign dandies.

### B.—Nagoya

The licensed prostitute quarter of Nagoya, the largest city at the central part of Japan, was first established in A.D. 1874, and then in those streets Chōjamachi, Shichikenchō, and Uonotana, which were the seats of gay circles under tacit permission up to the above date, the girls in the profession of



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## GIRLS IN CITIES AND TOWNS

singing and dancing appeared publicly in abundance. The *geisha* girls living within the licensed quarter were not few, too, and as their houses were marked with lanterns hanging at the doors, they were nicknamed "Lantern Girls." The brothels keeping a good number of singing girls in their own employment, they did not like to hire those lantern-girls for the guests who visited the brothels and wished to engage the *geisha*.

As the result of the long quarrels between the brothels and the lantern-girls, the latter left the quarter at last, and opened their business at Monzenchō Street in A.D. 1895, organising a new powerful circle under the name *Mutsumi-ren*. About the same time there happened feuds among the three circles of Chōjamachi, Uonotana, and Shichikenchō, and they were compelled to split into several smaller parties. At present the following *geisha* circles of Nagoya are rivalling one another: *Kuruwa* (licensed quarter), *Sei-ei*, *Asahi*, *Shinonomē*, *Mutsumi* (ex-lantern-girls), *Kinjō*, *Azuma*, *Yawata*, *Yanagi*, *Sakaē*, and *Senyū*.

Nagoya girls are very noted for their beauty and accomplishments, and we are told that their skilful dancing of the Nishikawa school cannot be seen at any other cities.

### C.—Kyoto

For a few years after the capital of Japan was removed to Tokyo (A.D. 1869), the gay quarters in Kyoto were solitary, but they could recover their old prosperity, together with the establishment of the First National Exhibition in the city in A.D. 1872, and at present there are eight licensed quarters for girls: Gion A Class or Gion Proper, Gion B Class or Zeze-ura, Miyagawachō, Shimabara, Kamishichiken, Shichijō-Shinchi, Gobanchō, and Pontochō.

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Gion Proper is the best spot for singing and dancing throughout the city, the largest and most celebrated restaurants within its boundary being Mantei, Izutsu, Nakamurarō, Toriimoto, and Togano-o. If a great party is given in one of these large restaurants it is a custom to have the three succeeding dances of girls performed to enhance the mirth; the first is the fellow dance of small dancing girls, the second that of younger singing girls, and the last the single dance of an older girl.

Besides the restaurants above mentioned and many other large and small ones in the vicinity, there are two kinds of public-houses called *kashizashiki* and *sekigashi*; Ichiriki, Minoyoso, and Onotei are the most famous of the former and generally attended by the first-class girls, the accommodations of the last, Onotei, being most suited for foreign travellers; and the latter are a kind of inns and most of them found in a row in the Street Kiyamachi along the River Takasē.

After the first of July all these houses are arranged with the open floors or platforms constructed over the stream, and towards the evening guests assemble here to take cool and hire girls whose chatters, laughters, singing, and playing on *samisen* are so noisy that the sound of currents of the river are utterly overcome by them. (See "Kyoto" in "The Nightside of Japan.")

Pontocho is the old and very prosperous quarter next to Gion. It is situated on the western bank of the River Kamo, just opposite to Gion on its east bank, and limited at the Sanjō Bridge to the north and the Shijō Bridge to the south. Along both sides of the street there stand the public-houses *kashizashiki* in two rows, and on the western side we find a number of alleys which lead to the Street Kiyamachi. The River Takasē washes the banks

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of the street, and small tow-boats are calmly going up and down the stream.

At the rear of the houses on the eastern side there flows the River Kamo. What a nice view we can have from a room in one of these houses! The clear stream of Kamo and Mounts Kwacho and Otowa to the east; Amida Peak and Inari Hill to the south; and Mountains Nyoï and Hiei to the north—as much as all so-called thirty-six peaks can be overlooked at once. No house in Gion can command such a view any ways.

The public-houses of the first class here are Nishiya, Kaji-tei, Ueda-ume, Komatsutakě, and Takanami. As to the restaurants in the street, the most famous ones are Matsumura, Umemura, Seikarō, and Kyōrakuken; Kikusui is popular for chicken and Nanyōken for European dishes.

Six other quarters are all flourishing, too, and the *geisha* girls of the third class live in Kami-Shichiken.

### D.—Osaka

The greater part of the Shimmachi quarter was destroyed by the fire in A.D. 1895, but having been soon restored to its old form, it is now in good prosperity. The north quarter or Sonezaki was also burnt up by a great conflagration of 1912, but all the houses having been rebuilt immediately, the girls in the quarter are full of business at present.

The five circles at the south quarter are in their extreme thriving, the famous bustling region of Dōtombori being situated at the centre of them, and a great number of noted girls have made their appearance. The names of the five circles are as follows:

1. Sō-emon-chō, on the north bank of the River Dōtombori, and limited by the Bridge Ebisu on one side and the Bridge Nippon on the other. It

## THE STORY OF THE GEISHA GIRL

is sometimes called Shimanouchi or Shima, and is the centre of pure Osaka *geiko*.

2. Kuro-emon-chō, on the south bank of the River Dōtombori and limited by the Bridges Ebisu and Daikoku.

3. Yagura-machi, situated between the south of the Bridge Ebisu and the Bridge Nippon. It is the most thriving place throughout the city.

4. Namba-shinchi, the whole ground reaching from Shibaiura to the Namba railway station, consisting of six streets from Ichibanchō (first street) to Roku-banchō (sixth).

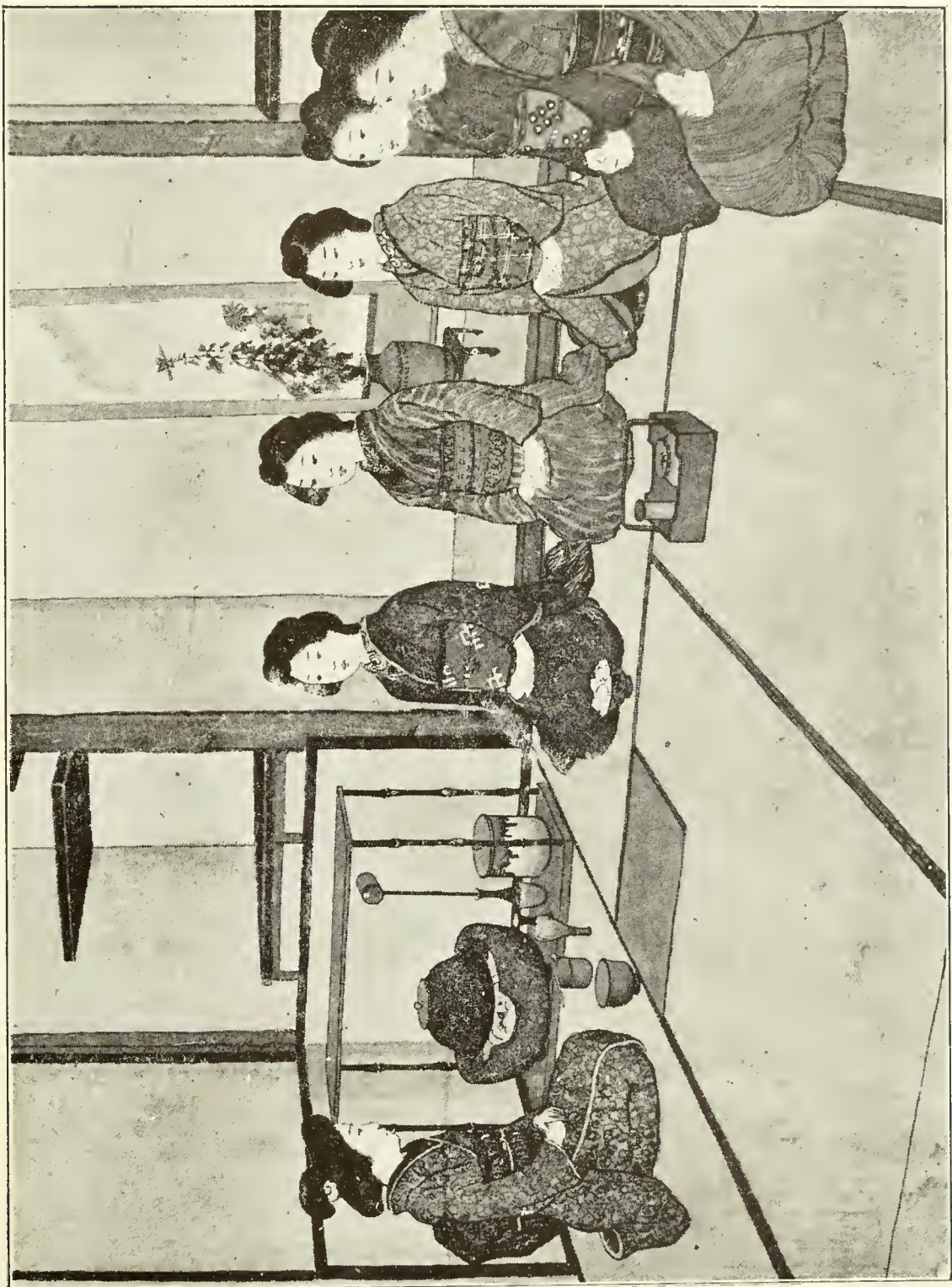
5. Sakamachi, located to the east of Namba-shinchi.

Namba-shinchi, Yagura-machi, and Sakamachi were once ruined by the fire of 1912, but at present they are completely re-established.

Horië, another quarter of *geisha* girls, has lately made a great development and produced a number of good girls.

The two greatest and most renowned *geisha*-houses in Osaka are Tondaya and Yamatoya, both of which are situated in the Street Sō-emon-chō, one of the five gay streets of the south quarter. Each of these houses employs over one hundred girls, and it is said that there is no great party given by a firm or a bank in Osaka in which *geisha* of Tondaya or Yamatoya are not found among the girls waiting upon the guests. Every evening, no matter whether it is rainy or stormy, the sound of *samisen* and drums can be heard from the rooms of these two houses, and there is not even one night in which none of their girls is engaged to restaurants. How horrible is the influence of the girls of these houses and how wonderful their prosperity!

Both Tondaya and Yamatoya have their buildings for guests and houses for girls; the former are to receive the customers who wish to drink and



GIRLS IN TEA CEREMONY.



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hire girls, and the latter used as the residence of girls who are to stay here while they are not engaged, and to dress themselves in preparation for attendance on their patrons in evening.

One of the causes by which Tondaya became famous as one of the best girl-houses was appearance of Yachiyo, a young and beautiful girl in the house. We are told that the hostess of Tondaya spent more than ten thousand *yen* in order to make up her to be an accomplished dancing girl at her age of fifteen. All the girls of the house are not only beautiful in their figure and complexion, but also very graceful in their action and behaviour. So they have been always hired to the parties held in Osaka and monopolised all the first-rate restaurants in the city. The hostess is boasting that Tondaya is not "The Tondaya of Osaka," but is "The Tondaya of Japan."

Yamatoya, the rival against Tondaya, was not the first-rate public-house in the south till recently. Besides Tondaya, the largest houses were Itakō, Katsuraya, Hiratatsu, Oda, and Maruya, in the Sō-emon-chō Street; Kinoshō, Ishikawa, and Matsumoto, in the Kuro-emon-chō Street; and Kyōmasuya in the middle street. Consequently the so-called first-rate girls of the quarter were limited to those who belonged to one of these houses.

Yamatoya, who wished to be enlisted in the class of those first-rate houses and to bring up its girls at the level with those of Tondaya or Itakō as the first-rank belles, made efforts for attaining its ambition. One of the wise policies taken by Yamatoya for development of its business was reduction of the girl's fee, and thus tendency of guests for Yamatoya became gradually to be favourable.

On the contrary, Tondaya is lately spoken of to be somewhat proud of its great fame and prosperity, and even the girls themselves of the house are said to be stuck up by presuming on the name

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of Tondaya. As the result of its bad rumour, a greater part of its customers has lately run to Yamatoya, Itakō, and Katsuraya.

Taking advantage of the occasion, Yamatoya encouraged its girls, young, able, accomplished, and far more beautiful than Yachiyo of Tondaya, to catch the guests to their own side, and it was wonderful to see that wind began to blow favourable for Yamatoya, and that within a few years it stood aloft above all the hitherto so-called first-class houses, grasping much greater influence than Tondaya, its once formidable rival.

Much surprised to see the great and sudden predominance of Yamatoya, Tondaya was compelled to defend itself against the new powerful enemy, repenting of its tall talk as "Tondaya of Japan." An alliance under the name of "Arts Stimulating Association" was made among Tondaya and its fellow girl-houses, with a view to threaten and press down Yamatoya.

The fierce competitions between the two greatest girl-houses at the south quarter of Osaka may be compared to the War of Roses, Tondaya being the red and Yamatoya the white rose—Yachiyo, Katsu, and Shigē, generals in the red army, commanding their younger officers, Hideya, Satoei, Hitokoto, Koichi, Hideyu, Komako, Hideryū, Mamē-yakko, Matsuchiyo, and so on—Tama and Tomo, the leaders of the white, encouraging to achieve great exploits of their younger warriors, Kotake, Hamayū, Kotoku, Shimeko, Tsuruha, Tombo, Koshimē, Tamaju, Emika, and so on.

Miyozuru, Kosomē, and Koyachiyo are the super-eminent dancing girls in the red, and Itoha and Mitsuha those in the white party. Still more there are "Thirteen Daughters" who form a body of nice young girls from thirteen to fifteen years old, and are esteemed as the jewels of the latter party; they are so well trained in all arts of



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dancing, singing, and playing on musical instruments that even the older girls of the opposite party could not help to admire their good accomplishments.

### *E.—Kōbē*

Kōbē is the greatest port in the western part of Japan, and as it is in about equal dimension to Kyoto or Nagoya, there should have been the beauties in the number equal to those in each of the two cities, but we are sad to say that Kōbē is much inferior to them on this point at present.

It is a new city established and developed within only fifty years, at first having been a seaside quarter like a settlement into which people gathered from all directions. Men and women who flocked together into the narrow belt of land bordered by the hills on one side and by the sea water on the other were all outcasts or vagrants defeated in the struggle for existence in their native provinces and compelled to find any means of living at a certain unknown district.

The wanderers, who had settled themselves at this hopeful new port, began to work desperately to earn money, and struggled one another mentally and physically to attain his or her first and greatest success. Taking no care of their bad constitution and ugly countenance, it is natural that they could not produce beauties among their descendants.

Kōbē is not the origin of beauties, but its degree of wealth is much higher than that of Nagoya or Kyoto. The higher is the degree of wealth and civilisation at any quarter of a country, the more beauties are imported into it from all directions. Kyoto was once the capital of Japan where the wealth and civilisation of the country were concentrated, and the beauties who had poured into the

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city from all provinces were the element of excellent productions of new beauties in succeeding ages; no doubt the improvement of females was carried out in the old capital by concentration of local beauties.

Now we find in Kōbē a great number of nice girls brought from various cities and towns. Singing and dancing girls belonging to the Central and the New Central Guilds, which are called to be the representatives of the Kōbē beauties, amount to over three hundred at present, and nine-tenths of them are immigrants from Osaka, Kyoto, Tokyo, Nagoya, and other towns.

The two great circles of beauties of Kōbē are one gathered in the Streets Hanaguma and Motomachi to the east, and the other living in the quarter Fukuwara to the west; again, one line from Ikuta passage to Nunobiki to the east, one line from Minato Street of Hyogo, the suburb of the city, to Yanagiwara to the west, and one line running through the bluff to the east from Okuhirano to the north are all the regions of beauties, the greater part of them consisting of those imported from other cities.

To classify the beauties of Kōbē according to their state of distribution above mentioned, the girls who form the Central and the New Central Guilds in the Streets Hanaguma and Motomachi are called the Hanaguma circle, those in Fukuwara the Fukuwara circle, those in the Streets Sannomiya, Ikuta, Ninomiya the Sannomiya circle, those distributed in Yanagiwara and vicinity the Hyōgo circle, and those on the whole bluff the Bluff circle, the five circles existing in the whole city and suburb in all.

Though the three hundred girls of the Central and New Central Guilds are noted as the representatives of the Kōbē beauties, and certainly they are comparatively nice in their complexion, yet we may

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say that the number of the very beauties are found to be more in the Fukuwara circle than in them; and, moreover, some of the girls on the bluff and in a part of Hyōgo may be far more beautiful in face and much better in style than the best ones of them.

The girls who represent the Hanaguma circle at present are Mitsukoma, Umekō, Karako, and Kinya; Mitsukoma is admired among the gentlemen of Kōbē as the queen of Kōbē beauties—her long, thick, black hair and oval face, with the high nose and the vivid eyes, remind us of the belles drawn by Utamaro, one of the great artists in the Tokugawa age.

There are five hundred girls in the Fukuwara circle, and the beauties of the first rank among them are Fukudama, Shinkoma, Komagiku, Kimiei, and Hanayakko. The first two, Fukudama and Shinkoma, are the representatives of beauties in two different types, just opposite to each other: the former has a rather slender face of regular outline, and with the nose of a sharp bridge, the little forehead, and the charming eyes; the latter is fat and round, with the lovely mouth and eyebrows, which add the air of fascination to her. It is a remarkable fact that in this quarter of Kōbē we find a number of girls who were once very celebrated among the gay circles of Tokyo.

The quarter of the city surrounding Sannomiya is the cradle of the European civilisation in Kōbē, and over one hundred girls belonging to the Sannomiya circle, which is situated at a spot between the Sannomiya Shrine and the Ikuta Shrine, are far more cosmopolitan than those in Hanaguma or Fukuwara. They understand manners and customs of the Europeans, and are well experienced in treatment of them by their skilful diplomatic ability. They are generally dressed very heavy and gaudy, in accordance with the taste of foreigners, in an entirely different way from the girls

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who dress themselves simple and elegant to attend upon the Japanese customers.

Though the number of girls in the Sannomiya circle is small, yet there we find relatively many beauties comparing to those in the Fukuwara quarter. Sadayū and Kō-yokko are the first class and most popular singing girls, and Yakko is a young and hopeful dancing girl; Takēyakko is a tall and charming girl, and her mouth, whose lower lip projects to receive the upper, is full of amiability; and among other graceful girls, Kikuyū, Fumiko, Yonēhachi, and Kinta, we can point out Riki-yakko as a beauty of fine physique—her thick black hair and white roundish face are in good proportion to her healthy body in best development, her vivid eyes having a magic power to fascinate the males.

As the bluffs in all cities are generally resided by higher gentlemen, rich merchants, and Government officials, so is a line of hillside of Kōbē, consisting of the Streets Ishii, Hirano, Yamamoto-dōri, Yamate-dōri, and Kumochi. The daily life of people living in these higher quarters is much different from that of those in the mercantile streets in the lower part of the city, and it is natural that there is a great difference in the style of dressing and everything between the girls in these opposite positions.

In the Yamatē and Yamamoto Streets of the bluff, connected with the quarter of the Sannomiya circle, there is a body of girls adorned themselves in the so-called dignified bluff style. They are active in character, and can speak English, French, or German, though it is broken and vulgar in general. Most of the customers for them are foreigners living in the settlement or on a visit to Japan. If we visit Nunobiki, the famous large waterfalls hanging down on the hillside of the same name situated to the north-east of the port, we



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DRAWN BY TOYOKUNI,



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often find young beautiful Japanese ladies accompanied by European gentlemen. A number of these girls live in houses built in very neat and fashionable form, dotting the landscape full of green trees, extending at the foot of the mount.

Hyōgo was once made the capital of Japan under the name of Fukuwara by Kiyomori, the head of Taira military clan, in June, A.D. 1180, but though it was given up soon and Kyoto was restored to its old rank in October of the same year, yet a great number of beauties of the old capital was immigrated into the district by the tyrant during his temporary residence. We may ascribe the production of nice girls in this quarter at present to the transplantation and cultivation of beauty's seeds seven hundred years ago.

The Yanagiwara gay quarter belonging to the Hyōgo circle comprises a number of great beauties—Narayoně, Fukumusumě, Narakō, Rikimaru, Niryō, and Hisako are well known among men of the world in the Kōbě port.

### *F.—Miscellaneous Quarters*

Besides the chief cities of the country above mentioned, the larger cities where the famous gay circles are in prosperity are Sendai, Okayama, Hiroshima, Shizuoka, Hakata, and Nagasaki; the last one, Nagasaki, is the port first opened for foreign trade by the Tokugawa Government, and we are often told that Maruyama and Inasa, the two flourishing gay quarters of the harbour, were the stages of love-affairs between the Japanese girls and the young foreigners.

Now let us have a further look into the special manners of girls in some local towns or pleasure resorts.

In Japan mineral hot springs can be found almost

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everywhere throughout the country, and in all these spas young nice girls of a special profession live in the spring hotels, restaurants, or their own houses standing around the spring. They are a kind of singing and dancing girls.

Near Kyoto the famous hot bath resorts are Arashiyama, Kasagi, Uji, and Yawata. Kasagi is a very celebrated one from ancient times; the bottom of rocks along its north bank is washed by the pure water of the River Kizu running from east to west, and to the south it is protected by Mount Kasagi, noted for the remains of the temporary palace of Emperor Godaigo in the dark age (A.D. 1331). We find more than thirty girls living in the larger restaurants, such as Kasagi-tei and Matsukawa-rō, as well as in the bath-hotels—those who live in restaurants are called by the general name of *geisha*, but the others in bath-hotels take a different denomination, *yuna*, which means “bath-girls,” though they wait upon the guests, play on *samisen*, and sing the songs just as equal as the *geisha* do. Most of them are the natives of Osaka and Kyoto.

Uji is a pretty town, to the north of which the River Uji is purling, and the spot of the spring is at the foot of Mount Asahi, towering high above the upper waters of the river. In the town there live over twenty singing and dancing girls who can be engaged to any of the bath-hotels or the restaurants. As they have no guild their fee is not fixed. Most of them are the Kyoto girls refined up with the clean water of the River Kamo, which runs through the old capital.

Uji and its vicinity is the quarter famous for the production of tea-leaves, and if we visit it at the season of tea-picking we will be much pleased to listen to the interesting popular songs sung by tea-pickers, who are generally young maidens painted beautifully and dressed neatly, their head being



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covered with a white Japanese towel. These tea-pickers' songs are always popular among the Uji *geisha*, whose shrill voice singing these songs accompanied by high tone of *samisen* can be heard late in night from hotels and saloons standing on the high banks of the river.

The first and largest hot bath place near Osaka is Arima, travellers being conveyed by motor-cars from the Mita railway station to the resort. There are two large buildings in which bathrooms are arranged—one is called the higher bath-hall, and the other the common one. The former is situated near the Bridge Taiko, and the latter at the centre of the town—the former is divided into six bathrooms, each of which can be occupied by an individual or a family, while the latter is provided with one large broad bath-place.

Around the halls there are a great number of hotels in good hospitality and perfect accommodation to bath-takers, and all these hotels employ *yuna* (bath-girls), who accompany their customers to the halls and take care of them on their dresses, footgears, and everything.

To break the monotonous life and try the local taste of merriment in the bath-resort, we can hire the *geisha* girls, who spin the webs to catch the bathers. Some of them live in the streets of Arima itself, but the greater part of them are found in Mita, a stage town near the station of the same name. We will be much pleased to see the Arima dance which is performed by these girls with accompaniment of peculiar songs.

As the Arima Spa is located on a tableland, autumn cool comes earlier, and towards the middle of October wood trees are decorated with the russet leaves soon. If we get out of bed early morning and open the windows wide, we can find the top of Mount Arima-Fuji and the woods and houses at its foot all enveloped in the morning mist; and

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on the stream of the River Arima, which is noisily flowing over the rocks from the direction of the waterfall called the Drum Fall, the steam of the hot spring is faintly rising. In the narrow street some young girls dressed in a bath gown and with a towel in one hand are seen going for the bath-hall, followed by their guests.

In the town Mita there are over fifty girls who organise a guild named the Mita-ken, and the famous Mita Dance performed by them can be seen on the festival days of the tutelary god of the city or during the *Bon* festival of each summer (the *Bon* is the feast in memory of the dead, celebrated for three days in July of the lunar calendar).

Having surveyed the girls in hot spring quarters near Kyoto and Osaka, let us get on an airship and fly to Echigo, the north-eastern province of the country.

We have already told that Echigo along the Sea of Japan is a district very noted for production of nice girls, and its people themselves are reasonably proud of their native beauties. If we visit Niigata, Nagaoka, Takata, Shibata, or any other cities in the province, the first things which the citizens show us are the *geisha* girls.

Though there are so many circles of girls in these several towns in the province of Echigo, those in Shibata, which is the northern-most town, hold the pure Echigo colour. Here about seventy singing and dancing girls live in the streets, and the restaurants and waiting-houses into which they are engaged by guests amount to over thirty. Among these girls we can find many beautiful ones, very reasonable to be boasted by the Echigonians for their excellent production of beauties.

The girl who is looked up to as the representative of the Shibata belles and widely known to other localities, is Yaë of the Mihashiya girl-house, and

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while she is the first in both countenance and accomplishments, the other two girls, Moto of Yamadaya and Ima of Shimizutei, are no inferiors to her in point of elegancy.

Shibata is the paradise of *geisha* girls; they get up at ten or eleven every morning, after breakfast go to hairdressers, take bath on the way back, visit friends, and devour sweets, chattering and laughing, until it approaches the evening, the time for their profession—these are the affairs of the whole day for them.

They are natives of the district, and there can be found no girls who are imported from other provinces. Moreover, the customers who favour them are generally limited to the natives of the town or its vicinity, the patrons most beneficent among them and very free with their money being the rich farmers in the environs.

The Shibata girls are drinkers in general. If we call a certain girl late in night, we will be often told that she cannot come under reason of her having drunk to excess in another house. We know not whether she has fallen down owing to much drinking or got in bed too early for the night professional by some other profitable cause!

As the natives of Echigo province are devoted in Buddhism, so are the young girls of Shibata and other towns too, and they are glad to submit everything to Buddha. A girl adheres to her patron, and never thinks of other lovers. If she is given up by him once, however, she never grieves at it, but reconciles herself by taking it to be the message of Buddha, and then seeks a new patron, to whom she would be very obedient and faithful again. It is the characteristics of the Echigo girls that they are not whimsical and never fall in love with men out of fickleness.



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