

THE AMERICAN YOUTH.

FOR THE AMERICAN YOUTH.

A Japanese Love Story.

BY ONOTO WATANNA.

KASAKA YUKA was young, and she was gentle and pretty; moreover, her father had been a samouri, but he had been long since dead. Yet Yuka's mother, Kasaka Onoto, who was but a poor peasant woman with none of the samurai blood in her was very proud of her daughter, whose father had been a samouri. That is why Yuka had such sweet, courteous and refined ways, for what was not inbred in her had come to her from her very knowledge of her blood. So, though Yuka grew up in the midst of the peasant people, she came to be looked upon as one quite different from them.

Yuka's mother was very poor. Since her husband's death her means had been small; but she had great hopes for the future, for she expected to marry Yuka, who was so beautiful and good, to some very wealthy man. With this intent in view, she gave her daughter advantages few of the peasant children enjoyed.

On the exact day Yuka was born there was born only a very little distance from her home a little boy who was named Kirishima Ido. Yuka's and Ido's mothers were girls together; they had played and studied together, so that when the two children were born on the same day it was not surprising that mutual gifts and congratulations were given and exchanged between the two families, although the mother of Yuka was inclined to be a trifle proud, as her child was of Samurai blood. Her pride, however, did not prevent her from allowing the two children, as they grew older, to play together and to be with each other constantly. Thus it happened that these two grew to be great friends also, and when Yuka was old enough to go to school so was Ido. They grew up together, as their mothers had done; they shared their little secrets and told each other

their thoughts and hopes for the future. And Ido grew to look upon Yuka as something very wonderful, while Yuka had a strange, motherly love for Ido. Yuka, who had always very high spirits, was fond of playing tricks and teasing people, and Ido, of course, though inclined to be somewhat awed at the immensity of some of Yuka's proposals, always did his share under her direction. Yuka always was the leader.

Now, there lived about half way between Yuka's house and the school one Taka Hasche. This Taka Hasche was said to be a very cross and wicked man. He did not like children, and had built around

his garden a fence with spikes on it, such as the Kirshitan (Christians) often made. Although he was so unsociable to all his neighbors and was looked upon with dislike and distrust by them, yet he was feared and treated with respect, for he was the richest man in Kummamotta. Moreover he was an unmarried man.

One day as Yuka and Ido were going to school together, Yuka said, "Ido, what say you that we do take some stones and break the spikes off these fences?" Ido giggled nervously and said, "He-he." Every one feared Taka Hasche, but he gave in, and the two children set to and began to break off the tops of their neighbor's fence, throwing the spikes toward Taka's house with shrill laughs of triumph.

Whilst they were in the midst of their fun, out came Taka Hasche. Ido turned pale with fright, but Yuka jumped nimbly down and ran swiftly away. Although Ido was left behind, Taka Hasche did not touch him, but he chased Yuka far, far up the hill, though he did not catch her.

"Do not fear, Kasaka Yuka," he cried in a rage, "I will catch you yet."

The years passed. What had commenced in frolic with Yuka, and a desire to tease her neighbor had grown into serious enmity and hatred betwixt the two. Taka Hasche was not an old man, but his mean and thrifty ways made him appear much older. Ido and Yuka were as dear friends

as ever, only that Ido loved Yuka more dearly than a friend. And so he would go down into the streets of Tokio every morning with his basket laden with flowers to sell, that he might earn some money while he was waiting to start to work at some trade so that he might save enough money to make Yuka his wife. He had never broached the subject to her, but it was an understood thing between the two. And every day as Ido plodded back and forth to the shop where he was serving an apprenticeship, his thoughts ran in this wise, "Every day makes me older; every day makes me more a man, and I will earn more when a man. Soon I'll be able to save enough to marry Yuka," and all the rest of the day he was happy and did his work with a merry heart. And, although Yuka always pretended to be very much surprised whenever he got his mother to talk to her on the subject, yet she was very pleased at heart, for she loved Ido dearly, too.

Thus for five long years Ido worked and Yuka waited. Each year Ido's father would come to Yuka's mother and would ask for Yuka for his son and tell her how much Ido had saved, but each time Kasaka Onoto would remind him that Yuka's

father was of Samurai blood and it befitted her that she marry well. But she did not refuse Ido altogether. This was to put him off, for although Onoto still cherished the thought of a rich marriage for Yuka, she wanted Ido to fall back on in the event of her failing to marry Yuka to a rich man. Then Ido would turn sorrowfully back to work and toil on for another year.