

# Every-day Life in Japan

By Onoto Watanna

Author of "A Japanese Nightingale," "The Wooing of Wistaria," etc

"ALL waters and women look the same under the light of the moon," but all nations do not appear the same in the light of civilization. The West speaks of the "heathen" East, and the East with equal contempt calls the Westerner a barbarian. Each complains that the other is uncivilized. It depends on what constitutes civilization. Progression and a certain religion does not necessarily spell it.

Convention walks hand in hand with any civilization. No nation is uncivilized which in the actual every-day living practices the little niceties and politenesses of convention. Do not deem a land uncivilized because the natives squat on their heels as they eat their dinners. Daintier and less barbarous the tiny bits of china and the long slim chopsticks of the Orient than the heavy carved gorgeous silver of the West.

The ancient practice of arising with the sun is still kept up by many of the Japanese outside the big cities. Tokyo, Yokohama, even Osaka, have become too commercial and cosmopolitan for the inhabitants to observe the mode of life practiced by their ancestors. The city people rush about with the eager breathlessness of the Yankee. At night they often dissipate, and sunrise finds them sleeping hard.

A man may not drink sake till past the last hour of the night and awaken to smile at the morning sun. The inhabitants outside of the big cities, however, make up the backbone of the nation, and these are the ones who arise with the sun.

At five in the morning shojis are pushed slightly apart and bright faces look toward the East. "Ohayo! Ohayo!" (Good morning—or more literally, "It is morning!") says the polite Japanese, and bows with great friendliness and appreciation to the big yellow globe pushing its way upward in the sky. A murmuring of voices runs through the house. Down in the kitchen the noisy maid-servant makes herself heard. She is scolding her little army of assistants, for she, the chief servant and cook, has an assistant, a boy of seventeen, who in turn has a small boy assistant, who in turn likewise has an assistant, a still smaller boy. The chief servant scolds them all thoroughly. She would like to shake more energy into their lazy, sleepy bodies. "Hurry! for the Okusama (august lady of the house) will be down presently." She sends them hurrying this way and that, one to draw and carry water, one to prepare the dining-room, one to sweep the verandas, open the shojis and let in the morning sunlight and air, and she herself sets to work upon the cooking. Thus in the hours when the average Western servant is sleeping the Japanese servants do all the housework for the day. Before breakfast the housework is done. When the honorable lady of the house descends to the honorable down-stairs the rooms shine in cheerful morning welcome to her; breakfast is on the lacquered trays which stand on feet a few inches in height. Before she breakfasts, however, the Okusama looks into the various rooms with the searching eye of the experienced housekeeper. If all is well she sweetly enters the dining-room, and herself waits upon her husband and parents, and pours for them the morning tea.

The family may have been up as early as the servants, but they have engaged themselves in bathing, dressing, and, for a short

spell, in simply enjoying the rising sun and the early morning. Breakfast is ready by seven. Of course where the family cannot afford servants the mistress of the house, or, if she is old, her daughter-in-law or her daughters must do the housework, but even quite poor people keep at least one scullery-maid.

Morning conversation must always be pleasant. How sad to begin the day with harsh words! The wife, if she is highly bred and fond of the politenesses of speech, will say to her husband,

"O shikkei itashimashita," which means, "I beg you to pardon me for my rudeness last time we met." She may not have been in the slightest rude, but she hastens thus to apologize for what might have been. The husband accepts her apology with graciousness, and observing that he too was awfully rude, he turns to the subject of the day. "The sun is honorably deigning to shine," or, "The honorable rain stills falls. The earth must indeed be thirsty." There is no complaint made against the weather. In addressing each other the Japanese usually preface a name with the term "honorable"—in Japanese "O," "Go," or "On." The term "san" is usually applied after the name. "Sama," a more respectful and less familiar term, is used to strangers. Both words mean about the same as "Mr., Mrs., or Miss," though "san" in the family is affectionate. "O-Haru-san" will say the husband, "please, another cup of tea for O-Bankurpsama," the latter being a friend or guest.

In many families the son of the house has brought home to his parents a young bride. At this time she is undergoing the severe strain of attempting to win the most desired approval of her parents-in-law. The son on attaining his majority becomes superior to his mother, but she is the absolute ruler of her daughter-in-law. Hence it often happens that the young wife waits upon the older woman. When breakfast is finished the son takes the morning paper, a social rather than a news sheet, and glances through it hurriedly before leaving for his work. When he has finished he passes it to his wife, and then it becomes her duty to read it aloud to her mother-in-law, a task very often tedious and trying. But she is very anxious to please the powerful lady, for she knows that her happiness is entirely in the hands of her mother-in-law. Such is the latter's power, indeed, that if she deems it desirable, she can even divorce her son's wife, whether the son desires it or not. Taught to think more of the parent than the wife, he bows to the often unhappy inevitable. Indeed, many a man has gone away from home on some mission and returned to find himself wifeless, his mother having sent home and divorced his wife in his absence. I believe, however, that the power of the mother-in-law is on the wane. The life of the bride even under the dominion of an exacting mother-in-law is always gilded with hope. She prays daily and fervently that she may become a mother, for then she may, as a rule, have an establishment of her own, and her position becomes immensely elevated. Indeed, she immediately begins to speculate upon her own chances of becoming a mother-in-law. Foreigners have expressed surprise and amusement at the ambition of Japanese girls to grow old. This is one of the reasons. Age brings freedom, power.

When the men have taken themselves off to their various occupa-



Japanese Geishas with their Musical Instruments



Bed-time in Japan

The photographs in this article are from stereographs copyright, 1904, by Underwood & Underwood, N. Y.

tions the women, in turn, begin their daily tasks. Even rich women find something to do. There are always children in the family. The children are bathed and dressed, often altogether in the family pond. Clean linen clothes are put upon them. The babies are sent away with their nurses, the older children to school, and the little tots that come between are usually taken in hand by the mother or an elder sister. The Japanese women begin to teach their children manners when they are as young as three and four years. They will show them how to sit politely on the floor, how to bow gracefully, how to hold the chop-sticks, the proper and refined way to eat; they teach them words and greetings of politeness, and finally, but not least, they instruct them in the first principles of patriotism and loyalty. Everything they are told comes from Tenshi-sama (the Emperor), and when the final question, "If Tenshi-sama needs you, what will you do for him?" is put, the answer comes quickly, "I will die for Tenshi-sama." One hour at least is given to this first home instruction, then the little ones are sent out into the gardens, where they play joyfully together.

The morning is the busy time for the Okusama. When the children have been sent out into the gardens she finds a few moments to give to her young daughter. The young girl will assist her at the tokonoma, and while thus pleasantly engaged the mother imparts some good advice. The girl finds a moment, perhaps, to make some shy confidence. Often she confesses to the mother what she would not breathe to her father or any one else—her love affairs. For watched and guarded as is the young girl of good family, still she is a girl, and hence romantic. She is not permitted any familiar association with young men, but she has a chance to see, and sometimes even speak to young men in her own circle of family friends. But even if she is not given the opportunity to meet and speak to a young man, there is nothing to prevent her casting shy glances toward a prepossessing youth whom she may encounter when driving or walking abroad. Her "love affairs" are not like those of the American girl. She cannot tell her mother of words of passion and love poured into her ears, of tender hand-clasps and embraces. Such things are unknown to her. But she will tell of one who passes and repasses their house, of a flower placed upon her window-ledge, and sometimes of a little love-letter

found in her sleeve. How it got there she cannot imagine, but the lover could tell of an obliging maid or even a small brother. There are few mothers who can find it in them to scold the daughter for such confidences. She will urge upon the girl the virtue of becoming modesty, and warn her against making any display of her feeling, but she is fully in sympathy with the young girl, and secretly

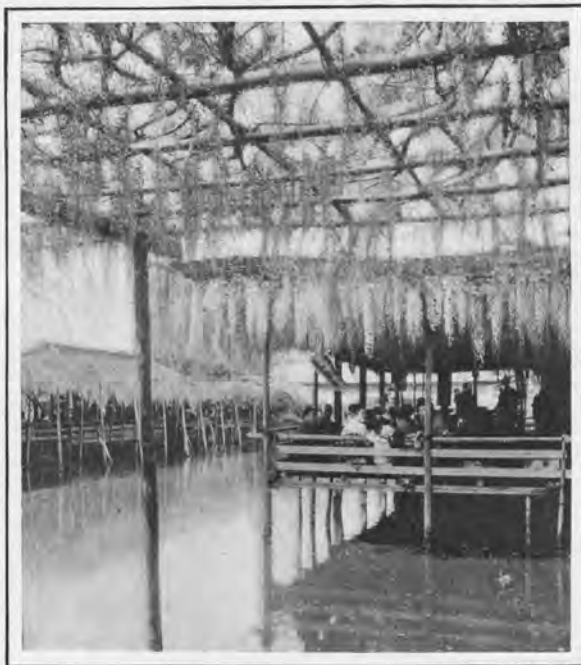
she plans to do her utmost to bring the young couple together, to use her influence with the father to approach the boy's father with a view to making a proposal—or obtaining a proposal—either way. Matches are made for the young people by the parents of the youth and maiden. Some people employ the services of a Nakoda (marriage agent) where they are not acquainted with the family with whom they desire an alliance. Such marriages are not necessarily unhappy. The girls and boys expect it to happen this way, and parents, if they are the right sort, endeavor to choose wisely. Even if a girl is married to a man she has never seen till the time of the betrothal it may be that she has looked forward to the time when her hero is to come and claim her. The first man she is thus thrown in close contact with she naturally becomes interested in, particularly so in view of the fact that both of them are conscious of the relation they will soon occupy to each other. I do not believe in such marriages—still they are not so unhappy.

There are two tasks the lady of the house nearly always reserves for herself—the instruction and counselling of her children and the arrangement of the tokonoma (place of honor in the guest-room). What servant could undertake properly either of these tasks? The Okusama does not fill the beautiful vases with flowers. She sets in it one branch, one flower, or a twig from a beautiful tree. It is placed just

as it should be, so that all its graceful lines may show to the best effect. We have only two eyes with which to see. We cannot properly admire a great many beautiful things at once. Better admire to the full one little flower than surfeit oneself with a huge mass of them. And so it is with the other decoration in the tokonoma. It is not a cabinet full of beautiful curios. The Japanese people of means and refinement keep their treasures in a storeroom. Each day they bring out one of them, and this is set in the tokonoma. Every day there is a new scroll or ornament and flower to admire. It serves, too, as an excellent subject of



*A Japanese Mother carrying her Child on her Back*



*A Gathering-place under a Wistaria Arbor*



*An Every-day Street Scene in Japan*



*Japanese Boys at Sport—the Start of a Footrace*

conversation for a chance visitor, for all these ornaments have a history of some kind, hence their value. The visitor will politely ask questions concerning it, and thus a subject of conversation more interesting than the weather is afforded.

By the time the house has been thoroughly put in order the meat, fish, and vegetable men have come and gone; noon is at hand. All the members of the family are at dinner together. If there is one absent from home, still his place is set and served. His spirit, they say, still dines and abides with them.

The noon meal is a merry one—such good things to eat, such a buzz of joyful chatter! A little boy of twelve honorable years talks with his mother. His father is gone to the war. He is the head of the family, his mother's adviser, confidant, and protector. Or sometimes the soft-speaking young daughter-in-law moves gracefully about the room, waiting with solicitude upon the mother-in-law, preparing with her own hands the amber tea for the older woman, and when the latter condescends a word of commendation she appears very grateful. The mother-in-law tells her to be seated and eat her own meal, and finally, making sure that her mother-in-law is thoroughly served, she modestly takes her seat.

"A good, dutiful, modest, and gentle daughter, my son," the older woman will later assert, and the bride is rewarded, after all, since she has pleased her husband.

The afternoon is given up to social pleasures. Often the ladies of the house, attired in soft, silken onesies, drive abroad in their jinrikishas and spend the afternoon in making calls upon friends. Sometimes they go to the city on a shopping trip and come back with their vehicle quite loaded down with the pretty things dear to the heart of a woman.

The Japanese wife and mother prefers to spend her afternoons at home with her children. They all go out together, if only into the tiny garden. Nothing in the house can compare with the out-

doors. In spring and summer they are out nearly all day. The women sew and embroider under some pretty tree—a cherry, camphor, or plum-tree. Here, their hands employed sewing, their eyes and senses delighted by their surroundings, watching the children playing, is it any wonder that the Japanese woman is calm of soul? Nature is the greatest distraction from care, they believe. Live close to nature and you will forget the little bitternesses of life. How happy seem the little children—even the bare-legged ragged rascals of the poor. They twist like natural acrobats about the bamboo poles; they climb to inconceivable heights up the trees, and cling to swaying boughs with the agility of monkeys. The child in the garden, with the watching mother, flies his kite, while his sisters play battledore and shuttlecock. A favorite game for indoors is called sugoroku. On a large sheet of paper various little pictures are printed—portraits of eminent warriors or views of noted places. It is played with a dice. It is a simple game, and it teaches the little ones the names of historical characters and places.

Every month in Japan has its particular significance to the Japanese. January, the month of the New-year; February, the inari (fox festival); March, the doll festival; April, the birthday of Buddha, the month when people stroll out for hanami (flower picnic), and fields and hills are tinted with clouds of cherry blossoms; May, when the azaleas are ablaze and the picnickers flock to the beautiful gardens; June, the Temple festivals; July, the celebration of the "Milky Way"; August, moonlight banquets; September, the month of the kikuzuki (chrysanthemum) shows; October is a desolate month, for the gods are said to be absent. In November the parents celebrate the third, fifth, or seventh anniversary of their children, and entertain their friends; December, a month of work in preparation for the New-year.

*(Continued on page 527.)*



*In Cherry-blossom Time—Japanese having Tea*



*A Religious Procession leaving the Temple of Nippo*



"Indeed I'll try," he repeated.

Pamela's horse was brought round to the inn door. The dusk was coming on.

"Which way do you go?" asked Warriden.

"Down the hill."

"I will walk to the bottom with you. The road will be dangerous."

They went slowly down between the high elder hedges, Pamela seated on her horse, Warriden walking by her side. The wide level lowlands opened out beneath them fields of brown and green, black woods with swinging boughs, and the broad high road with its white wood rails. A thin mist swirled across the face of the country in the wind so that its every feature was softened and magnified. It loomed dim and strangely distant with a glamour upon it like a place of old romance. To Pamela and Warriden, as the mists wove and unwove above it, it had a look of dreamland.

They reached the end of the incline and Pamela stopped her horse.

"This is my way," said she, pointing along the highway with her whip.

"Yes," answered Warriden. The road ran straight for some distance, then crossed a wooden bridge, and curved out of sight round the edge of a clump of trees. "The new road," he said, softly. "The new road from Quetta to Seistan!"

Pamela smiled.

"This is Quetta," said she.

Warriden laid his hand upon her horse's neck and looked suddenly up into her face.

"Where will be Seistan?" he asked, in a low voice.

Pamela returned the look frankly. There came a softness into her dark eyes. For a moment she let her hand rest lightly upon his sleeve and did not speak. She herself was wondering how far she was to travel upon this new road.

"I cannot tell," she said, very gently. "Nor, my friend, can you. Only," and her voice took on a lighter and a whimsical tone, "only I start alone on my new road."

And she went forward into the level country. Warriden climbed the hill again and turned when he had reached the top. But Pamela was out of sight. The dusk and the mists had enclosed her.

*To be Continued.*

## Every-day Life in Japan

(Continued from page 502.)

Thus every month has its distractions to break the monotony of the every-day life.

It is said that the Japanese woman is a slave to her husband, an upper servant of his household. She is a very happy slave and her lot is an enviable one. The husband takes upon his shoulders the burden of business and leaves her with the children. She shares in their joys and is as innocent as they. But one does not confide one's dearest thoughts, one's dearest hopes and ambitions to one's slave. One does not earnestly listen to and heed the advice of one's slave; one does not unquestioningly give one's children into the hands of one's slave, nor does one cherish one's slave as a pearl. So the Japanese woman is a very happy "slave."

Before the Restoration the better-class Japanese esteemed it a degradation to work. A tradesman was despised. To-day there is hardly a man of Japan who does not follow some calling. The older men, the grandfathers, may stay at home, but the sons—the restless, modern, progressive sons of the New Japan—are not happy unless employed. The spirit of modern Japan is in them. They are as devoted to their business as to their homes. But they keep them well separated and apart. The Japanese who can afford it has his office in the big city, but his home in the suburbs. During the day he is in the midst of the busy stir and whirl of the city, but about four in the afternoon he is hurrying toward the grateful peace and beauty of his country home. The first thing he does on reaching home is to bathe and remove all the clothes he has worn at his office or store. With the changing of his business clothes he lays aside all thought of business. In his home he finds desired rest and recreation. He is by nature a lover



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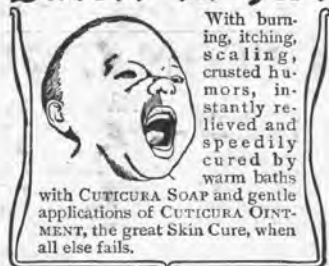
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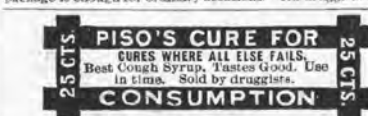
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of leisure. Few business men in America would leave their offices so early or would take so many holidays. The Japanese business man takes all the holidays he can afford. He is at home most of the fête-days. He goes with the family to see the carnivals, the temple, and flower festivals.

In the evening when the little ones are snugly sleeping the wife and husband enjoy each other's company. Each tells the other of the various happenings of the day. He gives her advice concerning the children, and she in turn advises him in matters she understands. Often they take little moonlight strolls together, or seek some pleasure-booth on a charming river, where they sip their sake or tea and listen to the music of the geishas. Often they entertain friends at a tea ceremony, and often are in turn entertained. Clad in her most charming dress the wife goes with her husband to visit their friends or relatives. Always they carry little lacquer boxes, for to show proper appreciation of the host and hostess the guests must either eat all placed before them or carry home with them what they cannot eat.

I have written chiefly of the daily life of the average Japanese of average means and education. There are the poorer people, whose lives are melancholy indeed. Yet if an American wrote on the home life of the Japanese he would not describe the life of the slums. So I refrain from describing the pitiful ones. In the big cities of Japan people work rather than live. Many there be who from force of circumstances cannot afford a home in the suburbs. They are chiefly of the laboring class—pleasure women, such as geishas and tea-house establishments, shopkeepers, the families of factory hands, jinrikimen, and so forth. There are, too, many fairly well-off people who have city houses. The city has its attractions to many. It is not as healthful or as moral as the country, but it is exciting. Children play about in the open street; people use a common public bath; young men and women find their pleasures in tea houses and theatres and the story-teller's halls, and an occasional picnic in the country.

But a word regarding the farming people. They are the happy ones, rough and uncultivated as they seem. Ragged the farmer looks, and you will hear he is poor. But it is not truly so. The farmer has money in his ragged clothes; he is prosperous in comparison with the working-men in the big cities. He is proud too. His sons go out from home to make the brave army of the Emperor. Their homes are warm and comfortable. Look into one on a cold winter day. You will see the family gathered about an irori, a fireplace encircled by a wooden frame from which hangs a steaming kettle. The red-hot charcoal gleams warmly. The group seem to be enjoying themselves immensely. The features of these rurals are flat and coarse, but honest. It is hard to realize that the round-faced, snub-nosed woman with the baby on her back is of the same nationality as the lady of the Yamato type, pure and perfect of features, with white thin skin, small lips, dreamy eyes, straight nose, and exquisite hands. Yet the noisy rollicking laugh of the countrywoman seems almost as good to hear as the gentle, melodious voice of the lady, and within the countrywoman's heart as good and generous emotions stir.

### Where some Famous Novels were Written

AN English inquirer has gathered together some interesting facts about the birthplaces of certain famous novels. Mrs. Humphry Ward's *Robert Elsmere*, for example, was written in two different places. The larger portion, it appears, was written at Borough Farm, in Surrey, while the latter part was completed in Russell Square, London.

*Adam Bede* was written at Richmond, Surrey, where George Eliot was staying, about 1850. Here, also, Marian Evans wrote her first book, *Scenes from Clerical Life*.

*John Halifax, Gentleman*, Dinah Mulock Craik's famous novel, was composed at Rose Cottage, Amberley, in Sussex.