



"But soon Izuma came back to the store-room, and, crossing on tiptoe, stood for a long time by the sleeping girl, gazing at her with all his heart in his eyes."

ILLUSTRATED BY C. D. WELDON

CONLY a short time ago she had been the very light of the tea-garden. No one could dance with the wild extravagance, yet graceful delicacy, of Amoy, and no voice was sweeter than hers; furthermore, she was wonderfully pretty, with her little pursed mouth, bright eyes and rich abundance of shiny hair; and besides being pretty and clever, Amoy was gentle, modest and good, so you will see it was no wonder that she was the favorite of all the patrons of the house. Even the girls, who were usually so jealous when one was more popular than another, could not help liking Amoy.

For two years, though a Chinese girl, she had lived the public life of the geisha-girl in Japan, laughing, dancing, singing for the entertainment of the guests; but this existence had not spoilt her in the slightest. At the end of the two years the girl still retained her native modesty and grace.

But now all was different; for some months—ever since the air had become thick with dark rumors of war—Amoy had been very unhappy. One day the manager had come into the tea-garden, and to the great surprise of all the girls had spoken harshly to Amoy, whom he had always treated with great consideration. This was the day that the declaration of war against China had been published on blood-red paper. From that day her life had become even more unhappy. Her employer had lost all his former cordiality of manner toward her, and the inmates of the house, the girls, even the very servants, had begun to despise her; for was she not of a nation at war with them, and whom it behooved them to hate?

BUT even this was not all. To the sorrow that had resulted from her fall from favor was added the fear of losing her position. Business was bad, for the young men were all enlisting and the older ones were too much occupied with the country's cause to find time for the distractions the tea-houses offered. Mizutany, the manager, was beginning to talk of discharging some of the girls, and well Amoy knew that she would be the first to go. Amoy was all alone in Japan. Away back in the province of Shantung, in China, she had a half dozen little brothers and sisters and an old father and mother. At a very early age she had gone out into the world and made her living with a troupe of Chinese jugglers and players who had come to Japan. Her unusual beauty had attracted

the attention of Mizutany, who made her a tempting offer for her services, and she had entered his employ. Among the frequenters of his tea-house she had always appeared light and gay of heart, and no one ever guessed how homesick and sad the girl became at times.

The tea-house and gardens adjoined, and, in fact, were connected with a public jinrikisha-stand which was just outside the gardens, and very handy for the guests as they went to and from the gardens. At the back of the jinrikisha-stand was a large open shed, which served as a shelter during storm. In this shed, up one flight of stairs, was a large lumber-room, a dull, gloomy place, used both by the jinrikisha-men and the tea-house people for the storing of old goods, worn-out jinrikishas, broken musical instruments and other plunder. Few there were who would voluntarily take the trouble to climb the rickety stairs unless it was necessary to store away some useless thing; yet it was to this old store-room that Amoy would come when her duties were over. In it was an old-fashioned jinrikisha, its linings worn to shreds, its calash top broken and its beautifully lacquered sides all cracked and blistered. This offered the softest seat in the room, however, and it swayed gently to and fro. Amoy would often climb into the old jinrikisha's heart, and there she would brood bitterly over her unhappy lot.

THIS landlord of both the tea-house, managed by Mizutany, and the jinrikisha-stand, was Inouye Izuma, a young man said to be of considerable wealth. He was very much esteemed for his general good-nature and kindness of heart. Few gave more freely to the war fund than he, and when the call for volunteers came from the government he was one of the first to offer himself. With scores of others, however, he was refused the chance of military service. But unlike many of those who were refused, Izuma neither took his life nor became gloomy or despondent. Perhaps the government would need him later on. For this he held himself in readiness, and turned himself with a cheerful heart to the task of helping those at home. Many a family that had given up sons for service in the war, and were suffering poverty besides sorrow, found a son in Izuma, and found great cheer in his encouraging smile and helping hand.

When the news of the sinking of the Kowshing arrived, and drove the city mad with delight, Amoy crept up to the old store-room to weep alone. The day without was beautiful, and even the dark store-room was brightened by a few stray gleams of sunshine that literally forced

their way into the place as though in protest that any spot should be in darkness. Amoy was tired and in trouble. From words she had overheard she knew she was on the point of being discharged, and she was distracted. She prayed to all the gods to help her. She even murmured a pitiful prayer to the Japanese goddess of mercy, Kwannon, to soften the hearts of her people—for Amoy had lived so long in Japan that she was almost a Japanese in heart and spirit, even though not for one moment did she ever forget her own country and people.

All this time the old jinrikisha had rocked soothingly back and forth, and even while she prayed Amoy fell asleep. The sunlight gleamed across her little head and seemed to spread a halo around it. Among the useless relics and worn-out vehicles and instruments she seemed more pretty than ever she had before.

SHE had not been asleep fifteen minutes before the door of the store-room was pushed open and Inouye Izuma and a stranger came into the place.

"I will show you the vehicle and you can see what repairs are needed," Izuma was saying. They moved over to a jinrikisha that had met with an accident the previous day.

"This is the—" continued Izuma, and then suddenly broke off and stared with wide, fascinated eyes at the sleeping girl. "Look!" he said to the other man. Then they stood very still and gazed at the pretty picture.

Izuma had certainly seen her before in the gardens, but doubtless had never noticed her peculiar beauty, for he seldom went to the gardens save on business with Mizutany, and would merely encounter the girls in gay groups. Now he stood beside Amoy, breathing very hard, and his eyes gleamed and glowed the more they looked at her. Then very reluctantly he turned them from her, and transacted his business hastily with the other man, after which they passed out together.

But soon Izuma came back to the store-room, and, crossing on tiptoe, stood for a long time by the sleeping girl, gazing at her with all his heart in his eyes. When she awoke he was still standing there, and she started up blushing, and looking very ashamed and frightened. Izuma was blushing and confused, too, and they seemed like two pretty children.

"Ah! I must ask your pardon," she said, and even her little ears tingled.

Izuma did not answer.

"I—I was very tired," the girl faltered, fearful that she had offended him; for in these days she was very careful not to offend when she could avoid it.

BUT is it comfortable to sleep here?" he asked, gently. "No; not so comfortable as in the house," she agreed; "but—but I did not mean to sleep. I wished only to be alone."

"Ah! Why?"

She sighed. "You a Japanese and ask that?"

They were talking in pure Japanese, which language the girl spoke almost as fluently as her own; there was a delightful little accent to her words, however.

"Yes," he answered; "I do not understand."

"I—I am not Japanese. Perhaps you do not know?" she murmured, her head drooping.

"Yes, I know that. You are Chinese."

"Then—and everybody in Japan hates me."

"No, no—not everybody."

"Who does not?" she asked, bitterly.

"I—I do not. I have seen you often, and I have never disliked you—never hated you, and now—" the sentence remained unfinished, but his face was eloquent.

"I must go now," she said, jumping up nervously.

"But why did you come here?" he asked.

"To be sad, to weep, to break my heart alone," she answered, with a burst of passion.

"Ah, but is pain more bearable alone?"

"Alas, I have none to share it with me!"

"But me!" he exclaimed, eagerly. "Let me share it with you!"

"But you are Japanese," she said, quietly, and left him musing all alone in the semi-darkness of the store-room.



THE next day Izuma's man carried a huge bunch of cherry-blossoms into the tea-house and laid them at Amoy's feet. The girl understood, and grew quite pale.

"For me—are they for me?" she asked, unsteadily.

"Yes."

A number of the geisha-girls were looking curiously on, wondering who it was that had sent the flowers. Amoy buried her delightful little nose in the blossoms. She was pale and rosy in turns.

"Tell him—" she began, "ah, let me see; who—who sends the flowers?" She knew, but preferred to hear his name spoken.

The man told her, a touch of surprise in his voice. Still Amoy hesitated. From somewhere in the street outside came the triumphant beat of the drum and the brazen call of the bugle. Amoy raised her little chin, and handed the flowers back to the man.

"Tell him—tell him I cannot take them now. Tell him that—that I must wait till the war is done. That," she hesitated, her voice faltering, "that I shall marry one of my own countrymen."

Her lips trembled when the man took the flowers, obediently, bowing very politely; and she stood still in the path, watching him until he had disappeared from sight.

"Look," said one of the girls; "she has returned his flowers."

"Maybe she is too good for a Japanese," another sneered.

Their curiosity as to the sender of the flowers got the better of them, for proposals were not plentiful in these times. "Who is he?" they asked.

She told them quietly, and they were surprised and envious, for Izuma was wealthy and wielded much influence; while Amoy—why, she was but a geisha-girl, and a Chinese one at that!

"Why did you refuse him?"

"Because he—perhaps—despises my—my people," she said, proudly.

"Well, he does not despise you or he would not have offered himself. You are very foolish."

"I am of my people," said Amoy, simply.



NOW her sorrows in the tea-house were over. Mizutany, having heard of the proposal, suddenly became kind. Surely if Inouye, his master, wished the girl for a bride she should be treated with great respect.

For three days there was no further sign from Izuma. Then his man returned. It was a poem this time; very beautiful, very flowery. Her eyes, her hair, her lips, her hands, her grace, modesty and goodness—upon these it dwelt through all its many lines. The girl quivered.

"Tell him," she said, "that—here is his poem. I cannot take it. I send it back."

"Amoy, you are a fool!" the girls told her. "Why don't you marry him? We wish we had the chance. Are you betrothed to some one in China?"

"No; but—but I will be some day. I can't marry of a nation that is an enemy of mine."

And the third visit of Izuma's man found her still resolute. She knew it would be the last visit.

"Tell him—tell him I shall marry a man of my own country. That—ah! here are his flowers again. I cannot receive them. I return them." And with that she turned her back on the man. Only for a moment, however, then she flashed around; but the man was gone, and she felt faint. She ran like the wind after him, out of the gate and across the little rice-field, and she called to him, brokenly, as she ran, "No, no! I will take them! Give them to me! Tell him—tell him— Ah-h!"



HE involuntarily started back. Izuma himself was before her.

"What is it?"

"The flowers!" she gasped.

He grew pale. The man was out of sight now. He had gone to Izuma's house. The young man had grown nervous and restless and could not wait there, so had come down to his shop near the garden.

"You return the flowers again, Amoy?" he asked, shivering.

"Yes—no, no, no, no, no!" she said. "I will keep them! I want them! Oh, give them to me! I wished to wait, that was all—to wait till the war was done! I did not wish to marry while there was war, but—but I must keep them now—the flowers—and—"

"The war is over," he said, gently. "Peace has been declared."

"And the flowers?" Her voice trembled and fluttered into appeal.

"I will bring them next time myself, Amoy."