



His Interpreter

By Onoto Watanna

ILLUSTRATED BY C. ALLAN GILBERT

PART I.



THE American sat at his desk intently studying some plans and sketches that were spread before him. His fine fair face was drawn with his intense absorption in his task, and the heavy lines on his forehead showed he was puzzled over something regarding it. Often he would turn from his plans to a large book,

and run his hand down a list of figures, frowning heavily as their volume annoyed him. After a time he pushed the book and maps from him, and running his hand wearily through his hair, leaned back in his chair, with half-closed eyes and irresolute mouth and chin.

A polite Japanese looked in at him from an adjoining office with the calm, half-wondering, wholly uncredulous countenance peculiar to the better class of Japanese.

The American observed him at the door, and called to him: "Ah, Inouye! Just a minute!"

The American's crisp, nervous explanation to his interpreter was listened to with the gravest attention, the latter scarcely commenting until the American had ceased speaking. Then he leaned over the plans and studied them silently a moment.

"I don't see that I've made it particularly clear to you, Inouye," the American put in, hastily, lighting a cigar and watching with half-closed eyes his assistant's apparent interest in the plans.

"It's like this, I have the contract all right, and Takamine is willing to put up a good part of the money. You understand that thus far I have merely represented an American syndicate. Now I have the choice of taking up the work with the sole financial help of Takamine, pushing it along and doubtless making a pretty good profit for both of us; but owing to the slenderness of our financial resources we could only afford to do the work in a limited way. Of course, it might make a pretty big thing for both Takamine and myself, but I cannot help wanting to push so splendid an opportunity to its fullest extent, and do the work on an immense scale. This is only possible with the financial aid, or, indeed, by my putting things entirely into the hands of the syndicate, and then perhaps profits would not accrue for some time. Of course, I understand there would be," he repeated, "a big profit for both Takamine and myself if I simply pushed it along at once, without advising the syndicate; but the dence is that I can scarcely do that without seriously impairing and perhaps altogether breaking my relations with the syndicate, and somehow—well, I can't afford to do that."

His handsome face clouded with perplexity and dissatisfaction. The Japanese raised his head from the plans, and asked, calmly:

"Is there greater profit in the work, Mr. Arthurs, should the American syndicate take the contract?"

The American shifted in his seat, nervously turning over the sides of his blotter.

"Well, a more general profit, Inouye. The syndicate has controlled all my work thus far. I am anxious to get other contracts on top of this one, and I would more likely be able to get them if I carried out this one with the assistance of the syndicate. Couldn't afford to do it alone. This if properly carried out means only the beginning of an immense lot of work—the cars, the miles of rail I have calculated building in the future, could only be accomplished with the aid of the syndicate. The question is whether I shall merely carry out this contract and make immediate profits for myself and Takamine, or let the syndicate put up the big cash, buy American material, and—well, make a fortune for the syndicate, too. You understand in America these syndicates are immensely wealthy. With the mere permit of the Japanese government the rest comes easily enough. If the contract passes into the hands of the syndicate it means a good position, and in time a good fortune, for myself; but in that event it passes out of Takamine's hands altogether, he being merely one of a good many stockholders."

THE Japanese walked to the door and looked out across the blue fields. He was not thinking of the American's plans. His mind was absorbed in the image of a young maiden, the daughter of Takamine. At one time he had been almost as a son to Takamine, whose hospitable doors were constantly open to receive him. With the over-hasty conceit and impetuosity of a young man, his friend's kindness to him made him overbold, so that he had asked the father for the daughter in marriage. Takamine was a wealthy man, though perhaps of not such high birth as Inouye. Nevertheless he was indignant that his generosity and interest as a benefactor to the young man, and which had procured him the position he presently occupied with the American, should be apparently imposed upon, for it seemed to Takamine, who had something of the arrogance of the wealthy Japanese, that no one but a man in his own position should aspire to his daughter's hand.

Before the great reformation of the government system such an offer from Inouye, even in his impoverished state, would have been considered a high compliment, as he belonged to that class of people called the *Shizoku* (nobles), while Takamine would have been recognized merely as a citizen or rich merchant. But since the reformation all classes of people became recognized equally, and there was no line of distinction drawn whatever, save that which nobility and high position, aided by wealth, could carry out, although the nobles secretly resented the change and instinctively felt their superiority in spite of fallen fortunes.

So Inouye bitterly thought of the refusal he had

received, and with all the stubbornness of his class rebelled against it. Moreover, his heart was quite set on the girl Haru for a bride, and it was with bitter jealousy he imagined her the bride of another, for Haru was the embodiment of everything that was sweet, beautiful, dainty and noble.

"Well, Inouye, what would you do about it?" the American's voice broke in on him.

Inouye had made himself, as confidential secretary and interpreter, almost indispensable to the American, and because of the coolness and wisdom he had shown in all things, the more careless man was used to relying a great deal on his opinion. Inouye's face was rather pale.

"If the syndicate pushes the work you will in the long run make as much, if not more, profit. Is it not so?" he asked.

"Well—yes," said the American, slowly. "And it would also give me a certain standing in America among railroad men."

"And Mr. Takamine?" inquired the Japanese, quietly. The American laid the paper-knife he had been fingering nervously down on the desk. His voice was almost fretful.

"I wish he had stayed out of this thing altogether," he said, irritably. "I've got the contract, anyhow, and the syndicate could build the road just as well without his purse. I simply wanted his aid with the government in getting the contract; but he was shrewd enough to smell a good thing for himself, and now, I fear, is in it to stay. I can't very well go back on him, but I'll be hanged if I care to push the work along solely on his and my account."

The dark, thoughtful face of the Japanese was averted a moment as the American continued:

"I'm only afraid if I do let the syndicate push it that his capital will be almost entirely absorbed for some time, and that he will realize nothing whatever on it for some years. He'd get his money back in time, doubled, but it would take some years, perhaps, before profits would accrue and dividends be declared. The dence is, he won't put in a small part of his fortune, but every available yen he wants to throw into the road."

"I think," said Inouye, deliberately, "I would hand the whole thing to the syndicate. It would be better for you altogether, for the syndicate and for this country. I would not spoil so large a piece of work for one person."

His gentle, slow voice paused, and the American listened attentively to him.

"As you say, in the end it will mean loss to no one. Only because the work will be doubled in its volume will the time for profit be farther off."

The American closed his book with a snap and began folding the contracts and maps.

"I believe you are right, Inouye," he said; "I will have you write the syndicate later, and in the meantime write as courteous a letter as possible to Takamine,

"He fell in love with a newer grace each day."

letting him know what we have decided upon, and explaining that profits will be doubled for him in the end. By the way, there's no use mentioning the time when profits begin to accrue. He would not understand that, and we must have his help with the government for the first eight months at least. Use your diplomacy, and make me a translation of the letter for my file before sending it out."

There was a half-perceptible smile on the interpreter's face as he withdrew.

It was some months before the work could be even begun on the road, for communication between America and Japan is slow, and Mr. Arthurs was obliged to submit most of his plans directly to the syndicate, although the latter had become so delighted with his success in obtaining, through Takamine, various governmental concessions and privileges that they put the utmost trust in the young man, and permitted him to push forward the work largely on his own responsibility.

The American had taken a larger suite of offices, and there were a couple of new Japanese clerks sitting in the outer offices of "The American Oriental Railroad Co."

Inouye's desk had been moved into the same office as the American's, and the pushing of the work forward depended as much on him as on the promoter himself.

Arthurs was a queer mixture of shrewdness and weakness. With the keenness of a veteran promoter he planned out a work so extensive that it threatened to absorb all smaller railways then existing in Japan. In spite of this he depended almost entirely on Inouye for the execution of his plans, and because of his confidence in him had appointed him assistant manager of the company. The American soon found it almost impossible to take a step without the assistance of Inouye, and indeed it was Inouye who gave the orders and saw they were carried out. There was scarcely a suggestion that Inouye made which was not agreed to by Arthurs, and in this way practically the entire management lay in the hands of the Japanese.

EVERYTHING went smoothly with the company, and the American, having put the responsibility on the shoulders of Inouye, found leisure to see something of the country itself and take interest in the people. Like most foreigners, he soon succumbed to the *dolce far niente* of the atmosphere, and took his pleasures in a leisurely fashion. Indeed, there are few foreigners visiting Japan who look upon the country otherwise than as almost a pleasure resort; and though they arrive with all the ambition and vigor of the West, they soon slip off their commercial coats to don those of quiet peace, restfulness and sunshine. The ease and luxury which pervade the life of the higher class of Japanese is contagious, perhaps, to the foreigner, and the same listlessness soon makes itself manifest among them after a short residence there and when business cares press not too heavily. Of course, the merchant-class people are ever alert with a constant, keen eye for business, but this class of Japanese are seldom as attractive to the foreigner as the remnant of the old Samurai class. To pleasures they are addicted. Local fêtes, flowers of every season, snow and the full moon, all these give the better classes pretext for forming convivial parties which meet in picturesque tea-houses and drink the tiny cups of hot *saké*, waited upon by the dazling, tripping waitresses, and constantly cheered and entertained by the gaiety and accomplishments of the ever-present geisha.

With the usual abandon and extravagance of an American, Arthurs plunged into this novel and strangely fascinating life of gaiety and dissipation, which, though fully as attractive as that of his own country, yet nevertheless was seldom unhealthful, because seldom carried to excess. In fact, he grew happier and stronger under its influence. He was never bored, seldom melancholy. The geisha-girls kept him on a constant strain of mirth and sentiment, and the beauty of the scenery was restful enough for even the most weary man of the world.

Like most foreigners, the only native women he came in contact with were merely the geisha or dancing girls, and his ideas of Japanese women were entirely founded on the life of these girls, believing them typical of the Japanese woman. And with the usual susceptibility of a young man he fell in love with a fresh face, a newer grace, a brighter eye or redder lips each day.

IT WAS two years later. Takamine, who had as yet had little or scarcely any return for his invested money, grew more nervous each day. He had put the greater part of his wealth in the railroad, hoping to realize a profit from it very soon. To live in the extravagant style he had always done, and give his sons and daughter fitting educations, was a constant drain on his purse, already so badly depleted by his investment. Three of his sons were abroad, being educated in foreign lands, and there remained with him only his youngest child, Haru, who was motherless. She was the sunshine of the old man's life, and he made great plans for her future. His influence with the government had not been as great of late. He had been worsted in a recent election for governor of the province. He felt he would have gained this position had he been able to spend his money more lavishly, but with so much of it tied up in stocks and bonds of the railroad he did not feel encouraged to do so.

In the meanwhile Arthurs' position had grown in prominence; his salary was increased threefold, and he himself was one of the largest stockholders of the company. The railroad had progressed rapidly, and already included many miles of rail.

Yet in spite of the evident prosperity of the road, and the fact that it had already begun paying a small quarterly dividend to its stockholders, Takamine's financial affairs became more straitened. He had speculated heavily, and was gambling away the remnants of his fortune. His last and only resource was his investment

with the railroad, and he vainly tried to sell the bonds. The Japanese are not, as a rule, a speculative people. Had he been in America he doubtless could have sold his bonds at even more than their face value; but in Japan it was different. The people, though vastly interested in the progress of the road, were yet niggardly in putting out any of their money, and when they did, it was only in small sums. In fact, the stockholders of the road were almost entirely English and Americans, and although Takamine had put nearly forty thousand dollars into the concern (and this is a fortune in Japan), he was anything but the largest stockholder of the company; for whereas he had paid in hard cash for all his stock, many of the stockholders had either been presented with or were supposed to have worked for a good part.

ONE morning when the American sauntered into the office in his white flannels, looking anything but business-like, he found Inouye at a desk writing out a long contract, and sitting on the edge of the secretary's table he inquired as to its contents.

The young Japanese flushed a trifle, but answered quite readily that it was a legal betrothal contract.

"A—a wh-what?" said the American, dropping his half-smoked cigar from between his fingers.

"I wish to marry," said Inouye, smiling a trifle. "I have been partially betrothed for some years now," he added, quietly.

"The deuce you have! Rather ambiguous that 'partially.'"

The Japanese fingered the contract lovingly with his small, beautifully manicured fingers.

"That is," he added, slowly, "I have never had the consent of the father or of the girl, but—I have been determined it should be, and it will be!" he ended, convincingly. The American whistled softly.

"Hum! And what is she like? One of those delightful little yum-yum creatures who walk on their heels and trip on their toes, so that you never know whether they are dancing or merely walking? One of those cherry-lipped, peep-eyed little witches who blow you a kiss to-day and a post-to-morrow?"

Inouye frowned.

"She is not like that," he said, briefly. "Those are females—only females," he added, in disgust.

The American sat up straight in his chair and stared with round eyes of wonder at the other.

"Females!"

Inouye had turned a half-angry red.

"You foreigners never can understand in Japan the difference between a Japanese lady and a—a—mere female; that is what I call the ones you describe."

The American laughed outright. "You're a queer fellow, Inouye," he said. "My acquaintance with your countrywomen has been rather limited, I suppose."

"But you have had no acquaintance with my countrywomen," said the Japanese, proudly and doggedly.

The American leaned back in his chair and mused, and the interpreter continued writing his contract in fine Japanese figures.

"When is it coming off?" the American interrupted.

"It will depend if her father agrees," the other replied; and added, with a touch of satisfaction in his voice, "I think he now will."

HE RAISED his head from his work and looked at the American, smiling pleasantly. "Her name is Haru," he said, and a soft light shone for a moment in his eyes.

"Haru," repeated the American, softly. "What a pretty name! It means 'spring,' does it not?"

"Yes," said Inouye, "it means spring. She will be the very spring of my life. She is daughter to Takamine," he added, briefly.

The American sat stock-still. He remembered the incident three years before of the young man's proposal and refusal; of how he (Arthurs) had been told by Inouye to encourage the old man to invest as much as possible, and later of the pitiful state of Takamine's finances. The cold, emotionless face of his young secretary looked a trifle relentless and unscrupulous, and in a flash he understood just what the deteriorated fortunes of Takamine would mean to Inouye—deteriorated, however, only for a time, for he would eventually make immense profits on his investment. Mingled with the American's quick comprehension of the work of Inouye was a feeling of admiration at the quietness and skill with which he had carried it out, no one being sufferer therefrom save perhaps old Takamine, and he would be only for a short time. All this passed through the mind of the American with lightning rapidity. The Japanese found his slow, sharp words enigmatical when he broke the silence.

"You are a pretty clever fellow, Inouye. I believe you would sweep anything aside that stood in your way in order to attain your end."

Inouye did not reply, and after a time the American continued, deliberately: "You will marry a bride seemingly poor, in reality wealthy. Our road is bound to be a superlative success, as you know. Her father is one of the largest stockholders, though the old fool, I believe, has grown to think his bonds so much waste paper."

Arthurs got up from his seat and walked up and down the room, his hands thrust in his pockets, while Inouye watched him a trifle anxiously. He stopped by Inouye's chair, and said, quite gently:

"Well, I'm glad for you, my boy, and wish you every happiness. Don't blame you, either, if you love the girl. She must be very—er—pretty and sweet for you to have waited so long and taken such pains to win her. Of course she reciprocates your affection?"

"That," said Inouye, evasively, "will come after marriage. It is always so in Japan. We do not love before marriage. We merely expect to love."

The American was silent.

[CONCLUDED IN THE OCTOBER ISSUE.]

FINDING HER PLACE

By Sallie Joy White



HOW LITTLE one hears in the present day about "woman's sphere." That much-abused expression has passed into the oblivion which it so justly merits, and it is to be fervently hoped that it will never be relegated thence. The period of such limitation has gone by, and to-day a woman's place is largely defined by her taste, capacity, education and health.

James Russell Lowell's statement that "No man is born into the world whose work is not born with him," may in the light of the dawning twentieth century be made to include woman as well. A child uninfluenced by the suggestions of others will engage in the occupations for which she is naturally adapted. She will do those things which she best loves to do, the things toward which she is drawn. In very truth, a child's mind is the guide to a woman's place. The lives of women who have become famous in various lines of work show that as children they spent many hours in counterfeiting the work in which they afterward became prominent. The child's occupations were the woman's in embryo.

THE little girl whose dolls are often grievously ill, are nursed, nourished and cuddled, will, it is more than likely, find her place among the physicians or in the hospital wards as a nurse. The one who displays domestic tastes, who fashions marvelous creations in dresses and hats, who with her scissors produces original designs from colored papers, or who "plays school" with her little friends or teaches mimic doll-schools, will later find her place among the dressmakers, milliners, designers or teachers. The little one who enjoys her household toys, who has her tiny molding-board and rolling-pin by the side of her mother on a baking-day, who with her miniature tub and wash-board personally launders her doll's clothes, shows the true instinct of the born housekeeper, and will prefer the corner by the home fireside for the field of her achievement, and the quiet duties of the home to those larger but no more noble and important ones of the world outside. The child who for hours sits with her book or studies totally oblivious to all surroundings may later find her place in the field of letters. The crude pencil-drawings of many a girl have the promise which in womanhood shall develop her into the artist.

The places occupied by the girl of fifty years ago are not sufficiently broad or numerous for the girl of to-day. Changed conditions have brought women not only to positions of larger duties and heavier responsibilities, but to broader growth and nobler life. Since the day of creation there never was an epoch when so many legitimate opportunities were given a girl to become a part of this winking world, an essential factor in its progress, and a sharer with her brother in its emoluments as in this. Man has to-day to cope with a new knowledge, an unexpected aptitude in the woman with whom he is associated in the home as well as the world. But he does not find her any the less womanly for the new education. She still finds her highest service in ministering to humanity. The home over which she holds sway is a well-ordered place. She is the companion of her husband in all intellectual things, and she keeps pace with him in knowledge and understanding. She is a wiser guide for her children because she herself is better informed, and has the power of thinking out things along the most approved lines of family government. Does she go outside of the family to find her place, then patients in the hospitals wait for her ministrations, childish minds need her training and guidance, pharmacists require her assistance, publishers, architects, artists, offer to her the chance for a cultivated and honest life in places hitherto unoccupied.

WHAT of the discouraged women who find the battle of life seemingly going against them in spite of incessant struggle? Well, what of the discouraged men in like condition? In most cases both of men and women the struggles and disappointments in industrial pursuits arise from a lack of thought in choosing a career. That is fatal to any endeavor. A grave and daily recurring mistake is made in seeking the fields that are already overfull, and not looking afar for new occupations. If fewer girls would qualify themselves for the overcrowded professions, and fit themselves for other skilled employments and newer industries, there would be fewer discouraged, anxious, overburdened women.

The careful mother who watches her child and takes note of its developing tastes and studies its natural inclinations can assist much in deciding the question of occupation, and help the girl to find the place which is to be hers in the world. Fostering a taste, strengthening an inclination, this can be quietly done by the mother, and under such training the question will almost settle itself. She is a fortunate girl who has a mother who can set her with her face in the right direction toward her life-work.

Once her place is found the girl who would make her work profitable must pursue it diligently, striving with all her might to render herself as nearly perfect in it as possible. This is an age of competition, and only the best will succeed. Unless one strives incessantly to get to the top she will remain at the bottom, and down there lies the threatening monster starvation. Unless in filling her position she can make her influence and power felt broadly and beneficently, unless she can develop and bring the best, the noblest and the most generous instincts of her nature to her work, she has not chosen the right work or the right place in which to pursue it.