

THE LIFE OF A JAPANESE GIRL

By Onoto Watanna

THE first lesson instilled into the mind of a Japanese girl is to be modest and gentle, and she is reared along lines which tend to make her respect her elders. From the days when she is wrapped in long clothes to the time when she is given to her bridegroom she is

under the strict though gentle care of her parents. Though constantly disciplined, it is in so mild and gentle and unseen yet firm a way that maidenhood becomes a pleasure and wifehood a joy. Out of all this there grows the love of and devotion to her parents that is beautiful.

The Christian parents in Japan dedicate their little girls to God, and take care of them in their early life, just the same as in Christendom. But the Buddhist parents dedicate them to their gods, attending the main temples, where the patron gods of their families are supposed to be placed. They are named seven days after their birth.

JAPANESE girls to-day enjoy much greater freedom and liberty than before the great revolution of the Government system. Previous to that time there had been distinct classes of people in Japan, and the classes were forbidden, under pain of punishment, to intermingle. It was only the higher classes who enjoyed the opportunities of advanced education and had chances for development; but in these days all classes have equal rights.

as it is for boys. Science, history, mathematics, and very often Chinese classics are necessary, but the morals are considered as by far the most important branch of female education in Japan.

Physical exercise is greatly encouraged in the schools. The girls play basket ball, croquet and even lawn tennis outdoors, and practice with dumb-bells and Indian clubs. After remaining four years in the second course in the higher common school, at the age of fourteen, if the girl can afford it, she is sent to a still higher school to pursue her special studies. If a girl is very ambitious she can enter the Imperial universities for degrees.



A Lady of Fashion

THERE are various religions in Japan. As stated before, Japanese Christian parents bring their little girls up the same as other Christians, but this does not mean they forsake all the former principles and customs of their native country, adopting American and European methods exclusively. On the contrary, they merely adopt the Christian principles and leave the good Japanese customs just as they are. The little Japanese Christian girl is taught how to pray, how to sing and how to act as a Christian girl ought. Where the parents are not Christians the little girl is taken to the temple occasionally, but she is entirely free in her belief.

It is not customary in Japan to give girls special allowances of money. When the parents are rich they naturally give them plenty, and where poor the opposite is the case, but there is no custom nor rule about this. However, there



A Noted Beauty

THERE exists in Japan, among some of the classes, a certain custom of hiring a midwoman, *nakoda*, or professional matchmaker, in order to make an engagement between a couple. It often happens that a family will desire an alliance with another family with whom they are not intimately acquainted. Then are the services of the professional matchmaker invaluable. To be successful in such a profession one must never be known as such to the family she desires to court. Very often *nakodas* and midwomen follow this profession for years and yet are not known as such save to those who have employed them.

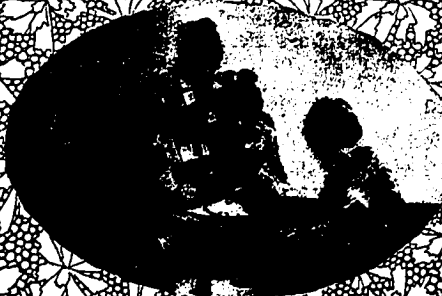
Most of the matchmakers are very honest, and it is their duty to discover all the good and bad points of the couple and point them out to the parents; they give good advice, and do everything possible to promote the happiness of the pair. They travel back and forth to the homes of the young people, who are entirely ignorant of their motive, carrying compliments and presents, and trying in a delicate manner to work on their sentiment.

AFTER finding a suitable youth the courtship begins under the guidance of the parents. If the girl's parents are very strict in obeying the ancient rules and ways they will never permit her to be, even for a moment, with a boy they do not themselves approve of, and even if they do like him she is not allowed to be with him alone until they are married. Many of the parents in Japan, however, believe in courtship between the young people, and permit their children to have as much license as is given children in any country.

Marriage is usually preceded by a ceremonious betrothal, which is more binding than the "engagements" of Western



Writing A Letter



A Favorite Game



Nursing the Sick

A mother who has a great many children generally sends the new-born babe out to be nursed, no matter whether it be girl or boy, and the nurse has entire charge of it from two to seven or eight years. If she does not send the baby out she hires a girl to take care of it.

EVEN when she is only a very little girl her mother is anxious to try her ability in talking. She will very soon learn how to say "haha" (mamma), "toto" (papa).

Soon the mother will teach her how to sit politely on the floor. The Japanese floor is, however, not at all like the American floor, or that of other countries. It is three or four feet from the ground at least, and there are mats over it thickened about four inches with soft rice straw, stuffing the outside cover, which is changed every summer. She is taught how to eat her meals correctly; how to speak politely and grammatically. When she goes out to play she is forbidden to run around too much or to play rough games like the boys. The home part of her education is to teach her how to be modest, meek and polite.



A Japanese Belle

When she is six years of age she must attend the common school to take the primary course of study, compulsory education extending over all the country. She first studies morals, reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, music and drawing. She spends four years in the common school, and if she can afford it goes to a higher common school. There she studies sewing, arithmetic, reading, physiology, physical geography, history, and all other branches necessary for every-day life. The school system in Japan to-day is pretty much the same for girls

are a great many girls in Japan who earn their own livings in different ways, and are to a certain extent free from parental restraint and independent. Many girls are now engaged in the post-offices, Government telegraph and telephone offices, and as teachers in the primary schools and kindergartens. Many of them also are trained nurses in the hospitals.

And there are the geishas (dancing girls), who are found in all large Japanese cities. The geisha first came into evidence about the middle of the last century, and in a short time her popularity was such that her presence became indispensable at parties, which, but for her contagious vivacity and mirth, would perhaps have been flat and insipid. Her duties are not merely to serve tea, and dance for the entertainment of her patrons, but she is expected to laugh and talk gayly, even if on the most trivial subjects. A geisha must be highly accomplished in many ways. She plays the *samisen* and often a number of other musical instruments, dances, sings and talks, and her remuneration is generally large.

JAPANESE parents take great pride in dressing their daughters nicely and cleanly, and have them behave like little ladies. The long and wide sleeves, which reach clear down to the knees, and the long sash, or *obi* (generally fifteen feet long and fourteen inches wide), and the long *kimono* are the peculiar points of the Japanese dress. The common dress is made of cotton, and is only worn by the poor people. The silk dress is usually worn by the well-to-do people. There is a great variety in the price of a silk dress. Though silk is so cheap in Japan a good *obi* or sash (not the best) very often costs one hundred dollars, but, of course, this lasts its wearer many years, frequently a lifetime. The average expenditure for a girl's dress is about three hundred *yen*, which is the equivalent of about three hundred silver dollars.

When the Japanese girl is about fifteen or sixteen years of age she gains her first knowledge of "society." She may spend evenings playing "Karutta," a noble indoor game, which resembles the English game of "Authors"; she may go to the seaside and to the mountains in summer time with the young boys, and thus have a chance to enjoy the society of her friends. She may also get into good society during her later schooldays. However, the friendships are never carried to any great extent in her childhood days. The average age for marrying is about fifteen to twenty for girls and twenty to thirty for boys.



Nurse and Child

countries. The engagement is usually short in Japan. Sometimes, however, the boy is a regular soldier, who cannot form a family until after his discharge from the army, or, again, he may be a student in a foreign country. Then the engagement is very long (sometimes more than three years). When an engagement takes place the boy and girl exchange matrimonial presents, the boy giving the girl an *obi* and the latter giving him the *hakama*, or man's silk skirt. Among the poorer classes the boy sometimes gives the girl a certain amount of money (from fifty to one hundred *yen*) as a token of engagement, and the date is fixed for the ceremony.

WHEN the girl is a Christian and the boy is not she generally lets him choose the form of marriage, though often the ceremony is gone through in both ways to satisfy the Christian. The ordinary ceremony would be

rather complicated, I think, to the idea of the American. Nowadays bridal trips are in favor among the upper classes. Marriage in Japan is only a civil contract, and not in any way a religious one. It is protected by law and social obligations. The church and State do not concern themselves at all in marital affairs.

The chief peculiarity about the ceremony is the exchanging of cups of *sake* (a liquid) nine times: three times the bride, three times the groom, three times the midwoman who works between the pair in making the engagement. Toward the end of the ceremony a singer sings a song called "Takasago," which narrates the loving and happy life of an old couple. Thus the ceremony closes, the last notes of the singer's beautiful melody remaining in the air, charming all. The last stage of girl life is over.



A Christian

Editor's Note—An illustrated article on "A Girl's Life on the Western Prairies" will be published in the next (May) Journal.