

IX.

LIFE IN A JAPANESE HOUSE.

Now that the excitement of travel was over, I settled down to my duties, to survey the place and surroundings, and to try and understand the life around me. I first examined my quarters.

The old mansion assigned to me was one hundred and ninety-seven years old. It had been in possession of the same family during that period. The house had been built on part of the site of Shibata's old castle, in which he and his band committed *hara-kiri* and underwent voluntary cremation. Across the river rose Atago yama. On this hill, Hidéyoshi encamped with his army. A few score feet to the west of my gate was a stone on which tradition says Shibata stood when he drew an arrow to the head, and shot it into his enemy's camp, splitting the pole of the canopy, or mammoth umbrella, under which Hidéyoshi sat. The moat which bounded the north side of my estate was part of the old fortress, and a few rods eastward stood a gate-way still intact, though no "harsh thunder" could be grated from its hinges, which rust had long united together. My whole estate was classic soil, and I suspect more than one old conservative growled to see the foreigner on the spot made sacred by Echizen's greatest hero, whose devotion to Yamato damashi ideals had been at-tested in blood, fire, and ashes.

It was a grand old house of solid timber, with spacious rooms, and long, well-lighted corridors. It was sixty feet broad, by one hundred feet deep. Though of one story, it had an immense and lofty sloping roof and shaggy eaves. The rooms numbered twelve in all. The floors were laid with soft neat mats, and the paper sliding screens could all be taken out, if need were, to make a hall of vast area with many square columns. The corridors, which were ten feet wide, passed outside the rooms, yet were part of the house. The walls, where solid, were papered. The ceiling, of fine grained wood, was twelve feet from the floor. In the rear were the kitchen and servants' quarters.

The entire estate comprised about ten acres, the sides of which, ex-

tending inward to a depth of thirty feet, were lined with the dwellings of the former retainers and servants. In the central area had been gardens and stables.

All these accessories to the mansion were in the rear. The front of the house looked out upon a long, beautiful garden. To the left was a wall of tiles and cement, too high for any inquisitive eyes to peep over, which extended all around the inclosure. Along the inner side was a row of firs. These trees had been planted by the first ancestor of the family that had followed Hidéyasü to Fukui in the sixteenth century. They were now tall and grave sentinels, of mighty girth and wide-spreading limbs, that measured their height by rods and their shadows by furlongs. By day they cast grateful shade, and at night sifted the moonbeams, over the path. Near the end of the court-yard was the main gate, made of whole tree-trunks, and crowned by an imposing roof. Just within it was the porter's lodge, where a studious old *mom-ban* (gate-keeper) kept watch and ward over the portal, through which none could enter except men of rank and office. He usually had his nose inside a book when I saw him, for he was a great reader, and near-sighted.



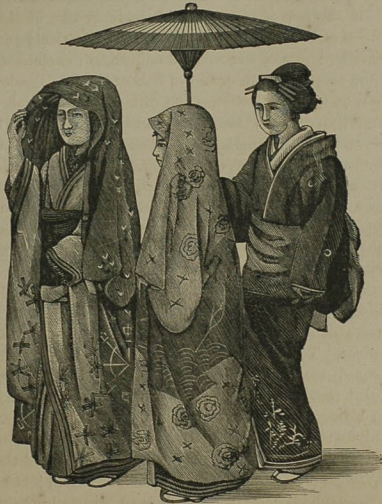
The Studious Gate-keeper.

Near the lodge was a clump of trees, and beneath their shadow and protection had been the family shrine. It was an ark cut out of solid stone, four feet high. Within it had been the sacred vases, mirror, and white paper, all holy symbols of the Shintō faith, which the family professed. All around the now neglected garden were blossoming camellias, red as maiden blushes, or white as unstained innocence. On another hillock, tufted here and there with azaleas and asters, were several dwarfed pines. The rockery and fish-pond, long neglected, were overgrown and scarcely perceptible. Evidently it had been a charming place of great beauty, for the traces were yet to be seen of former care and adornment. To the right was an arm of one of the castle moats, full of running water. Beyond its banks and mossy and flower-decked stone walls were the gardens of several samurai families, in which sweet rosy-cheeked children played, or boys fished, or pretty girls came down to look at the lotus-flowers. The echo of their merry laugh often reached me. In the deep parts of the stream, clear as crystal, darted the black, silvery, or speckled fish; while in the shallower portions great turtles crawled and stuck their

wedge-like noses above the water. In summer the lotus-flowers grew and bloomed, slowly rising from the long roots in the ooze, unfolding their first emerging tips into glorious concave shields of green, two feet in diameter, corded beneath like the veins of a gladiator, and holding on their bosses translucent pebbles of dew. Then rose the closed bolls, like a clasped hand that trembled with the trembling water, giving no sign of the beauty within—the mighty flower in its bosom. Then, as the sunshine of summer fell aslant the cool water, the boll, tenderly and shyly, as if afraid, unfolded day by day until the splendid revelation of the lotus was complete. Massive shield and glorious flower made a picture of unearthly loveliness to the child who strove to pluck the remote beauty, or to the adult to whom the lotus-flower is the emblem of eternal calm. The little Japanese child who first, with the glorifying eyes of childhood, looks upon its purity, finds in it an object of unspeakable delight. The mature believer in Buddha sees in it shadowed forth creative power, universe, and world-growth. The “lotus springs from the mud” is ever the answer of the Asiatic to him who teaches that the human heart is corrupt, and unable to cleanse itself. The calyx of the lotus is a triangle whose base is a circle—symbols of spirit and form, of eternity and triunity. In Nirvana, Buddha sits on a lotus-flower. As the mortal body of the believer approaches the cremation house, that the borrowed elements of his body may be liberated from their fleshly prison and returned to their primordial earth and air, a stone carved to represent a lotus-flower receives the bier. To the Buddhist the lotus is a thing of beauty, a joy forever, because the constant symbol of poetic and religious truth.

I was glad they had put me in this old mansion. It was full of suggestive history. It had been a home. Pagan, heathen, Asiatic—it mattered not; it was a home. Here in this garden the infant had been carried until a child—growing up, the playmate of the flowers and birds, amidst Nature, until it knew her moods, and loved her with the passionate fondness for her which is so intense in the people of these islands. Here children played among the flowers, caught their first butterflies, began their first stratagem by decoying the unwary fish with the hook, and picked off the lotus petals for banners, the leaves for sun-shades, and the round seeds to eat, or roll like marbles. Then, as the boys grew up, they put on the swords, shaved off their fore-hair, and progressed in the lore of Chinese sages and native historians, and were fired with the narratives of the exploits of Taikō and Yoritomo and Iyéyasū; while the girls grew in womanly grace and beauty, and

perfected themselves in household etiquette and studied the "Woman's Great Learning." Then had come the marriage ceremonial, with no spoken vows, and made without priest or official, followed by festal cheer, wine, music, dance, and exchange of presents. Here the bride became mother. Hence, after one hundred days, she went with her child to the temple, where the robed and shaven bonze wrote a name-charm, and put it in the child's prayer-bag. In this house had been



The Wedding Party. (From a Japanese painting on silk.)

celebrated many a household festival. These rooms had echoed with merry laughter, or resounded with the groans and sobs of grief. Hence had gone out the funeral procession, when the bodies of loved parents were borne to the grave or the cremarium. The funeral cortège, with lanterns, and hearse of pure white wood borne on four men's shoulders, with robed bonzes and men in ceremonial dress and muffled swords, and women in pure white robes and half-moon-like caps of floss silk,

had passed out this gate. Prayers had been read, candles lighted, bells tinkled, the corpse laid on the pyre, and the fire lighted by the brother of the deceased, and the ashes deposited in the vase in the family monument in that cemetery beside the mountain yonder. In this family oratory a new black tablet, gilt-lettered, was set among the ancestral names, to be honored through coming generations.

Every day some new discovery showed me that this had been a home. Birth, marriage, death, sickness, sorrow, joy, banquet—all the fullness of life, though not like ours, had sanctified it. I thought of the many journeys to Yedo and Kiōto of the father on business, the sons on travel for culture and education, and the daughter for religion's sake, or to the distant home of her husband. I pictured the festival days, the feast of dolls for the girls, when the great nursery-room was decked with all the rich toys with which girls delight to mimic the real life of motherhood and housekeeping, which is but a few years off. There stood the bamboo poles on which was hung the huge paper carp, to show that a boy had been born during the year, or that the heir of the house would rise in the world and surmount all difficulties, like a carp leaps the water-fall. New-year's-day had come to this house, the only time when profound Sabbath reigns in Japan. Then the servants and retainers pledged anew their loyalty, congratulated their master, and received gifts of money and clothes. I thought of the religious festivals when the mansion and all the tenantry of the estate hung out gay lanterns, and the master's household, like a great heart, sympathized in the birth, death, marriage, sorrow, or joy of the tenantry. Thus, for centuries in this dwelling, and on this ancestral estate, lived the family in peace and prosperity.

Then came foreigners and many troubles—civil war, revolution, the overthrow of the shōgun, the restoration of the mikado, the threatened abolition of the feudal system. Great changes altered the condition of Fukui. The revenues of the estate were reduced, the family moved to humbler quarters, the retainers and tenantry dispersed, and now the foreigner was here.

All this I found out gradually, but with each bit of revelation the old mansion wore new charms. I loved to walk in the grand old garden at night, shut in from all but the stars and the faint murmur of the city, and the few glimmering lights on the mountain across the river, or when the moon sifted her beams through the tall firs, or bathed her face among the lotus-flowers in the moat, or silvered the ivy on the wall. I had come hither to be a builder of knowledge, to

help bring the new civilization that must destroy the old. Yet it was hard to be an iconoclast. I often asked myself the question—Why not leave these people alone? They seem to be happy enough; and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow. The sacredness of human belief and reverence had consecrated even the old shrine, and other hands than mine must remove the stones of the deserted fane. What vulgarity to make a dining-room of the family oratory, where the ancestral tablets once stood, and the sacred lights and incense burned! I found tied to the front of the house a case of light wood, containing an amulet, written in Sanskrit and Chinese, for the protection of the house. I took it down, for I had no faith in its protection; but I kept it carefully as a curious memento, because others had trusted in it, and every thing human is sacred, even faith, if our own is. I found nailed on the inner lintel of the great gate a pile of charms of thin wood, to ward off disease and evil. One had been added every year, like strata upon strata, until the deposit was a half-foot thick. They had on them the name and seal of the temple in which they had been written, and were inscribed with Sanskrit quotations from the sacred books.

Under the new administration, the *personnel* of my establishment was as follows: My interpreter, Iwabuchi, occupied a pleasant little house in the rear and within call, so as to be ready to assist me when visitors came, though most of them went first to Iwabuchi's house. I found that even in the kitchen the feudal spirit of grades and ranks was strictly observed. My cook had an assistant, who himself had a small boy, who often hired other small boys to do his work. My "boy," or body-servant, had another man to help him. Even the *bettō*, or groom, employed an underling to do all the actual manual work. Theoretically, it required a large force of men to guard and wait on the foreigner, and I was amazed to find myself so famous and surrounded.

To begin at the height of rank and honor: first, there was the *daimiō's* officer, who had been appointed to look after my wants. He had an office for daily use in one of the distant rooms of the building. Under him was a subofficial, and also a clerk. These three men were considered necessary, as foreigners were known to have many wants, to require troublesome attention. Then, the foreigner was a stranger in the city and neighborhood, and as the people were unfamiliar with men of his strange breed, some of them might insult him, or a wandering *jo-i* (foreigner-hater) might kill him, in which case an in-

demnity of fifty thousand dollars would have to be paid by the Government. Hence, four stalwart samurai, each with their two swords, were set apart for my protection. These escorted me to and from school, and went with me in my walks and rides, and at first were very serviceable guides, until my familiarity with the language and people, and my perception of their perfectly harmless character, made these armed men bores. They performed duty on alternate days, and occupied a part of the long house to the left. Then, there were five or six of the larger students, who wished to live near their teacher. They occupied another room under the same roof with the four guards. At the rear entrance to the inclosure of my house was another gate and porter's lodge, in which a man kept watch and ward, admitting none but the privileged, though all who entered here were of much lower rank than those who came to the front gate. To man the two gates—front and rear—a corps of eight men were appointed, who did duty alternately. Their duties were not onerous. They consisted in reading, eating, sleeping, drinking tea, bowing to me as I passed, and keeping out stragglers. The long house, stretching away to the eastward, was full of folks of the humbler sort, with many children and babies, and of dogs not a few. These youngsters, with their quaint dress, curiously shaved heads, and odd ways, were often a source of great amusement to me. The fun reached its climax when they attempted to walk bamboo poles or turn somersaults on them,



Boys playing on Bamboo Bars. (Hokusai.)

often in the latter motion becoming real gymnasts, in the etymological sense of the word. In imitating wrestling-matches, they made a small arena of sand ringed by twisted rice-straw, and then the nude little dumplings of humanity, some of them less than four years old, stamped their feet, eat their salt, rinsed their mouths, slapped their knees, and then clinched in mimic rage, tugging away until victory was declared for one or the other, by the Lilliputian judge with fan in hand. Even the applause, to the casting in the ring of fans and garments to be redeemed, as in the real triumph of the elephantine fat fellows, who look as though stuffed with blubber by means of a sausage-blower, were given with comical accuracy of imitation. When the infant Hercules got hold of his antagonist's clout—the master-grip of the game, which put the unlucky one “in chancery,” a shout



The Grip of Victory.

went up from the spectators like the Roman “*habet*” or the modern prize-fighter’s cheers. Even the dogs seemed to enjoy the fun, while mothers and nurse-maids, with babies strapped on their backs, overflowed in a new stream of palaver.

Of the inmates of my house I must not omit mention. My servant was selected and brought to me on the first day of my arrival, and shown his future master. Falling down upon his hands and knees, and bowing his forehead to the floor, he murmured something which was meant to be a promise of good and faithful service. Then, raising his body, he sat upon his knees and heels, and waited further orders. I own I was not prepossessed. Sahei was less than sixty inches high, with a remarkably ugly phiz, thick protruding lips, flat nose—not always scrupulously attended to—and eyes of the dull, alligator hue so common among the lower classes. His skin was of the most unsatis-

factory tint. His motions were ungraceful. His hands and feet, for a Nihonese, were clumsy. His scalp and cue—strong points in the *tout ensemble* of a handsome native—were not attractive. My first sight of him awakened regrets that Sasaki had not selected a handsomer specimen of his people to wait on me. When one has a stranger daily under his nose and eyes, the æsthetics of physical form and face assume a vast degree of importance. I yearned for a more comely form, more attractive face, and more delicately tinted skin. I thought of the pretty pages in the prince's palace, and the fine-looking boys with smooth, *café-au-lait* skins and rosy cheeks in school. "I shall keep Sahei a few weeks in deference to the official who recommended him; then I shall get a handsomer boy," thought I, as I dismissed him for a while. I was also at first disappointed in my new servant, supposing him to be single. I had intended to have a married man with a family, that I might be able to see more of actual Japanese life under my own roof. A bachelor's quarters afford a poor field for the study of the home life of a people. I was greatly and pleasantly disappointed. Sahei was not from the rice-fields. He had traveled to Tōkiō, had been in the war as a page, and was intelligent and fit to wait on a gentleman. He had once been a carpenter by trade, and could do handy jobs about the house, and he did help me greatly to make things comfortable when it would cost too much time and trouble to set the whole official machinery of Fukui in motion to drive a nail, or put up a shelf for flower-vase, or a little Paris clock. Sahei was more comely in character than in person. Cheerful, faithful, diligent, careful of his master, quick to answer his call, tender of him as to a child, and though a heathen, Sahei was, according to Pope's definition, the noblest work of God. He was not only honest in handling his master's money, but as alert as a watch-dog to guard against imposition, or loss through ignorance. Furthermore, Sahei had a family—wife, baby, and child's maid. This I did not learn until a week afterward, when he came to announce with shame, and as if expecting my displeasure, that he had a wife; she waiting behind the entry door-way to hear what the *danna san* (master) would say. Might he present her to me? His delight at my pleased surprise betrayed itself in a broad grin, and in a moment more he was leading his baby by the hand, while his wife waddled forward, accompanied by her little maid. Mother, baby, and maid, in succession, fell on their knees, and polished their foreheads on their hands laid prone on the matting. Then, sitting on their heels, they bashfully looked up at their new master. I

bid them all stand up, and took their photograph in my eye. The imposing physique of Mrs. Sahei utterly dwarfed her insignificant lord, and suggested a contrast between a pudding and a tart. She was of healthily tinted skin of lighter shade, with black eyes that sparkled as though her head were a voltaic battery and her eyes the terminals. Closer acquaintance confirmed my impressions of her. She was an affectionate mother, and a jealous and careful wife. Continually bubbling over with fun, she reminded me, when laughing, of a bowl full of jelly when well shaken. She was a diligent worker. Her tongue was as sharp as a freshly honed razor, especially after her liege lord had spent too much money on *geishas* and saké; for the otherwise exemplary Sahei had two weaknesses, which were evident even to his master. He would occasionally make his throat a funnel for saké, and he delighted to spend an occasional evening amidst the fascinations of the singing girls, coming home late at night, with flushed veins and a damaged purse, to meet with a Caudle lecture on his return. Here was the bakufu, or "curtain government," of a sort quite different from that we read of at Kamakura. I always knew, by Sahei's sheepish looks and the general flavor of demoralization in his appearance next morning, when he had been eating forbidden and costly fruit.

The baby was as pretty and bright-eyed a morsel of flesh as one could wish to see. His name was Satarō (first-born darling of Sahei). He was two years old, just able to keep his centre of gravity, and voyage across the rooms and through the house, with only an occasional sprawl on the matting. Baby, on his first introduction, bobbed his head in adult style, and chirped out, "*Ohaio, sensei*" (good-morning, teacher), his baby talk making it sound like "chen-chey." I immediately dubbed him "Chenkey." Let me give his photograph. Chenkey was a chubby boy, with rosy cheeks, sparkling black eyes, skin almost as light in tint and as soft and smooth as an American mother's darling. His head was shaved entirely, except a round spot on the back part; his mother shaved his diminutive pate once a week, and usually kept him so sweet and wholesome that a romp with him rarely involved damage from sticky lips or soiled baby hands.

I must not forget Obun (tea-tray), the little maid who attended to Chenkey, carried him about, dressed him, and made her back a seat for him. Obun was eleven years old, a thin, frail, sad-looking child, that freshened up under a kind word like a wilted flower when touched by rain-drops. Obun evidently had heard the dreadful stories about the foreigners, and believed them. Timidly, and with suppressed fear,

she had come to greet the *sensei*, and only after days and weeks of familiar intercourse and serving me at table could she lay aside her fears. Even then she was a sad-eyed, dreamy child, always looking down deeply and solemnly into flowers, or gazing at the blue sky or the distant mountains, or watching the stars at evening. Obun had had a hard life of it. Her mother had died in giving her birth, and the orphan was then bandied about among nurses and relatives until she was old enough to take care of a baby, when she was given as a servant to Sahei for her food and clothes.

The *personnel* of Sahei's establishment did not end with wife, baby, and maid. It was not for the lord of the kitchen to draw water, clean fish, and do the work of the scullery. Not he. For this he must

have a boy. "That boy" was Gonji. Gonji's wages were his rice and robes—two of the latter per annum. He was scarcely worth his full rations. Lazy, and uniquely stupid in some things, and bright enough in others, the keenness of his appetite kept pace with the capacity of his stomach. His favorite occupations were worrying dogs, playing with Chenkey, on whom he doted, and amusing himself at watching the *sensei*, whose very existence was a profound mystery to him, and whose every motion was a subject of wondering cogi-



Gonji in a Brown Study.

tation. Sometimes, when spruced up, he enjoyed the honor of waiting on the *danna san*. To see the white man eat, threw Gonji in a brown study at once, as on knees and heels, with waiter before him, he anticipated my wants.

Every day of my life in the old mansion was full of novelty. Every trivial event was a chink to let in a new ray of light upon Japanese life, character, or ideas. One day Obun came into the dining-room after dinner, looking around for something, and answering my inquiring eye with the words "*O mamā.*" "What do you mean, child? Do you think your mother is alive, and where did you learn that English?" While I was pondering the problem of the possible

affinity of the Japanese with the Aryan languages, the little maid seized an empty plate, appearing surprised at its emptiness, and went out. I afterward found that *o mama* meant "boiled rice," which I had used to feed a flock of sacred pigeons belonging to the big temple near by, which sometimes flew into my garden.

Sahei's family had no sooner comfortably installed themselves in the servants' quarters than their evening bath must be got ready. The old mansion, like all Japanese houses, was provided with a huge caldron and furnace quite near the house, for heating water for the bath taken daily by every member of every Japanese family. Although somewhat familiar with the sight of Eves, innocent of fig-leaves, tubbing themselves in the open street in broad daylight, I had supposed the presence of the foreigner and stranger would deter any exhibition of female nudity in or about my house in Fukui. Vain thought! The good wife innocently disrobed, unmindful of the cold air, immersed and made her bath and toilet, with Chenkey in her arms. Having finished, she was followed by Obun, then by her husband, brother, uncle, and Gonji, in succession, who had been about and around, heating and carrying the water. I can not call them spectators, for they took no interest whatever, except as assistants, in the spectacle, which to them was an ordinary sight, awakening no other emotions than those we feel in seeing a female face or hand.

Night came—glorious moonlight nights they were in Fukui. In the kitchen the servants lighted their lamps—a long slender wick of pith, in a dish of oil, set half-way up in a square paper-shaded frame, three feet high—a standing lantern, in the base of which were sulphur-tipped chips, or matches, and flint, steel, and tinder. Or, they set a hollow paper-wicked candle, made of vegetable tallow, in a copper, bronze, or wooden candlestick two feet high.

"These people have a theory of candles," thought I, "as Symmes had about the earth. Both theories are opposed to orthodoxy. Symmes's world and a Japanese candle both have a hole through them; but the former theory is representative of a fact, while the latter is not yet proved to be so." These hollow candles are stuck on a spike, not set in a socket like ours. The French and English buy this vegetable tallow in Japan, bleach it, and import the "wax" candles made from it, selling to the Japanese at an advanced price. It happened once, so I have read, that a Japanese junk drifted to the shores of California. A newspaper reporter announced in type, with sensational intent, next day, that the junk had been salt-water-logged so

long that the wick had been entirely corroded by the action of the water, until the candle had a hole entirely through it!

In my own room, I had my Connecticut lamp, well fed with Pennsylvania petroleum.

The snow had begun to melt, and, at intervals, a heavy, thunderous noise overhead told of a huge snow-slide—the accumulation of winter sliding off. Over the castle and city and yashiki gates, and over the doors of houses, I had noticed a long timber bar riveted to the roof, which prevented the snow from falling on the heads of people below, while it slid freely in other places. Anon the whirring of wings, and the screaming of the flocks of wild geese as they clove the air, told



Night Scene on the River-flats. (Hokusai.)

how these restless birds enjoyed the night as well as the day. These geese were my nocturnal barometer. I could tell from the height or lowness of their flight, and the volume of sound of their throats, what were the "weather probabilities" for the morrow.

A view from my garden-gate included the street, the river-flats, a few boats like black spots on the water, the bridge, and the masts rising spectrally beyond Atago yama with its twinkling lights, people returning home, and coolies hurrying along with belated travelers. The moon shone overhead, but yet, dimly seen, reminded me vividly of a sketch by one of the native artists, whose great merits and peculiarities I was then beginning to appreciate and distinguish. I could

hear the voices outside, the women's chatting, the children's prattle, and the coolies' grunt.

The crows of Fukui were as numerous, merry, audacious, and absurd as their black brethren in the pine-roosts of New Jersey or the corn-fields of Pennsylvania. I wondered who it was who had lived in Japan three months, and then innocently asked if there were any crows in the country. These filthy feeders amused me daily with their noisy conventions, or their squabbles around the kitchen refuse. Occasionally they ventured on bolder raids. On one occasion a state-ly raven, seeing through the window a morsel of bread on the breakfast-table, meditated a theft. A Japanese crow of the olden time ought not, in the nature of things, to be expected to understand either the chemical composition or the physical properties of that familiar alkaline silicate called glass. Viewing with his raven eye from his eyrie in the fir that morsel of bread, and knowing well the virtues of wheat, our crow made a dash with outspread wings and beak at the bread. The result was a badly stunned bird with a bumped head and nearly broken beak. Nothing daunted, my "Nevermore" gathered himself up, and proceeded to survey the situation. Here was a new and puzzling subject of study. Glass was evidently a new phenomenon. It was transparent and hard, yet there was the bread, and the crow's craw was empty. What was it, this invisible and pervisual barrier? It was not water, nor yet air. Perhaps it was ice, and Mr. Crow laid his eye against the pane to test the temperature—flattening it like a child its nose on a rainy Sunday. Ah! happy thought! perhaps it would yield to blows.

Perseverantia omnia vincit. Tap, tap, tap, sounded the pick-like beak on the tough glass pane with a regularity less gentle than that of Poe's ebony visitor. All in vain, however; the pane yielded not, the tantalizing bread had to be yielded, and the black Tantalus flew off with its dismal "Nevermore," to report adversely to its comrades, and hold a debate on the subject of the unknowable. Despair brooded, not on wisdom, but on a pine-tree.

The black rascals were sometimes more successful. With impudence almost human, and with cheek quite as hard, they would even occasionally fly into the house. One day Chenkey was standing on the veranda next the garden, eating a rice-cracknel, called *kaminari sembei* (thunder-cake). A vigilant *karasu* (crow) hopped from a tree-branch to the fence, and, pretending to be asleep, calmly watched his opportunity with one eye. Chenkey had just taken a bite, and turned

his head around for a moment. In a trice the black thief had swooped and stolen the cake. An incredible uproar of caws in the tree-tops, a few tears from Chenkey, and it was all over.

Strange to say, the natives, as their poetry attests, hear in the hoarse notes of this sable bird the plaintive sounds of love. "Concerning tastes," and associations also, "it is not to be disputed." With us a lamb is an emblem of mildness; with the Japanese, of stupidity, or even obstinacy. Should I call a native a goose (*gan*), he would see no more point in the allusion than if I called him a turkey or a pheasant. In Japan, sheep and tame geese are unknown, except from reading of them. The wild goose is one of the swiftest, most graceful, and alert birds. It is rather a compliment to be called a (Japanese) goose.

There was a goodly number of rats in the old mansion, though they rarely disturbed me in the day-time. Their favorite place of playing what seemed to be foot-ball, or Congress, was over the ceilings, running along the beams immediately above the rafters. The builder of the mansion had foreseen the future, and, with wise benevolence, had cut square holes through certain portions of the fine lattice-work that might be spoiled by irregular gnawing, and thus earned the gratitude of all rodent generations. I determined to be rid of these ancient pests, and went out in search of a cat. I saw a number of fat Tabithas and aldermanic Thomases which I asked for, or offered to purchase, in vain. I preferred a lean feline specimen that would seek the rats from motives of hunger, but I could get none. The people loved their pets too well. But one day, on passing a hemp shop, I saw a good-natured old lady sitting on her mats, with a fine tortoiseshell tabby, and instantly determined to get that cat. Accosting her with the usual bow, I said, in my best Japanese, "Good-morning, old lady. Will you sell me that cat? I should like to buy it." The American reader will question the propriety and my politeness in using the adjective *old*. Not so the Japanese. It is an honor to be addressed or spoken of as old. Every one called me "*sensei*" (elder-born, or teacher). One of the first questions which a Japanese will ask you is, "How old are you?" It is a question which American ladies do not answer very promptly. But the questioner masks no insult. It is not in the same spirit as that of the young men who refer to their maternal parent as the "old woman." The old lady was pleased. Concerning the sale of her cat, however, she demurred. Her *néko* was a polite, well-bred animal. I was a foreigner from some outlandish place beyond the sea. Could she trust Puss with me? With

head inclining forty-five degrees over her left shoulder, she considered. Looking up, she said, "I will not sell you the cat; but if you *love* it, you can have it." Of course, I loved it on the spot. Taking the name of the street, and number of the house, I sent Sahei for it. Installed in my dwelling, it proved to be handsome and lazy, disturbing but little the ancient population, which, however, never troubled me except by their frisky noise. My repeated invitations to a banquet of arsenic were as often declined, with thanks and squeals; but on wrapping up a piece of seasoned meat in a small box in a tight bundle of



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paper, they partook luxuriantly and subsided. The old lady came occasionally to see her former pet, and found in the foreigner's house unlimited delight over photograph-album, stereoscope, and wall pictures, and endless food for wonder and subsequent gossip, at the home of her son and grandchildren—a very affectionate family, as I had occasion to witness, but with a weakness for saké.

The most remarkable fact concerning the majority of cats in Japan is that they have no tails, or, at least, a mere stump or tuft, like a rab-

bit's. They resemble the Manx cat in this respect. Whether wholly natural, or the long result of art, I could never satisfactorily determine. It always struck me as a great feline affliction, since the chief plaything of a kitten is its tail. To run around after their caudal stumps was a sorry game in the Japanese cats, compared with the lively revolutions of those boasting twelve inches of tail. An American gentleman once took one of these bob-tailed cats to California. The creature had evidently never made the acquaintance of the long-tailed brethren of its species, and the unwonted sight of their terminal appendages seemed to incite the feline nature of Japan to the highest pitch of jealousy and rage. It was continually biting, scratching, howling, and spitting at other cats, invariably seizing their tails in its teeth when practicable.

My other dumb companion in Fukui was a black dog, with but one eye. It was an American dog that had strayed away from Yokohama, and had followed the daimiō's retinue across the country. Happening to pass some farmers, who, reversing the proverb "Love me, love my dog," and hating foreigners, whom they believed to be descendants of these brutes, one of them struck the poor creature in the eye with a grass-hook, and made him a Cyclops from that moment. He was an affectionate animal, and apparently fully understood, as I could tell from the language of his tail, that I was one of his own country creatures, concentrating all his affection in his remaining orb. I was most amused at the name given him by the people. The Japanese word for dog is *inu*. Some of the young men who had been to Yokohama had heard the "hairy foreigners" calling their dogs by cracking their fingers and crying "Come here." This the Japanese supposed to be the name of the dog. Frequently in Fukui those who wished to display their proficiency in the barbarian language would point to my canine Cyclops, and cry out "Look at that 'Come-here;' how black he is!" "Oh! see how fast the American man's 'Come-here' is running!"

With a cat, a one-eyed dog, gold-fish,* home flowers, and plenty of human life behind and about me, the city in view, the mountains round about, and the lovely solitude of garden and trees in front of me, and my books, I was happy in my immediate surroundings.

* These were the *kin-giyo* (gold-fish) with triple tails, like lace, and variegated brilliant colors, which have been recently introduced into the United States.