

house with his boots on, uninvited. He shouted like a coolie, and he broke the *shoji*. His behaviour was like that of Susa-no-O in the chambers of the Sun-Goddess. Perhaps he had been drinking whisky-sodas.'

'A disgusting thing, is it not?' said the master. 'At this time I am writing an important chapter on the clear mirror of the soul. It is troublesome to be interrupted by these quarrels of women and savages. You will have Keiichi and Gorō posted at the door of the house. They are to refuse entrance to all foreigners. It must not be allowed to turn our *yashiki* into a battlefield.'

Mr Fujinami's meditations that morning had been most bitter. His literary preoccupation was only a sham. There was a tempest in the political world of Japan. The Government was tottering under the revelations of a corruption in high places more blatant than usual. With the fall of the Cabinet, the bribes which the Fujinami had lavished to obtain the licences and privileges necessary to their trade, would become waste money. True, the Governor of Osaka had not yet been replaced. A Fujinami familiar had been despatched thither at full speed to secure the new Tobita brothel concessions as a *fait accompli*, before the inevitable change should take place.

The head of the house of Fujinami, therefore, being a monarch in a small way, had much to think of besides 'the quarrels of women and savages.' Moreover, he was not quite sure of his ground with regard to Asako. To take a wife from her husband against his will, seems to the Japanese mind so flagrantly illegal a proceeding; and old Mr Fujinami Gennosuké had warned his irreligious son most gravely against the danger of tampering with the testament of Asako's father, and of provoking thereby a visitation of his 'rough spirit.'

CHAPTER XXI

SAYONARA (GOOD-BYE)

*Tomo ni narite
Onaji minato wo
Izuru fune no
Yuku-ye mo shirazu
Kogi-wakari-nuru !*

Those ships which left
The same harbour
Side by side
Towards an unknown
destination
Have rowed away from
one another !

REGGIE FORSYTH, remaining in Chuzenji, had become a prey to a most crushing reaction. At the time of trial, he had been calm and clear-sighted. For a moment he had experienced a sensation of relief at shaking off the shackles which Yaé's fascination had fastened upon him. He had been aware all along that she was morally worthless. He was glad to have the matter incontestably proved. But his paradise, though an artificial one, had been paradise all the same. It had nourished him with visions and music. Now, he had no companion except his own irrepressible spirit jibing at his heart's infirmity. He came to the reluctant conclusion that he must take Yaé back again. But she must never come again to him on the same terms. He would take her for what she really was, a unique and charming *fille-de-jolie*, and he knew that she would be glad to return. Without something, somebody, some woman to interest him, he could not face another year in this barren land.

Then what about Geoffrey, his friend who had betrayed him? No, he could not regard him in such a tragic light. He was angry with Geoffrey, but not indignant. He was

angry with him for being a blunderer, an elephant, for being so easily amenable to Lady Cynthia's intrigues, for being so good-natured, stupid and gullible. He argued that if Geoffrey had been a wicked seducer, a bold Don Juan, he would have excused him and would have felt more sympathy for him. He would have thoroughly enjoyed sitting down with him to a discussion of Yae's psychology. But what did an oaf like Geoffrey understand about that bundle of nerves and instincts, partly primitive and partly artificial, bred out of an abnormal cross between East and West, and doomed from conception to a life astray between light and darkness? He had been disillusioned about his old friend, and he wished never to see him again.

'What frauds these noble natures are!' he said to himself, 'these Old Honests, these sterling souls! And as an excuse he tells me, 'Nothing actually happened!' Disgusting!

"To play with light loves in the portal,
To kiss and embrace and refrain!"

The virtue of our days is mostly impotence! Lust and passion and love and marriage! Why do our dull insular minds mix up these four entirely separate notions? And how can we jump with such goat-like agility from one circle of thought into another without ever noticing the change in the landscape?'

He strolled over to the piano to put these ideas into music.

Lady Cynthia had decided that it would be bad for him to stop in Chuzenji. Mountain scenery is demoralising for a nature so Byronic. He was forthwith despatched to Tokyo to represent his Embassy at a Requiem Mass to be celebrated for the souls of an Austrian Archduke and his wife, who had recently been assassinated by a Serbian fanatic somewhere in Bosnia. Reggie was

furious at having to undertake this mission. For the mountains were soothing to him, and he was not yet ready for encounters. When he arrived in Tokyo, he was in a very bad temper.

Asako had heard from Tanaka that Reggie Forsyth was expected at the Embassy. That useful intelligence-officer had been posted by the Fujinami to keep watch on the Embassy compound, and to report any movements of importance; for the conspirators were not entirely at ease as to the legality of abducting the wife of a British subject, and keeping her against her husband's demands.

Asako had received that day a pathetic letter from Geoffrey, giving detail for detail his account of his dealings with Yaé Smith, begging her to understand and believe him, and to forgive him for the crime which he had never committed.

In spite of her cousin's incredulity, Asako's resolution was shaken by this appeal. At last, now that she had lost her husband, she was beginning to realise how very much she loved him. Reggie Forsyth would be a more or less impartial witness.

Late that evening, in a hooded rickshaw she crossed the short distance which led to the Embassy. Mr Forsyth had just arrived.

Mr Forsyth was very displeased to hear Mrs Barrington announced. It was just the kind of meeting which would exasperate and unnerve him.

Her appearance was against her. She wore a Japanese kimono, unpleasantly reminiscent of Yaé. Her hair was disordered and frantic-looking. Her eyes were red with weeping.

'Let me say at once,' observed Reggie, as he offered her a chair, 'that I am in no way responsible for your

husband's shortcomings. I have too many of my own.'

Asako could never understand Reggie when he talked in that sarcastic tone.

'I want to know exactly what happened,' she begged. 'I have no one else who can tell me.'

'Your husband says that nothing actually happened,' replied Reggie brutally.

The girl realised that this statement was far from being the vindication of Geoffrey which she had begun to hope for.

'But what did you actually see?' she asked.

'I saw Miss Smith in bed with your husband. As it was in my house, they might have asked my leave first.'

Asako shivered.

'But do you think Geoffrey had been—love-making to Miss Smith?'

'I don't know,' said Reggie wearily. 'From what I heard, I think Miss Smith was doing most of the love-making to Geoffrey; but he did not seem to object to the process.'

Asako's yearnings for proof of her husband's innocence were crushed.

'What shall I do?' she pleaded.

'I'm sure I don't know.' This scene to Reggie was becoming positively silly. 'Take him back to England as soon as possible, I should think.'

'But would he fall in love with women in England?'

'Possibly.'

'Then what am I to do?'

'Grin and bear it. That's what we all have to do.'

'Oh, Mr Forsyth,' Asako implored, 'you know my husband so well. Do you think he is a bad man?'

'No, not worse than the rest of us,' answered Reggie, who felt quite maddened by this talk. 'He is a bit of a fool, and a good deal of a blunderer.'

'But do you think Geoffrey was to blame for what happened?'

'I have told you, my dear Mrs Barrington, that your husband assured me that nothing actually happened. I am quite sure this is true, for your husband is a very honourable man—in details.'

'You mean,' said Asako, gulping out the words, 'that Miss Smith was not actually Geoffrey's—mistress; they did not—sin together.'

Asako did not know how intimate were the relations between Reggie and Yaé. She did not understand therefore how cruelly her words lanced him. But, more than the shafts of memory, it was the imbecility of the whole scene which almost made the young man scream.

'Exactly,' he answered. 'In the words of the Bible, she lay with him, but he knew her not.'

'Then, do you think I ought to forgive Geoffrey?'

This was too much. Reggie leapt to his feet.

'My dear lady, that is really a question for yourself and yourself alone. Personally, I do not at present feel like forgiving anybody. Least of all, can I forgive fools. Geoffrey Barrington is a fool. He was a fool to marry, a fool to marry you, a fool to come to Japan when everybody warned him not to, a fool to talk to Yaé when everybody told him that she was a dangerous woman. No, personally, at present I cannot forgive Geoffrey Barrington. But it is very late and I am very tired, and I'm sure you are, too. I would advise you to go home to your erring husband; and to-morrow morning we shall all be thinking more clearly. As the French say, *L'oreiller raccommode tout.*'

Asako still made no movement.

'Well, dear lady, if you wish to wait longer, you will excuse me, if, instead of talking rot, I play to you. It is more soothing to the nerves.'

He sat down at the piano, and struck up the *Merry Widow* chorus,—

'I'll go off to Maxim's: I've done with lovers' dreams;
The girls will laugh and greet me, they will not
trick and cheat me;
Lolo, Dodo, Joujou,
Cloclo, Margot, Frou-frou,
I'm going off to Maxim's, and you may go to——'

The pianist swung round on his stool: his visitor had gone.

'Thank God,' he sighed; and within a quarter of an hour he was asleep.

He awoke in the small hours with that sick restless feeling on his chest, which he described as a conviction of sin.

'Good God!' he said aloud; 'what a cad I've been!'

He realised that an unspoilt and gentle creature had paid him the greatest of all compliments by coming to him for advice in the extremity of her soul's misery. He had received her with silly *badinage* and cheap cynicism.

At breakfast he learned that things were much more serious than he had imagined, that Asako had actually left her husband and was living with her Japanese cousins. What he had thought to be a lovers' quarrel, he now recognised to be the shipwreck of two lives. With a kindly word he might have prevented this disaster.

He drove straight to the Fujinami mansion, at the risk of being late for the Requiem Mass. He found two evil-eyed hooligans posted at the gate, who stopped his rickshaw, and, informing him that none of the Fujinami family were at home, seemed prepared to resist his entry with force.

During the reception at the Austrian Embassy which followed the Mass, an incident occurred which altered the whole set of the young diplomat's thoughts, and, most

surprisingly, sent him posting down to the Imperial Hotel to find Geoffrey Barrington, as one who has discovered a treasure and must share it with his friend.

The big Englishman was contemplating a whisky-and-soda in the hall of the hotel. It was by no means the first of its series. He gazed dully at Reggie.

'Thought you were at Chuzenji,' he said thickly.

'I had to come down for the special service for the Archduke Franz Ferdinand,' said Reggie excitedly. 'They gave us a regular wake, champagne by the gallon! Several of the *corps diplomatique* became inspired! They saw visions and made prophesyings. Von Falkenturm, the German military attaché, was shouting out, "We've got to fight! We're going to fight! We don't care who we fight! Russia, France, England: yes, the whole lot of them!" The man was drunk, of course; but, after all, *in vino veritas*. The rest of the square-heads were getting very rattled, and at last they succeeded in suppressing Falkenturm. But, I tell you, Geoffrey, it's coming at last; it's really coming!'

'What's coming?'

'Why the Great War. Thank God, it's coming!'

'Why thank God?'

'Because we've all become too artificial and beastly. We want exterminating, and to start afresh. We shall escape at last from women and drawing-rooms and silly gossip. We shall become men. It will give us all something to do and something to think about.'

'Yes,' echoed Geoffrey, 'I wish I could get something to do.'

'You'll get it all right. I wish I were a soldier. Are you going to stop in Japan much longer?'

'No—going next week—going home.'

'Look here, I'll put in my resignation right away, and I'll come along with you.'

('No thanks,' said Geoffrey, 'rather not.'

In his excitement Reggie had failed to observe the chilliness of his friend's demeanour. This snub direct brought up the whole chain of events, which Reggie had momentarily forgotten, or which were too recent as yet to have assumed complete reality.

'I'm sorry, Geoffrey,' he said, as he rose to go.

'Not at all,' said Barrington, ignoring his friend's hand and turning aside to order another drink.

Geoffrey had a letter in his pocket, received from his wife that morning. It ran :—

'DEAR GEOFFREY,—I am very sorry. I cannot come back. It is not only what has happened. I am Japanese. You are English. You can never really love me. Our marriage was a mistake. Everybody says so, even Reggie Forsyth. I tried my best to want to come back. I went to Reggie last night, and asked him what actually happened. He says that our marriage was a mistake, and that our coming to Japan was a mistake. So do I. I think we might have been happy in England. I want you to divorce me. It seems to be very easy in Japan. You only have to write a letter, which Mr Ito will give you. Then I can become quite Japanese again, and Mr Fujinami can take me back into his family. Also you will be free to marry an English girl. But don't have anything to do with Miss Smith. She is a very bad girl. I shall never marry anybody else. My cousins are very kind to me. It is much better for me to stay in Japan. Titine said I was wrong to go away. Please give her fifty pounds from me, and send her back to France, if she wants to go. I don't think it is good for us to see each other. We only make each other unhappy. Tanaka is here. I do not like him now. Good-bye ! Good-bye !

Your loving,

ASAKO.'

From this letter Geoffrey understood that Reggie Forsyth also was against him. The request for a divorce baffled him entirely. How could he divorce his wife, when he had nothing against her? In answer, he wrote another frantic appeal to her to return to him. There was no answer.

Then he left Tokyo for Yokohama—it is only eighteen miles away—to wait there until his boat started.

Thither he was pursued by Ito.

'I am sorry for you.' The revolting little man always began his discourse now with this exasperating phrase. 'Mrs Barrington would like very much to obtain the divorce. She wishes very much to have her name inscribed on family register of Fujinami house. If there is no divorce, this is not possible.'

'But,' objected Geoffrey, 'it is not so easy to get divorced as to get married—unfortunately.'

'In Japan,' said the lawyer, 'it is more easy, because we have different custom.'

'Then there must be a lot of divorces,' said Geoffrey grimly.

'There are very many,' answered the Japanese, 'more than in any other country. In divorce Japan leads the world. Even the States come second to our country. Among the low-class persons in Japan there are even women who have been married thirty five-times, married properly, honourably and legally. In upper society, too, many divorce, but not so many, for it makes the family angry.'

'Marvellous!' said Geoffrey. 'How do you do it?'

'There is divorce by the law-courts, as in your country,' said Ito. 'The injured party can sue the other party, and the court can grant decree. But very few Japanese persons go to the court for divorce. It is not nice, as you say, to wash dirty shirt before all people. So there is divorce by custom.'

'Well?' asked the Englishman.

'Now, as you know, our marriage is also by custom. There is no ceremony of religion, unless parties desire. Only the man and the woman go to the *Shiyakusho*, to the office of the city or the village; and the man say, "This woman is my wife; please, write her name on the register of my family." Then when he want to divorce her, he goes again to the office of the city and says, "I have sent my wife away; please, take her name from the register of my family, and write it again on the register of her father's family." You see, our custom is very convenient. No expense, no trouble.'

'Very convenient,' Geoffrey agreed.

'So, if Captain Barrington will come with me to the office of Akasaka, Tokyo, and will give notice that he has sent Mrs Barrington back to her family, then the divorce is finished. Mrs Barrington becomes again a Japanese subject. Her name becomes Fujinami. She is again one of her family. This is her prayer to you.'

'And Mrs Barrington's money?' asked Geoffrey sarcastically. 'You have forgotten that.'

'Oh no,' was the answer, 'we do not forget the money. Mr Fujinami quite understand that it is great loss to send away Mrs Barrington. He will give big compensation as much as Captain Barrington desires.'

To Ito's surprise, his victim left the table and did not return. So he inquired from the servants about Captain Barrington's habits; and learned from the *boy sans* that the big Englishman drank plenty whisky-soda; but he did not talk to any one or go to the brothels. Perhaps he was a little mad.

Ito returned to the charge next day. This time

Geoffrey had an inspiration. He said that if he could be granted an interview alone with Asako, he would discuss with her the divorce project, and would consent, if she asked him personally. After some demur, the lawyer agreed.

The last interview between husband and wife took place in Ito's office, which Geoffrey had visited once before in his search for the fortune of the Fujinami. The scene of the rendezvous was well chosen to repress any revival of old emotions. The varnished furniture, the sham mahogany, the purple plush upholstery, the gilt French clock, the dirty bust of Abraham Lincoln and the polyglot law library checked the tender word and the generous impulse. The Japanese have an instinctive knowledge of the influence of inanimate things, and use this knowledge with an unscrupulousness which the crude foreigner only realises—if ever—after it is too late.

Geoffrey's wife appeared hand in hand with cousin Sadako. There was nothing English in her looks. She had become completely Japanese from her black helmet-like *coiffure* to the little white feet which shuffled over the dusty carpet. There was no hand-shaking. The two women sat down stiffly on chairs against the wall remote from Geoffrey, like two swallows perched uneasily on an unsteady wire. Asako held a fan. There was complete silence.

'I wish to see my wife alone,' said Geoffrey.

He spoke to Ito, who grinned with embarrassment and looked at the two women. Asako shook her head.

'I made it quite clear to you, Mr Ito,' said Geoffrey angrily, 'that this was my condition. I understand that pressure has been used to keep my wife away from me. I will apply to my Embassy to get her restored.'

Ito muttered under his breath. That was a contingency which he had greatly dreaded. He turned to Sadako Fujinami and spoke to her in voluble Japanese. Sadako whispered in her cousin's ear. Then she rose, and withdrew with Ito.

Geoffrey was left alone with Asako. But was she really the same Asako? Geoffrey had often seen upper-class Japanese ladies at receptions in the hotel at Tokyo. He had thought how picturesque they were, how well-mannered, how excellent their taste in dress. But they had seemed to him quite unreal, denizens of a shadow-world of bowing, gliding figures.

He now realised that his former wife had become entirely a Japanese, a person absolutely different from himself, a visitant from another sphere. There could be no more thought of embraces and kisses. It was no longer a question of Yaé Smith, of recriminations or of forgiveness. He was English; she was Japanese. They were divorced already.

Asako waited like a victim at the block for the blow to fall.

The big man rose from his chair, and held out his hand to his wife.

'I'm sorry, little Asako!' he said, very gently. 'You are quite right. It was a mistake. Good-bye, and—God bless you always!'

With immense relief and gratitude she took the giant's paw in her own tiny hand. It seemed to have lost its grip, to have become like a Japanese hand. Nothing more was said.

He opened the door for her. Once again, as on the altar-steps of St George's, the tall shoulders bent over the tiny figure with a movement of instinctive protection and tenderness. He closed the door behind her, recrossed the room and stared into the empty fireplace, littered with matches and butt-ends of cigarettes.

After a time, Ito returned. The two men went together to the district office of the Akasaka Ward. There Geoffrey signed a declaration in Japanese and English to the effect that his marriage with Asako Fujinami was cancelled, and that she was free to return to her father's family.

Next morning, at daylight, his ship left Yokohama. Before he reached Liverpool, war had been declared.