

The Heart of a Geisha

O-TATSU-SAN was making her toilet. Her "kimono" was of violet silk, and her "obi" was stiff with threads of gold. The little maid, Kiku-San had spent many hours over the honourable hair, and, at last satisfied with its gloss and piled-up wonder, she stuck carefully therein her most precious "kanza-shi" of jade and amber. She smoothed with a drop of oil her high, narrow eyebrows, and touched her full, drooping lids with rose. She made the cherry-blossoms at her cheeks bloom a little more brightly, and now was adding the last touch of

of the colour of sunset, bore on top a "hat," on either side of which was perched a fierce white bird of the sea, while fastened to the edge of the hat floated long strands of green, very thin silk; so that the bird of the sea appeared to be poised with outstretched, longing wings over green waves of the billows.

These thoughts ran idly through Tatsu's head as she smoothed with dainty, fluttering fingers the folds of her "obi." But it is time now to go to "O-Chaya" (teahouse). Indeed, she is a little late. She gets into the rickshaw. "Hi!

against supports of small, flat sticks. When tea and sugared beans have been brought by the Musume (little maid) Tatsu-San makes a very low bow and says:

"Shibaraku o me ni kakaramashita" (It is a long time since I have hung upon your honourable eyelids!). She always repeats these polite words, and

Mr. Hayward always laughs. But she is not yet satisfied—is he not a very illustrious person? Again she bows, and exclaims sweetly:

"O shikei itashimashita" (Pray excuse me for my rudeness the last time we met!). Mr Philip Hayward catches quickly at one of the small hands and presses it to his lips. "Tatsu-San," he



"It is a long time since I have hung upon your honourable eyelids."

carmine to the centre of her mouth, which she had been told had been "made to kiss."

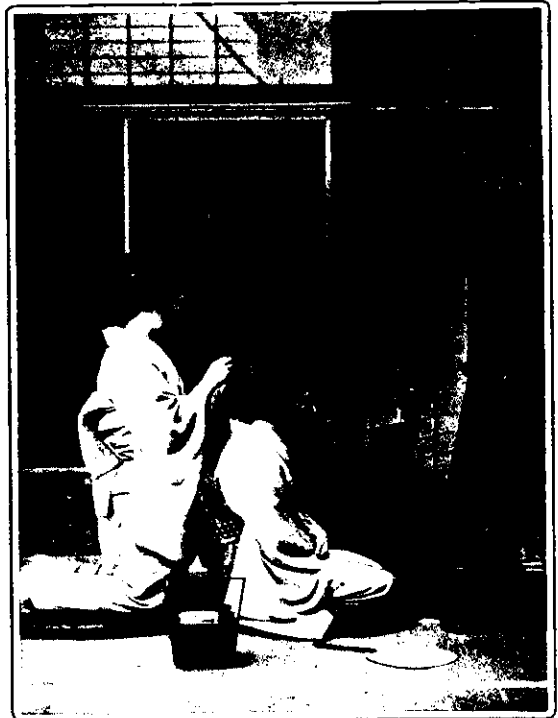
She wished to look very pretty indeed, for had not the honourable young English mister promised to be at the "Tea house of the Iris Gardens" that evening? And had he not promised to bring to her pictures of his honourable mother and his honourable brothers and sisters, who lived in that far-off land of which he so much talked?

She had seen many English ladies who had stopped at the great hotel, and who sometimes came to the teahouse. Truly, their skins were white, like milk, and their garments very wonderful. Sometimes the hair of these honourable persons was beautiful gold colour, but some possessed red hair, like the dreadful "oni" (devil) which terrified one at the play. Also, she wondered why those august ladies chose to wear on their heads the dead bodies of birds, whose cruel, staring, yellow eyes seemed always to look fierce protest into her own eyes! She had but that day observed in the Street of Many Lanterns a tall young woman with square shoulders and honourably large feet, whose hair,

Hyaku!" she calls. "Hai, hai" (Yes, yes) answers Totaro—and off they go very quickly. They pass rickshaws bearing geishas, and Tatsu greets many, and acknowledges many greetings.

As they approach O-Chaya, Tatsu sees that nice young Englishman, who runs quickly down the steps of the balcony to meet her. He assists her to alight, and her soft "arigato" (thank you) is sweet music to his ears, while the proprietor of the teahouse, Ito Takeda, smiles and makes many bows in the background. Ito Takeda has a greedy heart, but this he cleverly conceals under a sleek, good-natured countenance. Truly, O-Tatsu-San is his most valuable geisha, and her time of service at the teahouse has yet two years to run; yet, if the honourable English sir desires to make temporary marriage with her, he will be bound to pay him well for so great a loss to his business.

The room in which they sit opens on a balcony overlooking the gardens, with their stone lanterns, tiny lakes crossed by scarlet bridges, and beds of iris flowers dressed in purple and white, like beautiful ladies and leaning slimly



"The little maid, Kiku-San, had spent many hours over the honourable hair."



"She tells him a tragic story, wherein love and jealousy are intermingled."