

Blanchard Amy Ella

The Four Corners in Japan



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CHAPTER I

STARTING OFF

"I feel a migratory fever stirring within my veins," remarked Miss Helen Corner one morning as she sat with the elder two of her nieces in their Virginia home.

Nan put down the book she was reading; Mary Lee looked up from her embroidery. "You are not going to desert us, Aunt Helen?" said Nan.

"Not unless you girls will join me in my flight."

"But where would you fly?" asked Mary Lee.

"What do you say to Japan?"

"Japan? Oh, Aunt Helen, not really."

"Why not? Every one goes there these days. We could make the trip by way of California, stop off for a few days at Honolulu, and see some of the strange things I have been reading about this winter. I am strongly inclined to make the trip if you two will go with me."

"And would we start soon?" asked Nan. "In time for the cherry blossoms, the lovely flowery Japanese spring and all that?"

"It was what I was planning to do."

"What about mother and the twinnies?"

"We should have to make up our minds to leave them behind. I believe your mother has declared against going with us. She thinks the twins should not be taken out of college and that she should be within call while they are there. That should not prevent your going, however. Nan, what do you think about it?"

"You know me, Aunt Helen," responded Nan.

"What about you, Mary Lee?"

"Oh, 'Barkis is willin';' that is if mother approves."

"I consulted her before I mentioned it to you, for I did not want any one disappointed. Therefore, young ladies, consider yourselves booked for a personally conducted trip. I think we might start next month, and we need not burden ourselves with too much of an outfit."

"I should think not," returned Nan, "when such lovely and cheap things can be had in Japan. Hurrah! Mary Lee, let's go tell Jo."

The two girls started off together. The month was February, but already the first hints of spring could be found in the warmer sunshine, the longer days, the swelling of buds on trees and bushes. A few yellow stars were already spotting the forsythia which clambered up one end of the front porch of Dr. Woods's house which they soon reached. They entered without knocking, for their friend Josephine Woods was like a sister, and would have resented any formality. They knew where to find her, for it was after her husband's office hours; he was off making his professional visits, and Jo would be up-stairs attending to certain housewifely duties.

They discovered her in the little sewing-room surrounded by piles of house linen.

"Hallo," cried Nan, "what in the world are you doing, Jo?"

"Marking these towels for Paul's office," she returned soberly.

Nan laughed. "It is so funny to see you doing such things, Jo. I can never quite get over your sudden swerving toward domesticity. We have come over to tell you something that will make you turn green with envy."

"Humph!" returned Jo. "As if anybody or anything could make me turn green or any other color from envy. I am the one to be envied."

"She still has it badly," said Nan shaking her head. "What is there in marking towels to make it such an enviable employment, Mrs. Woods?"

"Because it is being done for the dearest man in the world," replied Jo promptly.

"I wonder if you will still continue to be in this blissful state of idiocy when we get back from Japan," put in Mary Lee.

"Japan!" Jo dropped the towel she was holding, barely saving it from a splotch of indelible ink.

"Aha! I knew we could surprise you," jeered Nan. "She is green, Mary Lee, bright, vivid, grass green."

"Nothing of the sort," retorted Jo. "Of course I always did long to go to Japan, but I wouldn't exchange this little town with Paul in it for all the Japans in the world."

"You are perfectly hopeless," said Nan. "I wonder if I shall ever reach such a state of imbecility as to prefer marking towels to going to Japan."

"I wouldn't put it past you," returned Jo. "Just you wait, Nan Corner. I expect to see the day when you are in a state that is seventy times seven worse than mine ever was."

"If ever I do reach such a state, I hope the family will incarcerate me," rejoined Nan.

Jo laughed. "This does sound like the good old college days," she remarked. "But do tell me what is up, girls. Are you really going to Japan?"

"So Aunt Helen says," Mary Lee told her.

"And when do you go?"

"Next month."

"The whole family?"

"No, the kiddies will have to continue to grind away at college. I think it probable that mother will go back with them after the Easter holidays and stay there till summer, when they can all go away together."

"And how long shall you be gone?"

"Don't know. All we know is that we are going. We didn't wait to hear any more till we came over to tell you. What shall we bring you, Jo?"

"I think I should like a good, well-trained Japanese servant," returned Jo with a little sigh.

"Poor Jo; there are serpents even in Paradise, it seems. Does the last kitchen queen prove as unworthy to be crowned as her predecessors were?"

"Oh, dear, yes, but never mind, I am still hoping that the one perfect gem will at last come my way. Meantime I am learning such heaps of things that I shall become absolutely independent after a while. You will see me using fireless cookers, and paper bags, and all that by the time you get back."

"Well, good luck to you," said Nan. "We must be off. You shall have the next bulletin as soon as there is anything more to report."

They hurried back to find their mother, being entirely too excited to stop long in one place. After talking the plan over with her, they hunted up their Aunt Helen to join her in consulting maps, time-tables and guide-books. Before night the date was set, the route was laid out, the vessel upon which they should sail decided upon.

At last one windy morning in March the Virginia mountains were left behind and the little party of three set their faces toward the western coast. California was no unknown land to them and here they decided to tarry long enough to see some of their old friends, making Los Angeles their first stop.

"Doesn't it seem familiar?" said Mary Lee as they approached the city where they had lived for a while.

"The very most familiar thing I see is out there on the platform," returned Nan as she observed Carter Barnwell eagerly scanning each car as the train came into the station. Nan hailed him from the car window and he was beside them before the train came fairly to a standstill.

"Glory be to Peter! But isn't this a jolly stunt you are doing?" he cried fairly hugging Miss Helen. "Why didn't the whole family come, as long as you were about it?"

"By the whole family you mean Jack, of course," remarked Mary Lee.

Carter laughed a little confusedly. "That's all right," he returned; "I'm not denying it. Where are your checks and things? Give me that bag, Miss Helen. You are going straight to the house; Mrs. Roberts is counting the minutes till you get there."

The three were nothing loth to be settled in Carter's automobile and to be whirled off through summerlike scenes to Pasadena where Mrs. Roberts's home was.

"Do let us go past the little house where we used to live," said Nan who was sitting on the front seat with Carter. "I suppose it is still there."

"Oh, yes," was the reply, "and I hope it always will be. It was there I first saw Jack, you know; the little rascal, how she was giving it to that youngster." He laughed at the recollection. Then in a lower voice and more seriously he asked, "Did she send me any message, Nan?"

"We didn't see the twinnies before we left, you know," returned she. "There wasn't any special excuse for a holiday and it didn't seem worth while to bring them away from college just now. Doesn't she write to you, Carter?"

"Sometimes," he answered soberly.

"Oh, well, you know what Jack is," said Nan with an effort to be consoling. "Just hang on, Carter, and it will be all right, I am sure."

"Yes, perhaps it will," he responded, "but sometimes it does look mighty discouraging. I haven't had a line from her since Christmas, Nan."

"Isn't that just like her? I suppose she had the politeness to thank you for that lovely set of books you gave her."

"Oh, yes; she wrote a perfectly correct little note. I was afraid maybe she didn't like the books."

"She was crazy about them, but she just wouldn't give you the satisfaction of knowing it," said Nan comfortingly.

"That is something to know," returned Carter in a more cheerful tone. "There's the house, Nan." He halted the car for a moment that they all might have a glimpse of the vine-embowered cottage where they had lived, and then on they sped again to draw up, after a while, before the door of the Roberts's pleasant home in Pasadena.

They were tired enough from their long journey to be glad of the rest and quiet which Mrs. Roberts insisted they should have. "You are to go to your rooms and have a good restful time before we begin to chatter," she told them. "Since you assure me that you left every one well at home, I can wait to hear the rest of the news."

So to their rooms they went to descend after a reasonable time to luncheon when they were welcomed by Mr. Roberts and were waited upon by the same Chinese servant who had been with the Robertses for years.

Another day or two here and then off again they started to San Francisco where they would take their steamer. Carter insisted upon seeing them thus far on their way, and they were glad enough to have his assistance in getting started.

"Wish I could go along," he told them, "but I reckon I have enough of traveling on this continent. It is something of a jaunt to Richmond and they think I must show up there every two years anyhow."

"Then I suppose this is not your year for going since you came to see us graduated last summer."

"No, but I am banking on getting there next year."

"And of course when the twins are graduated you will be on hand."

"You'd better believe I shall. No power on earth shall keep me from going then."

It was Nan to whom he was speaking, and she well knew why he was so in earnest.

"Well, remember what I told you," she said. "Don't give up the ship, Cart, no matter how discouraging it looks. Jack is a little wretch at times, but she is loyal to the core, in spite of her provoking ways."

"Nan, you are a perfect old darling," said Carter wringing her hand. "You have put new life into me. I'll remember, and I shall not give up till I see her married to another man."

"That's the way to talk," Nan assured him. "Dear me, is it time to go? Well, good-bye, Cart, and good luck to you."

Carter turned from her to make his adieux to Miss Helen and Mary Lee, then back he turned to Nan. "You are a brick, Nan," he said. "Good-bye and write a fellow a word of cheer once in a while, won't you?"

Nan promised and in another moment Carter had left them. The steamer's whistle blew a farewell blast and they were moving out of the harbor, Carter watching them from shore, his waving handkerchief on the end of his umbrella being visible as long as they could see.

They remained on deck that they might watch for every point of interest which the beautiful harbor displayed, and at last through the Golden Gate they steamed out into the broad Pacific.

"Doesn't it seem queer to be going the other way around?" said Nan to her aunt. "Do you realize that this is the Pacific and not our old friend, the Atlantic?"

"Old friend," scoffed Mary Lee; "old enemy I should say. I hope to be spared the seasickness which I always associate with our last voyage."

"Of course you won't have any such experience," Nan assured her. "This is placid water and in four or five days we shall be in Honolulu. It wouldn't be worth while to get seasick for such a little trip as that."

But Mary Lee was not altogether satisfied with her prospects and was glad to seek her steamer chair before very long, and the other two decided to follow her example, Nan going to their stateroom to get wraps, and other paraphernalia, together with the guide-books with which they had provided themselves. After seeing that her aunt and sister were comfortably tucked in, Nan proposed that she should dispense information, while the other two became acquainted with the Pacific. "Of course you know," she began, "that Honolulu is on the Island of Oahu. I used to think it was on the Island of Hawaii, didn't you, Mary Lee? It is quite like an American town except that it has tropical trees and plants and things like that. I don't suppose it is half as picturesque as it was before we took possession of it. It was ceded to the United States, I mean the Hawaiian Islands were, in 1898."

"How big is Oahu?" asked Mary Lee.

"It has an area of six hundred square miles, and it is the loveliest of all the islands."

"Dear me, I hadn't an idea it was so big. I thought we should be able to walk all over it during the time we expected to be there."

"Not this trip, my honey, but we can drive about or go on the street-cars around Honolulu."

"Oh, are there street-cars?"

"Certainly there are. Honolulu is quite a big city."

"I always think of it as a wild sort of place with queer little grass huts for the people to live in when they are not disporting themselves in the water and making wreaths of flowers. I expected to see coral reefs and palms and people with feather cloaks on, when they wore anything at all."

Nan laughed. "You might have seen all that if you had lived some eighty or ninety years ago in the days of King Kamehameha."

"Oh, dear, and I suppose there is no more *tabu*, and we shall not see a single calabash. I don't understand *tabu* exactly, but I thought I should have an excellent chance to find out."

"No doubt the book tells," said Nan turning over the pages. "It was like this," she said presently after a little reading. "If a chief wanted a field that appealed to his tender sensibilities he set up a pole with a white flag on it and that made the field *tabu* to any one else. Sometimes if he wanted a lot of fire-wood he would *tabu* fire and the people had to eat their food raw. All the nicest articles of food were *tabu* to women who were obliged to eat their meals in a different room and at a different time from the men."

"Dear me," cried Mary Lee, "then I am sure I don't want to go back eighty or ninety years even for the sake of grass huts and feather cloaks. We shall probably receive much greater consideration in this twentieth century. Tell us some more, Nan."

"You know the islands are of volcanic origin and they have the most delightful climate imaginable. On the Island of Molokai is the leper settlement where Father Damien lived and died. It is a larger island than Oahu, but only a part of it is given over to the lepers, and they are cut off from the remaining land by a high precipice, so they could not get away if they wanted to, as the ocean is on the other side. You will see plenty of coral at Honolulu, Mary Lee, for there are buildings made of blocks of it, and there is a museum where we can be shown the feather cloaks. They were made for royalty only, of the yellow feathers taken from a bird called the Oo. He was black but had two yellow feathers of which he was robbed for the sake of the king. They let him go after they took away the yellow feathers so he could grow some more. But just imagine how many feathers it must have taken to make a cloak that would reach to the knees, sometimes to the feet. No wonder there are none of these birds left."

"It is all very interesting," declared Mary Lee. "Is there anything about calabashes?"

"Not very much," returned Nan after another examination of her book. "Perhaps we can find out more when we get there."

"I think I may be able to tell you something about calabashes," said a gentle voice at Nan's side.

Nan turned to see an elderly lady with a bright face, who had her chair next to the Corners'. "We are trying to get our information crystallized," said Nan. "It would be very good of you to tell us something about calabashes."

"I live in Honolulu," returned the lady, "and I have been entertained by your remarks. You have been quite correct in all you have said. The calabashes are quite rare now and rather expensive, though once in a while there is an auction sale when one can get them more reasonably."

"Do you hear that, Mary Lee?" cried Nan. "Oh, wouldn't it be fine if there should happen to be one while we are in Honolulu?" She turned again to the lady by her side. "Our name is Corner," she said. "This is my sister, Mary Lee, and my aunt, Miss Corner, is next."

"And I am Mrs. Beaumont, the wife of an army man who is stationed at Honolulu. We are in the way of knowing some of the out-of-the-way things that all travelers do not know about, for we have been there some time. I am just returning from a visit to my sister who is in California."

Nan felt herself in luck and continued her talk with this new acquaintance, getting more and more enthusiastic as various things were told her about the place to which they were going. "I have been noticing you," said Mrs. Beaumont when they had become on quite friendly terms. "You are always so eager and interested."

"Oh, yes, I know I am," Nan said a little ruefully. "I am so very eager to know and see everything that I don't think of consequences, at least my sister tells me so."

"And are the consequences liable to be disastrous?" asked Mrs. Beaumont.

"Sometimes," Nan smiled reminiscently, "though, take it all in all, I would rather have a few disasters than miss what lucky experiences bring me. Nothing very terrible has happened to me yet

for I have a younger sister who is so much more impulsive that I am able to curb myself on account of her didos. I daren't do things that I must warn her from doing, you see."

Mrs. Beaumont laughed. "I think many of us could understand the position, though, like yourself, there are some of us who delight in experimenting with the unconventionalities."

Nan's heart warmed to the speaker at this speech and the two sat talking till the call for dinner sent them below.

CHAPTER II

A GLIMPSE OF HONOLULU

By the time the reefs of Oahu were in sight, the Corners had become so well acquainted with Mrs. Beaumont that they felt that they would have a friend at court when they should finally reach Honolulu. The four stood on deck together watching for the first glimpse of the coral reefs, Koko Point, and Diamond Head, then the city itself at the foot of the mountains. Finally they passed on to the harbor inside the reefs and beheld the tropical scene they had pictured. There were the palms, the rich dense foliage, and, at the moment the vessel touched the wharf, there were the smiling natives with wreaths around hats and necks, waving hands, and shouting, "*Aloha!*" So was Honolulu reached.

As Nan had warned them it was quite like an American city, and as they were driven to the hotel which Mrs. Beaumont had recommended, they could scarce believe themselves upon one of those Sandwich Islands associated with naked savages and Captain Cook, in one's early recollections of geography.

"I do hope," remarked Nan as they entered their rooms, "that we shall not find any centipedes or scorpions in our beds."

"Horrors!" cried Mary Lee. "How you do take the edge off our enthusiasm, Nan."

"Well, there are such things, and I, for one, mean to be careful."

"We shall all be careful," said her aunt, "but I don't believe in letting that mar our pleasure. Mrs. Beaumont says one rarely sees those creatures, though of course they do exist. Some of them are not so poisonous as we are led to suppose, and one soon recovers from the sting. Now, girls, don't let us waste our time in discussing centipedes and tarantula, for we must make the most of our time. I have ordered a carriage for a drive to the Pali, which, I am told, is the favorite one. We can take the shore line next, Waikiki, it is called, and then we can see the surf-riding and all that."

"Such lovely, queer names," commented Nan.

"Such queer looking people," said Mary Lee as they started forth, looking eagerly to the left and right that they might observe anything worth their while.

"Why do those women all wear those awful Mother Hubbard looking frocks?" said Nan. "While they were adopting a costume, couldn't some civilized person have suggested something more artistic? Poor things, I think it was a shame to condemn them to wear anything so ugly. When there were Japan and China to give them models of picturesque kimonos, it seems almost a crime for them to adopt these hopelessly ugly things."

"Now Nan is off," laughed Mary Lee. "You touch her in her tenderest spot when you offend her artistic or musical taste."

"Speaking of music," said Nan, not at all offended, "I want to hear the song of the fishermen. Mrs. Beaumont says it is very weird and interesting."

"And I want to go to a *luau*," Mary Lee declared.

"I think that may be possible," Miss Helen said, "for Mrs. Beaumont has promised to be on the lookout for any festivity which might interest us and will let us know."

"She was a true discovery," Nan went on. "I am so glad she happened to be on board our steamer. Those wreaths that the natives wear around their hats and necks they call *leis*. Isn't it a pretty fashion?"

"The flowers are really wonderful," said Mary Lee, "but oh, such commonplace looking shops, with canned things on the shelves just as at home. In such a summery, balmy climate I should think they could raise almost anything."

"So they could, but they don't," her aunt told her. "Everything almost, in the way of fruit particularly, is brought from the coast. Sugar is the great crop here. There are some coffee plantations, and rice is raised. Pineapples and bananas receive some attention, but the possibilities for cultivating other things seem to be unconsidered except by a very few."

"The natives eat *poi*," said Nan. "It must be horrid stuff from the description of it. It is made from a tough root something like a sweet potato. They mash it, or grind it up, mix it with water into a sort of paste, and sometimes they let it ferment before they dish it up in a calabash. Then the family sits around to eat this appetizing dish with their fingers. Mary Lee, how should you like to dine out with some of the Hawaiian gentry and be asked to join in a dip into the all-sufficing calabash with dried tentacles of an octopus as a dainty accompaniment?"

"Ugh!" Mary Lee looked disgusted.

Yet the next day when Mrs. Beaumont appeared to bear them all off to a *luau* they were all quite as eager to go as if they had not discussed *poi* to its disadvantage.

"*Luau* is the Hawaiian name for feast," Mrs. Beaumont explained. "The presence of guests will turn nearly any dinner into a *luau*. We are going a little out of town so that you may see one in its primitive method of serving."

"Shall we have to eat anything that is set before us?" asked Mary Lee anxiously.

"Oh, no, but I am sure you will find enough to satisfy you among the things you can eat. There will be fish steamed in *ti* leaves, and probably pork roasted in an oven built underground. And I am sure you will like a green cocoanut eaten out of the shell."

"But tea leaves," said Nan – "I should think they would give fish a queer flavor."

"Not t-e-a, but t-i," Mrs. Beaumont explained. "The *ti* plant is used for many things. It makes a convenient wrapping for one's ordinary marketing, and takes the place of paper in more than one instance."

The girls were very curious to see what the *luau* would be like, and were charmed to find that the feast was to be served from a mat spread upon the ground. The mat was finely braided and was adorned with a profusion of flowers. At each place were laid *leis* of carnations, begonias, bourga invilleas, or some unfamiliar flowers; only roses and violets were conspicuous by their absence.

Mrs. Beaumont and her guests were welcomed with low salaams by those who were native Hawaiians, though the company was a mixed one, as the feast was attended by some of the officers and their wives more in a spirit of policy or curiosity than because of strictly social relations. The girls discovered that Mrs. Beaumont was quite right in her advice about the fish and pork which they found delicious. They tried the *poi*, but barely tasted it. There was a very possible salad made from the alligator pear, and the green cocoanuts were indeed a delicacy which they could enjoy. It was not appetizing to watch the eaters of *poi* wrap the sticky mass around their fingers before putting it into their mouths, and one or two glances were entirely sufficient. Knives and forks were provided for the principal guests, and indeed for any who preferred, but some still clung to the simpler and earlier manner of eating with their fingers.

Later on came a visit to the shore to see the surf-riding, less indulged in than formerly since clothes have become an impediment, yet interesting enough. Here, too, they heard the wild and melancholy song of the fishermen which Nan tried to jot down as a hint to her musical memory in days to come. A sightseeing tour about town was planned for the next day when they were to see the various buildings, the Executive mansion, once the palace, the Museum where, indeed, were the feather cloaks and other interesting exhibits of primitive days, the Punahou College, and, what to the Corners was the most interesting of all, the Lunalilo Home for aged natives.

"When I see those low salaams, I know I am in the Orient," said Nan. "Did you notice that old fellow actually prostrate himself?"

"They are a very gentle, biddable people, if they are lazy," remarked Mary Lee, "and they say they are strictly honest."

"I think that is because of the old system of *tabu*," Nan made the remark. "You were not allowed to take anything that belonged to a chief, for it was a matter of life and death, and even to allow your shadow to fall across the path of one of those mighty beings meant 'off with his head' or some similar order. I know what I shall do when I am queen of these islands; I shall *tabu* Mother Hubbards. Look at that fat old monstrosity; isn't she a sight?"

"There are quantities of Chinese and Japanese," said Mary Lee, noting the various persons who passed them.

"It seems to me one sees more of them than of the natives."

"I believe they do outnumber the natives," Miss Helen remarked, "for they form the principal class of laborers. The Chinese, more than the Japanese, have become shopkeepers, and own a larger proportion of real estate, so no wonder we see so many of them."

"Are you all very tired?" asked Nan suddenly.

"I must confess that I am," Miss Helen told her.

"And I shall be mighty glad to get to my room," Mary Lee put in. "Why do you ask, Nan?"

"Because I am wild to take a ride on those King Street cars. Mrs. Beaumont says that nobody of the better class does ride on them, and that is the very reason I want to go."

"Oh, Nan, I wouldn't," objected her sister.

"Why not? Nobody knows me, and I shall probably see sights undreamed of. Come along, Mary Lee."

"No, indeed, I don't want to get mixed up with lepers and filthy scum of the earth."

"Nonsense! There couldn't be any lepers, for they keep a very strict watch and hustle them off to Molokai as soon as one is discovered."

"Mrs. Beaumont saw one; she told me so."

"Oh, Mary Lee, did she really?"

"Yes, she was buying something in one of the Chinese shops at the time of the Chinese New Year, and this creature was begging outside when she came out. She says she shall never forget the sight, and that sometimes their friends hide them so the officers cannot find them."

"Well, they will not hide them on a King Street car, that's certain," retorted Nan. "If neither of you will go with me, I shall go by myself."

Finding her determined, Miss Helen and Mary Lee went on to their hotel while Nan boarded the car she had selected. It was about an hour before she rejoined them. "Well, how was it?" asked Mary Lee as her sister came in.

"It was great larks," was the answer. "You missed it, you two proper pinks of propriety."

"Come in and tell us, Nan," called Miss Helen from the next room.

Nan laid aside her hat and came to her aunt, sitting on the side of the bed while she related her experiences. "It was perfectly decent and respectable," she declared, "and the route is a beautiful one. A most polite Chinese person of the male persuasion took my car fare to deposit, handed me my change with an entrancing bow and then," she laughed at the recollection, "neatly abstracted his own nickel from his ear and put that in, too."

"From his ear?" Miss Helen exclaimed.

"She is just jollying us, Aunt Helen," said Mary Lee.

"Indeed I am not," declared Nan, "and, what is more, he had stowed away another nickel, for his return fare, in his other ear; I saw as I came out. For my part I think it is a lovely idea, and I believe I shall adopt it in future, particularly when I must get on one of those evil inventions, a pay-as-you-enter car. One day in New York I dropped as many as three car fares in trying to get a nickel into the box. It was a rainy day; I had my umbrella and a small traveling bag to carry, so how in the world I could be expected to grasp the situation I have been wondering ever since. No, the ear is the place, a simple and effective way of solving a very difficult problem."

"What else did you see?" queried Miss Helen.

"I saw a bland, urbane native lady, gowned in a pink Mother Hubbard – I have learned that the native name for these horrors is *holuku*– well, she wore one. She carried a basket of fish, principally alive, for one that looked like a goldfish almost jumped into my lap. When she left the car I noticed that the Chinaman next me began to jerk his foot in a most remarkable manner. He attempted to get up, but somehow couldn't seem to manage it. The woman was going one way; the car the other; but finally another passenger stopped the car after some unintelligible words to the motorman and I discovered that the woman's hook and line had caught in the Chinaman's shoe. The woman was dragging away, all unconsciously, for she had caught a fish which she didn't intend to fry. It was very funny, but I was the only one in the car who laughed; the rest were far too polite."

"Well, Nan, it is just like you to have had such an experience," said her aunt.

"If I were going to stay in Honolulu for any length of time," returned Nan, "I think I should like to take a ride in the King Street cars every day. What are we going to do to-morrow?"

"We are to have tea in Mrs. Beaumont's little grass house – you know she owns one – and she thinks there is to be an auction."

"Calabashes!" cried Nan. "Good! I have set my heart on one, but I am not going to pay more than ten dollars for it."

"I am afraid you will be disappointed then," her aunt told her, "for they run up as high as fifty dollars and over, I am told."

"Well, we shall see," said Nan. "Of course I can't spend all my spare cash on calabashes or I will have none left for Japan where I expect to be tempted beyond my powers of resistance."

"We are to dine at Mrs. Beaumont's this evening, so you'd better be thinking of dressing," Mary Lee warned her.

"And no doubt we must look our best for there will be some fascinating young officers there, I believe. Isn't it fortunate that our steamer chairs happened to be next Mrs. Beaumont's? She has been perfectly lovely to us all, and we have seen twice as much as if we had tried to trot around alone."

They were not disappointed in their evening's entertainment which brought them in contact with some of the ladies, as well as the men, of the garrison, and gave them an opportunity of learning many interesting things. The evening ended in a surprise when a band of natives came to serenade, bringing their rude musical instruments and giving songs typical of these islands of the South Seas.

The calabashes were the great interest of the next day when an auction sale of a small private collection was held. Mrs. Beaumont, who was wise on the subject of the antique wooden ware, went with them, and to her great satisfaction Nan did secure an excellent specimen for the price she had set.

"You see," said Mrs. Beaumont, "as there is no metal on these Hawaiian Islands, the best substitute known to the natives was the *Koa* wood which has an exceedingly fine grain and is susceptible of a very high polish. Wherever a calabash was decorated by carving, it had to be done either with a stone implement or with one made of sharks' teeth, and though these carvings are crude they are really very interesting and add to the value of the calabash. There are very few of the very old ones left now as they have been bought up by collectors. The natives use those made of cocoanut shells or of small gourds, as you may have noticed."

Nan bore away her calabash in triumph, stopping at a little place to have it polished by a man who was noted for doing such work well. Hers, while not large, was rather unique as it had a division in the middle so that two kinds of food could be served at once in it.

There were more walks and drives, and even a visit to one of the neighboring islands. The pretty little Japanese tea-houses, which they came upon frequently in their drives, the girls absolutely refused to patronize. "We want to save everything Japanese till we get to Japan," they declared. "There is quite enough novelty in that which is strictly Hawaiian."

"And more than enough that is strictly American, if one is looking for novelty," remarked Miss Helen. "Who would suppose that in these South Sea Isles one would find severe-looking New England houses, electric lights, electric cars, telephones and all the rest of American modern improvements?"

"Including Mother Hubbards," Nan put in. "I am glad they have left something typical of the old times. I suppose the little grass houses were unhealthy places, but how picturesque they are."

They had the opportunity of observing one of these primitive houses more closely that very afternoon when Mrs. Beaumont gave them tea in the small hut which she retained as a curiosity. It was quite a gay little company which gathered there, young officers, bright girls and charming, elderly, soldier-like military men who, the girls maintained, were more entertaining than the younger ones.

At last came word that the steamer for Japan would arrive the next day, and so there was a repacking of trunks, a stowing away of souvenirs and a final farewell to those who had helped to make the stay at Honolulu so pleasant and profitable. Then early the following morning the three travelers boarded the steamer for a still longer journey to Japan.

But they were not allowed to go off without being speeded on their way by their new friends who came bearing *leis* in such number that their hats, their necks, their waists were adorned with garlands as the vessel slowly moved out. When the last "*Aloha!*" had died upon the air, they had moved outside the reefs, and finally when Oahu was lost to view, upon the waters they cast their wreaths that they might be borne back to land, a silent message to the friends they had left behind. Such is the pretty custom in these southern seas.

CHAPTER III

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

As one nail drives out another so were the sights of Honolulu lost in those newer ones which were met as the vessel entered the great bay.

"It is just like the pictures," cried Nan, eagerly squeezing her sister's arm.

"It is exactly," responded Mary Lee. "Oh, Nan, those square-sailed things are the junks, aren't they? And oh, what a lot of little boats."

"And isn't the color beautiful?" returned Nan, her eyes seeking the further mass of shore beyond the calmly glittering waters. "I am wildly excited, aren't you, Aunt Helen? Somehow it seems the foreignest of all the foreign countries we have seen yet, much more than Honolulu did, for there was so much that was American there."

"It is certainly deeply interesting," her aunt agreed. "I suppose we shall have to come down to the matter-of-fact question of customs directly, and after that we can begin to enjoy ourselves."

"Oh, dear me, I always forget that there are such disagreeable things as customs. I hope they will not capture my precious calabash."

But the customs were easily passed and then came the first sensation of the day, a ride to the hotel in a *jinrikisha*.

"I feel as if I were on a fan or a *kakamono*," giggled Mary Lee, as they were borne along by their galloping coolie.

"What funny little houses," commented Nan. "Can you imagine that really sober, every-day people live in them? It all looks like a joke, and as if we might come to our sober senses after a while. To be sure some of the houses do look somewhat European, but even they have a queer expression."

"I didn't expect to see any horses, and yet there are a good many." Mary Lee made the observation.

"I suppose they have been brought in by the foreign population," said Nan. "I have seen quite a number of phaetons, and some persons on horseback, so there goes one rooted theory. Set it down for a fact that they do have horses in Japan."

"Don't the shops look fascinating! But we mustn't try to buy much of anything here for we are going to Tokyo almost at once, Aunt Helen says. Do you know how far it is, Nan?"

"Only about twenty miles, I believe. Ah, here is our hotel right on the quay. We get a harbor view, but they say the best scenery is not here, but that further in the interior it is wonderful. I am wild for the first glimpse of Fujiyama."

"I suppose we shall be honored and kowtowed to from this out," remarked Mary Lee as they left their *jinrikishas* to be met at the hotel door by a bowing, obsequious person who conducted them inside.

"It should be a flattering possibility, but you must remember that we are only poor miserable females and are of no account in this land."

"I shall remember that when I get carried away by my admiration of things Japanese," replied Mary Lee.

Their rooms looked out upon the water, and for some time they gave themselves up to viewing the novel scene spread out before them; the queer crafts which passed and repassed; the lambent, soft light which played over the waters; the effect of a swarming crowd in the costume of the country, at times diversified by the wearing of a partial European dress, again accentuated by those who wore such attire as was most familiar to the girls in their own home. It was quite late in the day and, as they expected to go on to Tokyo the next morning, they decided to take *jinrikishas* or

as they discovered them to be called *kuruma* and *kurumaya*, that they might see something of the city of Yokohama and have their first experience of Japanese shops.

"Now, Nan," warned Mary Lee the wise, "don't get too reckless even if things are cheap. We have months before us and if you begin to load up now, think what you will have by the end of the time."

Nan, hesitating while she looked longingly at a fragile cup and saucer, sighed. "I suppose you are right, but one's enthusiasm is always so much more ardent in the beginning. Besides, I have always found that no matter how much I carried home with me from abroad, I was always sorry I didn't buy double."

"But these breakable things will be so hard to lug around."

"True, my practical sister. I think I will limit myself to the purchase of two things alone in this precious town and it will be fun to decide what they shall be."

From shop to shop they went, stopping to look at the queer hanging signs, to examine the curios, the silks, and the odds and ends which could be picked up for a mere trifle. But at last Nan decided upon a silk scarf as being easy to carry and a singularly lovely kakamono, though she gave many a sigh to the beautiful bits of color which she must pass by. "So cheap," she would murmur, "and I can't have it."

Then Mary Lee would resolutely rush her away with the consoling remark that doubtless she would find things twice as lovely and even more cheap in other places. "For you must remember," said she, "that we are only on the threshold, and probably, as this is such a well-known seaport, and one which is so much visited, things here are more expensive than they will be further on."

"I bow to your superior judgment," Nan would reply, with a last backward look at the treasure she coveted.

Mary Lee, herself, followed Nan's decision and bought but two articles, one a small piece of carved ivory and the other a piece of embroidery, both of which could be easily tucked away and would take up little room.

Their afternoon would not have been complete without a first visit to a tea-house. "A really truly Japanese one this time," said Nan. "Aren't you glad we waited? I have much more of a sensation, haven't you, Aunt Helen?"

"It does seem the real thing in such an atmosphere and such a company," she returned, as they were served with the pale yellow beverage in tiny cups by the most smiling of little maids.

It was something of a ceremony as they discovered, when, at the very door, they must remove their shoes that they might not soil the clean straw mats with which the floor was thickly spread. Slippers were provided them and shuffling in with these upon their feet they sat on cushions, when a little maid in kimono and broad *obi* came forward to ask if the honorable ladies would like some honorable tea.

"Dear me," whispered Nan, "it is just as I hoped it would be. We have been called honorable at last."

Presently the *mousméé* approached on her knees bearing a carved tray which she presented most humbly, and the three sat drinking their tea and trying to realize that this was Japan and that they were not dreaming.

Continuing their ride, they were taken still further away from the European quarter of the town through the streets which looked more and more foreign; but they did not stop at any of the tiny shops, raised above the street, with their banner-like signs of blue or red or white all bearing lettering in fantastic Japanese or Chinese characters. It was all wonderfully rich and harmonious and the three were so busy drinking in the sights, the queer little low houses, the people, mostly habited in blue, short of stature, smiling, picturesque, that they were taken by surprise when at last their broad-hatted runner stopped. They looked up there to see before them in the evening light the great cone of Fujiyama, or Fujisan, as the wonderful mountain is called.

Nan began to laugh hysterically. "What makes you do that?" said Mary Lee. "I don't see anything so amusing about this glorious view."

"I have to do something," returned Nan, "and I don't want to cry. I have to do one or the other, it is so wonderfully beautiful. Doesn't it seem like the very spirit of a mountain wrapped in this pale, misty evening light? The great sacred mountain! And how high is it? I must look at my book and see." She turned the leaves of the book which she carried with her. "The great volcano," she read, "is between 12,000 and 13,000 feet high. It is 120 miles around the base. It has been practically inactive since 1707, yet there is a spot where it still shows indications of inward fires which, it is safe to declare, may break out some day."

"Dear me, let us hope it will not be while we are here," said Mary Lee.

"It isn't at all probable," Nan assured her, "for I am sure there would be some warning, unearthly noises, and growlings and mutterings. I shouldn't mind a little harmless sort of eruption, and I am rather looking for a baby earthquake that we can really expect almost any time. Do you know, Mary Lee, I am only beginning to wake up to the tremendous possibilities of Japan. Every little while I come upon the description of some famous shrine or temple, some wonderful view, some queer custom, or fascinating festival. I am beginning to get more and more bewildered, and shall have to sift this information so I can gather together the few grains which must serve us while we are here. It would never do to go away with merely a hodge-podge of facts not properly catalogued in our minds. You, who have an orderly and practical mind, must help me arrange some sort of synopsis of what we are to see and why we must."

Mary Lee agreed and after a short observation of the magic mountain, they turned their backs upon it and saw only the bobbing hat of their runner who bore them through the unfamiliar and weirdly interesting streets, whose shops were now beginning to be lighted by gay paper lanterns, on to a more familiar looking quarter of the city, peopled principally by Europeans and back to the hotel on the quay, where they stopped. Their minds were full of new sensations, and their eyes were still filled with the pictures of foreign streets, smiling, gentle-voiced little people, and lastly great Fujisan, calm and beautiful in the sunset glow.

After dismissing the *jinrikishas*, the three entered the hotel again, Nan walking ahead. As they were passing through the corridor, she stopped short as she came face to face with a girl about her own age who also came to a halt as she saw Nan. Then she sprang forward and took Nan by the shoulders, giving her a gentle shake. "Nan Corner, as I live! This is surprising."

"Eleanor Harding, who could have expected to meet you on the other side of the world?" cried Nan.

"How on earth did you get here?" asked Eleanor.

"Just dug a hole and fell through," returned Nan.

Eleanor laughed. "Dear me, that does make me feel as if we were all back at Bettersley. Why, there is Mary Lee, too! What fun!" She hastened forward to greet her old classmate, and to speak to Miss Helen whom she had met more than once at various college functions. "Well, this is luck," she declared. "Do let us go somewhere and have a good talk. Have you all had dinner? No? Then come along and sit with me for I was just going in."

"But we are still in traveling dress," objected Mary Lee, always particular.

"Never mind that; lots of others will be, too. Come right along."

Thus urged the three followed along to the dining-room where they found a table to themselves over in one corner, and the chattering began.

"Now tell me all about it," said Eleanor. "Dear me, but it does me good to see you."

"We have come just because we all wanted to," Nan told her. "Aunt Helen proposed it, and here we are. We left mother and the twinnies at home."

"Jack and Jean are at Bettersley, of course."

"Yes, pegging away and getting along about as well as the rest of us did in our freshman year. Jack, as may be guessed, is in everything, including scrapes, but she is a general favorite and always comes out on top."

"It makes me sort of homesick," said Eleanor with a sigh.

"But you haven't told us yet what brought you here," Mary Lee reminded her.

"Oh, so I haven't. I came out with my aunt whose husband is an army man. My brother is in the diplomatic service and is to be here some time, probably, so every one thought it was my chance for seeing this country."

"It certainly is, for you will have opportunities denied the rest of us mere tourists. Is your aunt here in Yokohama?"

"For the present. She and my brother have both gone to some function this evening, hence I am alone. Do you know what I thought when I first caught sight of you, Nan? I thought you were married and had come on your wedding trip."

"No such prospect for Nancy," was the answer.

"What about Rob Powell?" asked Eleanor. "He used to be your adorer a year ago."

"Was it only a year ago? It seems ten," returned Nan. "Oh, I hear of him once in a while from Rita Converse. He is doing pretty well for a beginner, I believe."

"What callous indifference," replied Eleanor. "I quite counted on hearing of your engagement by this time."

"I don't seem to engage as readily as some others," Nan made answer, "and the longer I put it off the more 'fistadious' I become as Jean used to say. What about yourself, Nell, my dear? I don't forget Yale Prom."

"Oh, bless me, who can count upon what happened before the deluge? I've begun all over again. I am counting on my brother Neal to supply me with something in the way of a Mikado or a *daimio*."

"Deliver me if you please," cried Mary Lee.

"So say we all of us," echoed Nan. "No Japanese mother-in-law for me. You must do better than that, Eleanor."

So the chaff and chatter went on. Eleanor had been one of their comrades at college and there were a thousand questions to ask on each side, reminiscences and all that, the process of what the girls called "reminiscing" continuing long after they had left the table and had retired to a spot where they would be undisturbed. Here, after a while, they were discovered by Eleanor's brother who was duly presented and who entertained them all by an account of the affair which he had just attended. Later came in Mrs. Craig to hunt up her niece and nephew. She was a charming woman who had already been through many interesting experiences, and who was disposed to make much of these college friends of her niece.

"We must all have some good times together," she proposed. "My husband and Neal have both been out here long enough to give us suggestions."

Neal declared himself eager to be of assistance and lost no time in beginning to plan what they all must do the next day. There was some discussion about hours and engagements, but at last all was arranged to the satisfaction of every one concerned and the little company broke up.

"Did you ever know such luck?" whispered Nan as they were going to their rooms. "Aunt Helen, we certainly started out under a lucky star. What would Honolulu have been without Mrs. Beaumont? And here come Mrs. Craig and Mr. Harding to act as cicerone for us here. Nell Harding of all people! I can't get over my surprise yet."

"Were you very intimate with her at college?" asked Miss Helen.

"Not quite as much so as with Rita Converse and one or two others. Still we were very good friends, especially during our senior year. Do you remember, Mary Lee, that she was the one who

wrote to her brother about that horrid Oliver Adams, when you were taking up the cudgels for Natty Gray?"

"Indeed I do remember," returned Mary Lee. "She was so nice about it; I have always liked her better ever since that time. What do you think of this brother, Nan?"

"Pleasant sort of somebody. Looks as if there might be a good deal in him. Not specially good-looking, but he has nice eyes and a well-shaped head that looks as if he had more than ordinary intellect. I think we shall all become very good friends. Don't you like Mrs. Craig, Aunt Helen? I am sure she is great, and is going to be no end of help to us."

So the talk went on while the night opened up new stars to their vision, and the coming day promised new friends, new scenes and new experiences.

CHAPTER IV TEMPLES AND TEA

"And aren't we to go to Tokyo to-day?" asked Mary Lee as she sat up in bed the next morning.

"Don't ask me," replied Nan. "We supposed we were, and as it is only twenty miles away we may be going yet though Aunt Helen did not say anything about it last night. She and Mrs. Craig were plotting all sorts of things for to-day while we were talking to Nell and her brother. I caught a word here and there about temples and *tori-i* and things."

"And we, too, were making plans meanwhile, so it looks as if we might have a busy day, Nan."

"Yokohama and Tokyo are practically the same city," Nan gave the information, "for they are so near one another. Because of that we may be going to carry out the original plan. I'll go ask Aunt Helen." She pattered into the next room to find Miss Helen already up. "What's the first thing on the carpet to-day, Aunt Helen?" she asked.

"Why, let me see; breakfast, of course."

"Decidedly of course, but I didn't mean anything quite so obvious."

"Then Mrs. Craig is coming for us and we are to take a drive to see some temples, and this afternoon we are to call on a Japanese friend of Mrs. Craig's."

"A real Japanese?"

"A really, truly one whom Mrs. Craig knows quite well."

"And we shall have the chance of seeing a veritable Japanese house? Good! I've been hoping we might have such a chance. Where is the house?"

"In Tokyo."

"Then we are to go there as was first planned."

"I think so; it is more attractive than in Yokohama, and you know Mrs. Craig is stopping there. She and her nephew came to Yokohama simply to meet Miss Harding whom they will take back with them to Tokyo, so it seems to me we would be better off there ourselves."

Nan uncurled herself from the foot of the bed where she was sitting and went back to her sister. "Tokyo it is to be," she announced. "Tokyo and temples and a visit to a Japanese home; that is the day's programme. Isn't it great? You'd better get up, Mary Lee; Aunt Helen is all dressed."

The two girls made haste to join their aunt and before very long were ready for their morning of sightseeing. This time they were to go, not in *jinrikishas* but behind Mrs. Craig's stout little ponies which carried them along at a good pace to a spot where suddenly arose before them a great stone stairway.

"Oh, where do those steps lead?" asked Nan, all curiosity.

"They are the first intimation we have that we are nearing a *tera* or temple," Mrs. Craig told her.

"And do we climb that long flight?" asked Mary Lee.

"Assuredly."

They all alighted from the carriage and began the ascent. At the top they confronted a queer gateway.

"Is this what they call a *tori-i*?" asked Nan.

"No, it is merely a gateway in the ordinary sense," she was told.

"We must stop and look at it," Miss Helen decided, and they all stood looking up at the strange structure.

"What an odd roof," Mary Lee observed, as she regarded the peaked pagoda-like affair.

"And such carving," exclaimed Nan. "Do look at all those queer gargoylish lions' heads, and see the dragons on the panels; snakes, too."

"And there is Fuji." Miss Helen, who was resting after her exhausting climb, and was enjoying the view, directed their attention to the great mountain whose dim peak arose above the town at their feet.

Nan turned from her regard of snakes and dragons that she might look off at the scene. "No wonder one sees Fuji on fans and panels and pretty nearly everything in Japan," said she. "I don't wonder the Japanese honor and adore their wonderful mountain."

After giving further examination to the gateway, they all walked on, presently coming to another one which showed more dragons and gargoyles. Through this they passed to enter a sort of courtyard. The girls looked with curiosity at an array of stone objects which they supposed to be monuments. "What are they?" Mary Lee asked.

"Stone lanterns," Mrs. Craig told her, "and yonder are the Buddha lions." She pointed out two strange, fantastic stone figures in sitting posture each side the way.

"And does Buddha live here?" asked Nan with a smile.

"He lives in many places," Mrs. Craig replied with an answering smile.

Just ahead they perceived three steps leading to a low edifice. Men and women were going and coming from these, stopping to kneel at the entrance of this, the temple which they had come to see. Most of these people tarried only a very short time, bending their heads in silent prayer for a few minutes, while they joined their hands reverently. Some clapped three times quite slowly, though noisily. There were many contributions made, small coins thrown into the big wooden box at the entrance.

The girls stood watching the worshippers curiously. "It would be interesting to know how much their offerings amounted to," said Mary Lee. "I suppose very little in our money."

"Very little indeed," responded their guide. "When you consider a *rin* is one-tenth of a *sen* and that a *sen* is only about equal to one of our cents you can see that a very small contribution suffices."

"What is inside the temple?" asked Nan.

"The shrine of Buddha, but he is not on exhibition except on feast days. If you go in you will have to take off your shoes, so perhaps we would better wait till some other time."

They decided that they would not attempt an entrance at this time, but they peeped through the paper-screened sides of the building to see a dim interior whose contents were in such obscurity that they could not make them out.

"Do you always have to take off your shoes before entering a temple?" asked Mary Lee.

"Oh, dear, yes, and not only upon entering a temple but before entering any house. You know all floors are furnished with soft matting rugs which it would never do to soil. When one considers how much mud and dust we carry into our homes on our shoes and skirts I am inclined to think the Japanese have more than one custom which we might adopt to advantage. If you want to see a *tori-i*, Miss Nan, I think we can find you one not very far away."

"I don't exactly understand what a *tori-i* really is," confessed Mary Lee.

"There are two theories concerning them," Mrs. Craig told her. "Many assert that they were originally perches for birds, one meaning of the word being a bird-rest, and it is supposed that they were used as a sort of altar on which fowls were offered to the gods; others maintain that the word means simply a gateway. One can easily see how either meaning could be accepted, for they do look like a perch as well as a gateway."

After another drive through a labyrinth of streets, where were queer little houses and queerer signs, they arrived at the bottom of another hill where again a flight of steps arose before them.

"Dear me," sighed Miss Helen, "I wonder if I am equal to all these climbs. I should like to import a few elevators for the sake of my American powers of climbing."

However, rather than be left behind, the ascent was decided upon by Miss Helen, Nan helping her up, and lingering with her when a pause for breath seemed advisable. At last they joined the other two who, more agile, had reached the spot before them. "So this is a *tori-i*," said Nan looking

up at the gateway. "Such a simple affair; just two upright pillars with two things across them. It might easily be a bird-perch. No carving, no letters, no anything, yet it is sort of impressive just because of its simplicity. Is there a temple beyond?"

"No, only a shrine," she was informed, "and probably closed."

"Then we shall not have to climb that second flight of steps," said Miss Helen in a relieved tone. "If one has to mortify the flesh in this manner before seeing temples, I am afraid I shall not see many."

"Oh, but you used to climb lots of steps in Europe," Nan reminded her. "How many were there in the duomo at Florence?"

"Don't ask me, my dear; the remembrance of them is still with me. Probably because I did climb so many in Europe is why I hesitate here, and perhaps the weight of years might be added as a second reason."

Nan frowned and shook her head. "You mustn't say that. You are as young as any of us."

"In spirit, maybe," her aunt returned with a smile.

"We certainly shall not expect you to see all the shrines and temples we come upon," Mrs. Craig told them, "for there are too many, and the best way is to select the most famous only to visit."

"We learned to do that way in Europe," said Nan. "One gets mental indigestion by tearing off to see every little thing, and finally one is so mixed up that nothing is remembered correctly."

"And if one lived here a lifetime it would be impossible to see all the sights or to learn all the legends," Mrs. Craig went on. "The best way is to get some well-written book and study up between times. You need to know a little of the folk-lore and something of the religions in order to understand the sights you wish to see. It will be impossible to get more than merely a very superficial idea even then, particularly upon the question of the two old beliefs of Shintoism and Buddhism."

"The Shinto belief is the worship of ancestors, isn't it?" asked Nan.

"It is founded upon that, as we understand it," Mrs. Craig explained. "Lafcadio Hearn probably can give you a better idea of what it means than I can, so I advise you to hunt up his books."

"We have some of them," Nan returned, "and I shall look up the subjects when we get home."

"Do all the Japanese adopt the Shinto creed?" asked Mary Lee.

"Oh, no, some are Buddhists, some are Christians, some have a mixed belief in which both Buddhism and Shintoism have a part. The ramifications are so numerous and so intricate that it would be impossible to explain them. I know only a very little myself, and I have been here three years. As to the language, it is hopeless. I shall never be at home with it, and there are only a very, very few foreigners who ever do master its intricacies. When you consider that every schoolboy is expected to learn six or seven thousand characters for daily use alone, and a scholar must know twice as many more, you may imagine the undertaking. Moreover there are several styles of writing these characters, so you may be glad you are not expected to master Japanese."

"Oh, dear," sighed Mary Lee, "it makes me tired merely to think of it."

After the climbing of so many steps, and after the fatigue following the constantly recurring sights which passed before their vision, they decided to go home and rest that they might be ready for their afternoon's entertainment. Their last sight of the *tori-i* was one they never forgot, for it framed the exquisite cone of Fuji as in a picture, and they were interested all the more when Mrs. Craig told them that these ancient gateways usually did form the framework for some special object such as a mountain, a temple, a shrine.

After having had luncheon and a good rest they were all quite ready for the next experience which Mrs. Craig had promised them. Eleanor who had been off with her brother all morning joined them in the afternoon's entertainment and was quite as much excited as the others to be a caller upon a really truly Japanese.

"It is such a pity," said Mrs. Craig, when they were about to start, "that you couldn't have been here in time for the Doll Festival which occurs upon the third of March. I am hoping, however, that the dolls will still be on view at the house where we are going, though they are usually stored in the go-down at the end of the three days."

"And what in the world is a go-down?" asked Eleanor.

"It is the family storehouse," her aunt told her. "Very little is kept out to litter up a Japanese house, where the utmost simplicity is considered desirable, so they have these storehouses in which all superfluities are kept. When you reach Mrs. Otamura's you will be surprised at the very absence of furnishings, but there, I must not tell you too much or you will not be sufficiently surprised."

"It is so lovely to be sensationed," said Nan with a satisfied air.

Mrs. Craig laughed and they proceeded on their way to the house which stood, its least attractive side toward the street, in a quarter of the city where the better class lived. The garden was at the back, and there were verandahs at the side. There were no chimneys, but the roof was tiled and the sides of the house were fitted with sliding screens covered with paper. These were now thrown open.

At the door they were met by a servant whom Mrs. Craig addressed with respect and with a few pleasant words, this being expected, for none save the master is supposed to ignore the servant. Each one of the party removed her shoes and slipped on a pair of straw slippers before stepping upon the soft, cool matted floor. The room into which they were ushered was indeed simply furnished; in an alcove whose floor was slightly raised, hung a single kakemono, or painted panel, and a vase stood there with a single branch of flowering plum in it; there were also a little shrine and an incense burner. On the floor, which was covered with thick mats, were placed square silk-covered cushions on which the guests were to be seated.

But before this was done they were greeted by the mistress of the house with the most ceremonious of low bows. She could speak a little English and smiled upon them so sweetly that they all fell in love with her at once. She was dressed in a soft colored kimono and had her hair arranged most elaborately. Close upon her heels followed her little girl as gaily decked as a tulip, in bright colored kimono and wearing an obi or sash quite as brilliant. This *treasure flower*, as a Japanese will always call his child, was as self-possessed and gracious as it was possible for a little maid to be. Following her mother's example she knew the precise length of time during which she should remain bent in making her bow, and her smile was as innocent and lovely as could be any one's who was called by the fanciful name of O-Hana, or Blossom, as it would mean in our language.

There was a low table or so in the room and, as soon as the *hibachi* was brought in, small stands were placed before each person, for of course tea must be served at once. The *hibachi* was really a beautiful little affair, a fire box of hammered copper, in which was laid a little glowing fire of *sumi* sticks, these being renewed, as occasion required, from an artistic brass basket by the side of Mrs. Otamura. "The honorable" tea was served upon a beautiful lacquered tray and from the daintiest of teacups, offered by a little maid who humbly presented the tray as she knelt before the guests.

The conversation, carried on partly in English and partly in Japanese, was interesting to the foreigners who were on the lookout for any oddities of speech, but who would not have smiled in that polite and gracious presence for anything. They drank their pale honey-colored tea with as much ceremony as possible although not one of them was accustomed to taking the beverage without milk or sugar.

"The dolls are really on view," Mrs. Craig told them after a few sentences in Japanese to her hostess, "and O-Hana will take you to see them."

"Oh, how lovely," cried the girls, their enthusiasm getting the better of them.

At a word from her mother the little black-haired child came forward and held out her tiny hand to Miss Helen, who as eldest of the party deserved the most respect. Following their little guide they went through the rooms, each screened from the next by paper covered sliding shutters, until they came to one where upon row after row of crimson-covered shelves appeared a most marvelous array of dolls, with all the various furniture, china, musical instruments, and even warlike weapons, that any company of dolls could possibly require.

"Aren't they perfectly wonderful?" said Mary Lee looking at a magnificent royal family in full court costume.

"Oh, no, they are very poor and mean," replied the child who quite understood her.

It was very hard not to laugh, but no one did, each turning her head and pretending to examine the doll nearest her.

"And which do you like best?" asked Miss Helen.

"This one," O-Hana told her, pointing to a very modern creature in a costume so much like their own that the girls could not restrain their mirth at the reply.

"She is very beautiful," said Nan hoping that her praise would do away with the effect of the laughter.

"She is very ugly, very poor," replied O-Hana, "but," she added, "I like her the best."

"It would take hours to see them all," said Miss Helen, "and we must not stay too long." So after a cursory view of officers and court ladies, musicians and dancers, ancient heirlooms in quaint antique costumes elbowing smart Paris creatures, they finally took their leave of the dolls, wishing they might stay longer.

There was a little more ceremonious talk and then as polite a leave-taking, O-Hana doing her part as sedately as her mother.

"I should like to have kissed that darling child," said Nan as they all started off again, "but I didn't suppose it would be considered just the correct thing."

"Indeed it would not," Mrs. Craig told her, "for the Japanese regard it as a very vulgar proceeding. I fancy we foreigners shock their tender sensibilities oftener than we imagine, for they are so exceedingly ceremonious and attach the utmost importance to matters which we do not regard at all."

"I know I shall dream of that funny little doll-like creature, O-Hana," Nan went on, "with her little touches of rouge on her cheeks, her bright clothes and her hair all so shining and stuck full of ornaments. As for Mrs. Otamura, she is delicately lovely as I never imagined any one to be, such tiny hands, such a fine, delicate skin, such an exquisitely modulated voice, and so dignified and gracious; I felt a very clumsy, big, overgrown person beside her."

"You were right about the house, Mrs. Craig," commented Mary Lee. "It certainly was simplicity itself. Think of our great masses of flowers in all sorts of vases and bowls, and compare all that to the one lovely spray of plum blossom so artistically arranged."

"Their flower decorations are a matter of great study," Mrs. Craig answered. "It is taught as a branch by itself and all girls study it. The few decorations a house possesses must be in harmony with the season. When the cherry blossoms come you will see an entirely different kakemono in the Otamuras' house, an entirely different vase for the flowers and other things will be in keeping."

"It is all very complicated," sighed Nan, "and I am afraid I shall carry away only a very small part of what I ought to find out about these curious people."

She was quite sure of this as Mrs. Craig began to tell of some strange customs, stranger feasts and still stranger folk-lore the while they were carried along through the narrow streets to their hotel. Here they found Neal Harding awaiting them with a friend of his, a young journalist whom he presented as "Mr. Montell, who hails from the state of South Carolina."

The addition of a bright young American to the party was not at all regretted by the girls who went to their rooms commenting, comparing and, if it must be said, giggling.

CHAPTER V

AN EVENING SHOW

"Speaking of dolls," said Mr. Montell to Nan, when they all met at dinner, "we Westerners have no idea of their value nor of the sentiment with which they are regarded here in Japan. Did you know that there was once a doll so human that it ran out of a house which had caught on fire?"

"Oh, Mr. Montell!" Nan looked her incredulity.

"If you don't believe it I refer you to that wonderful writer upon Japan, Lafcadio Hearn. It is a belief in this country that after generations of care and devotion, certain dolls acquire a soul; as a little girl told Mr. Hearn, 'they do when you love them enough.'"

"I think that is perfectly charming," cried Nan. "Tell me something more about the dolls. We were deeply interested in those we saw this afternoon, but we hadn't time to examine them all to see if there were any among them who had gained a soul through love. Have you been to a Doll Festival, Mr. Montell?"

"Oh, yes, and to several other festivals, for I have been here since the first of January."

"And which was the first festival you saw?"

"The feast of the New Year which lasts about two weeks. It is something like our Christmas holiday lengthened out, for during the whole month every one wears his, or her, best clothes, gifts are exchanged, and there is much visiting back and forth; besides, the Japanese homes overflow with dainties, at least with what they consider dainties. There is a cake made of rice flour, and called *mochi*, which isn't half bad."

"I rather like the rice cakes, and I have always liked rice, but when it comes to raw fish and such things I draw the line. Imagine seeing a perfectly good live fish brought to the table and then seeing your host calmly carve slices from its writhing sides! Ugh! I hate even to think of it. Were you ever present when such a thing was done?"

"Yes, I was on one occasion, and I cannot say that the vision increased my appetite. I had the good fortune to be given letters of introduction to one or two prominent Japanese families and have been able to see something of the home life of the people. It is really charming when you know it. I never knew a more beautiful hospitality, nor a sweeter spirit of gentleness shown."

"They do seem a happy race, for they are perpetually smiling."

"And yet we would think the lot of most a most unhappy one."

"Except the children's and some of the old people's. I have been shocked to see what terrible burdens some of the poor old women carry. I had an impression that all old people in Japan were revered and were treated as something very precious."

"On general principles it is so, but among the lower classes the women are treated with little respect and have duties imposed upon them which make one fairly groan to think of."

"I have learned that women have not a price above rubies in this land, although they are much more fascinating than I imagined. Mrs. Otamura is the most delicate, doll-like little creature, really very pretty and with such an exquisitely gracious and graceful manner. That reminds me again of the dolls. Is it real food they offer them? I wasn't quite sure and I didn't like to ask."

"Oh, yes, it is real rice and *saké* and all that which you probably saw. It is a great pleasure to the little girls to set a meal before their dolls whenever one is served to themselves."

"Such beautiful little lacquered and china sets of dishes they were, too; I felt like playing with them myself. When is there another festival, Mr. Montell?"

"I think the feast of the Cherry Blossoms will be the next important one, but there are little shows all the time, small temple festivals rather like a fair, such as one sees in Europe in the small towns."

"And can one buy things at them?"

Mr. Montell laughed. "The difficulty will be not to buy, for you will be pestered with persistent venders of all sorts of wares."

"We bought such a funny lot of little bodyless dolls to-day; we felt that we must have some, such dear little faces with downcast eyes and such a marvelous arrangement of hair. They were only five *rin* apiece. I am just learning the value of the coins, and only learned to-day that there was such a thing as a *mon*. I have it written on the tablets of my memory that ten *mon* make a *rin* and ten *rin* make a *sen*. Five *rin*, then, is about half a cent, so our dollies are very cheap."

"I recognize your little doll at once; she is O-Hina-San. You see her frequently, though, as you may have observed, no O-Hina-San looks exactly like another."

"Well, at all events she is a very cunning little person. I am surprised to find what cheap and pretty things one can buy for so very little. Don't you think that in the countries where there are coins of such small denominations one can always find cheaper things than at home? When I am in Europe I always think twice before spending five centimes and twenty-five seem a whole great big lot, yet they represent only five cents of our money, and who hesitates to spend a nickel? If we had mills as well as cents I believe it would soon reduce the price of things."

Mr. Montell laughed. "That is a theory to present to our political economists who are trying to get at the cause of the high price of living. Will you write an article on the subject? I might place it for you."

Nan shook her head. "No, indeed. I will present you with the idea and you can work it up for your paper. I could do better with an article on the Doll Festival. Dear me, why didn't I come to Japan before I left college? I love that theory of their gaining souls, and, indeed, some are so lifelike that it is hard to believe they are not alive, and some of them that we saw were over a hundred years old."

"You know the dolls are never thrown away, but are given something like honorable obsequies. The very, very old ones must, in due course of time, become hopeless wrecks. They are not exactly buried, but are given to the god *Kojin*. A mixed person is *Kojin*, being neither a Shinto nor a Buddhist deity. A tree is planted near the shrine where he lives, and sometimes the poor old worn-out doll is laid at the foot of the tree, sometimes on the shrine; but if the tree happens to be hollow, inside goes dolly."

"Isn't it all entertaining and surprising?" returned Nan. "I suppose you have seen and have learned many wonderful things."

"More than I hoped to. I am going further up into the country after a while, for in the isolated districts one can get at some very curious customs which have not become modified by modern invasion."

"Just as it is in Spain or any other country which is not tourist-ridden."

"I am wondering if there may not be a temple festival to-night; I will inquire. If there is we must all go, for it is something that every foreigner should see."

"An evening affair, is it?"

"Yes, and for that reason the more interesting, to my mind."

"Do you hear that?" Nan turned to the others. "Mr. Montell is going to pilot us all to an evening street show, a temple festival. Won't it be fine?"

"Is it this evening?" Miss Helen inquired. "If it is I am afraid you will have to count me out, for I have about used up my strength for to-day."

"Even after having had a reinforcement of food?" inquired Nan.

"It won't prevent your going, dear child," said Miss Helen. "You know we agreed that we were not going to stand on the order of our going and coming, and that any one who felt inclined should always be at liberty to drop out of any expedition she felt disinclined to make."

"I think you young people would better undertake the show," put in Mrs. Craig. "Nell and Neal can chaperon you all, and we elders can stay at home and keep one another company. I have seen temple shows galore, so I shall lose nothing."

This was agreed upon, and they all arose from the table, separating into groups, the younger people going to the front to look out upon the passing crowd, while Miss Helen and Mrs. Craig seated themselves for a talk over the plans for the following day.

Mr. Montell went off to make his inquiries. Nan and Eleanor Harding paced up and down the corridors, leaving Mary Lee with Mr. Harding.

"We don't know a thing about Tokyo," said Mary Lee addressing her companion. "What is the name of this street, for instance?"

"It is a part of the great Tokiado Road which is three hundred miles long."

"Gracious!" exclaimed Mary Lee. "Where does it end?"

"It goes from Tokyo to Kioto and passes through many towns. It is really a wonderful trip from one city to the other."

"Have you taken it?"

"Yes, I went with a party of six."

"How did you travel?"

"By *jinrikisha*."

"Dear me, all that distance?"

"Yes, indeed. The runners can travel six or seven miles an hour, sometimes even as much as eight, and it is really a most agreeable way to go, for one has a chance of seeing the country as he would in no other way, unless he walked."

"I wish we could do it."

"There is no reason why you shouldn't. If you are good walkers you can relieve the monotony by getting out once in a while; we did whenever we felt inclined, and over the mountains it was a distinct advantage."

"I am afraid that wouldn't appeal to Aunt Helen particularly. She is not so ready as she used to be to endure discomfort, and we shall probably have enough of that if we keep on beaten tracks. There are wonders in abundance to be found without doing any terrific stunts, and I reckon we may as well keep to them."

"How long had you planned to stay?"

"Oh, I don't know. We haven't planned at all. We will stay till we think it is time to go. I suppose we shall get homesick for mother and the twinnies in course of time."

"You'd better do as much of your sightseeing as possible before the rainy season begins."

"And when may we expect that it will?"

"It is liable to start in almost any time during the spring, but usually extends through late spring and early summer."

Just here Mr. Montell returned with the news that he was correct in his surmise and that there would be a night festival in another part of the city. "It is over by ten o'clock," he told them, "so we'd better be off if we want to enjoy it."

The girls rushed to their rooms to prepare themselves for the outing while the young men hunted up the *jinrikishas* which were to take them to the spot.

"We shall be tired enough after an hour in that jostling crowd," Mr. Montell replied when it was proposed by the girls that they should walk one way.

"And besides," put in Mary Lee, "we have been going all day, and we must not get tired out in the very beginning, for we want to save up for all the rest there is to see."

So off they set in the *jinrikishas*, to arrive at last before the temple which was supposed to occasion the gathering of the crowd which jostled and clattered within a small radius. Just now it was at its greatest. At first the arriving party merely stood still to see the varying scene. A few

turned to look at the foreigners, but such were by no means rare in this huge city and they did not arouse as great an interest as did the booths and the flower show.

"Isn't it the weirdest sight?" said Nan to Mr. Harding who had her in charge while Mary Lee and Eleanor were under the care of Mr. Montell.

"It is certainly different from anything we have at home," he returned. "Shall we see the flowers first? I think we may as well move with the crowd, as it will be easier than standing still where one is liable to be shoved and pushed about."

They slowly made their way toward the spot where there was a magnificent display of flowering plants, young trees, and shrubs lining both sides of the streets. The only lights were those of torches, which flickered in the wind, and of gay paper lanterns swung aloft.

"Before you attempt to buy anything," Mr. Harding said, "let me warn you not to pay the price first asked. The system of jewing down is the order of things here and you will be cheated out of your eyes if you don't beat down your man."

"I am afraid I don't know enough of the language to do anything more than pay what they ask, unless you will consent to do the bargaining, that is, if your proficiency in the language will allow."

"I think I can manage that much," he replied cheerfully.

Nan paused before a beautiful dwarf wisteria. "What wouldn't I give to have that at home," she said, "but when one considers that it would have to be toted six thousand miles, it doesn't encourage one to add it to one's impedimenta. I am already aware that I shall have the hugest sort of collection to take home with me, and my sister is continually warning me not to buy everything I see. I think, however, I shall have to get just one little lot of cut flowers to take back to Aunt Helen. Oh, those are cherry blossoms, aren't they? The dear pinky lovely things! I shall have to get a branch of those". They paused before the beautiful collection of plants and flowers whose charms were being made known vociferously by the flower dealer. Foreigners are easy prey of course, so at once the price was put up beyond all reason.

Mr. Harding shook his head. "Too much," he said in the vernacular, and immediately the price dropped perceptibly, but it required more haggling before it came within the limits of reason. But finally Nan bore off her treasure in triumph, holding it carefully above the heads of the crowd. This was rather an easy matter as she was much taller than the general run of those who constituted the throng, and more than once was regarded with amusement. She could not leave the flower show, however, without one more purchase, this time a beautiful little dwarf tree in full flower, for Mrs. Craig, "who," explained Nan, "has a place to keep it."

Mr. Harding assumed the responsibility of carrying this purchase, and, leaving the flowers, they pressed their way toward the booths where myriads of toys were for sale. "Things unlike anything in the heavens above or the earth beneath or the waters under the earth," exclaimed Nan pausing before a booth which attracted her and which was surrounded by children looking with eager longing at the toys. Most of them, to be sure, would be certain not to go home empty-handed, for the parents of these were seldom too poor to spend half a cent to please a child. But there was one little pale-faced creature with the inevitable baby on her back who did seem destitute of a *sen* or even a *rin*.

"There is an example of womanhood's burdens," said Mr. Harding, watching the slight figure in its gay kimono. "The little girls are seldom without a baby on their backs, it seems to me; no wonder they look old and bent and wizened before their time, yet they are the most cheerful, laughing creatures in the world, and do not seem to mind being weighted down with a baby any more than American children would with a hat."

"But this seems a particularly small girl and a particularly big and lusty baby," returned Nan, eyeing the little motherly creature. "Do you suppose I might make her a present? I wonder what she would like best of anything on this stall."

"Shall I ask her?"

"Oh, will you?"

Mr. Harding put the question, but beyond the answering smile, there was no reply from the shy little maid, though her interest in the foreigners was immediately awakened.

"There is a lovely O-Hina-San," whispered Nan. "Do you suppose she would like that?"

"I am sure it wouldn't come amiss, and would be worth the guess."

"Then I will get it at the risk of a whole half cent." She laid down her five *rin* and took up the queer little figure, a flat stick covered with a gay kimono made of paper, and surmounted by a pretty little head. Nan held out the gift smilingly, but the little girl looked at her wonderingly, making no effort to take it. Nan opened the small fingers and clasped them around the doll. The child smiled and looked at Mr. Harding.

"For you," said he in the child's own language.

The smile brightened and down went the child, unmindful of the baby, her head touching earth while her tongue was unloosened to say "Arigato gozaimasu," which meant "honorable thanks."

"Now I must get something for the baby," declared Nan; "that is, if I can get any idea of what these things are for. There is a most fascinating red and blue monkey clasping a stick; that strikes me as appropriate. Will you ask how much it is?"

Mr. Harding put the question. "One-eighth of a cent," he told her, "and this is 'Saru,' the 'Honorable Monkey'; why honorable, I cannot say."

The toy dealer picked up one of these toys, pressed a spring and lo! the monkey ran up the stick. "I must have him. All that for one-eighth of a cent! Surely this is a Paradise for children." She placed the monkey in the baby's little fat hand. He regarded it gravely, but his little sister again prostrated herself to offer her "honorable thanks," and rising, looked at Nan with as adoring an expression as her small wan face could assume.

"And all for less than a cent," said Nan. "I should like to spend the rest of the evening buying toys for these poor little mother-sisters. I could buy thousands for a dollar."

But by now the little girl had moved away, probably to go home with the wonderful tale of the foreign lady, who had given her an experience which was quite as delightful as the presents themselves; and Nan with her escort followed along with the crowd, stopping to examine the toys and have their meaning explained whenever possible.

"Many of these toys have a religious meaning," Mr. Harding told her. "All these queer little images represent some god. Fukusuke looks like a jolly sort of a boy, and Uzume who is the god of laughter, I take it, is a most merry personage. That one with a fish under his arm is Ebisu, the god of markets and of fishermen."

Seeing their interest, the dealer picked up a figure representing a hare sitting on a sort of handle of what Nan took to be a bowl of some sort. "Usagi-no-kometsuki," said the man.

"Aha! this is Hare-in-the-Moon," exclaimed Mr. Harding. "He is cleaning his rice."

"Oh, is that what the pestle is for? I have seen them cleaning rice; they do it by stepping on the handle."

"The next time you see the moon, look up and try to discover Usagi-no-kometsuki. Will you allow me to present him to you?" He bought the little toy and handed it over to Nan who laughingly accepted it, and they went on past the booths showing more toys, or sometimes quaint little ornaments, strange compounds of confections or fans, goldfish and such things, all entertaining enough to one unaccustomed to such a display.

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